



Fresno Madera Farm Credit

Agriculture is Our Only Business

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Want to explore the wide variety of California wines? Come to Oakland on August 21

Family Winemakers of California to host major tasting event, sponsored in part by Farm Credit

When you're a small, family-owned winery without a large advertising budget, the best way to spread the word about the quality of your wines is to have key influencers taste them. But since the 300 members of the Family Winemakers of California are located from Eureka to San Diego and many points in between, it can be difficult to get these influencers to come to you.

Which is why the trade association holds two large tastings each year, one at the Del Mar Fairgrounds in San Diego County in the spring and one in the Bay Area in the summer. This year, the Bay Area event will be held on Sunday, August 21, at BLOC15 in Jack London Square in Oakland – the first time a Bay Area tasting will be held outside of San Francisco.



A total of 52 producers who sell fewer than 5,000 cases a year will be pouring more than 350 different wines at the event, which is expected to draw about 250 people from the wine trade – retailers and writers for trade publications – and another 150 or so discerning consumers.

"We host two events to connect small producers with the wine trade they wouldn't normally have an opportunity to formulate a relationship with," said Kathy Spallas, the association's vice president of administration. "A lot of tastings are like a festival, but ours is just a wine tasting. It's about meeting the winemaker and the winery owner and allowing them to learn what they want to learn about the wines.

Farm Credit has been a sponsor of the events for many years, which Spallas said "means the world to us." Mark Littlefield, President and CEO of Farm Credit West, said Farm Credit was proud to help showcase wines from smaller producers, especially after the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

"The pandemic has been very difficult for many small producers in the wine industry, as many were selling their wines only to restaurants or relied on visitors to their tasting rooms for wine sales," Littlefield said. "These wineries are eager to get back to pouring their fabulous wines for

consumers and especially for the trade accounts that are back in business and ready to restock their wine lists.”

Farm Credit West, American AgCredit and CoBank provide funding. The organizations are part of the nationwide Farm Credit System – the largest provider of credit to U.S. agriculture.

Besides helping member companies market their wines, the association also is a strong advocate for family-owned wineries at the state Capitol. Besides the labor and regulatory issues affecting most businesses, the biggest issue affecting smaller wineries is their ability to sell directly to consumers – the main reason the association was formed in 1990.

“We’ve spent more than 30 years working to loosen up the post-Prohibition restrictions in California law and broaden access to domestic markets,” Spallas said. “We’ve pursued legislation for many years to create numerous sales channels that now allow wine to be sold at certified farmers’ markets, at fairs and festivals and through order-taking at non-profit wine tasting events.”

Julie Renner, food and wine agribusiness team lead with American AgCredit, said Farm Credit is pleased to have the opportunity to support advocacy efforts that benefit agriculture.

“The Family Winemakers of California have made significant contributions to the California wine industry since its founding, by helping to spearhead efforts that now make it easier for California wineries to sell directly to consumers in other states,” Renner said. “Organizations like the Family Winemakers are great examples of how cross-industry collaboration and partnership can advance agricultural interests.”



Spallas noted that small wineries that market directly to consumers fared better during the pandemic than their counterparts that focused on relationships with restaurants and retailers because of the decline in eating out.

Doors will open for the Oakland Tasting at noon for specially ticketed consumers and at 2 p.m. for the general consumer. The event ends at 4 p.m. Consumer tickets are on sale now <https://familywinemakers.org/taste> (click on the Consumer button) for \$55. Early admission tickets are \$75. The cost at the door will be \$60 and \$80. Orders can be placed that day for wines you like for shipment to your home, and many wineries will be offering special prices.

About Farm Credit:

American AgCredit, CoBank and Farm Credit West are cooperatively owned lending institutions providing agriculture and rural communities with a dependable source of credit. For more than 100 years, the Farm Credit System has specialized in financing farmers, ranchers, farmer-owned cooperatives, rural utilities and agribusinesses. Farm Credit offers a broad range of loan products

and financial services, including long-term real estate loans, operating lines of credit, equipment and facility loans, cash management and appraisal and leasing services...everything a "growing" business needs. For more information, visit www.farmcreditalliance.com

About the Family Winemakers of California:

Small, family-owned wine producers across the state are the foundation of Family Winemakers of California. Formed in 1990 to lobby for the rights of its members to freely produce, market and sell their products, we currently represent over 300 producers. Our legislative and regulatory work is augmented by the tastings we organize for our members to help them succeed in a highly competitive marketplace.

Family Winemakers ... Taste California!