

2012 – a good year for California wine growers

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

There's plenty to toast among the local wine region, which enjoyed a fairly solid 2012. An ideal growing season, new businesses and increasing recognition from national media added up to a choice year for the greater Sacramento area's wine season.

Here are some of the ways in which 2012 rocked in terms of wine:

- **Mother Nature:** After two years of unseasonable weather and lighter than normal harvests, 2012's growing season offered some much-needed salvation. This year's statewide wine grape crop is projected to reach 3.7 million tons, a 10 percent jump over 2011 and a tie with the second-largest harvest on record. For a domestic wine industry facing possible supply shortages, 2012 was like a reassuring hug from Mother Nature.

- **Positive press:** The greater Sacramento region's wine offerings continued to land on the national media radar. After a lengthy feature on the Sierra foothills in 2011, the *San Francisco Chronicle* came back this year listing El Dorado County in "5 California wine areas to watch."

Wine Enthusiast also featured a big spread this year on Sierra foothills wine country, while Eric Asimov of the *New York Times* recommended the Edmunds St. John 2009 El Dorado County Bone-Jolly Gamay Noir in his "memorable bottles for \$20" column.

- **The China connection:** Delegations from China made numerous visits to Lodi in 2012, tasting the region's wine and seeking new trade partners. Given the rapidly growing wine market in

China, and increasingly seeking value-friendly California brands, this relationship could bode well for the region's wine business for years to come.