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Wine Market Council Unveils 2026 Innovation Panel Featuring Industry Leaders at Napa Conference

Executives from top wineries will showcase proven strategies driving sales, digital engagement, and consumer growth in a changing market.

Thursday, March 12, 2026



The Wine Market Council has announced the lineup for its “Wine Innovation Panel,” set to take place during the 2026 WMC Research Conference at Copia in Napa, California. The event is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25, 2026, from 1:00 to 6:00pm. The

conference will focus on the theme “Innovating Wine for Tomorrow’s Market,” bringing together industry leaders to discuss new strategies and technologies shaping the future of wine marketing, sales, and consumer engagement.

Executives from Jackson Family Wines, Domaine Serene, Whiny Baby, and Amici Cellars will headline the innovation panel. Each speaker will present a case study of a proven innovation that has delivered measurable results such as increased wine sales, growth in wine club memberships, higher tasting room and website visitation, or stronger social media engagement.

Kendal Webber, Vice President of Marketing at Jackson Family Wines, will discuss recent product development efforts and brand refresh initiatives. This includes the introduction of “no sugar added” wine labeling and creative direct-to-consumer programs like complimentary tasting room happy hours that have led to increased visitor traffic. Webber will also address partnership opportunities with sports teams and new approaches to events and digital marketing.

Liz Lease-McCaffrey, Chief Revenue & Marketing Officer at Domaine Serene Vineyards & Winery and Château de la Crée, will share a partnership strategy that connects wholesale and direct-to-consumer channels. This approach has resulted in more wine club sign-ups and greater visitation to tasting rooms in both Oregon and Burgundy.

Jess Druey, Founder and Head of Whiny Baby, will highlight innovations in new wine product development and digital engagement. Druey’s presentation will focus on how emerging brands can connect with younger consumers and challenge traditional barriers within the wine category.

Melissa Devore, President of Amici Cellars, will explain how her Napa Valley winery adopted artificial intelligence tools early on to boost digital engagement, increase wine sales, and drive tasting room visits. Devore’s experience shows how AI can deliver meaningful results for small, family-owned wineries.

The panel will be moderated by Gino Colangelo, President of Colangelo & Partners. Colangelo is a public relations expert with experience promoting hundreds of domestic and international wine brands. He is also Co-Founder of Come Together, a community

focused on sharing positive stories about wine.

In addition to the innovation panel, the conference will feature presentations by Danny Brager, Wine Industry Analyst, and Liz Thach, MW, President of the Wine Market Council. These sessions will highlight other businesses achieving success through innovative strategies in today’s competitive wine market.

The annual WMC Research Conference brings together professionals from across the wine industry—including researchers and thought leaders—to explore current data, trends, and strategies influencing the sector’s future. The agenda includes registration at 1:00pm followed by a welcome from Liz Thach at 1:30pm. Danny Brager will present an overview of the state of the wine industry at 1:45pm. At 2:15pm, Christian Miller and Liz Thach will share highlights on wine consumer intelligence. After a coffee break at 3:00pm, the innovation panel discussion will run from 3:30 to 5:00pm. The event concludes with a networking session featuring wine and appetizers from 5:00 to 6:00pm.

Attendance is complimentary for up to three employees per WMC member organization. Additional attendees and non-members can register for $125 per person. The fee covers all afternoon sessions as well as refreshments during breaks and the networking session. For further information or registration details, interested parties are encouraged to contact admin@winemarketcouncil.com.