



Best of Florida

Dakotah Winery's Carlos awarded Double Gold

It is very heartening to see a Florida wine gain world class status. This year's honor goes to **Dakotah Winery's** Carlos wine.

The road to the final judging began on Thursday February 8th at the Florida State Fair International Wine Competition. For 2 days the field of 24 judges began sampling 1575 wines.

On Saturday, the best of the best were judged to determine the BEST of SHOW wines. Only wines that receive the designation of Double Gold are included in this runoff. To receive the Double Gold status a panel of three judges must unanimously agree that a wine is a Gold medal winner. Although Dakotah's Carlos did not become Best of Show, it still was an auspicious honor to be in the running. Only 7 white wines were in this privileged class.

Congratulations to Dakotah's winemaker Rob Rittgers for his outstanding creation. Keep up the good work.

As an added feature to this year's Commercial Competition, the Taster's Guild a nationwide Society of wine and food enthusiasts (see write up on page 2), provided a trophy for the best Florida wine. A large wine glass trophy with the inscription "Best of Florida" was presented to Dakotah Winery.

The other outstanding Florida Wines which received the designation Best of Florida were **Keel and Curley Winery**—NV Blueberry / Semi-Dry in the red wine class, **Florida Orange Groves**—Mango Mama Sparkling Mango Wine in the sparkling wine class and **San Sabastian Winery**—Cream Sherry in the dessert wine class.



Dakotah's Carlos shown with Best of Show Ribbon and Tasters Guild trophy and plaque.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message	2
Tasters Guild	2
Florida State Fair International Wine Competi-	3
Hobbyist Wine Competi-	4
tion	
FGGA Conference & Meeting	5

MARK YOUR CALENDER

- **Wine Festival & Market**
Saturday March 10 &
Saturday March 24
10:00AM to 3:00PM
Florida Estates Winery
- **6th Annual Fine Art & Jazz Show**
Saturday March 10th
10:00AM—5:00PM
Sunday March 11th 10:00AM—
5:00PM Free Admission
Lakeridge Winery



Presidents Message

(The Gavel was Finally Passed)

I would like to use this first message to express some views and to ask for everyone's help and support during my term as President of the FGGA.

The conference held in January was a great success and a big hand of appreciation goes to Frank and Carol Ascolillo who chaired and planned the event. It was a job well done. There were many sessions on grapes-- from growing them to making wine from them commercially or as an amateur. However, the session that I felt was most interesting was the comparison of muscadine wines versus vinifera wines through a blind tasting. The examples used this year were a better comparison than last year by using Carlos versus Riesling and Noble versus Pinot Noir. There were several people that could not tell the difference between the wines.

I would like to challenge the members and the Board of the FGGA with two goals during my term as President. The first goal is to increase the membership of the FGGA by 10%. My second goal is to increase the acreage of grapes by 20%. I feel that both these goals are realistic and can be accomplished. I feel that there is strength in numbers (membership) and the increase in acreage will allow more wineries to make wine from Florida grapes that at the present time may not be able to obtain them due to a shortage of acreage.

I am still astonished at the amount of people that live in this state that are not aware of

the viticulture being done here. When you mention Florida wines, most people do not realize that we really can grow grapes in Florida and make wine from them.

I would like to thank Bob Paulish for his outstanding efforts and direction as the President of the FGGA for the past six years, and I think I speak for every member when I say a job well done. And, Bob, have a most enjoyable R & R.

Donnie R. Nettles
FGGA President

What is the Tasters Guild?

Following is an excerpt from the Tasters Guild website

Established in 1987, TASTERS GUILD consists of over 40 active chapters throughout the country that bring together consumers, wine, food and the wine and food service industries. The local chapters provide activity and ongoing wine and food events for their members and guests. In support of these local Chapters, there is an extensive network of retail wine and specialty food shops, superior restaurants, top-rated hotels, premium wineries, knowledgeable wholesalers and top international importers to provide easy access to quality wines and food often with special discounts for members. A detailed listing of all the retail/trade affiliates, and local chapters is distributed to the entire membership by way of the Guild's Network Directory.

TASTERS GUILD conducts an Annual International Wine Judging in the spring when hundreds of newly released wines are judged by panels of experts. Toward the end of summer we also coordinate our Annual Convention & Consumer Wine Judging for members. The results of both events are reported in the Guild's official publication, the TASTERS GUILD JOURNAL, as other national periodicals

Grape Times February, 2007

EDITOR and PUBLISHER
Bob Paulish

Questions? Contact Susan Goolsby
386-329-0318 or admin@fgga.org

The Nineteenth Annual Florida State Fair International Wine and Grape Juice Competition

took place February 8 – 10, 2007. Eight three-judge panels judged over 1575 commercial wines and 175 hobbyist wines during the three day period. 33 states and 10 foreign countries were represented. California submitted 41% of the entries, followed by New York at 14%. Our judging panels are comprised of respected wine writers, wholesalers, retailers, wine educators, winemakers and restaurateurs from throughout the United States.

In the Commercial Division 39 Double Gold medals were awarded, 155 Gold, 468 Silver and 527 Bronze. The Best of Show White Wine was unanimously awarded to **Schilling Bridge Winery**, Nebraska, for their Edelweiss. Best of Show Sparkling went to **Swedish Hill Winery** of New York for their Spumante Blush. **Orfila Vineyards and Winery Estate** was awarded Best of Show Red for their Val De La Mer Estate wine, while **Casa Larga Vineyards** of New York took Best of Show Dessert with their Esta. Our competition is held each February in conjunction with the Florida State Fair.

Fairgoers are able to observe the judging process and can view all of the wine entries which are displayed in cases for the two week duration of the fair.

The competition is cosponsored by The Florida State Fair Authority and the Florida Grape Growers Association. The competition results are posted on the Florida Grape Growers' website, www.fgga.org.



Competition Judges

Left to right

Back row: Dan Baldwin, Stan Parsons, Chase Martin, Al Beck, Bob Stanley, Chris Stamp, Aaron Fodiman, Charlie Sims, Keith Mullins, Mickey Parish, Steve Alcorn
Middle row: Al Gane (flowery shirt) Betty Nettles, Jill Blume, Justin Morris, Dan Carroll Jr., Bob Bates, Marie Griffin, Rene Chazottes, Jeanne Burgess, Jim Trezise
Front row: Bonniejean Paulish (Competition Coordinator), Ann Miller, John Damian, and Mary Studt (Judges Coordinator)

Hobbyist Wines are the Best

Six wines awarded Double Gold.

There were 175 wines entered in the Florida State Fair Wine Competition Hobbyist Division. This was a 7% increase in the number of amateur entries and the quality of the wines and bottle labeling were the best ever. It is a tribute to the work of the hobbyist winemakers to produce a superior product.

Their efforts were rewarded with 27 Gold (6 Double Gold), 52 Silver and 46 Bronze medals. Of the wines entered 70% received a medal. This was an outstanding achievement.

Mike and Denise Harrell, newcomers to our competition won Amateur Best of Show White. **Donnie and Betty Nettles** were awarded Amateur Best of Show Red for their Southern Home wine while **Dee Roberson** captured Amateur Best of Show Dessert with her Orange Chocolate Port. Other Double Gold winners were **Frederick Semon Sr.** - Strawberry Surprise, **Eleanor Flood**—Petite Chenin Blanc, **Donnie & Betty Nettles**—Starfruit, and **Tim Cunningham**—Merlot.

Individual Gold medal winning totals **Tim Cunningham (4)**, **Dallas Baker (3)**, **Frederick Semon Sr. (3)** and **Donnie & Betty Nettles (3)**.

For a complete list go to www.fgga.org.



The Crew

Left to Right standing: Mary Johnson, Kathleen Hoffman (Crew Chief), Dee Roberson, Charlene Murphy, Jim Harris, Ellie Mario, Monica Mejia, Kay Kempf, Debbie Harris, Jean Weicherding, Fred Hoffman, Robbie Roberson.

Left to right kneeling: Dallas Baker, Donnie Nettles, Betty Jean Wegman, Dottie Mugavero, Joe Mugavero.

Missing: Steve Hammond, Norma Hartman, Don Johnson, Rosemarie Litchfield, Bob Paulish, Annamarie Phelps, Ray Wishmeyer.

Record Attendance at Annual Conference & Meeting

A large audience filled the meeting and dining rooms at the Hilton Hotel in Ocala to hear from the “pioneers in Viticulture”

John Mortensen, who has made significant contributions through his research that resulted in the development of many of the muscadine and bunch grape varieties we grow today, talked about his research and the history of the muscadine grape. Another outstanding professor of viticulture, Justin Morris from the University of Arkansas, presented his view of the future of muscadine. His 35 years of research makes him one of the outstanding scholars in Viticulture and Enology. As a result he was inducted in the Arkansas Horticulture Hall of Fame. Completing the pioneer trio, Bob Bates from the University of Florida gave a humorous presentation of Florida grape growers of the past.



Members and guests enjoying dinner with Florida wines.

The second annual wine tasting challenge “Vin versus Muscadine” was held. This is a popular event for it pits the popular vinifera wines against our muscadine wines. The results are always interesting, especially when the audience attempts to guess the grape varieties presented in the blind tasting.

No conference is complete without presentations from our Universities. Jiang Lu, Mehboob Sheikh, and Violeta Colova provided the current results of ongoing research at FAMU. Sue Percival, Don Hopkins, Charlie Sims, and Dennis Gray gave an update of the research being conducted at UFL.

After the FGGA Annual Meeting concluded on Thursday, everyone participated in “Taste of Florida”. Nine Florida Wineries donated wines for the tasting and dinner. This was by far the best turnout of wineries at our annual event. Many thanks to those who participated:

Walker Jr., Robert T.

WALKER, Robert Thomas Jr., 78, of Sebring passed away Wednesday, January 3, 2007, in Sebring. He was born January 22, 1928, to Robert Thomas and Lillian (Gill) Walker in Little Rock, Ark. and had been a resident of Sebring since 1991, coming from Miami Springs, Fla. He was a manufacturer of plastics and owner and operator of Sunshine Soap and Plastics in Miami, Fla. and later Walker Company, also in Miami. He was a veteran of World War II, attaining the rank of Second Mate in the U.S. Merchant Marines. A Department of Agriculture Master Gardener, Mr. Walker was one of the founding members of the Highlands Grape Grower's Association and was a hobbyist beekeeper. In addition, he was a former Chairman of the Prostate Cancer Group in Highlands County and was a guest columnist for Highlands Today and the Sebring News-Sun. He had been a deacon in the Miami Springs Presbyterian Church, was active in the Miami Hotel Association and attended First Presbyterian Church in Sebring. He is survived by his wife, Jean Walker of Sebring; daughters, Virginia Robinson of Crystal Lake, Ill., Phyllis Ann Olson of Moravian Falls, N. C., Susan Martin of Sebring and Nina Smith of Orangevale, Calif.; son, Robert Walker of Callahan, Fla.; sister, Nina Brewer of Little Rock, Ark. and 12 grandchildren. Memorial donations may be made in his memory to the American Cancer Society.

Chautauqua Vineyards
 Dakotah Winery & Vineyards
 Florida Orange Groves Winery
 Lakeridge Winery & Vineyards
 Pine Knoll Winery (Frank & Carol Ascolillo)
 Rosa Fiorelli Winery
 San Sebastian Winery
 Schnebly Redlands Winery
 SeaBreeze Winery.

Dinner followed the tasting with a talk by Jim Trezise, one of the most influential persons in the American wine industry and President of the New York Wine & Grape Foundation. He was instrumental in the development of the growth of the wine industry in New York. His talk on what we can do to grow our industry was spell-binding. It is difficult to keep FGGA members quiet during a meeting; however, there was total silence during Jim's talk. This was a most memorable Conference and Meeting.

**FLORIDA GRAPE GROWERS
ASSOCIATION**

2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Donnie Nettles, President	321-956-1894
Frank Ascolillo, Vice-President	352-249-9116
<i>Citrus/Marion County Chapter President</i>	
Vince Shook, Treasurer	
Ruthann Thropp, Secretary	386-467-2437
Robert Paulish, Past President	813-633-8692
Antonio Fiorelli	941-322-0976
<i>Manatee County Chapter President</i>	
Kellie Thropp	386-467-2177
<i>Putnam County Chapter President</i>	
Kathy Giller	863-382-4706
<i>Highlands County Chapter President</i>	
John Sirvent	386-659-2231
Salvatore Iannone	386-467-2437
Edsel Redden	386-329-0318
Bob Bates	352-392-1991
Jeanne Burgess	353-394-8627
Dennis Gray	352-324-9702
Charlie Sims	352-332-1133
Bonniejean Paulish	813-633-8692
Robert Thropp	386-467-2437

**Country Winery &
Agri-Tourism Business
for the Lifestyle Owner**

“Farm Winery” on **30 acres in Central Florida**. The location is situated central to Orlando, Palm Beach, Tampa and Fort Myers Beach .

Property has five acres of native Muscadine & Scuppernong vines in full production with land for a fifteen acre expansion.

Country Store & Tasting Room are “open air” and the Winery is housed in a fully functional redesigned Grain Bin.

Seasonal Strawberries are produced in a 30 thousand plant hydroponics garden.

This is a **turnkey opportunity** with proven sales , measurable growth and an excellent established marketing program.

For more information call Phone **863-699-2060**

**Florida Grape Growers Association, Inc
111 Yelvington Road
East Palatka, FL 32131**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED