



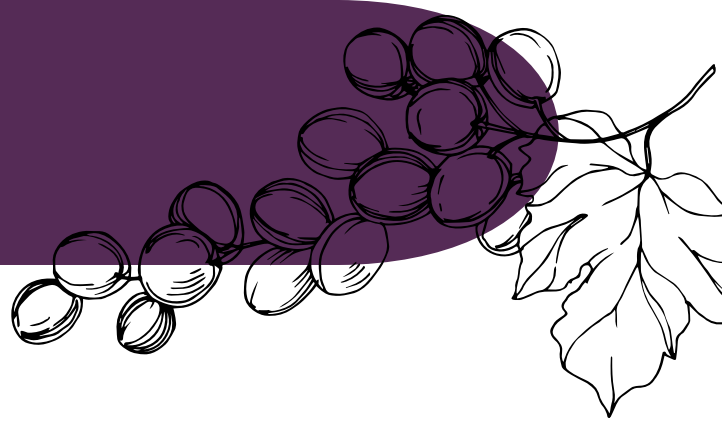
2025 NWGGA
**Annual
Conference**

February 24-25
Graduate Hotel
Lincoln, NE

**Nebraska Winery
& Grape Growers
Association**



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE



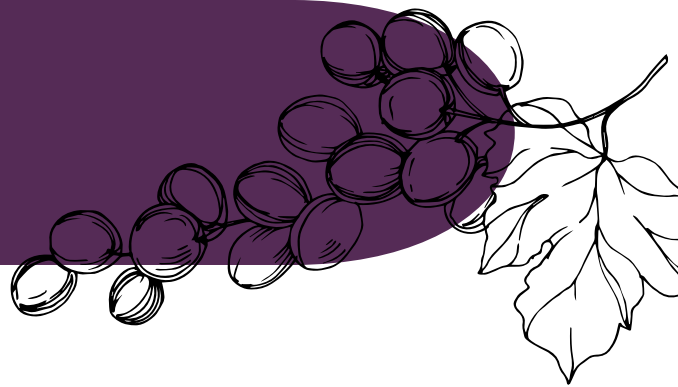
Monday, February 24, 2025

7:30 AM	Registration & Pastries
7:50 AM	Welcome
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Regenerative Grape Farming Practices - Derrick Vogel
9:00 - 10:00 AM	AVA Registration: Benefits and Considerations - Dr. Gina Montalbano Zesiger & Bryan Zesiger
10:00 - 11:00 AM	Organic Controls: Essential Oils & Biopesticides in Disease Management - Dr. Tim Miles
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Using Canopy Management and Harvest Dates to Promote Wine Aromas and Flavors for La Crescent, Frontenac Blanc & Other Hybrid Grapes - Erin Norton
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch & UNL Viticulture Program Updates - Dr. Paul Read
1:00 - 3:00 PM	Annual Business Meeting
3:00 - 4:00 PM	State of the Industry & Industry Priorities Roundtable - Lead by NWGGA Board
4:30 - 6:00 PM	After Hours Roundtable & Reception: Industry Wine Exchange - Sara Wiebold and Mark Gudgel

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

7:30 AM	Registration & Pastries
7:45 AM	Welcome
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Nebraska Wine Quality Assessment Results - Denise Gardner (Virtual)
9:00 - 10:00 AM	Unleash the Power of Wine Clubs: Attract, Engage & Grow Your Winery - Rebecca Ritz
10:00 - 11:00 AM	Acidity in Wines Made from Cold-hardy Cultivars. Tools to Adjust the Acidity and Maintain Wine Quality - Erin Norton
11:00 - 11:30 AM	NLCC: Rules, Issues and Insights - Hobie Rupe & Mark Davis Jr.
11:30 AM - 12:00 PM	NGWB Update - Mike Schilling
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch & NGWB Sustainability Project Workbook Presentation - Vaughn Hammond
1:00 - 2:00 PM	How to Increase the Value of Your Brand with Strategic Packaging Design - Rebecca Ritz
2:00 - 3:00 PM	Evaluating Filtration Methods and Their Impact on Wine Quality - John Murman & Jack Krejci
3:00 - 4:00 PM	Uncorking Your Potential: Social Media & AI Marketing Strategies for Wineries - Rebecca Ritz

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Monday, February 24, 2025

8:00 AM

Regenerative Grape Farming Practices - Derrick Vogel

Discover actionable strategies for incorporating regenerative practices into grapevine cultivation. This session will explore the potential benefits of regenerative growing techniques, including enhanced soil health, improved vine resilience, and increased sustainability. Participants will also gain insight into the challenges associated with implementing regenerative practices, such as cost, labor, and adaptation to specific vineyard conditions. Join us to learn how to balance ecological stewardship with the demands of commercial grape production.



Derrick Vogel

Grape Grower & Co-Owner Folklor Wine & Cider

Derrick is a dedicated viticulturist, Northern Michigan enthusiast, and dry Riesling devotee. Derrick grew up milking cows and driving tractors on his family's dairy farm in the Thumb of Michigan. Derrick holds a Bachelor's in Laboratory Science and a Master's in Health Administration and spent a decade in the healthcare field before pursuing a career in viticulture. He is a graduate of the Viticulture & Enology, Science & Technology Alliance (VESTA) Program and a Journeyman Winemaker. He has worked as the vineyard manager and assistant winemaker at Petoskey Farms Vineyard & Winery since 2018. In 2019, he co-founded Phenology Vine Care, a vineyard management and consulting company serving private and commercially-owned vineyards in Michigan's Tip of the Mitt AVA. In 2021, he and Izabela Babinska purchased farmland and planted their first vines for Folklor Wine & Cider in Charlevoix, MI. Folklor follows a "vineyard first" philosophy, investing in soil health and the whole-farm ecosystem, influencing their viticulture, winemaking, tasting offerings, and business practices. Derrick is passionate about wine from all over the world but is especially drawn to wines grown and produced in Michigan.

9:00 AM

AVA Registration: Benefits & Considerations - Dr. Gina Montalbano Zesiger & Bryan Zesiger

The establishment of the KAW Valley American Viticultural Area (AVA) in 2024 marks a significant milestone for Kansas wine producers, showcasing the region's unique terroir and enhancing its visibility in the national wine industry. But what does AVA registration truly entail, and how can it benefit growers and wineries?

This session will delve into the process of AVA designation, using the recent KAW Valley AVA as a case study. Attendees will learn about the requirements for AVA registration, the steps involved, and the potential benefits, such as increased marketability, consumer recognition, and protection of regional wine identity.

Our speakers will also discuss the challenges and responsibilities that come with an AVA designation, including maintaining quality standards and leveraging the designation for marketing and branding. This session is ideal for winery owners, vineyard managers, and anyone considering an AVA application for their region.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Dr. Gina Montalbano Zesiger

Co-Owner of Z&M Twisted Vines & President of Kansas Viticulture & Farm Winery Association (KVFWA)

Dr. Gina Montalbano Zesiger is a distinguished educator, agricultural advocate, and entrepreneur. She holds a Doctorate in Education and has dedicated much of her career to leadership in education, serving as a principal and educator before transitioning to the world of viticulture. As the current president of the Kansas Viticulture and Enology Association, Gina is a passionate advocate for the growth of the wine and grape industry in Kansas and beyond. Together with her husband, she co-owns Z&M Twisted Vines Winery & Vineyard, where they produce over 50 unique wines and hard ciders, blending traditional techniques with innovative flavors. Dr. Montalbano's expertise extends to agricultural tourism, policy development, and collaborative leadership, serving on multiple agricultural boards to support specialty crop growers and small farm wineries. Her unique ability to combine education, advocacy, and entrepreneurship has positioned her as a thought leader in the wine industry. Dr. Montalbano brings a wealth of knowledge about the challenges and opportunities facing emerging wine regions and is dedicated to empowering fellow growers and winemakers to thrive in today's market.

Bryan Zesiger

Co-Owner of Z&M Twisted Vines

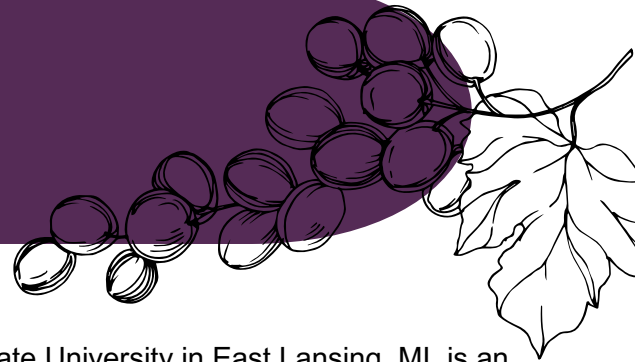
Bryan Zesiger is a retired U.S. Army Major, Apache helicopter pilot, and decorated combat veteran with 26 years of distinguished military service. Since transitioning from the military, Bryan has channeled his leadership skills and passion for innovation into agriculture, co-founding Z&M Twisted Vines Winery & Vineyard. He has played a pivotal role in shaping the agricultural tourism industry in Kansas, contributing to the development and passage of key legislation, including Senate Bill 410, which supports agritourism and specialty crop growers. Bryan is a member of the national committee for the American Farm Bureau on Environmental and Natural Resources and serves on multiple agricultural boards, advocating for policies that protect and promote small farms. His commitment to agritourism and specialty crops has earned him recognition across the region as a champion for family farms. Combining his military discipline and business acumen, Bryan brings a unique perspective to the wine industry, blending storytelling, innovation, and a commitment to excellence.

10:00 AM

Organic Controls: Essential Oils & Biopesticides in Disease Management - Dr. Timothy Miles

This presentation will explore the potential of organic disease management options for grape production east of the Rocky Mountains, focusing on major diseases like powdery mildew, downy mildew, black rot, and Botrytis bunch rot. We will review current management practices, emphasizing the role of softer chemical approaches, including essential oils, salts, acids, and biologically based pesticides such as Bacillus-based products. Through trial data, we will demonstrate how diseases like powdery and downy mildew can be effectively managed using these tools; while highlighting the challenges in controlling black rot and Botrytis. Application timing and its critical role in maximizing efficacy and minimizing risks will be a focal point, along with practical considerations for reducing phytotoxicity. This session is designed to provide grape growers with actionable insights into integrating these products into a broader disease management strategy while balancing efficacy and crop safety.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Dr. Timothy Miles

Associate Professor, Michigan State University

Timothy D. Miles, a plant pathologist at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI, is an associate professor in the Department of Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences at MSU. His extension and research interests include mycology, genomics, population genetics, pathogen detection, molecular diagnostics, and host resistance. These areas of expertise are applied to solving disease management issues in grapes and other specialty crops.

11:00 AM

Using Canopy Management & harvest Dates to Promote Wine Aromas and Flavors for La Crescent and Frontenac Blanc - Erin Norton

Viticultural tools can be used to maximize aromas and flavors in wine. In this session, Erin will show findings from work done with La Crescent and Frontenac Blanc to enhance wine aromas and flavors. Treatments for this experiment included canopies that were manipulated with either minimal, moderate, or intensive amounts of work and three harvest dates, each separated by a week. This led to nine sets of harvested fruit and wine being made. With these results, we hope to show growers the effect of practical viticulture on wine quality. Aroma evaluation of wines.



Erin Norton

Director, Midwest Grape & Wine Industry Institute

Erin Norton joined the Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute in December 2015 and became its Director in March 2024. With a background in chemistry, Erin's career path led to studies in viticulture and enology. Before coming to Iowa, she gained extensive experience working seven harvest seasons around the world. In 2022, Erin completed her PhD in Food Science at Iowa State University. At the MGWII, she oversees all research and outreach activities, driving innovation and collaboration in the grape and wine industry.

12:00 PM

Lunch & UNL Viticulture Program Updates - Dr. Paul Read

Dr. Read will provide an update on the University of Nebraska's viticulture program and projects.



Dr. Paul Read

Professor, University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Dr. Paul Read, Professor of Horticulture and Viticulture at the University of Nebraska, has been with the university since 1987, including a decade as department head. He holds degrees from Cornell University (B.S., M.S.) and a Ph.D. from the University of Delaware. Before Nebraska, he was a faculty member at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Read's research focuses on tissue culture for horticultural crop improvement and vineyard management, supporting Nebraska's grape and wine industry. He has served as President of the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS) and is a Founding Member of both the Plant Growth Regulator Society of America and the American Chestnut Foundation.

An ASHS Fellow and Outstanding Graduate Educator, Dr. Read has consulted and led study programs in countries including South Africa, Brazil, and India. He also serves as editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Fruit Science.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



1:00 PM

Annual Business Meeting

3:00 PM

**State of the Industry & Industry Priorities Roundtable -
NWGGA Board of Directors**

Join the NWGGA Board for a State of the Industry & Industry Priorities Roundtable. In this interactive session, members of the Nebraska Wine & Grape industry will have the opportunity to discuss the current state of the industry and identify key priorities to focus on for the upcoming grant cycles. This roundtable provides a platform for open dialogue and collaboration to shape the future of the industry.

4:30 PM

**After Hours Roundtable & Reception: Industry Wine Exchange -
Sara Wiebold & Mark Gudgel**

Join your fellow industry professionals for an exclusive after-hours roundtable and reception, a collaborative wine-tasting experience designed to foster connection, education, and inspiration within the Nebraska wine community. This session invites attendees to bring a bottle of wine to share, showcasing a diverse selection of wines in an interactive group setting.

Guided by Certified Sommelier Sara Wiebold and Mark Gudgel, President of vinNebraska, this unique session offers an opportunity to delve into the art and science of wine tasting, with tailored insights for wine professionals. Nebraska winemakers will also be on hand to share their expertise and discuss the innovations and challenges shaping the industry.

This relaxed, yet focused environment is the perfect setting to exchange ideas, explore trends, and build meaningful relationships with peers—all while tasting some of the finest wines Nebraska has to offer.

Please note: Attendees are encouraged to bring a bottle of wine to contribute to the tasting experience.



Sara Wiebold

Certified Sommelier, Apple House Market

Sara Wiebold has been a Certified Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers since 2017 and is currently the Certified Sommelier at Apple House Market, where she shares her extensive wine knowledge with customers, curating a diverse and high-quality selection. With a deep passion for wine, Sara offers expert advice and personalized recommendations to enhance the wine experience for enthusiasts of all levels. Her commitment to education and customer service is complemented by a deep understanding of the industry, gained through formal training and hands-on experience. Sara is dedicated to helping others explore and appreciate the world of wine, while also supporting local producers. Sara is also a member of the NWGGA Education Committee.

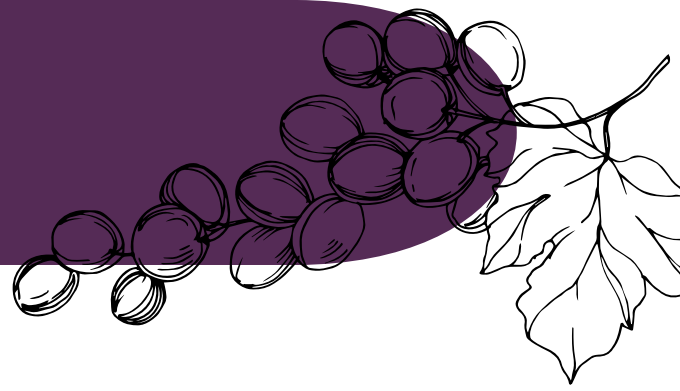


Mark Gudgel

President of vinNebraska

Mark Gudgel serves as the President of vinNebraska, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting wine education, appreciation, and philanthropy. Under his leadership, vinNebraska continues its mission to celebrate fine wine while supporting charitable causes through events and partnerships. Gudgel is an advocate for sustainable viticulture, a passionate educator, and an experienced writer with a focus on wine and travel. He frequently collaborates with industry professionals to elevate Nebraska's wine culture and foster community engagement.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Tuesday, February 25, 2025

8:00 AM

Nebraska Wine Quality Assessment Results - Denise Gardner

Denise Gardner will give her final presentation on the Wine Quality Assessment Project that NWGGA began in 2020 and concluded in 2024. Denise will reveal the top production gaps that were found through the Wine Quality Assessment Project and outline practical ways industry members can address any of the gaps they may have in their own facilities. Denise's approach to the conclusion of this project covers fundamental winemaking production practices that are essential for every winery.



Denise Gardner

Denise Gardner Winemaking

Denise Gardner, wine consultant and founder of Denise Gardner Winemaking (DG Winemaking, <https://dgwinemaking.com/>) has been integrated in the grape and wine industries for over 20 years with a background in wine production improvement, sensory evaluation, and research. Denise holds a M.S. in Food Science and Technology from Virginia Tech University, and has completed two industry accreditations (the Certified Specialist of Wine, CSW, from the Society of Wine Educators and the Level 3 certification from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust, WSET). Having worked in both industry and academia, Denise provides a unique perspective and experience few hold in the wine industry.

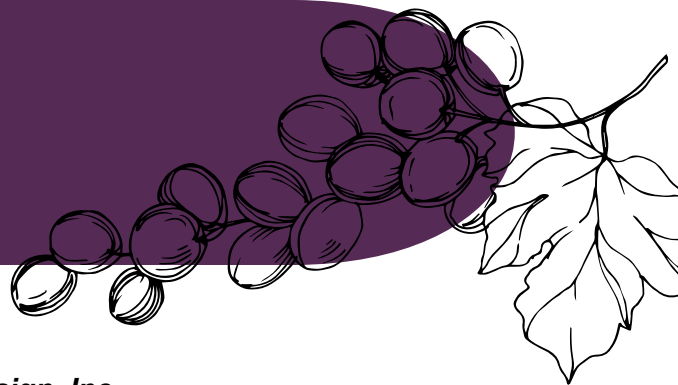
Today, DG Winemaking delivers focused consulting and educational services that improve wine production efficiency, quality, and marketability for wineries of all sizes. Denise's consulting services continue to address common winemaker needs and connect people to build community within a vast, growing industry. By assisting wineries with fermentation and production plans to optimize quality from grapes to package, providing effective wine processing decisions, assisting with compliance, and creating wines with intention to enhance quality, Denise's clients have improved recognition among peers, competitions, consumers, and wine reviewers. You can learn more from Denise by subscribing to her Winemakers' Blog newsletter, following her on Instagram (@dgwinemaking), or listening to her podcast "Voices of the Vine" available through most podcast platforms.

9:00 AM

Unleash the Power of Wine Clubs: Attract, Engage & Grow Your Winery - Rebecca Ritz

Tired of one-time sales? Build lasting customer relationships and boost your winery's success with the power of wine clubs. Learn how to attract and retain loyal members, increase revenue, and leverage the best wine club platforms. Gain valuable insights from real-world success stories and discover proven strategies to transform your winery into a thriving hub of community and engagement.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Rebecca Ritz

Founder & Creative Director, Bauerhaus Design, Inc.

Rebecca Ritz, a leading voice in wine marketing and branding, combined her passions for design and wine to create Bauerhaus Design. For over 15 years, she has helped wineries craft unforgettable brands that stand out from the crowd.

Rebecca specializes in translating a winery's unique story into impactful design across all platforms, from elegant packaging to engaging websites. She empowers winery owners and marketing teams with actionable digital marketing strategies to increase sales and build lasting connections with their customers.

Her free 7-week email course, "Sell More Wine," has guided hundreds of wineries in leveraging branding and digital marketing for success. When not sharing her expertise on stage, Rebecca partners with wineries and wine associations across the country to bring their brand visions to life with strategy and heart.

10:00 AM

***Acidity in Wines Made from Cold-hardy Cultivars. Tools to Adjust the Acidity and Maintain Wine Quality.* - Erin Norton**

Cold-hardy cultivars can present a challenge to winemakers due to their high acidity. There are several tools to manage this, starting in the vineyard and in the winery. Erin will explore these tools and suggest some analytical ways to stay on top of your acidity to produce high-quality wines.



Erin Norton

Director, Midwest Grape & Wine Industry Institute

Erin Norton joined the Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute in December 2015 and became its Director in March 2024. With a background in chemistry, Erin's career path led to studies in viticulture and enology. Before coming to Iowa, she gained extensive experience working seven harvest seasons around the world. In 2022, Erin completed her PhD in Food Science at Iowa State University. At the MGWII, she oversees all research and outreach activities, driving innovation and collaboration in the grape and wine industry.

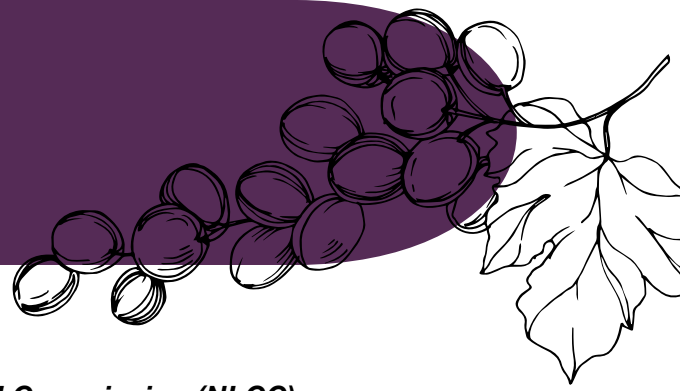
11:00 AM

Nebraska Liquor Control Commission: Rules, Issues and Insights - Hobert Rupe, LeAnna Prange & Mark Davis Jr.

Gain valuable knowledge and insights from the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (NLCC) in this informative 30-minute session tailored for winery owners and industry professionals. Explore the latest regulations, licensing requirements, and compliance standards affecting Nebraska's wine industry while getting a refresher on the basics.

With a focus on addressing common challenges and answering your pressing questions, this session offers an opportunity to engage directly with representatives from the NLCC and gain actionable guidance to ensure your business thrives within regulatory boundaries. Don't miss this chance to stay informed, mitigate risks, and elevate your understanding of Nebraska's evolving liquor landscape.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Hobert Rupe

Executive Director, Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (NLCC)

Hobie Rupe was appointed Executive Director by the Commission in December 2003 and began his duties on January 15, 2004.

Prior to serving as Executive Director he was an Assistant Attorney General for the State from May 1994 until January 2004. As an Assistant Attorney General he served as legal counsel/administrative prosecutor from September 2001 until January 2004.

He is admitted to practice before the Nebraska Supreme Court, The Federal District Court for Nebraska, The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals and The United States Supreme Court.

He is a 1992 graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law and a 1989 graduate of Northwest Missouri State University with a Bachelor of Science in History and Government.



Mark Davis Jr.

Financial Compliance Analyst, Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (NLCC)

Mark Davis Jr. is the Fiscal Compliance Analyst at the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (NLCC). Mark has been an auditor with the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission since 2018.

11:30 AM

NGWB Update - Mike Schilling

Mike Schilling will give an update on the Nebraska Grape & Winery Board's current projects.



Mike Schilling

Retired, SchillingBridge Winery & Microbrewery & NGWB Member

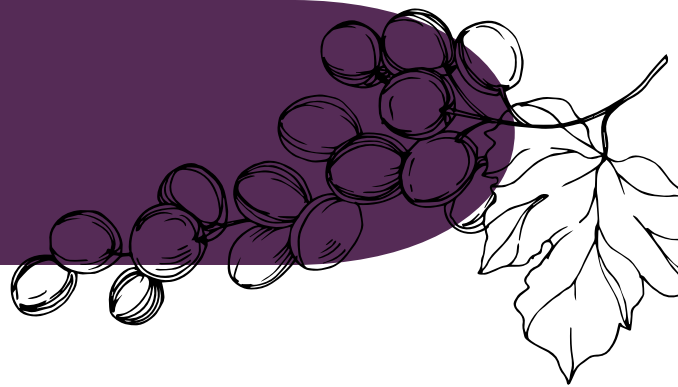
Mike Schilling is the previous co-owner of SchillingBridge Winery & Microbrewery and the current Vice-Chairman of the Nebraska Grape & Winery Board.

12:00 PM

Lunch & NGWB Sustainability Project Workbook Presentation - Vaughn Hammond

Vaughn Hammond will discuss the NGWB Sustainability Project Workbook.

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Vaughn Hammond ***Semi-retired Horticulturist/Orchardist***

Vaughn Hammond has been a lifelong horticulturist. His passion is local foods and their potential impact on local and individual economies. His early career out of college started on Long Island, managing a one-acre hydroponic salad greenhouse and 20 acres of specialty vegetable crops. Upon returning to Nebraska, he became a viticulture research technician with the University of Nebraska and transitioned to an Extension Educator focusing on specialty crops. During his UNL career, he also had a joint appointment with the Department of Interior as an Agriculture Advisor in Afghanistan, working with farmers producing fruit and vegetable crops. He left the University system for private industry, managing orchards in the Nebraska City area, and was the Agriculture Manager for Vala's Pumpkin Patch and Apple Orchard. His retirement project is again growing lettuce in water for Nebraska Vegetable and Protein located in Nebraska City.

1:00 PM

How to Increase the Value of Your Brand with Strategic Packaging Design - Rebecca Ritz

Are your wine labels competing with the big brands? This session will explore why strategic packaging design is so important in building a strong wine brand. We will dive into elements that increase your perceived value and how consumers select labels. Plus, we will share examples of successful packages and how to elevate your brand's value.

2:00 PM

Evaluating Filtration Methods and Their Impact on Wine Quality - John Murman & Jack Krejci

Understanding and implementing effective filtration methods is crucial for producing high-quality wine. This session will guide Nebraska winemakers through an objective evaluation of both new and popular filtration techniques. By collecting data at critical points and deconstructing processes to identify where external factors may influence quality, participants will gain valuable insights into the current standards of their wines.

Additionally, this session will explore how these findings can benefit growing wineries, providing guidance on investments in scalable, effective methods to enhance product quality and meet industry demands. Join us to learn how the Nebraska wine industry can adapt and evolve for greater success.



John Murman ***Co-owner, Glacial Till Vineyard***

John Murman is a co-owner of Glacial Till Vineyard and Winery, where he oversees all aspects of wine and cider production. A graduate of the University of South Dakota with a degree in Business Management, John was also a member of the university's National Swim Team. Following the founding of Glacial Till by his family, John pursued his passion for winemaking by earning a Winemaker's Certificate from UC Davis. Committed to excellence, John continuously tests and implements innovative procedures to produce the highest quality products. His dedication to craftsmanship and innovation drives the success of Glacial Till's offerings.

