Contact:
Leasha LaBruzzi
publicity@sonomacountyfair.com
(707) 545-4200 ext. 202

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Russian River Brewing Company Receives Harvest Fair Award for Excellence in the Craft Beer Industry

SANTA ROSA, CA – August 22, 2016 – Russian River Brewing Company, owned and operated by husband and wife duo Vinnie and Natalie Cilurzo, is this year's recipient of the Sonoma County Harvest Fair Award for Excellence in the Craft Beer Industry. The brewery was originally located at the historic Korbel Winery in Guerneville with Vinnie as the sole brewer. After Korbel closed the brewery in 2003, the Cilurzos acquired the brand name and reopened under new ownership as a brewpub in Downtown Santa Rosa.

"It's those words 'Russian River' that beer lovers across the country have come to immediately connect with some of their best loved beers," says brewmaster Vinnie Cilurzo.

Cilurzo used hops grown on the Korbel property to craft his first wet hops brew, Hop-Time Harvest Ale. When Korbel purchased Lake Sonoma Winery, Vinnie opened an adjacent brewery where he began experimenting with making beer in wine barrels. In 2003, when Korbel decided to get out of the beer business, Gary Heck graciously agreed to transfer the rights to the brand names, some equipment and all of the recipes to Vinnie.

"Russian River Brewing would be something completely different now if it weren't for that incredible opportunity," says Cilurzo.

Pliny the Elder Double IPA is probably Russian River Brewing Company's most well-known beer, but its Pliny the Younger that's most storied. People line up for hours in

front of the Santa Rosa brewpub, just for a taste of the younger Pliny during its yearly debut in February.

"Russian River Brewing Company pushed the boundaries of experimentation and innovation, putting Sonoma County on the map for excellent craft beer," says Monica Rodriguez of the Sonoma County Harvest Fair. "When people hear 'Russian River Brewing' they think interesting, outstanding beer and we are honored to recognize Vinnie and Natalie Cilurzo for their contribution to the industry."

Vinnie and Natalie opened Russian River Brewing Company as a brewpub in downtown Santa Rosa in 2004 and began self-distributing to nearby clients. In 2008, they opened a production brewery about a mile from their brewpub allowing them to triple production, take on more accounts locally, and distribute to four more states. Today, Russian River has nearly 100 employees between both breweries. Their busy Downtown brew pub has become a popular beer tourism destination and a community gathering place for many Sonoma County locals. Earlier this year the Cilurzo's announced plans to build their dream brewery with a brewpub, gift shop and tasting room on 15 acres in Windsor, CA.

The Sonoma County Harvest Fair is proud to honor Russian River Brewing Company with the 2016 award for Excellence in the Craft Beer Industry. The Harvest Fair will celebrate Vinnie and Natalie Cilurzo along with their fellow Harvest Fair award recipients during the Sonoma County Harvest Awards ceremony and dinner September 25 at Luther Burbank Center for the Arts. The celebration is open to the public with tickets available at HarvestFair.org or at the Harvest Fair Box Office located at 1350 Bennett Valley Road in Santa Rosa.

The 2016 Sonoma County Harvest Fair is September 30-October 2 at the Sonoma County Events Center at the Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa. The popular and prestigious annual event includes the World Championship Grape Stomp, wine, beer and cider tasting, food and wine-related seminars, workshops and much more. For information, visit HarvestFair.org or call (707) 545-4200. You can also follow "Sonoma County Harvest Fair" on Facebook.

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