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**Ulster County**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Grand Reserve Tasting Event Showcases New York Wine Industry**  
***Cornell Cooperative Extension plays major role in industry research and education***

Wine grapes and wineries are the strongest growth segment of New York State's billion-dollar agriculture industry. In 1975 there were 19 registered farm wineries in the state; today there are 180. More than half of New York's counties now have one or more wineries, clustered in five principal grape-growing regions: Lake Erie and Niagara, the Finger Lakes, the Hudson River Valley, and Long Island. On the weekend of September 8-11, 2005, more than 40 wineries from these regions and beyond will converge on Greig Farm in Red Hook, for the 4th Annual Hudson Valley Wine Fest. Wine tasting, cooking demonstrations, fine craft and gourmet specialty food vendors promise to make for a weekend of family fun that celebrates New York State wine.

The weekend kicks off with the **Grand Reserve Tasting** on Friday, September 9, 2005 from 6 to 9 pm with pourings of award-winning Reserve Vintages by some of the top wineries in New York State. These vintages are not available to the general public, and in most cases will not be available at any other time during the festival weekend. Proceeds from this event will benefit educational programs of Cornell Cooperative Extension of both Dutchess and Ulster Counties. The evening includes music, dancing and hors d'oeuvre, specially prepared by some of the area's finest restaurants to compliment the Reserve Vintages. A silent and live auction with George Cole of George Cole Auctions in Red Hook will offer a stunning array of items ranging from original artwork by local artists, to getaways in the Grand Canary Islands and Telluride Colorado, to a customized home landscape design and planting. Tickets to the Grand Reserve Tasting are \$100 per person and include a weekend pass to the Fest.

Michael Babcock, President of Wineracks.com, sponsor of the Hudson Valley Wine Fest said "We are delighted to be donating the proceeds from this event to Cornell Cooperative Extension. Their link to Cornell University provides access to the latest research based information to the burgeoning New York State wine industry. Locally, their educational programs and technical assistance help maintain a healthy farming community in Dutchess and Ulster Counties providing locally grown food for our tables and an attractive landscape for residents and tourists alike."

Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences provides major wine research and Extension programming to those involved in viticulture. For more than a century Cornell's Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, New York has performed extensive, cutting edge research in grape growing and other wine making fruits. The station's breeders have released more than 53 varieties of grapes, and provide analytical services and consultation to the wine industry and other fermentation industries through the New York Wine Analytical Laboratory and New York Wine Data Bank housed there. The new Vinification and Brewing Technology Laboratory at Cornell, a pilot plant dedicated to research and teaching in wine and brewing

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sciences, has expanded the University's experimental winemaking program to test new grape varieties and winemaking practices. Outreach from Extension Associations, including those in Dutchess and Ulster Counties in the form of workshops, conferences, farm visits and seminars extend that research based knowledge to those involved in the local wine and grape industries.

The proceeds for the Grand Reserve Tasting will bring much needed revenue to both county associations. According to Ulster & Dutchess County's Executive Directors Lydia Reidy and Linda Keech: "Extension plays a key role in preserving farmland and agriculture as a way of life in our region. We provide valuable educational information to farmers by delivering research-based information at grower meetings, commodity schools, workshops, conferences and training. By working with Dutchess and Ulster Counties Purchase of Development Rights Programs and Agricultural Districts we have contributed to the preservation of thousands of acres of valuable farmland. In addition, we help create future leaders through our 4-H Youth Development and Green Teen Community Gardening Programs, involving over 1,500 Ulster and Dutchess County youth in experiential citizenship and life skills programs. Supporting the Grand Reserve Tasting would represent an important endorsement of our work."

Tickets to the Grand Reserve Tasting, on Friday September 9<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 9 pm are \$100 per person and include a weekend pass to the Fest. Seating is limited and all tickets must be purchased in advance by calling 888-687-2517 or by visiting the Hudson Valley Wine Fest website: [www.HudsonValleyWineFest.com](http://www.HudsonValleyWineFest.com). For more information about the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Hudson Valley Wine Fest, please call Mike Babcock, President, WineRacks.com at 845-658-7181. For more information about Extension's work in the area of viticulture please contact Steve McKay, Extension Educator, Small Fruit and Grapes, Hudson Valley Regional Fruit Program, 845-828-3069.

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