



Red Hills Lake County, CA - June 14, 2007. Under an open tent overlooking the Mayacamas Mountains, **Obsidian Ridge partner and vineyard manager Peter Molnar** welcomed one hundred winemakers, growers, academics and press from South America, Europe, Australia and Colorado as Chair of ***The Elevation of Wine: The First International High Altitude Viticultural and Winemaking Symposium.***



Obsidian Ridge Vineyard proposed, organized and sponsored *The Elevation of Wine* to bring together vintners to define high altitude, share viticultural and winemaking experiences, compare high altitude wines from around the world, and lay out an integrated vision for future research into the effects of high altitude on winegrapes and wine.

The inspiration of creating the Symposium came after five years of planting, developing and farming Obsidian Ridge vineyard at 2,640' elevation. While Napa has made great Cabernets at 300', the conditions, challenges and intensity of flavors at altitude are very different. Talking with growers in other countries and regions, Peter found that little formal research had been done on high altitude farming, but that many winemakers and viticulturalists were asking similar questions.

Fresh from the first vintage of the world's highest vineyard at 9,900' in Argentina, keynote speaker Randle Johnson of the Hess Collection and Colomé Winery inaugurated the event with his reflections on crafting high altitude wine on two continents. In an attempt to define the terroir of high altitude vineyards, Dr. Greg Jones of Southern Oregon University followed with an investigation of the climate of high altitude, and Dr. Leo

McCloskey of Enologix continued with the measurable effects of altitude on winegrapes.



Prominent speakers included Ernesto Bajda of Bodega Catena Zapata, perhaps Argentina's most renowned winery; Dr. Paul Skinner

longtime Napa Valley viticulturist and consultant; Dr. Vittorino Novello, Chairman of the Department of Viticulture at the University of Torino, Italy and an authority on mountain viticulture in Europe; and Philip Shaw of 2950' Koomooloo Vineyard in the Orange District of Australia.

At the risk of oversimplification, the conference highlighted that sunlight intensity is much stronger at altitude and in response to this light stress, the grape protects its seeds with a thicker skin. Thicker skins means more polyphenols, components that make wine intense, rich, and flavorful.

As pioneers of high altitude farming, Obsidian Ridge will continue to chair The Elevation of Wine Research Advisory Group to organize, direct and disseminate research and practices. Full program and speaker biographies can be found at [www.theelevationofwine.org](http://www.theelevationofwine.org).