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Craft Beverages Unlimited Midwest & East

This year, Craft Beverages Unlimited visited St. Louis, Mo., and Asheville, N.C., featuring informational workshops, sessions and trade show exhibitors from the wine, craft beer and spirits industries. Both events featured an alliance of Vineyard & Winery Management, Craft Beer & Brewing and Distiller magazines to create the full experience. In St. Louis, Midwest Wine Press joined in on the action.

Craft Beverages Unlimited Midwest
St. Charles, Mo., Feb. 3 to 5, 2016

The first day kicked off with a VESTA sensory evaluation workshop, led by instructor Melba Allen, which focused on white wines and included tasting methodology, sensory components, faults and flaws. Allen’s very calm, personal approach and excellent ability to describe complex subjects in a clear, concise manner kept students well engaged throughout this day-long course.

Meanwhile, exhibitors began setting up on the trade show floor and were invited to a reception following setup at the adjoining Embassy Suites hotel lounge. You can’t go wrong with that.

The beer track began on the same day, Steve Parkes, founder of the American Brewers Guild, led the first session, which covered the challenges faced when going pro (upscaling). The next session, led by Jamie Bogner, chief content officer of Craft Beer & Brewing and Corey King, brewer and owner of Side Project Brewing (KING) won eighth best brewer in the world at Rate Beer this year, covered acidity analysis. Participants received four beer samples and six acid samples to taste and gain a better understanding of the effects of pH and titratable acidity levels, as well as a demonstration about the difference in taste between lactic and acetic acid. The pair also led the third session, which discussed creative ownership strategies for building longevity within the brewing industry.

Day two started off with part two of the VESTA sensory evaluation workshop, where Allen focused on red wines. The trade show floor opened at noon with a delicious buffet lunch. A second two-part VESTA workshop, led by Dr. Barry Gump, covered a detailed look at wine chemistry from start to finish. Other wine sessions included a close look at how to succeed in the Midwest wine business, led by Dr. Dean Volenberg of the University of Missouri and Todd Steiner of Ohio State University. Volenberg also led a session on the latest issues surrounding vineyard pest management in the area. A couple enology sessions covered extracting quality with enzymes, led by Peter Salamone, Ph.D., of LaFort USA, and improving color stability with Eugantine Chaufour of Entari/Vinquiry.

Beers sessions that day covered a step-by-step process toward successfully branding your business, led by Dan McCall of Michigan State University; and the challenges of sustainable and organic viticulture in the Midwest, led by Danny Wood of Midwest Wine Press, with panelists Alexa Genni of Clovers Meadow Winery and Colleen Gerke of Jowler Creek Vineyards & Winery. Consultant Piero Spada discussed the latest research regarding lattinos and hybrid winemaking. Grape breeder Tom Plocher and professor Dr. Chin-Hong Hwang covered grape breeding across the Midwest, including emerging varieties and methods for optimizing Norton. Karen Binder, distiller and co-owner of Grand River Spirits, led a practical session about how to start up a distillery.

3. Creatrac offered a wide array of ideas for marketing your business with custom-made products.
4. VESTA students learn about the different aromas found in white wine.
5. Students learn about tasting beer through engaging all the senses.
6. Friends reunite on the trade show floor.
7. Exhibitors and attendees engage on the trade show floor.
8. Stan Hieronymus offers his insights on tasting beer.
9. Instructor Melba Allen engages her sensory evaluation students.
10. St. Louis Tag had every kind of tag you could possibly think of and more.
Craft Beverages Unlimited East
Asheville, N.C., Feb. 10 to 12, 2016

Beautiful downtown Asheville provided a backdrop to our East Coast conference and trade show, which started with sessions and setup on the first day. VESTA instructors Melba Allen (wine sensory evaluation) and Dr. Barry Gump (wine chemistry) began, and a pruning workshop took place at Biltmore Winery, led by Joseph Geller, an instructor at Surry Community College. Participants gained hands-on experience using multiple techniques and styles.

On day two, the trade show floor opened, featuring wine, craft beer and distilling vendors and suppliers. The day was also packed with an array of wine sessions, including the second half of each VESTA workshop, business-oriented topics including projecting vineyard cash flows by Tremain Hatch of Virginia Tech and a brand packaging panel featuring winemaking consultant Tom Payette, Brad Brunson or Amarim, Lissa McLaughlin of All American Container and label expert Don Wright of Wright Global Graphics. Viticulture topics featured crop load management with Surry Community College’s Geller and whether or not crop load adjustment pays with Dr. Justine Vanden Heuvel of Cornell University (her assessment was that, according to her research on the East Coast, the answer is no). Enology subjects included extracting quality using enzymes with Peter Salamone of Laffort USA and developing a quality alliance program for North Carolina wineries with Dr. Seth Cohen of Appalachian State University.

A Craft Beer topics included equipment design with Steve Parkes of American Brewers Guild, understanding intellectual property with Angela Doughty of Ward & Smith, P.S., and acidity analysis with Jamie Bogner of Craft Beer & Brewing magazine as well as a panel of experts on the subject. They noted that the term “sour” is misleading, as it refers to the acid in the beer.

Friday finished off the conference and trade show and included viticulture topics such as converting training systems with Tremain Hatch of Virginia Tech, a panel discussion regarding Southeastern varieties with Cornell’s Dr. Vanden Heuvel, Hatch, and Geller. Vanden Heuvel also spoke on vineyard management practices to improve fruit ripening. Sparkling wine topics were popular, including an overview of production with Michael Jones of Scott Labs as well as a panel discussing its production in the Southeast, featuring Mark Friszolowski of Childress Vineyards, Bernard Delley of Biltmore Winery, Tom Payette, Eglantine Chauffour ofentrada/Quinqui and David Bower of Sun Community College.

Marketing topics included winery design with Tom Payette, rebranding with Don Wright and Terreneseita Corporation’s Susie Garvin, and maintaining your brand with Erin Doby of RayLen, Rhomas Salley of Raffaldini Vineyards and Jennie Hess of Childress Vineyards. Craft Beer topics included branding for success and exploring additional revenue opportunities. Karen Binder of Grand River Spirits also presented her distillery startup expertise to a wide range of interested attendees.

Thank you to our sponsors, exhibitors, partners, speakers and attendees for helping create a unique experience at each location. Cheers to all of you!