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Contact: Christopher Weir
cw@mooncatcher.com
(805) 239-0020

CHARDONNAY SYMPOSIUM TURNS WINE SPOTLIGHT ON SANTA MARIA VALLEY

Local Wineries and Vineyards Host Premier Showcase for America's Top White Wine on July 22-23

SANTA MARIA, CA—The nation's premier showcase for Chardonnay returns to the Santa Maria Valley with the 2nd annual Chardonnay Symposium hosted by the Santa Maria Valley Wine Country Association on July 22-23. More than 60 wineries from across the West Coast will participate in the event, which includes a welcome barbecue, grand tasting and seminars moderated by wine luminaries Steve Heimoff and Karen MacNeil.

The Santa Maria Valley is a natural choice to host the only event of its kind dedicated to America's most popular white wine. Indeed, the Santa Maria Valley boasts one of California's coolest growing environments, yielding optimal conditions for Chardonnay. Two Chardonnays from the Santa Maria Valley were named to the top 10 slots of the *Wine Enthusiast* magazine's annual list of "The Enthusiast 100: The Most Coveted Wines of 2010."

"The word is really getting out about the Santa Maria Valley as a remarkable food and wine destination," said Gina Keough, manager of the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau. "Our combination of world-class wines along with a signature local cuisine—Santa Maria Style Barbecue—is truly unique, and the success of the Chardonnay Symposium is only adding to the recognition."

Following is a summary of events for the 2nd annual Chardonnay Symposium:

Friday, July 22 – Vineyard Tour and Welcome Barbecue

The Chardonnay Symposium kicks off at 4 p.m. with a tour of Sierra Madre Vineyard's eight different clones of Chardonnay, followed by an extensive clonal tasting. Later, Chef Rick Manson will prepare a gourmet barbecue paired with Chardonnays from Sierra Madre Vineyard. The cost is \$95 per person for the tour and barbecue. The barbecue can be attended separately for \$50 per person.

Saturday, July 23 – Sessions, Luncheon and Grand Tasting

The day begins with two informational sessions hosted by Steve Heimoff, West Coast editor of *Wine Enthusiast* magazine, and Karen MacNeil, author of *The Wine Bible*. Heimoff will lead a discussion on "The Great Oaked Debate" at Bien Nacido Vineyards, while MacNeil will lead a discussion on "Taking Back Chardonnay" at Tantara Winery. The sessions will be followed by a luncheon at Au Bon Climat / Qupé Winery. Then, starting at 2 p.m., the Grand Chardonnay Tasting at Byron Vineyard & Winery will feature Chardonnays from more than 60 wineries paired

with local artisan foods. The cost for the panel discussion of choice, luncheon, commemorative Riedel glass and grand tasting is \$125. The grand tasting can be attended separately for \$65 per person.

For more information and tickets to the Chardonnay Symposium, please visit www.thechardonnaysymposium.com. For more information about touring the Santa Maria Valley wine country, visit www.smvwines.com. For more information about Santa Maria Valley attractions, lodging and more, visit www.santamaria.com or call the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau at (800) 331-3779.

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