

# Local

## ✓ <sup>WINERIES</sup> Cheers!

Wine is a growth industry, vintners say

By JOHN ROBINSON  
Sentinel staff writer

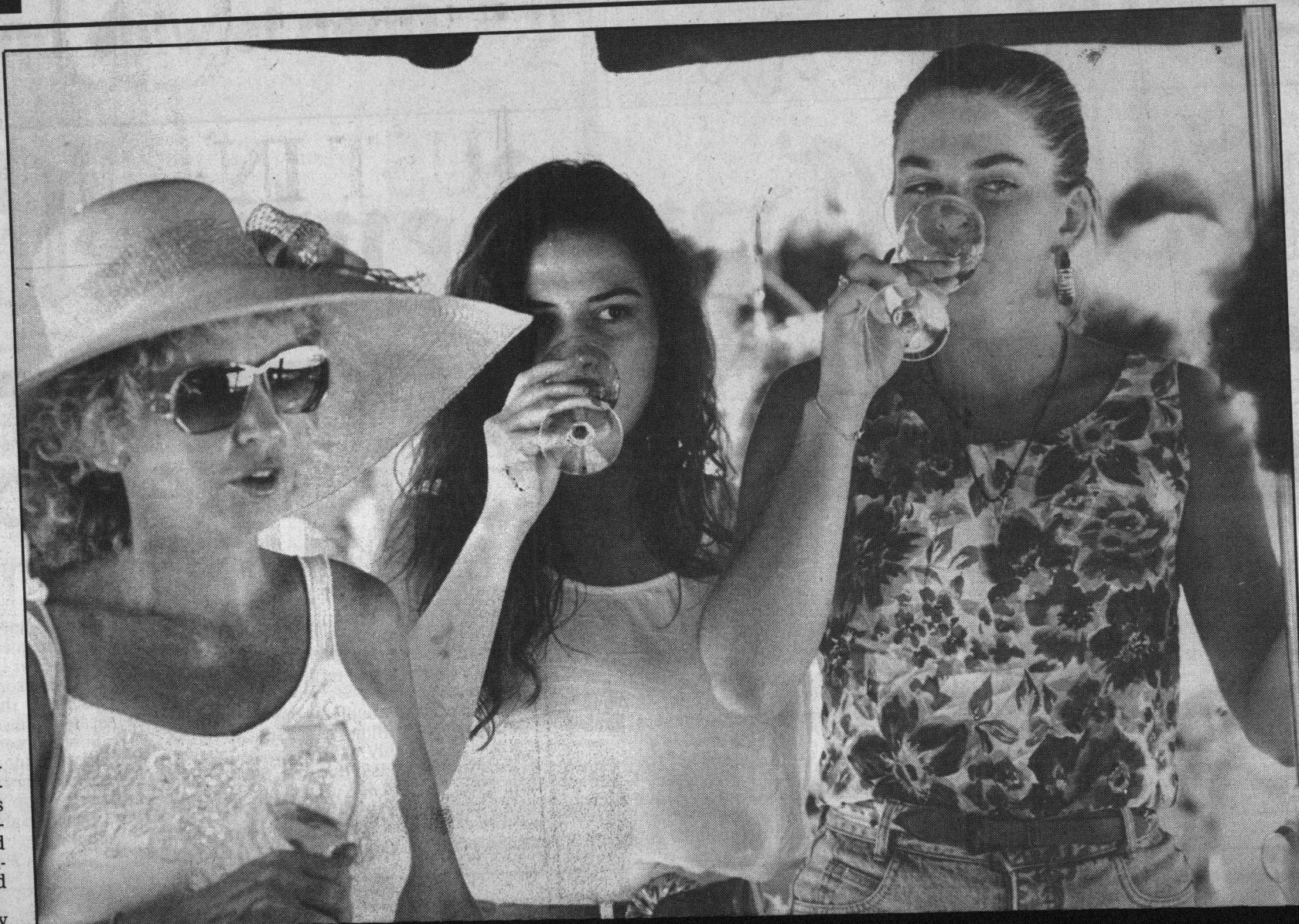
SANTA CRUZ — In the dark coolness of the cellar stood rows of oak barrels and huge casks of aging wine — teasing the tongue with tales of summer fogs, golden meadows and redwood trees.

For in those barrels, stacked in wineries around the county, is the taste of the Santa Cruz Mountains, a wine-producing region that is growing in reputation and stature.

This weekend, 18 local wineries opened their doors for the fifth annual Vintner's Festival, a tasting tour that is expected to draw more than 3,000 serious and casual oenophiles, or wine connoisseurs.

"We're seeing a lot of real high-quality wines being produced locally," said Steve Storrs, of Storrs Winery in Santa Cruz. "More vineyards are going in all the time and we're seeing the Santa Cruz Mountains area becoming nationally and internationally known."

The county's first small winery



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## 18 stops on tour for 1992

Tickets to the Fifth Annual Vintner's Festival can be purchased for \$10 at Bargetto Winery in Soquel, David Bruce Winery in Boulder Creek or Storrs Winery in Santa Cruz.

Self-guided tours start at 11 a.m. and continue 5 p.m. today. A designated driver is recommended.

The number of participants is up this year to a record 18. Here is a list of names and locations.

### Boulder Creek

Algren Vineyard, 20320 Highway 9, 338-6071.

Bear Creek Vineyard, 21428 Bear Creek Road, 395-3718.

Byington Winery, 28150 Bear Creek Road, 354-1111.

David Bruce Winery, 21439 Bear Creek Road, 354-4214.



was one begun by the Santa Cruz Mission priests. In the mid-1880s, the Italian immigrant community took advantage of the area's Mediterranean climate and began planting vineyards around the county to produce their own table wines.

Many of the old vineyards fell into neglect or were plowed under for other crops over the years.

In the 1960s, David Bruce and other vintners realized the potential of the area to produce high-quality wines and founded small wineries. Today, there are more than 20 small wineries and vineyards in the county.

"The only reason Santa Cruz isn't as well known as Napa is that it is smaller," said Don Brissenden, executive director of Byington Winery in Boulder Creek. "But for the small number of wineries, we have a lot of clout."

The local wineries range from fair-sized wineries such as Bonny Doon Winery and Bargetto's, which each produce nearly 25,000 cases a year, to "micro-wineries" such as Bear Creek Vineyards and Salamandre Wine Cellars which produce about 1,000 cases each.

Most of the larger wineries make a variety of wines, buying grapes from the Napa Valley and Hecker Pass areas. Others, especially some smaller operations, use locally grown grapes exclusively.

The county estimated last year's bulk wine grape crop to be worth \$262,000. What that translates to in terms of processed wine value is undetermined.

When it comes to growing high-quality grapes, the Santa Cruz Mountains are graced with sunny, south-facing slopes that are cooled at night by maritime breezes, which makes an ideal viticultural zone.

"This area is ideal for pinot noirs, chardonnays and zinfandels," Storrs said.

The wineries on the tour vary greatly in appearance and style.

Perhaps the most lavish is Byington Winery and Vineyard,

which was founded in 1988 with an investment of "millions" in a 17,000-square-foot Italian-style chateau, landscaped grounds and large capacity wine-making equipment.

Byington has owned the 90-acre parcel since 1962 but has a background in other businesses, including steel and cattle ranching.

"We're really in the hospitality business," Brissenden said. "It's really a labor of love and business. We looked at the market and decided on high-quality, limited production."

Where Byington's high profile approach — such that it has drawn complaints from neighbors due to the large amount of traffic it draws — other vineyards are barely noticeable.

At Boulder Creek Winery, the entire operation consists of winemaker Greg Stokes and his family.

"We don't have any employees," he said. "It's just me, my wife and my mother and father-in-law."

Stokes has about five acres planted and produced his first wines this year. It is a labor of love and little profit — at least for now.

"I hope it will provide an income and that I'll make a living," Stokes said.

Stokes, who also manages the vineyards for David Bruce Winery, just down the road, started his own winery because he "wanted to do things differently."

"Everybody has a different style," Stokes said. "You take the same grapes and three people will have three different styles of wine."

Who makes the best wine in the county?

It's a matter of personal taste, and for many of those enjoying the

At David Bruce Winery, Barbara Nicholson, Leah Mocsy, and Holly Nicholson on a tour that continues today.



The Byington Winery in Boulder Creek features a 17,000-square-foot chateau.

tasting, it was more a matter of enjoying the day.

"We've been to Napa so many times," said Barbara Nicholson of Los Gatos. "It's a totally different atmosphere here. It's beautiful. We love taking people up here (to local wineries)."

*The Vintner's Festival tour costs*

*\$10 and the entry into each winery is a wineglass passed out at the beginning of the tour.*

*Participating wineries include Ahlgren, Bargetto, Bear Creek, Byington, Crescini, David Bruce, Devlin, Hallcrest, McHenry, River Run Vintners, Roudon-Smith, Salamandre, Santa Cruz Mountain*

*Vineyard, Silver Mountain, Soquel, Storrs, Trout Gulch and Zayante Vineyards.*

*The tour runs from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and begins at three places, Bargetto Winery in Soquel, David Bruce Winery on Bear Creek Road and Storrs Winery in Santa Cruz.*

Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

**Felton**  
Hallcrest Vineyards,  
379 Felton Empire Road,  
335-4441.

Zayante Vineyards, 420  
Old Mount Road,  
335-7992.

**Bonny Doon**  
McHenry Vineyard,  
6821 Bonny Doon, Road,  
916-756-3202.

**Santa Cruz**  
Storrs Winery, Old Sash  
Mill, 303 Potrero Street,  
Santa Cruz, 458-5030.

**Scotts Valley**  
Roudon-Smith  
Vineyards, 2364 Bean  
Creek Road, 438-1244.

**Soquel**  
Crescini Wines, 2621  
Old San Jose Road,  
462-1466.

Bargetto Winery, 3535  
North Main Street,  
475-2258.

Devlin Wine Cellars,  
3801 Park Avenue,  
476-7288.

Silver Mountain  
Vineyard, Silver Mountain  
Drive, 353-2278.

Soquel Vineyard, 7880  
Glen Haven Road,  
462-9045.

**Aptos**  
Salamandre Cellars, at  
the Veranda Restaurant,  
8041 Soquel Drive,  
685-1881.

Santa Cruz Mountain  
Vineyard, at the Veranda  
Restaurant, 8041 Soquel  
Drive, 685-1881.

Trout Gulch Vineyard at  
The Best, 8035 Soquel  
Drive, 662-9586.

**Watsonville**  
River Run Vintners, 65  
Rogge Lane, 726-3112.