**Sophia Caples – Sustainability: Down To Earth with the Best Practices**

In recent years, sustainability has almost become a prerogative for products to be competitive in the contemporary market. Companies with no real interest in investing in sustainability go as far as to "greenwash" their consumer-facing presence to appeal to their customer base. The wine industry has noticeably shifted towards more sustainable practices, as demonstrated by the establishment of various certification bodies such as the CSWA and the Demeter federation. As sustainability has become more widely adopted, a contemporary format for exactly what sustainability is has emerged. In winemaking, sustainability is a holistic approach to viticulture and vinification that prioritizes environmental protection, conservation, and community support. In SommGeo's lecture, "Sustainability: Down to Earth with the Best Practices," several wineries exemplified these pillars of sustainability and demonstrated some important principles of sustainable farming and winemaking practices.

At St. Supery's Dollarhide Ranch, Michael Scholz directs sustainability efforts. St. Supery makes a concerted effort to conserve resources and foster a healthy environment in the vineyard and the winery. Water is generated via runoff and stored in lakes. This precious resource is then used as efficiently as possible-St. Supery uses technology like probes to ensure that irrigation amounts are appropriate and uses fans in the vineyard to decrease the need for water. Additionally, St. Supery uses flowmeters to detect areas where water usage is unnecessarily high-such as washing of barrels-and creates targeted policies to avoid such waste. St. Supery takes a very holistic, environmentally friendly approach to pest management by leaving bird and wildlife corridors on vineyard land and installing bird boxes and raptor perches. Owls and raptors hunt vertebrate pests, bluebirds target insects, and bats eat mosquitoes and other tiny pests in the vineyard. St. Supery created a habitat which fosters various wildlife species, and now benefits from a symbiotic relationship fostered through careful practices. Soil health is also an important part of St. Supery's approach to sustainability. Heirloom fruit trees have been planted in an effort towards farming diversification, and compost and cover crops are utilized in the vineyard as well. In the winery, packaging choices provide an opportunity to strive towards sustainability-they have begun using recycled materials in the 6-pack and 12-pack packaging, sourcing bottles from North American suppliers, using lighter bottles, and using carbon neutral corks in white wines. St. Supery invests in sustainable practices in the vineyard and winery and in their community. They support their community through philanthropy, and actually have a "Green Team" comprised of employees that works on developing sustainable practices. This allows for increased involvement in the sustainability effort. These wide-ranging sustainability practices have resulted in St. Supery holding Napa Green Land and Winery certifications for over a decade. These practices demonstrate an important truth about sustainability-it requires a holistic mindset. St. Supery has implemented a variety of changes, many of which seem like they would have a small impact when viewed in isolation. Yet when viewed as a whole, these practices combine to form an effective and inspiring effort towards sustainability.

Nicolas Cantacuzene of Thomas George Estates also demonstrates remarkable sustainability practices. He professes that sustainability starts with choosing the correct land-otherwise farming practices will inherently require far more resources. He started by choosing the Cresta vineyard to convert to dry farming. This involved decreasing the amount of water used in the vineyard over the course of 1-2 years. Over this time period, the vine's canopy shrinks, and the vine's need for water is decreased alongside it. Reducing the vine's dependency on water helps the environment-but also actually has a litany of benefits. The vine is more protected against heat and drought, which is crucial in California. The berries produced are also smaller and more concentrated, and as such produce a more flavorful wine. Sustainable practices in the vineyard allow for sustainable practices in the winery. The exemplary fruit quality means that very low intervention practices can be used. Cantacuzene does not inoculate with yeast or bacteria-the balance of soil nutrients created by dry farming means that the grapes have everything that they need! The vineyard is certified Sonoma County Sustainable. Nicolas Cantacuzene's success at Cresta vineyard is really exciting because it clearly shows the inherent connection between adopting sustainable practices and increasing wine quality.

It can sometimes feel like the world is inevitably rushing towards environmental disaster-and in this (warming) climate, adopting sustainable practices can be a hard sell. After all, who's to say that things aren't too far gone? Will any change we adopt really be able to make a difference? Additionally, sustainability can seem so daunting to implement-it's so complex and multifaceted. St. Supery and Thomas George Estates are stellar examples of sustainability. Their practices leave little to question in that regard. Yet this excellence goes even deeper. St. Supery demonstrates that sustainability can be achieved, one step at a time, if we have the courage to simply start. Thomas George Estates shows that making that effort is worth it-sustainable practices reap rewards in terms of environmental benefits and wine quality. Together, they represent the most important defining point of sustainability-sustainable practices are the path to a better future.