
WINES & VINES

04.08.2008

Beyond Grapes and Wine in Lake County

Two projects planned to bring greater exposure north of Napa

by Paul Franson



Rolling Knolls

Lower Lake, Calif. -- Two recent developments in Lake County could lead to much higher visibility for the lesser-known North Coast winegrowing region, which is seeking a critical mass of destinations to attract more visitors.

Clay Shannon, who already owns Shannon Ridge Vineyards & Winery above Clearlake Oaks, has acquired the picturesque Rolling Knolls vineyard in the town of Lower Lake, and he plans to develop a recreational village on the property.

Meanwhile, Langtry Estate and Vineyard has a new president who plans development including a trade-oriented recreational area, as well as wines.

These developments are at the opposite end of Clear Lake, California's largest natural lake, from Jim Fetzer's Ceago del Lago, which already is creating buzz within the county.

Shannon's latest acquisition includes approximately 240 acres of vineyards, two small cottages and an old walnut dehydrating structure. They will be converted into a tasting room, wine shop and gourmet deli.

Shannon also plans to develop the property into a mixed-use destination for visitors to Lake County. He's working with St. Helena-based architect Carlo Di Fede of Triad Design Studio for an European-style community to include private guest cottages, a rustic tasting room, picnic facilities and dining patios, a stone

chapel, recreational grounds, hiking trails and public restrooms.

"I want to create an old-world experience in wine country, just two and a half hours north of the San Francisco Bay Area," Shannon said. "This will be a destination location for wine aficionados, outdoor recreation enthusiasts and nature lovers. My goal is to preserve that land while offering visitors a unique experience in Lake County."

The property backs up to the Anderson Marsh wetlands and park, public land owned by the state of California and accessible to visitors.

Shannon also is working with the Lake County planning commission to develop a new winery on the property. His wines are now made at a facility in Napa County.

He acquired the Rolling Knolls vineyard from the Greer family of Fremont, Calif., who owned the property since 1992.

Shannon Ridge already has a tasting room for its wines. In June 2007, Shannon opened a renovated tasting room in a historic one-room schoolhouse on Highway 20 in Clearlake Oaks. Adjacent to the tasting room, the winery also completed the construction of a "vinegarden" and picnic table, which allows visitors to relax in a park-like setting while enjoying Shannon Ridge wines.

Shannon is a well-known grower in Napa and Lake counties. He and his wife, Margarita, purchased 420 acres that included steep volcanic mountain vineyards in High Valley in 1995; they later expanded into making wine.

The new vineyard is planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Zinfandel, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Petite Sirah and Sauvignon Blanc. Shannon will farm the property and plans to sell its fruit to other wineries. He commented that the Shannon Ridge wine brand is quickly expanding, and fruit from the Rolling Knolls vineyard will be used for future vintages of Shannon Ridge wines.

For more information about Shannon Ridge Vineyards and Winery, visit shannonridge.com.

WINES & VINES

415.453.9700 | Fax: 415.453.2517
info@winesandvines.com