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THE MERITS OF MERITAGE MERITAGE ASSOCIATION PETITIONS FOR DICTIONARY STATUS

YOUNTVILLE, CA, FEBRUARY 17, 2006 - "Meritage", often mispronounced and occasionally misunderstood, will soon find its place in Webster's Third New International Dictionary if the Meritage Association has its way.

The organization's co-chairwomen, Michaela Rodeno of St. Supery Winery and Julie Weinstock of Cosentino Signature Wineries, have officially petitioned Merriam-Webster, Inc., to include the word in the next edition of its largest and most comprehensive dictionary. In a letter sent to Dr. Frederick C. Mish, editor-in-chief of Merriam-Webster, Rodeno and Weinstock noted that since it was coined in 1988, the word "Meritage" has "taken on a life of its own."

"A quick inquiry using Google and Yahoo Internet search engines will generate more than 1.4 million references to the word 'Meritage'," said Weinstock, "but if you try to look it up in the dictionary, you're out of luck because it's not there."

According to Weinstock, the word was coined 18 years ago when three Napa Valley wineries - Cosentino, Flora Springs and Quintessa - sponsored an international contest to come up with a name for American wines blended in the tradition of Bordeaux. The winner was Neil Edgar, who then lived in Newark, CA. Mr. Edgar's word - "Meritage" - was a combination of the words merit and heritage, which recognized the premium quality of the grapes used to make the blend and the French tradition of blending grape varieties.

"Meritage has become a part of the American vernacular," Weinstock explained. "There are restaurants, financial firms, housing developments, apartment complexes, hospitality groups, media conglomerates, vacation rentals, photographers, catering firms - even a car wash - that carry the name 'Meritage'," she said.

Officially, "Meritage" is a type of red or white wine which is blended from two or more grape varieties traditionally grown in Bordeaux, France, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot or Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon. However, the word also is consistently used as a synonym a Bordeaux blend and is often used to describe something of the highest quality. "Meritage" also is a registered trademark of The Meritage Association and, in the wine industry, can only be used by wineries that agree to the association's licensing agreement, which stipulates the types of blends that can be labeled "Meritage." While initially used to describe American blended

wines, the word has been adopted internationally. Today, more than 150 wineries in the United States, Canada, Australia, Mexico and Israel make Meritage wines.

"Meritage" rhymes with the word "heritage," but more often than not is mispronounced to rhyme with "garage."

"One major benefit to having the word published in the dictionary is that more people would finally learn how to pronounce it correctly," Weinstock said.

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