

THE WASHINGTON PANEL

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Grenache Ground Breakers

*Winemakers Joel Gott
& Dave Phinney
Explore New Frontiers*

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Networking with Suppliers

SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS HOSTS A SHOW FOR THE TRADE IN MONTEREY

by Suzie Rodriguez



PHOTO: SUZIE RODRIGUEZ

Left to right: Daniel Bamberger (SWS), Steve Lee (SWS), Roberto Engstrom of Prestige Wine Imports and Steve Harden (SWS).

House Spirits has garnered raves for its renegade Aviation Gin, made with an innovative complex of botanicals such as coriander, anise seed and sarsaparilla.



Nearly 600 retailers, restaurant/bar beverage managers and other buyers had a grand time on May 14 at the Southern Wine & Spirits Central Coast Trade Show in Monterey, California.

Held at the Monterey Plaza Hotel on Cannery Row, the event featured 67 suppliers, spread through five large connecting rooms and a foyer overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

SWS execs made sure the event ran smoothly. Senior Vice President Steve Harden and Vice President Steve Lee stood beside the central doors welcoming old friends and introducing themselves to newcomers, while Monterey Branch Manager Daniel Bamberger moved from room to room on the lookout for problems that needed solving (none did).

"We look at this as a great opportunity," Bamberger said, "for linking our supplier network into the customer base, showcasing up-and-coming vintages and new releases, and just having fun together."

"I drove up from Santa Barbara," said Summerland Winery's owner, Bilo Zarif. At Summerland the focus is on small-lot, vineyard-designated wines that capture regional character. "We use very little intervention," Zarif noted.

Making the trip from Napa Valley's Esser Vineyards were owner Manfred Esser and consulting winemaker Benjamin Esser Calvi. Esser's five varietals—Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon—are made with grapes grown in Monterey. The German-born Esser came to the U.S. in 1974 and