



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**RHONE RANGERS TO HONOR JOHN BUECHSENSTEIN
WITH 2025 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Summer Gala planned for June 28, 2025, in Sonoma, CA

Paso Robles, CA (June 5, 2025) – The Rhone Rangers™ will present its ninth Lifetime Achievement Award on Saturday, June 28, 2025, to recognize the significant contributions made by an individual to the American Rhone wine movement. This year's honor will be bestowed to renowned wine educator and veteran California winemaker, John Buechsenstein. Buechsenstein is one of the original co-founders of the Rhone Rangers™ organization.

A native of the Bay Area, John Buechsenstein had his Rhône epiphany while tasting a 1955 Châteauneuf-du-Pape in the early 1970's that was given to him by a professor friend from Cornell. Later, while studying at UC Berkeley, Buechsenstein had the opportunity to further his newfound love of wine when an attorney friend enlisted him to help select wines for a new wine bar he was opening. This set the course for Buechsenstein who honed his tasting skills and furthered his education in viticulture and enology by transferring to UC Davis. While attending UC Davis, he became involved with and resurrected the UC Davis Extension's Sensory Evaluation of Wine course, which he has taught for the last forty-seven years as well as teaching in the Winemaking Certificate Program. In addition to his storied career as an educator at UC Davis, Buechsenstein co-authored the Standardized System of Wine Aroma Terminology, known as the Wine Aroma Wheel.

After graduating from UC Davis, Buechsenstein landed his dream job as an enologist at Joseph Phelps Winery where he was able to expand on his love of Rhône wines by focusing on Syrah. While at Joseph Phelps he and several other winemakers, including fellow UC Davis alumnus Randall Grahm, and his good friend Steve Edmunds, began speaking and meeting frequently to discuss and compare notes on winemaking and Rhône varieties. These meetings formalized and became larger gatherings where winemakers could taste and evaluate each other's wines in a setting that allowed everyone to openly discuss the nuances, rewards, and challenges in crafting wines from these obscure and unique varietals. By 1988, the name Rhone Rangers was coined (through a collaboration between Edmunds and Buechsenstein), with the Rhone Rangers™ formally formed as a 501c (6) organization in 1998.

Throughout the years, Buechsenstein has contributed greatly to the wine industry as a winemaker, wine educator, and directing wine study tours to the wine regions of Bordeaux, Champagne, Loire Valley, and the Rhône Valley in France. Buechsenstein is a past president of the American Society for Enology and Viticulture, a charter member of the Society of Wine Educators, and a professional wine judge at wine

competitions in the United States and abroad. Buechsenstein has been a contributing writer for many wine publications, and recently co-authored a book for UC Press, *Wine and Place: A Terroir Reader*.

“This year’s lifetime achievement award recipient, John Buechsenstein, began his winemaking career at Joseph Phelps Winery in 1980 after graduating from UC Davis. He then went on to craft Rhône varietal wines at McDowell Valley Vineyards and Fife Vineyards,” noted Larry Schaffer, the current national Rhone Rangers President. “He is credited with being a steering founder of our organization, back in the 1980s along with last year’s recipient, Steve Edmunds. It might be said, that without John’s enthusiasm and persistence, the organization might not have been formed and would not have achieved its current successes. We are pleased to recognize John for his contributions to the American Rhone wine community with this Lifetime Achievement honor.”

Past Rhone Rangers Lifetime Achievement honors have been awarded to notable Rhone wine luminaries, including Randall Grahm – Bonny Doon Vineyard (2013), Robert Haas – Tablas Creek Vineyard (2014), Robert “Bob” Lindquist – Qupé/Lindquist Family Wines (2015), Bill Easton – Terre Rouge (2016), Sondra Bernstein – the girl and the fig (2017), Gary Eberle -Eberle Winery (2021), Frederic Cline – Cline Family Cellars (2023), and Steve Edmunds – Edmunds St. John Winery (2024).

The Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to John Buechsenstein during the Rhone Rangers Summer Gala wine dinner, to be held at the girl & the fig’s suite D in Sonoma, CA on Saturday, June 28, 2025. The evening will include speakers from throughout the American Rhone wine community. Tickets are \$175 per person and include a multi-course dinner and an exclusive selection of Rhone wines, many from the private collections of the Rhone Rangers in attendance. For reservations, please visit www.rhonerangers.org.

About the Rhone Rangers™

Founded in 1998, the Rhone Rangers™ are a group of 130+ wineries throughout the United States dedicated to making wines from the 22 grape varieties originally made famous in France’s Rhône Valley. With a mission to educate and promote American Rhone varietal wines, the organization holds special events and fundraisers throughout the year to raise funds for their educational endeavors and the Rhone Rangers Scholarship Fund, which benefits students studying viticulture, enology, and wine business.

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