



Tri-Cities Wine Society

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News Release

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40-Year Event Ends – Tri-Cities Wine Festival

The annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival, a Pacific Northwest event for more than 40 years, has been permanently discontinued, according to Ted Davis, president, Tri-Cities Wine Society, which hosted the event for more than 30 of its 40-year run. Davis made the announcement recently at the society's annual membership meeting. The festival has annually attracted more than 1,000 attendees, including wineries and their representatives from Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana, and years ago, also from British Columbia. What would have been the 42nd festival had to be cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions on large gatherings.

"Closing this chapter of the wine society's history was a difficult decision for its board of directors," Davis explained, "but we do so with a sense of pride and feelings of accomplishment as we reflect on the growth of the Northwest wine industry over the past 40-plus years and the part the festival has played by showcasing Northwest wineries and their wines. The Tri-Cities Wine Society is looking forward to continuing to do so with other events." In reflecting on the wine industry, Davis shared that early in the festival's history, it was the only way many attendees could sample Northwest wines as there were few tasting rooms or wine events. Much has changed over the years.

The festival was the longest, continuously judged wine festival in the Northwest. It was started in 1979 by Coke Roth, a Tri-Cities attorney and past president, Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau – now Visit Tri-Cities – and his friend, Maury Balcom, as a fundraiser for a copier for the bureau, and as a way to promote Northwest wines and the Tri-Cities as a tourist destination. After 10 years and wanting to move in a different direction, the bureau offered the Tri-Cities Wine Society the opportunity to host the event. While the festival has been in different locations and at different times of the year, for many years it was a November event at the Pasco Red Lion, and then, for more than 10 years, at the Three Rivers Convention Center and in partnership with VenuWorks.

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“I want to take this opportunity to thank all the wineries and businesses that have supported the festival, including our silent auction, over its long history,” Davis went on to say. “For several years, proceeds from the auction have been targeted for scholarships to students focusing on viticulture and enology in area schools,” Davis added.

“I also want to extend a sincere thank you to the hundreds of volunteers over the years who worked to ensure the festival’s success,” Davis added. Regarding the volunteers, he said, “As the wine industry grew, so did the festival. It became a year-round effort for a small core of volunteers to ensure its success.”

Additional Information: With COVID-19 restrictions now lifted, the wine society is resuming hosting wine events for its members and their guests. “We are working toward getting back to monthly events and excited to be doing so, but we are taking it step by step,” Davis explained. “To date we have been focused on those events cancelled in 2020. Meanwhile, our board of directors is exploring options for continuing to showcase Northwest wines and our wine industry.”

The Tri-Cities Wine Society is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization dedicated to educating its members, their guests and the public about wine and the wine industry through monthly events in a casual atmosphere. Membership and events are open to anyone at least 21 years of age. Information about the society, including membership and events, is on its website, www.tricitieswinesociety.com.

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