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'Come Over October' aims to give 'Sober October' a run for its money

Written by Tina Caputo
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photo credit: Tina Caputo
Karen MacNeil speaks at the Joseph Phelps Vineyards in Napa.

Wine consumption is down in the U.S. for a variety of reasons — from inflation to competition from other beverages. But to those in the wine industry, some say the most worrisome challenge is the recent rise in anti-alcohol sentiment.

Early last year, the World Health Organization published a statement declaring there is no safe amount of alcohol consumption.

That's a major pivot from previous messaging about the potential health benefits of drinking wine in moderation.

Now, the wine industry is fighting back with a new collective marketing campaign called Come Over October.

Wine writer Karen MacNeil created the campaign with wine communications experts Kimberly Charles and Gino Colangelo. The partners are donating their time to the cause.

"Every wine drinker has had that experience of sharing wine with someone who they didn't know, and by the end of the evening, you are that person's friend," says MacNeil. "I thought, why isn't the wine

industry telling this story?"

Instead, she adds, anti-alcohol groups have been driving the narrative with negative headlines that diminish wine's history as a social and communal beverage. "The underlying message of Come Over October is that getting together with people is inherently a good thing," says MacNeil, "and that wine, for its 9,000 years, has facilitated get-togethers like that."

The idea behind the campaign is also to provide an alternative to Sober October — a movement that encourages people to take a month off from drinking.

Come Over October's organizers say there's nothing wrong with individuals wanting to take a break from alcohol. But calling for a large group of people to abstain for a whole month during the year's critical fourth quarter? That's problematic for an industry that's already struggling, notes Charles.

"If you talk to any winery or wine organization, they will tell you that that is when the most people drink wine and buy wine, and we want to be able to help amplify that," she says. "I feel that the industry has had to be a little bit more survivalist, and people have sort of battened down the hatches and are taking care of their companies and their brands. But now they see something that we can do together."

So far, the industry has contributed more than \$100,000 to the campaign, and wineries, restaurants and hotels across the country are planning October events and promotions. MacNeil says it's just the beginning.

"I hope that during the month of October, there will be hundreds of thousands of people who love wine, who are sharing it with someone that they either know or want to know more deeply," she says. "[People] who are reminded about all of wine's gifts, all of the things that it has brought those of us who love it so madly."

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	French Classes at the Alliance Française de Santa Rosa Thu, Sep 19 @9:30am Alliance Française de Santa Rosa Santa Rosa, CA 9.5 mi
	Beyond The Surface: The Power of Paper Thu, Sep 19 @10:00am CK Contemporary San Francisco, CA 49.8 mi

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