

Soquel Vineyards: Two winemaking brothers and one best bud

Wineries

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The folks behind Soquel Vineyards have forged deep connections to heritage, family and each other.

Twins Peter and Paul Bargetto have winemaking in their blood; grandfather John Bargetto and his brother Philip founded Bargetto Winery in 1933. So it's natural that after learning the family business, the two would want to make their own mark. They have with Jon Morgan, their best friend of 50 years. He spent 30 of those years working at Bargetto Winery.



**STACEY
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Wine Press

Morgan and the Bargetto brothers lived across from each other on Main Street in Soquel, and they all graduated from Soquel High School together. Now they own Soquel Vineyards.

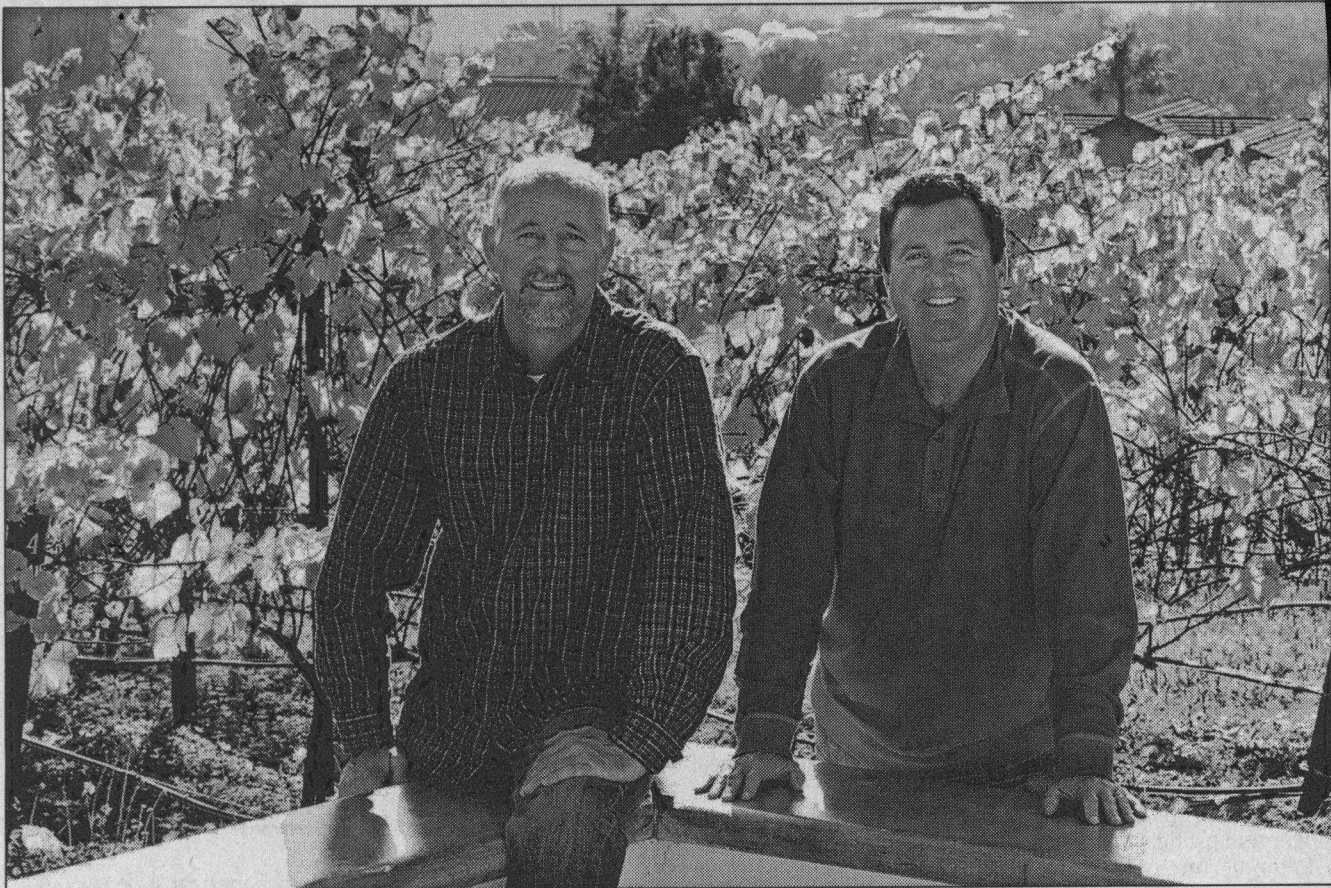
SEE SOQUEL ON C4



Jon Morgan, Paul Bargetto, Olivia Teuschel and Peter Bargetto check the progress of Soquel Vineyards' pinot noir estate crop in the hills above Soquel in 2010.

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DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Jon Morgan and Peter Bargetto on their Soquel Vineyards hilltop location.

SOQUEL

Continued from C1

The longtime friends have an easy working relationship. They opened the winery in 1987 on Glen Haven Road in Soquel and later bought property up the road that once was part of a produce farm owned by John Bargetto.

The tasting room overlooking vineyards and the Monterey Bay is a tribute to their Italian heritage with handmade Italian roof tiles dating from 1751. The immense doors were crafted by Morgan from a 12,000-gallon tank made of 1,800-year-old, first growth redwood, obtained from Bargettos' grandfather.

"All of us are winemakers," says Peter Bargetto, 54. "Jon and Paul do all the production. I work with the growers and do the day-to-day activities. I work with about a dozen different growers."

In addition to bottling estate-grown pinot noir, Soquel Vineyards buys grapes from growers in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Russian River and Napa valleys.

"We specialize in pinot noir," says Peter. "Without a doubt it's 40 percent of production." Soquel Vineyard also bottles old vine zinfandel from a 111-year-old vineyard out of Lodi and cabernet sauvignon from Napa.

"We don't take any shortcuts," he says.

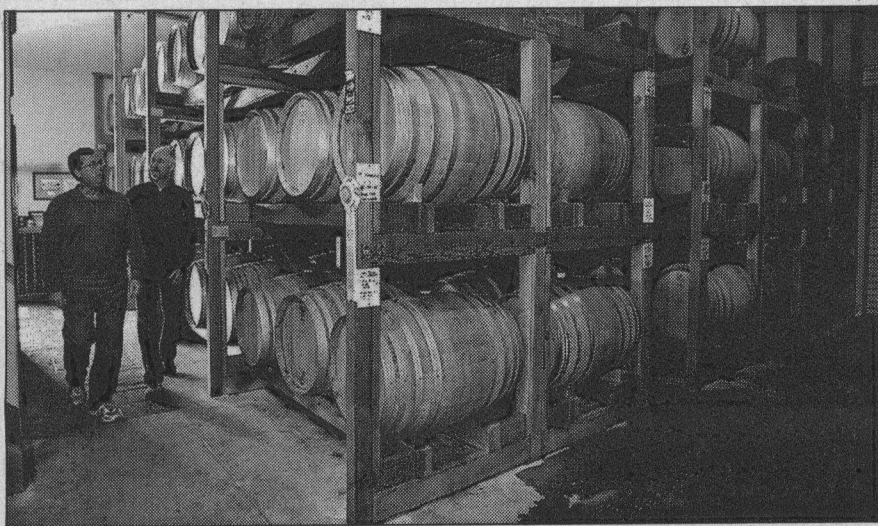
One of Soquel Vineyards' popular wines is the Trinity [\$16], an affordable blend of wines from different appellations.

"When all these wines come in, we use a portion for that blend. If we are crushing Napa Valley cabernet, an extra gallon goes into the Trinity," says Peter. "It's always soft, well-made, in 4- or 5-year-old barrels, emphasizing fruit and elegance."

One neighbor likes it so well, he regularly donates Trinity to the Catholic Church in nearby Capitola. Just wait until he tastes Soquel Vineyard's new Pyramid blend.

The estate vineyard, planted in 2004, is "100 percent organic," augmented with cover crops, fertilized with horse manure and amended with oyster shells for calcium, under the purview of vineyard consultant Prudy Foxx since 2007. Peter notes that in addition to owl houses, they've brought in 10 cats to help control the gophers.

Morgan and the Bargettos have seen four harvests from the vineyard and released their 2008 estate pinot noir six months ago. When Paul retires from



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Peter Bargetto and Jon Morgan at Soquel Vineyards.

AT A GLANCE SOQUEL VINEYARDS

WHAT: Soquel Vineyard is owned by twins Peter and Paul Bargetto and their friend Jon Morgan. Of 5½ acres, three are planted with pinot noir. The winery was established in 1987.

TASTING ROOM: 8063 Glen Haven Road, Soquel

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays

I MAKE WINES THAT: 'reflect the soils of the Santa Cruz Mountains.'

WINES: Produces pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, Chardonnay, blends and zinfandel. Grapes are from estate vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains, Russian River Valley and Napa Valley appellations.

FAMILY: Peter is married to Irene. They have two children, Simone and Sabrina. Paul is married to Sue and they have two children, Michael and Stephanie. Jon is married to Lisa and they have two children, Natalie and Stephanie.

OUTSIDE THE WINERY: Peter and his wife [she's from Chieri, Italy] visit their home in Italy for a month each year. Paul frequents a home in Tahoe, and Jon is a windsurfer and avid golfer.

INSPIRED BY: 'great Italian cooking,' says Peter. 'I love to cook. Right now, I'm going to make fresh cioppino. My wife is a gourmet cook from Italy. We eat Italian nightly.'

PRODUCES: 5,000 cases a year.

WINEMAKER SELECTION: 2008 Pinot Noir, Lester Family Vineyards. This vintage is bold and rich, layered with sweet, creamy French oak. The grapes from Lester Family Vineyards are a favorite of the winemakers and grown from seven clones in the Pleasant Valley area within the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation. \$40.

RECOMMENDS: Mount Eden Vineyards. 'I love (Jeffrey Patterson's) Chardonnay. At \$48, it's worth it. He's the best Chardonnay producer in the Santa Cruz Mountain appellation.'

CONTACT: 831-462-9045, www.soquelvineyards.com

the Soquel Creek Water District in April, he'll be in charge of planting an additional 10 acres of grapes.

"They are wines of finesse, elegance and character without being manipulated," says Peter, describing the hands-off winemaking process. He also gives credit to the tightly grained French barrels they use.

But for Peter, the ultimate payoff

is seeing other people enjoy Soquel Vineyards wine.

"I have passion already for wine. When I see people getting excited (about his wines), it's moving. It's something money can't buy."

Wine Press appears monthly. Contact Stacey Vreeken, the Sentinel's former Food & Wine editor, at staceyvreeken@gmail.com.