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**Twelfth Annual
RHONE RANGERS GRAND TASTING**
Sunday, March 22, 2009
Fort Mason, San Francisco

More than 100 Vintners Gather in San Francisco for the 12th Annual Rhone Rangers Tasting Of American Produced Rhone Wines

January 22, 2009 - San Francisco CA– The Rhone Rangers ride into San Francisco on March 21st and 22nd for the twelfth consecutive year and the largest American Rhone wine event in the country, the Rhone Rangers Grand Tasting at Fort Mason’s Festival Pavilion. Over 2,000 consumers and trade are expected to come for the opportunity to taste more than 500 of the best American Rhone wines from over 100 Rhone Rangers member wineries. Tickets are now on sale at www.rhonerangers.org.

In addition to the Grand Tasting, the program includes three diverse tasting seminars:

- ‘Great American Syrah from Cool Climate Pinot Country’ (Saturday, 3/21, moderated by Jon Bonné Wine Editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*)
- ‘Rhone Blending Session: The Mavericks and the Traditionalists’, (Saturday, 3/21, moderated by Jon Bonne, Wine Editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*)
- ‘American Rhones in 2009 - Eight Varieties, Eight Flavor Profiles,’ (Sunday, 3/22, moderated by Karen MacNeil, Culinary Institute of America)

Jason Haas, partner at Tablas Creek Vineyard in Paso Robles and president of the Rhone Rangers board of directors, is proud of this year’s expanded seminar lineup. “The Rhone Rangers tastings have always been a great way to learn about some of America’s most exciting new grape varieties. This expanded seminar program will allow more attendees to learn about the most intriguing issues in the world of American Rhones, and allow the organization to further advance its educational mission,” Haas said.

On Saturday evening, fifteen wineries will participate in a winemaker dinner at the Log Cabin in the San Francisco Presidio. The dinner will be catered by ‘the Girl & the Fig’

Restaurant, Sonoma, CA (famous for their “Rhone Alone” wine list) and offers an opportunity to taste library wines and enjoy a three-course meal with fifteen leading Rhone Rangers winemakers. Tickets are \$125. Following the meal, a brief live auction will feature fifteen lots of wine, unique wine country experiences and travel, donated by the host winemakers. Proceeds from the auction will benefit the Rhone Rangers Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to help educate the next generation of American Rhone winemakers. Last year’s scholarships were awarded to the University of California Davis, California State University Fresno, and Washington State University.

“The Grand Tasting is an opportunity to taste from over 500 American Rhone wines and to meet winemakers from all over the west. It is an adventure in wine, and it’s a great way to discover American-grown Rhones, while going beyond Chardonnay and Cabernet, and to understand why these wines have a cult-like following,” said Cheryl Quist, Executive Director of the Rhone Rangers.

At the Grand Tasting, attendees can sample gourmet foods from more than 35 specialty food purveyors, including cheese, bread, olive oil, charcuterie, fruits and chocolates. A silent auction will feature Rhone Rangers wines and wine-related items, with proceeds from the auction benefitting Meals on Wheels of San Francisco.

The Rhone Rangers are a group of nearly 200 winemakers dedicated to wines made from the 22 grape varieties which hail from France’s Rhone Valley. These varieties range from the better-known Syrah and Viognier to the up-and-coming Mourvèdre, Grenache and Roussanne, and the obscure (but delicious) Counoise and Picpoul.

PURCHASE TICKETS

The public is invited to purchase tickets for the Saturday seminars \$50/each, winemaker dinner \$125/each, and Sunday seminar and Grand Tasting (Combined Ticket) \$100/each or for the Grand Tasting (Only): \$60/each (through March 1, 2009); \$65 thereafter. For further information or to purchase tickets see www.rhonerangers.org or call (800) 467-0163.

Credentialed members of the wine trade and media can receive an invitation to the Trade Tasting by sending their contact information to rhonerangerevent@prmmatters.com

About the Rhone Rangers

The Rhone Rangers started from a small gathering of American vintners who began meeting informally in the 1980s. As their numbers expanded, they organized themselves under the name “Rhone Rangers.” The Rhone Rangers is a non-profit organization focused on promoting the enjoyment of Rhone varietal wines produced in the United States. These grapes include the 22 traditional varieties approved by the French government grown in the Cotes du Rhone, as well as Durif (Petite Sirah). In order for a winery to join the Rhone Rangers, they must produce at least one wine that contains 75% of any single approved varietal (or combination of these varietals).

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