



**For Immediate Release**

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## **A Gloriously “Normal” Harvest Predicted**

*Wine Growers Express Optimistic Outlook*

SANTA YNEZ, CA – The wine grape growers of Santa Barbara County have reason to toast the upcoming harvest- after two years of low yields brought about by unseasonable weather conditions, vineyards located in the Santa Maria Valley in the north to those outside of Lompoc in the west as well as sites located far into the eastern reaches of the Santa Ynez Valley all report normal growth patterns so far this year and growers anticipate a return to normal yields for 2012. According to Jeff Newton of Coastal Vineyard Care, “Unlike what we saw the past two years, the timing for bloom, bud break and véraison were normal across the entire span of the Santa Ynez Valley this year.” Jim Stollberg of Maverick Farming Company concurs, saying, “This growing season has been normal and without the uneven vine growth, poor yields and persistent pest pressures of the past two years.”

Along with a return to normal yields, the quality of this year’s crop has growers excited as well. “Fruit development has been right on target this year, and weather conditions this summer have promoted the slow and even ripening we like to see,” says Jim Stollberg. Chris Hammell, vineyard manager for Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills Vineyards in Santa Maria says, “The nearly perfect summer weather this year has resulted in an outstanding crop across the board.” Another reason to toast the season, according to Jeff Newton, is the significant improvement in the market for Santa Barbara County grapes over the past two years.

Harvest will likely begin in the next few weeks as those growers who produce sparkling wines will pick Pinot Noir and Chardonnay before acid levels drop as the grapes reach full maturity. “This is one climate change we appreciate,” quips Jim Fiolek, Executive Director of the Santa Barbara County Vintners’ Association. “It’s good to see the vines back on track.”

Area growers and vintners alike invite the public to experience the exhilaration of the harvest season at this year’s Celebration of Harvest on October 13 at Rancho Sisquoc Winery. Many are planning special dinners, tours and tastings throughout the weekend starting on October 12. Both Celebration of Harvest festival tickets and the “Vintners’ Visa”, a 4-day passport to twelve participating wineries throughout the county, are available for sale at [www.sbcountywines.com](http://www.sbcountywines.com).

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