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## **Russian River Valley Winegrowers Embark on Earlier Harvest, Smaller Yield, Yet High Quality, Rich Flavors Anticipated**

### ***Growers Weigh In on the 2014 Harvest in Premier California AVA***

**Santa Rosa, CA (September 09, 2014)** – With a watchful eye on the thermometer, dry conditions and fog levels, the expert growers in [California's Russian River Valley](#) are set to begin harvest up to two weeks earlier than usual this year. Given the region's geography and typically cooler climate due to a nightly fog layer in most areas of the AVA, harvest in the Russian River Valley is often later than its counterparts to the east. However, as California's third year of severe drought conditions continues, the country's premier Pinot Noir AVA is optimistic about the crop.

According to Rod Berglund, winegrower for [Joseph Swan Vineyards & Winery](#), located on the Laguna Ridge, near the AVA's geographical center, "The seeds seem to be ripening nicely...even the Syrah and Cabernet – which usually come in at the end of October – are tasting really nice."

Winemaker Ashley Herzberg of Bacigalupi Vineyards, located in the warmer, northwestern Middle Reach area of the valley, concurs, "The flavors this year are just great. I think the low rainfall year has stressed the grapes some, but we are mostly seeing a decent yield, and some really nice flavors."

The region has benefitted from recent snaps of cool weather, which slows down the ripening process and maintains the leaves around the grape clusters, or "fruiting zone," which help protect the grapes and regulate the pace of maturation. Jim Pratt of [Cornerstone Certified Vineyard](#) has bought back some valuable "hang time" from Mother Nature.

"The recent days of deep marine layer have slowed things down, which will probably be better for harvest timing and quality, intensifying flavors. We were on track to be a week ahead of last year (and that was earlier than normal), and now we are tracking about the same," says Pratt.

Says Herzberg, "The fog that started about three weeks ago was a blessing: it really slowed down what could have been a tremendously fast and furious harvest."

Still, most vineyards are implementing precautionary measures to ensure the longest possible time on the vines for grapes, as well as prevent any rot that may occur due to cooler, damper weather, which both Pratt and Herzberg cite as the primary concern for most vineyards. Neither

has seen any such issue thus far, as most growers proactively employ additional leafing and other preventative efforts.

“Anticipating a couple heat spikes, we left some mid-canes to flop for more shade on the fruit, which seems to leave deeper color in Pinot Noir berries,” says Wendy Fowler Nunes of [Nunes Family Vineyard](#) and St. Rose Winery, located in a more temperate neighborhood in the Russian River Valley. “We're also watching canes closely so they don't stop growing. We want just the right number of leaves to ripen each cluster by our harvest date, and we want to keep all ages of leaves on each cane.”

This year, most Russian River Valley vineyard managers are planning to begin harvesting at the beginning of September, approximately two weeks earlier than usual. The region's plantings comprise predominantly Chardonnay (42 percent of planted vineyards) and Pinot Noir (29 percent). The traditionally cooler weather in the area produces a higher acidity and more balanced flavor in many of its varietals, earning the Russian River Valley's vintages international acclaim.

### **About RRVW**

The Russian River Valley Winegrowers (RRVW) is a non-profit marketing and educational organization dedicated to maintaining the agricultural diversity of the Russian River Valley while preserving its natural resources and protecting its authentic farming heritage. As a trade association that supports grape farmers and wineries, our nearly 300 members participate in educational seminars, sponsored and consumer events, and community networking. The RRVW provides regular marketing, publicity and community relations support and is committed to promoting the Russian River Valley as the world's premier winegrowing region. For more information on the Russian River Valley or becoming a member, please email [info@rrvw.org](mailto:info@rrvw.org) or visit [www.rrvw.org](http://www.rrvw.org).