



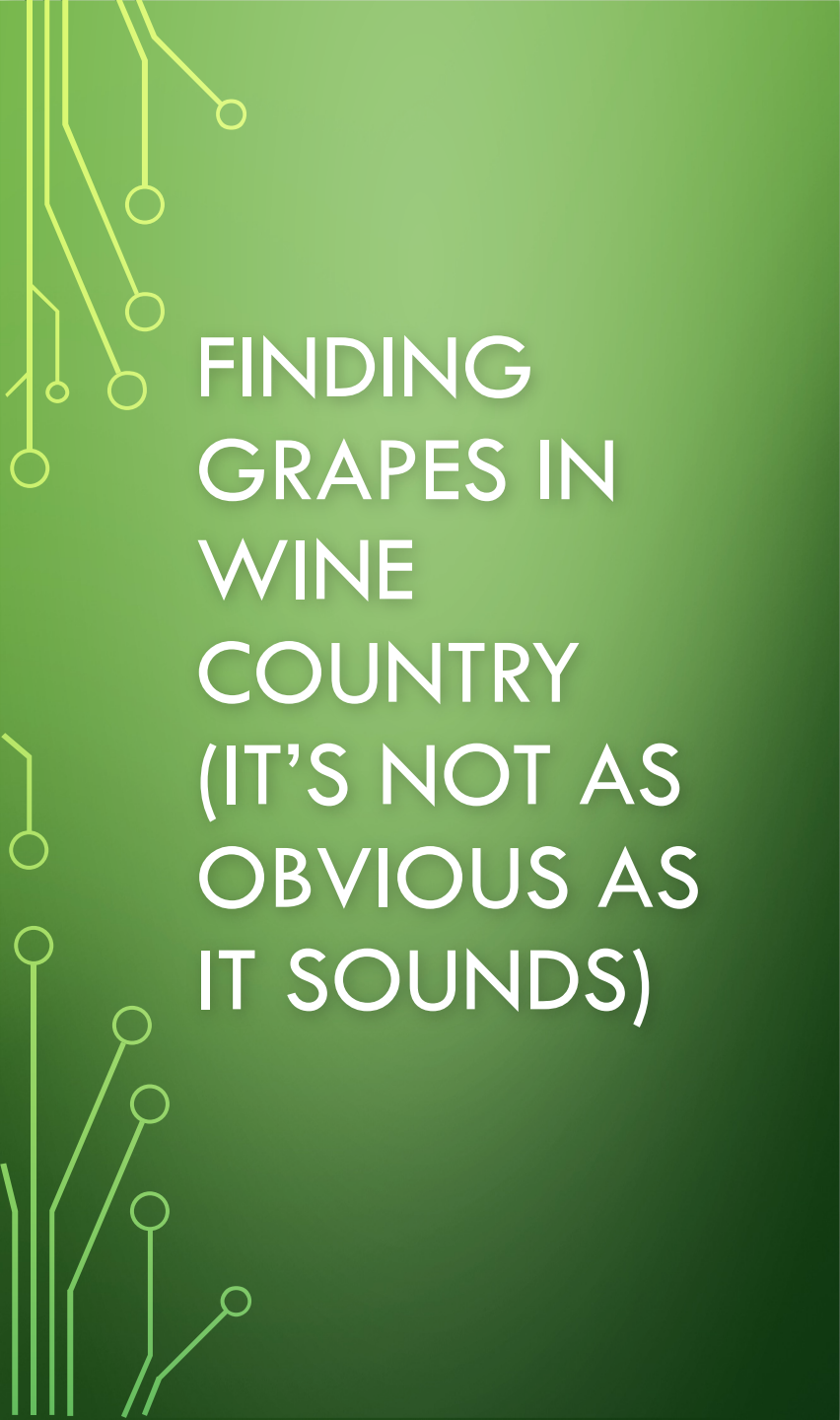
BOB PEAK
WINEMAKER
MAGAZINE
CONFERENCE
MAY 31, 2022

FINDING AND BUYING THE BEST GRAPES



TODAY'S TOPICS

- Find some grapes
- Get them home
- Determine what you got to decide what to do
- Examples from my experience



FINDING
GRAPES IN
WINE
COUNTRY
(IT'S NOT AS
OBVIOUS AS
IT SOUNDS)

Your local home winemaking supply store

Wine making clubs

Friends who make wine—including in groups

Online classified ads

Print classified ads (!)

Your favorite winery

MY LOCAL HOME WINEMAKING SHOP

- The Beverage People
- Now list online; used to maintain a binder in the store
- Growers list grapes for sale
- Start in July and August
- Variety, quantity, price per pound, picking conditions



TYPICAL GROWER'S LISTING (OR QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK)

Grape Varietal(s) Available:

Listing Date:

Pricing:

Estimated Pick Date:

Min/Max:

Who picks?

Age of vines:

Rootstock:

Clone:

Location:

Contact info:

EXAMPLE: LOCAL GROWER'S SAUVIGNON BLANC

- Ed Johnson Listed Grenache, Grenache Blanc, and Sauvignon Blanc in Potter Valley
- I bought Grenache a few years ago
- For harvest 2019 I bought Sauvignon Blanc
- Dealings were by phone
- Drove an hour and a half at 6:00 AM
- Ed's crew did the picking
- Gave him a check and drove off



EXAMPLES OF LOCAL WINEMAKING CLUB OFFERINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Genco

Garage Enologists of North County

Based in Healdsburg, CA

Winemaking competition

Group run by an experienced home winemaker

A group picks grapes and makes wine from his vineyard

Learn as you do it, and take wine home at the end

SHW

Sonoma Home Winemakers

Located in Sonoma Valley, CA

Have several team projects

Announce availability of grapes at summer/fall monthly meetings

Most unusual: maintain and harvest a one-acre City of Sonoma-owned vineyard

Sacramento Home Winemakers

Located in Sacramento

A large club—meeting of close to 100 people

Winemaking Workshops

Group crush activities

Winemaking competition

Tastings

Tours

Field trips



FRIENDS WHO MAKE WINE

- They love to share their wine
- They get their grapes somewhere
 - May grow grapes
 - May purchase
- A work-related group can help coordinate schedules and labor
- Ask if you can join in



WORK GROUP EXAMPLE

- Staff members at The Beverage People
- Bought a half-ton of local Pinot Gris
- Pitchforked our portion into smaller bins
- Three parts processed at my house
- Crushed as on previous slide
- Pressed
- Took home juice in PET carboys

Wineindustry.com classifieds



Zinfandel and Syrah /Mendocino County's most prized grapes

Grapes

•

Vintage
2001

Varietal
Zinfandel

Appellations (AVA) - CA, OR and WA
Mendocino AVA

Farming Practices
Farmed Sustainably

Quantity
18

Price

CLASSIFIED ADS



USING CLASSIFIED ADS

- Start looking early—late spring to midsummer
- Use more than one source
 - Mostly online
 - Some print ads in wine country
- Mostly deal in half-ton or ton quantities
- Need to arrange your transportation
- Be ready when notified of harvest



ASK YOUR FAVORITE WINERY

- Horse and Plow in Sebastopol, CA
- Do they grow?
- Do they sell grapes?
- Where do they purchase grapes?
- Can they refer?
- Will they order extra and sell some to you?



ASSURING QUALITY: NEAR THE VINEYARD

- Ask if you can visit during the growing season
- Find out what commercial wineries use those grapes
 - Visit
 - Do some tasting
- Ask if you can come get a sample of grapes close to harvest
 - Taste
 - Test Brix, pH, TA
- Be present for harvest if possible

ASSURING QUALITY: FAR FROM VINEYARD

- Specialized grape distributor
- Christina Musto Quick from Musto Wine Grape Company
 - I bought some Chilean Carmenera for a previous conference
 - Also bought Primitivo and Riesling to make at home
 - Clean, high-quality fruit packed in plastic crates
 - A similar company near you



MORE SOURCES FOR GRAPES

Produce wholesalers

For a conference in San Diego

Recommended by Gi Classen of Curds and Wine

Made arrangements by phone in advance

Went to the warehouse

Paid for and picked up my refrigerated crates

Farm Stands

Some also distribute locally

Apples for cider: Granny Smith, Pink Lady, Fuji

Ordered from the wholesale contact by phone

They delivered to The Beverage People the day before my class

Supermarket

It can be done!

They order from produce wholesalers all the time

Talk to the produce manager

Order a week or two before you want them

Some table grapes are vinifera and make decent wine

Friends in Wine Country

Do they have a vineyard?

Will they sell some grapes?

Can they do some searching locally for you (offer to buy them a tasting if a winery interests you)

Possibly do the other checking described earlier

Maybe receive the grapes at their home

Road Trip!

In May or June

Hit the road, visit wineries

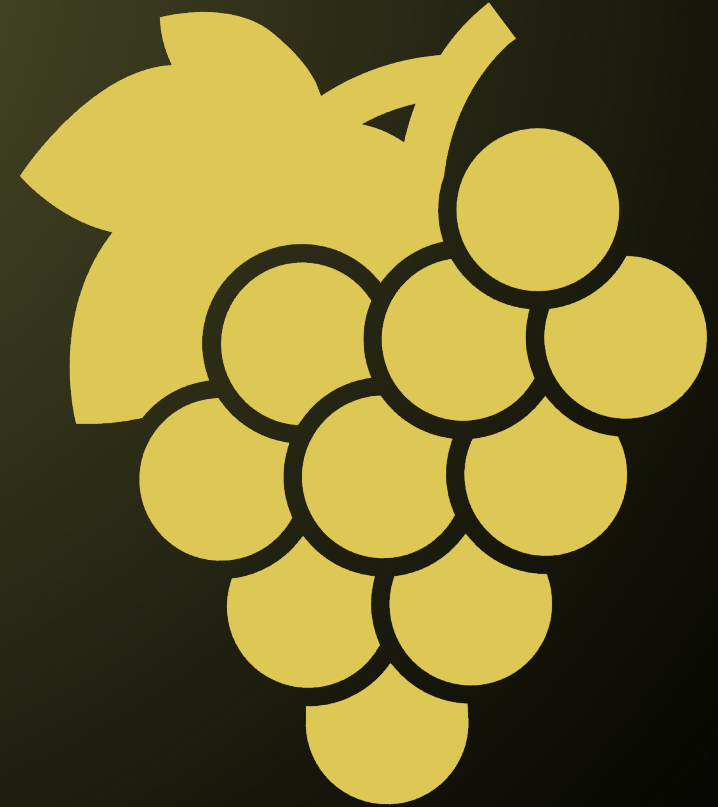
Look around while there for distributors

Ask about sources as you go wine tasting

FINAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FAR AWAY GRAPES

WHAT GRAPES DO YOU WANT?

- Use a “filter” model
 - Where will you look for grapes?
 - What varieties interest you?
 - Which of those might be available
 - Who can you get them from



HOW TO JUDGE



- Regional reputation of the grower
- Harvest Specifications they may provide: Brix, pH, TA
- A brand name of winery, grower, or distributor that is known and trusted
- Your own assessment if you can

WALK THE VINEYARD IF YOU CAN



- Visit on harvest day the year before you want to buy grapes
- Walk again in the spring to observe pruning quality
- Visit in summer to assess vine health
- Help pick if allowed

GET THE GRAPES HOME

- Keep cool: AC, gel packs, frozen jugs of water
- Sort as you pick if possible
- Sort at home if not
- Eliminate mold and rot
- Measure Brix, pH, TA
- Keep fruit as cool as you can
- Any questions?

