

"Eureka!" Just Doesn't Do It Anymore, Or ...

Ten Ways to Let the World Know You've Found Gold in the Mother Lode

10. Know the media. Read the newspapers and magazines and watch the TV programs you want to entice up here. Ask yourself: Where do we fit in to their coverage?

9. Keep your Web site current. As soon as you enter a wine in a competition or release it, post its technical specifications and suggested retail price.

8. Save your press releases for when you really have something to say. A gold medal in a wine competition doesn't qualify. Nor does a rave review from Robert M. Parker Jr.

7. Think of what sets you apart. You all have stories to tell. What excites you about what you are doing? Use that excitement to draw attention to yourself.

6. Be honest and forthright in your dealings with the press, even if the topic is momentarily embarrassing. If you're candid, reporters remember.

5. Personalize your story at every opportunity. Make an emotional connection with your anticipated audience. Wine enthusiasts want to know what drives you.

4. Try this exercise: Encapsulate your brand's core values into three words. Disney: Fun family entertainment. Starbucks: Rewarding everyday moments.

3. Do more marketing collectively. Organize thematic tastings to which only media and trade are invited. Have growers and winemakers available to answer questions.

2. Consider some kind of multi-county event to bring more attention to the entire Sierra foothills. How about a wine auction to benefit some group serving the foothills? Say a box-lunch sale that would pair regional restaurants with regional wineries?

To most effectively promote your wines, multi-county teamwork is crucial. Until you start to think of the Sierra foothills as a single appellation, you aren't going to make the best use of your resources. One of the more effective wine-marketing people in the country is Jim Tresize, executive director of the New York Grape & Wine Foundation. Over the past 20 or so years Tresize has persuaded the vintners of such far-flung and disparate regions as Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley and Long Island to think of themselves as a single unit. He's done it in part by keeping everyone on point with a catchy slogan: "Diversity is our strength, unity our power." When you look at all the varieties grown in the foothills, all the sub-appellations and all the characters up here, you know you don't lack for diversity. All you need now is unity.

- Mike Dunne, The Sacramento Bee, June 5, 2008