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**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SALUTES THE STATE'S WINEMAKING
INDUSTRY ON TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY**

AUSTIN, Texas – Feb. 9, 2009 – Texas Independence Day is fast approaching on March 2, and the Texas Department of Agriculture encourages consumers to commemorate the day by honoring the Texas winemakers and grape-growers who embody the Lone Star State's independent spirit.

Wine's place in American history is legendary. At the signing of our Declaration of Independence, the nation's forefathers toasted the occasion with a glass of Madeira. Reportedly George Washington's favorite wine, Madeira was served at his inauguration – and today an award-winning Madeira is made here in Texas at Haak Vineyard and Winery in Santa Fe.

"Wine is history in a bottle," Bobby Champion Jr., wine marketing coordinator for the Texas Department of Agriculture, said. "Long before Texas became a state, Spanish missionaries were making wine from native Mustang grapes near El Paso. Today's Texas wine industry emerged in the 1970s through the work of a handful of pioneers. They forged a new path, and now more than 160 wineries operate here."

Some Texas winemakers have been inspired to pay unique tribute to the state's legends.

At Fredericksburg Winery, the Switzer family honors Texas Independence Day with a flag-bearing Sangiovese called "Celebrate Texas." The wine is released each year, appropriately, on March 2.

At Fall Creek Vineyards on Lake Buchanan, the Auler family released two wines in 2008 under the new label "MISSION San Antonio de Valero," the original name of The Alamo. A portion of the proceeds goes to a restoration fund for Texas' most hallowed monument.

The Texas Declaration of Independence was adopted March 2, 1836, at Washington-on-the-Brazos. The following day Sam Houston and 59 fellow participants signed it at the historic Convention of 1836. The declaration ended Mexican rule and marked the birth of Texas as an independent republic.

For winery locations and information on Texas Independence Day and Texas wine activities across the state, visit www.gotexanwine.org.

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