

Marketing Grapes in Tough Times

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Marketing Is Ideally Done When Times Are Good

- Marketing is to create demand in order to sell your grapes
- Develop a marketing plan – Step 1
 - What are your price expectations?
 - Study the Grape Crush report pricing trends in your area
 - Study the bulk wine market to see if price expectations are realistic
 - Study the market for wines that use grapes at that price
 - What wineries are of interest?
 - Those that produce wines with your variety
 - Those that produce wines from your AVA/county
 - Wines are at the price point that will support your grape price goal
 - The prospective wineries are financially stable
 - The wineries successfully market their wines – sales are growing

Develop Marketing Materials

- Provide contact information – e-mail and cell phone
- Provide vineyard address if different than mailing address
- Provide details of the vineyard
 - Hillside, benchland, valley floor
 - Variety, rootstock and clones
 - Trellis, vineyard age, etc.
- Provide historical data
 - Yields and Brix
 - Average harvest date
 - Other buyers that are/have been supplied
- Provide the name of the Vineyard Manager

Reaching the Buyers

- Do you know the buyer for any of your target wineries?
 - Contact them first
- Attend industry events where you might be able to meet grape buyers or winemakers
 - Begin developing a relationship – make the sales pitch later
 - Invite them to visit your vineyard
- Direct market to other prospective wineries on your list
 - E-mail or a phone call may be better than mail
- Advertise your fruit
 - Online listings
- Consider contracting with a grape broker

Your Marketing Works!

- Consider any offer carefully
 - Does it meet long-term objectives?
 - Must you compromise on price this year?
 - What are the quality expectations of the buyer?
 - Are there special harvest requirements – high brix?
 - What are the payment terms?
 - What is the crush site? Can it be changed?
 - What are the delivery requirements – timing, container size
 - What services might the winery provide? Viticulture advice, tasting wine from your vineyard, etc?

A Contingency Plan – What If No Buyer Is Found?

- Are you willing/able to abandon the crop?
- Are you willing/able to custom crush the grapes?
 - You need a license – Type 29 if you sell bulk wine
 - You need a winery
 - You need to understand all the costs for services and storage
- Are you financially able to bear the added costs?
 - Bulk red wine sales may be 18 – 24 months out
 - Bulk white wine sales may be 3 – 10 months out
- Are you able to deal in the bulk market?
 - Price only depends on wine quality relative to other samples
 - Your hoped for grape price is no longer relevant

Summary

- Marketing your vineyard and grapes is critical – even if you have a contract.
 - Have a marketing plan
- Create the story of what makes your grapes and vineyard special
- Build your network of grape buyers – and keep track if they change wineries.
- Know the market for grapes, bulk wine and retail wines
- Be realistic in your price expectations
- If you get an offer, consider it carefully – it may be the best offer you get that year

