



GRAPE ESCAPE

You don't have to go very far
to find wineries in Placer County
Page 16

District adds
IB program,
expanded
kindergarten.
Page 8

Easter-themed
DIY decorating
projects.
Page 22



ON THE TRAIL

You don't have to go far to find wineries, tasting rooms in Placer County

By David Allen Brown

Austin Lindemann isn't worried about his winery's bottom line. If he turns a profit on his Sauvignon Blanc, Barbera or Merlot sales he'll certainly be pleased, he said. But the 75-year-old retired marketing executive concentrates instead on making the best wine he can on the two acres of land some would say is better suited for hay and alfalfa and not delicate grapes.

Harvesting each September since his vines have matured few years ago is still done by family and friends and he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I don't have to make a living at this," Lindemann said. "Most of the wineries and winemakers in Placer County are family owned. There are no huge corporations. I personally pick the grapes and label each bottle of wine I make."

Lindemann owns River Rock Ranch Lindemann Winery off a dusty dirt road about five miles west of Lincoln. He's a member of the Placer County Vintner's Association. Being a member assures him a spot on the Placer County Wine Trail, which can take even the snobbiest wine aficionado on a tour of 21 wineries and wine sellers' tasting spots and make them a believer in the burgeoning wine region of the county. The Wine Trail map gives directions to wineries as far north as Meadow Vista, east to Auburn and south to Roseville. Lindemann's winery is the farthest west.

"The association started in 2010 and without the map I don't think anyone would know where I was located and they certainly wouldn't drive out here," said Lindemann, who recently won a gold medal at the association's annual wine competition for his 2009 Merlot.

Lindemann can thank the vision and hard work of Jocelyn Maddux for getting the association up and running as well as coming up with the idea for the wine trail and the requisite map. Maddux is the Placer County Vintners Association's marketing committee chairwoman. But she also helps her parents, Phil and Jill Maddux, operate Lone Buffalo Vineyards in Auburn.

The Wine Trail idea started six years ago, she said, and included Lone Buffalo Vineyards and three other wineries. It's grown five-fold with a couple of wineries set to debut this year, Maddux said.

"We have a great mixture of in-town tasting rooms that showcase the wines they make to wineries and vineyards with a more rural feel," Maddux said.

"Everyone is passionate and not everyone is in it to make money. We are still very small compared to other wine areas but our wines are holding their own against the others. People are starting to notice us."

Placer County wineries have a long history. Grapes have been grown for wine in the area for as long as they have in neighboring El Dorado and Amador counties. But Prohibition forced many Placer County wineries to uproot the vines and replace them with fruit trees.

It's only been within the last decade or so that Placer County has seen a resurgence of wine grapes planted, and those vineyards are only now coming into maturity and producing wine capable of going nose-to-nose with the better-known varieties from El Dorado, Amador and even Napa counties.

At February's prestigious San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, the largest competition of American wines in the world, Placer County Wine Trail vintners took home two best-of-class awards, seven gold, 20 silver and 23 bronze medals. Auburn's Vina Castellano Winery took best-of-class in its price category for its Tempranillo,

for its Cabernet Sauvignon.

"We are all starting to see all of our hard work pay off," Jocelyn Maddux said.

"We all do the same events as the larger and more well-known wine counties. But we have one thing that really helps. We have Interstate 80 to get the large population around us to our wineries. You can go to one winery on the map, or go to 10-12 over a weekend. Everyone is so centrally located that the map makes it easy."

Lone Buffalo produces approximately 1,500 cases of wine a year, Maddux said, with her father serving as head vintner. He's a lawyer, she said, but just about every hour of the day not dedicated to his law practice goes into making great wine.

Marshall Davis works for Intel in Folsom and like Phil Maddux, the job just fuels their real passion – winemaking. But don't call it a hobby. When your garage is turned into a fermenting, storage and bottling plant and you're looking for industrial space so you can produce more cases of wine, then it's definitely something more than a hobby.

Stamp collecting is a hobby. Winemaking is a calling, Davis said.

"I make my wines out of my garage and can't make more than 400 cases there so

SEE **WINE**, PAGE **18**

while Lincoln's [Wise Villa Winery](#) took best-of-class

I'm luckily and happily experiencing growing pains," said Davis, owner of Davis Dean Cellars in downtown Lincoln.

"I'm looking for a larger space where I can make a thousand cases or more. To me, a thousand cases means I can retire from my job at Intel and, like Austin (Lindemann), do what I really want to do and that's make fantastic wine."

Winemaking is personal for these Placer County vintners. Their families are part of the process and the winemakers often name wines after their family members, or have some sort of backstory of each varietal as a tribute to them.

The labels on each Lindemann's River Rock Ranch bottle feature a picture of his late wife, Maryann. Davis's Zinfandels are called Zynthias after his wife, Cynthia. The best-selling wine at his tasting room in Lincoln is a 2010 mix of Zinfandel and Petite Syrah called Willow's Reserve after his daughter, Willow. Soon there will be a Liam's Late Harvest Zinfandel named after his young son.

If the wines aren't named after family members the stories around the wines are just as personal.

At Mt. Vernon Winery near Old Town Auburn, proceeds from sales of certain varieties of their wines go to fight against breast cancer, a cause near and dear to the hearts of owners Jim and Lynda Taylor and their

SEE WINE. PAGE 20

son, Ryan, who is the chief winemaker.

Mt. Vernon is the only winery in the world allowed to use the pink breast cancer awareness ribbon on its wine labels. That's due to the Taylor's relationship with world-renowned and Sacramento-based breast cancer surgeon Dr. Ernie Bodai.

Mt. Vernon is the largest winery in the Placer County Vinters Association and produces more than 5,000 cases a year. But 18 years ago, what is now six acres of vineyards were natural, rolling foothills just west of Old Auburn. The Taylors have bottled Cabernet Sauvignons, Merlots, Barberas and Ports.

They operate a retail side of the business that is most like those of the bigger wineries one would find in Napa Valley or Amador County's Shenandoah Valley. They have outdoor concerts in the summers and a wine cave where they hold special functions as well store barrels of fermenting wine. But visitors can taste 17 different varieties and vintages for just \$6. Those are definitely not Napa Valley prices.

"We're still family owned and operated and we like it that way," said Ryan Taylor, who planted every vine on the property. "If we expand any more I'll never get to take a vacation."

PLACER COUNTY WINE TRAIL

BEAR RIVER WINERY

Tasting: Friday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
2751 Combie Road, Meadow Vista
(530) 878-8959
bearriverwinery.com

BONITATA BOUTIQUE WINE

Tasting: Wednesday-Sunday, 1-6 p.m.
291 Auburn-Folsom Road, Auburn
(530) 305-0449
bonitataboutiquewine.com

CANTE AO VINHO

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
5250 Front St, Rocklin
(530) 633-0234
canteaovinho.com

CASQUE WINES

Tasting: Friday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and by appointment
9280 Horseshoe Bar Road, Loomis
(916) 652-2250
casquewines.com

CIOTTI CELLARS

Tasting: Friday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
3750 Taylor Road, Loomis
(916) 534-8780
ciotticellars.com

CRISTALDI VINEYARDS

Tasting: Weekends, by appt. only
4060 Ridge Drive, Loomis
(916) 759-1291
cristaldivineyards.com

DAVIS DEAN CELLARS

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
448 Lincoln Blvd, Suite 203, Lincoln
(916) 644-0495
davisdeancellars.com

DONO DAL CIELO VINEYARD AND WINERY

Tasting: Thursday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
6100 Wise Road, Newcastle
(530) 888-0101
donodalcielo.com

FAWNRIDGE WINERY

Tasting: Friday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and by appointment
5560 Fawnridge Road Auburn
(530) 887-9522
fawnridgewine.com

GREEN FAMILY WINERY

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, noon-4:30 p.m.
(no bicycles or buses please)
3420 Pine Ridge Lane, Auburn
(530) 888-8866
greenfamilywinery.com

LONE BUFFALO VINEYARDS

Tasting: Friday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
7505 Wise Road, Auburn (Enter at Buttes View Lane)
(530) 823-1159
lonebuffalovineyards.com

MT. VERNON WINERY

Tasting: Thursday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
10850 Mt. Vernon Road, Auburn
(530) 823-1111
mtvernonwinery.com

PAZA VINEYARD & WINERY

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
3357 Ayres Holmes Road, Auburn
(916) 834-0565
pazavinesandwines.com

PESCATORE VINEYARD & WINERY

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
7055 Ridge Road, Newcastle
(916) 663-1422
pescatorewines.com

POPIE WINES

Tasting: Friday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
3750 Taylor Road, Loomis
(916) 768-7643
popiewines.com

RANCHO ROBLE VINEYARDS

Tasting: Please call first
340 Fleming Road, Lincoln
(916) 645-2075
ranchoroble.com

RIVER ROCK RANCH

LINDEMANN WINERY

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, noon-4 p.m.
6024 Prairie Way, Lincoln
(916) 408-3855
riverrockranch.com

(No freeway access from Highway 65
to Nicolaus Road)

ROCK HILL WINERY

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
2970 Delmar Ave., Loomis
(916) 410-7105
rockhillwine.com

SECRET RAVINE VINEYARD AND WINERY

Tasting: Saturday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
and by appt.

4390 Gold Trail Way, Loomis
(916) 652-6015
secretravine.com

VIÑA CASTELLANO WINERY

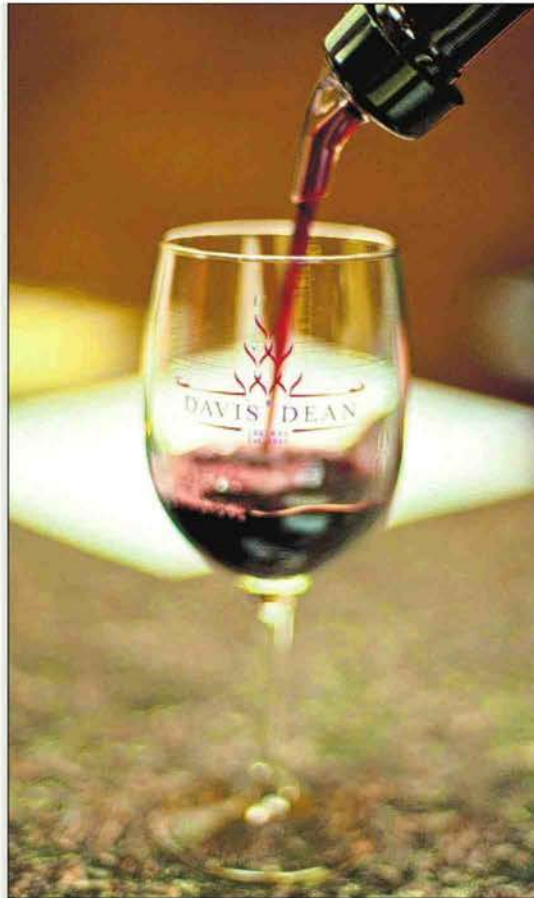
Tasting: Thursday-Sunday, noon-5 p.m.
4590 Bell Road, Auburn
(530) 889-2855
vinacastellano.com

WISE VILLA WINERY

Tasting: Wednesday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-
5 p.m.

4100 Wise Road, Lincoln
(916) 543-0323
wisevillawinery.com

On the cover: Vines are just beginning to bloom at the Wise
Villa Winery on Wise Road in Lincoln. Photo by Scott
Lorenzo



Scott Lorenzo

The Davis Dean Tasting Room on Lincoln Boulevard in
downtown Lincoln is one of 19 locations on the Placer
County Wine Trail. Story, Page 16.