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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Photos Available Upon Request

**Sonoma-Marin Fair Welcomes Top Judges to the North of the Gate Wine Competition**

PETALUMA, CA – March 13, 2019 – Among the hustle and bustle of the Sonoma Marin Fair, there is the best kept secret of the fairgrounds. The Wine Garden. It is the perfect quiet shady area to sip and discover some of the best wines in the Northern California wine region.

This year welcomes the 19<sup>th</sup> annual North of the Gate Wine Competition at the Sonoma Marin Fair, June 19-23, 2019, and brings a fierce (and delicious) competition from winemakers in the region. Qualifying wines are welcomed to display the uniqueness of their terroir starting anywhere from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oregon Border.

While over 60,000 fair-goers have the chance to experience and discover their new favorite wine, a panel of esteemed judges will be raising the bar to award coveted category awards. Wines are tasted and scored blind by twelve highly qualified judges. In terms of competitions, this carefully curated judging panel elevates the overall credibility of the awards given due to their extensive industry knowledge, consistent process of scoring, and familiarity with wine growing regions worldwide. As an added benefit, these industry veterans bring visibility to the competition across a variety of channels.

“What makes the *North of the Gate* so special is that all the wines have to come from grapes specifically grown in Northern California,” says Valery Uhl, Director and Chief Judge of the competition. “As a result, these winning wines easily represent some of the best wines in the region.”

Professional wine journalists and critics on the panel include Bill McNabb, Wine.com writer Wilfred Wong, wine reviewer Rich cook, and food & wine columnist of the Sacramento Bee, Mike Dunne. Certified sommeliers and wine industry aficionados include CIA-trained Traci Dutton, long-time Bay Area critic Larry Van Aallst, and wine-list curation expert Karen Bennett, among others.

This year's judging will be held March 29, 2019 at the Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds & Event Center. Wines who win their category are featured all 5 days of the fair and are included in a printed booklet offered to everyone who is welcomed into The Wine Garden to taste.

Tastings featuring the top medal winners will be available during the Sonoma-Marín Fair in the Wine Garden as the perfect reprieve from the warm summer's day activities. Guests can mingle with winemakers, enjoy live music, and partake in a cheese and chocolate pairing. A separate ticket will be required and available for purchase at the gate the day of and in advance online.

For more information on this year's judging panel, please visit [sonoma-marinfair.org](http://sonoma-marinfair.org).

Mark your calendars for a summer to remember during "Eight Decades of Fun" at the Sonoma-Marín Fair, June 19-23, 2019. With new competitions and contests, FREE concerts, unlimited carnival rides, and delicious fair food you will want to come all 5 fun-filled days. Enjoy heart-warming entertainment during the World's Ugliest Dog® Contest, the thrill of Sprint Car Racing, and the joy of connecting with our local agricultural community. For details, visit [sonoma-marinfair.org](http://sonoma-marinfair.org) or call [\(707\) 283-3247](tel:7072833247). Be the first to know about all of the fun by following us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

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