

Lodi Growers Create A High Standard For Sustainability And Better Market For Their Grapes

By David Eddy | June 2, 2014

If you want to pick up a few tips about sustainability from California winegrape growers, Mohr-Fry Ranches isn't a bad place to start. The agricultural history of the Mohrs and Frys extends back to the 1850s, when Cornelius Mohr left his job on a whaling ship in the port of San Francisco and began a farming operation on a Spanish land grant in an area south of a town that had just become incorporated, Oakland.

Urban encroachment eventually caused family members to look elsewhere to sustain the growing business. Today, Mohr's great-grandson Jerry Fry and his son Bruce — who represents the fifth generation — farm nearly 600 acres of mostly winegrapes in the Lodi Appellation south of Sacramento.



Bruce Fry, left, and father Jerry in a vineyard of truly "Old Vine Zin." The Zinfandel block was planted in 1901. (Photo credit: David Eddy)

There, they grow a dozen varieties of winegrapes, eight red and four white, everything from Alicante Bouschet to Zinfandel. Or, as Jerry

It's the latter variety, Z are justifiably proud o 1901, and another 70 mean they aren't fami tasters to ask, not for advantage of the fact,

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All of that Zinfandel acreage — plus Sangiovese, Merlot, Petite Sirah and Sauvignon Blanc — about 40% of their total, has been certified sustainable under a Lodi Winegrape Commission program, the Lodi Rules. Launched in 2005 — the Frys were one of the original six growers — the Lodi Rules is a strict program detailing many aspects of a farming enterprise. It is based on the three-legged stool concept of sustainability, each beginning with an "E": Economic, Environmental and Equitable.

There are 24,000 acres "Certified Green" in the Lodi Appellation, and an additional 6,000 acres have been certified in other regions throughout California. Approximately 20 wineries produce wines bearing the Lodi Rules seal.

Standards To Abide By

The Lodi Rules is not just a catchy slogan; it is a 128-page workbook of sustainable winegrowing standards. There are 101 standards, and to be certified you not only need to pass at least 70, you cannot fail any of the six chapters. (For an example of the standards, see "From The Workbook.")



"The economic consideration is number one because if it's not economical you can't help the environment, or provide social equity either." — Bruce Fry (Photo credit: David Eddy)