

# Coastal Grower

WINTER | 2020



# A Toast to Our Local Grape Growers and Winemakers

By Brian Milne, Fieldin.com



**W**hat a year for our local grape growers and winemakers. First, we had the pandemic, followed by a shelter in place – which shuttered tasting rooms, halted events and made working in our vineyards tougher than ever. Then we endured a record summer heat wave, followed by some of the largest fires in state history – which led to the worst air quality we’ve seen around these parts in years, raising havoc on harvest and tainting some of our grapes at the same time.

“Farmers are resilient and they accept the many risks inherent to agriculture, but 2020 has produced more challenges than any could have ever anticipated,” said John Aguirre, President of the California Association of Winegrape Growers.

When we look back on the ashy remains of 2020, it will be hard to forget those apocalyptic-looking images of our vineyards overshadowed by plumes of smoke and crimson-red sunsets.

Only time will tell how bad the pandemic and wildfires hurt the 2020 vintage, and the long-term health of our wineries. But in talking with growers and winemakers from Paso

Robles to Monterey during the hectic harvest season, the feeling was that it somehow could have been worse. (Quick, knock on the first oak barrel you can find!)

---

## Only time will tell how bad the pandemic and wildfires hurt the 2020 vintage, and the long-term health of our wineries.

---

While Aguirre said the wildfires were the state’s “single worst disaster the wine grape-growing community has ever faced,” some growers in the Central Coast region were able to avoid some of the devastation we saw to the north in Napa and Sonoma.

In fact, some local growers pointed out the thick layer of smoke that blanketed Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties in August and September actually helped give harvesting crews a needed break from the scorching sun, cooling things off enough to let them resume harvest activities sooner than expected.

That said, Wine Business Monthly noted in

mid-October that buyers were rejecting some grapes in Monterey and Paso Robles, and that “every varietal that was hanging after August 17 from Mendocino all the way down to San Luis Obispo has a smoke taint number. That is a fact.”

Fortunately, the numbers here were lower than our neighbors to the north, and our thick-skinned winemakers continue to find creative ways to work around and counter smoke taint.

Despite those challenges, our growers made it to the finish line and completed harvest in the face of all of the adversity that 2020 threw at us. And that is worth celebrating this holiday season.

While the volume of wine we’ve produced will surely be down in 2020, it doesn’t mean our local wine industry is out. So the next time you go to the store with the goal of finding a nice bottle of French or Italian wine for a holiday meal, go with something local and raise a glass to your local wine grape growers and producers for their fine work during an unusual and unprecedented harvest season.

We can all use a little reason to celebrate these days, so here’s to safe and successful 2021! **cc**

Learn more about Fieldin's smart farm platform at [fieldin.com/learnmore](https://fieldin.com/learnmore)

