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SONOMA COUNTY SHOWCASE DRAWS RAVE REVIEWS

Two-Day Taste of Sonoma County Highlights Wine Country's Premier Wine & Food Event

July 18, 2007 – Santa Rosa, CA: The Sonoma County Showcase Weekend of Wine & Food came to a successful conclusion Sunday, with more than 3,000 people enjoying four days of wine and food from 110 wineries and 75 chefs. Now in its 28th year, the 2007 Showcase debuted the Sonoma Family Style Benefit and Gala and added a well-attended second day to its signature event, Taste of Sonoma.

“Taste of Sonoma County highlights how much our region has to offer – wine, food, community, and overall wine country experience – that extending the event to two days gave attendees a full opportunity to experience our diversity and quality,” commented Phil Bilodeau, Sonoma County Vintners Director of Communications. More than 1,200 people attended Saturday, while Sunday drew 1,000 attendees. Both wineries and attendees commented that expanding Taste to a full weekend gave them more chance to interact with each other and created a relaxed, idyllic wine country atmosphere.

The two-day event at MacMurray Ranch in the Russian River Valley featured more than 100 wineries and 60 chefs and purveyors sampling their wares, along with a Bubble Lounge, standing-room-only wine seminars and cooking demonstrations, and a grower pavilion. Sunday's Sonoma Steel Competition was one of the highlights of Taste of Sonoma, with Jeff Mall of Zin Restaurant and Wine Bar emerging victorious over Janine Falvo of Carneros Bistro, Jeffrey Madura of John Ash & Co., and Jack Mitchell of Sassafras Restaurant in a battle of top Sonoma County chefs.

Prior to Taste of Sonoma County, Sonoma Family Style kicked off the weekend on Friday, July 13 at Kendall Jackson Wine Center. This new event, co-hosted by *Wine Spectator*, is destined to become an annual tradition, with the recipes from six winemaking families adapted by top Sonoma County chefs. Five hundred people attended the sold-out event and more than 50 Sonoma County wineries hosted tables, making it a true community and family affair. Sonoma Family Style also featured a Big Bottle Bid silent auction, which combined with a five-item live auction raised \$75,000 for the Redwood Empire Food Bank, Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation, and local Boys & Girls Clubs. John Hinman of Hinman & Carmichael LLP was the evening's top bidder, including the high bid of the evening for a lot that included a top-of-the-line Weber steel grill and a two-night stay for 10 at Sebastiani Vineyards' luxurious Casa de Sonoma.

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The Sonoma County Showcase Weekend of Wine & Food also featured winery lunches and dinners, with 25 wineries opening their doors to host intimate meals paired with their wines. Highlights included the Gary Farrell 25th Anniversary dinner at Dry Creek Kitchen with winery founder Gary Farrell and current winemaker Susan Reed, and a Rodney Strong Vineyards lunch at the private home of owner Tom Klein with the meal prepared by Chef Douglas Keane of Cyrus Restaurant.

In the Vineyard Experience brought the grapegrowing perspective to Showcase, with more than 70 people attending a Friday morning vineyard demonstration and comparative tasting at Barrelli Creek Vineyards. Winemakers Scott Kozel of Gallo Family Vineyards, Tom Mackey of St. Francis Winery & Vineyard, Mike Brunson of Michel-Schlumberger, Patrick Campbell of Laurel Glen, and Marcia Monahan of Pelton House led a captivated audience through a tasting examining Cabernet Sauvignon across the various appellations of Sonoma County.

The 2007 Sonoma County Showcase Weekend of Wine & Food was presented by Visa Signature, whose cardholders received exclusive benefits throughout the event. Premier sponsors of Showcase were Southern Wine & Spirits of California and Land Rover. Major sponsors are Acqua Panna, San Pellegrino, Macy's, the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission, and Caliber WinePak. National media partners are Gourmet, Wine Spectator, The Wall Street Journal, epicurious.com, and winecountry.com. Vintner sponsors were Gallo Family Vineyards, MacMurray Ranch, Matanzas Creek Winery, Rodney Strong Vineyards, and Stonestreet Alexander Mountain Estate. Supporting sponsors were American Ag Credit, Weber, Silicon Valley Bank, KJZY, KZST, KRSH, BOB-FM, Napa / Sonoma, the American Lamb Board, Tommy Bahama, Mikasa, Pure Luxury, and the Sonoma County Tourism Bureau.

The event was produced by Sonoma County Vintners, the leading voice of Sonoma County wine, dedicated to increasing awareness and improving the quality image of its wines to consumers, media, and trade locally and globally. With almost 65,000 vineyard acres planted among the county's 13 American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), Sonoma County is considered one of the world's premier winegrowing regions, producing an unparalleled range of varietals and wine styles. SCV has promoted this diversity and quality since 1944, and currently represents more than 150 member wineries. For more information on the wines and wineries of Sonoma County, visit www.sonomawine.com.

To request high-resolution photos of the Sonoma County Showcase Weekend of Wine & Food, contact Phil Bilodeau at 707.522.5849 or phil@sonomawine.com.

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