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New Products

Cross-cut Staves Now Available from Fine Northern Oak

Minneapolis-based **Fine Northern Oak** introduced its cross-cut oak staves at this year's ASEV annual meeting. The staves are made from "Northern Region" American oak (*Quercus alba*). This oak, often called Minnesota Oak, comes from the northwest portion of *Quercus alba*'s range in the US. Oak from this region is somewhat famous for its tight- and even-grained wood.

The stave-wood is the same grade as those used to make American oak wine barrels. Fine Northern Oak air-seasons the staves for three years. This removes bitterness and astringency from the oak while enhancing the natural aromas and tannins.

The staves are slowly convection-toasted for an even toast level. Fine Northern Oak selected this method of toasting because it yields a more evenly toasted product.

The staves are cut across the grain at regular intervals to speed the wine penetration into the oak and thereby decrease the time required to extract the volatile aroma compound from the oak. In part, this is due to the increased surface area of the stave, but mainly the increased rate of penetration/extraction is due to the exposure of the oak grain (xylem and phloem actually) at each cross-cut. The cuts are close enough together to mitigate the blockage of the vascular tissue in *Quercus alba* heartwood by tyloses.

Meridian Vineyards winemaker **Signe Zoller** added the cross-cut staves from Fine Northern Oak to her winemaking program this year. "We have only limited experience, but it is definitely one of my favorites. It's like finding a spice that blends perfectly with a stew without overwhelming it. I'm particularly fond of the heavy toast product which fills up the mouth without a resinous, coarse, green feel. The beauty of an oak product such as this one is the agility it gives you to make last-minute finishing touches to a wine."

The cross-cut staves are available as individual staves for use in barrels or as "frameworks" for use in tanks. Fine Northern Oak has a barrel equivalent calculator on their website to aid winemakers in determining the number of cross-cut staves or frameworks to use for a given volume of wine.

Fine Northern Oak uses the Staggemeyer Stave Mill in Caledonia, Minnesota, which also sells stave-wood and cuts staves for several other cooperages.

For more information, call: 952-935-9631, email: info@finenorthernoak.com or visit: www.finenorthernoak.com.