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TOM BREZSNY, MONTEREY BAY PROPERTIES



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel-photos

Roudon-Smith Winery's assistant winemaker Michael Walter takes stock of the winery's 2002 Merlot.

A winery of one's own

wineries 4-6-03

After three decades of winemaking lifestyle, Roudon-Smith Winery owners ready to retire

By GWENDOLYN MICKELSON
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

SCOTTS VALLEY

✓ After three decades of making wine at the highly regarded Roudon-Smith Winery, owners Bob Roudon and Jim and June Smith are ready to move into full retirement and have put their Scotts Valley property on the market.

What's for sale is more than buildings and equipment — it's a lifestyle.

The Santa Cruz Mountains wine-growing region, ranging from Half Moon Bay in the north to Mount Madonna in the south, now encompasses 50 small family-owned wineries. But in the 1970s, only a handful of hardy souls were making wine in the area. Roudon-Smith Winery was one of them.

Now, after more than three decades of producing highly regarded wines and being active members of the community and the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association, Bob Roudon and Jim and June Smith

Roudon-Smith Winery

WHAT IT IS: A 10,000-case capacity winery and use permit, equipment, home, approximately 3 acres of land.

LIST PRICE: \$949,500.

OWNERS: Jim and June Smith, Bob Roudon.

REALTOR: Tom Brezsný, Monterey Bay Properties; 464-5231.

LOCATION: 2364 Bean Creek Road, Scotts Valley.

INFORMATION: 438-1244; www.roudonsmith.com.

TASTING HOURS: Saturdays 11 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Sundays by appointment.

are ready to move on. They've put their winery on the market — but what's for sale is more than buildings and equipment.

"It's a lifestyle," says Tom Brezsný of Monterey Bay Properties, which is handling the sale. "Yes, there's a home here and a setting and a winemaking facility. But there's also a slower, genteel pace that has a certain gracious quality."

The Roudons (Bob Roudon's former wife, Annamaria, passed away in 1995) and the Smiths founded the winery in 1972, after the men met on the job at the Santa Clara startup they worked for. After a few years of

commuting back and forth from Silicon Valley while still holding down technology jobs, the families moved to the Santa Cruz Mountains permanently and dedicated themselves to winemaking.

Winemaker Bob Roudon learned how to make wine in Europe during a tour of duty with the U.S. Army in Germany. Later, he discovered French wines and winemaking techniques, which has influenced the style of Roudon-Smith wines since. It has been named one of the top 10 California "food wineries" by the

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Owners Jim and June Smith talk outside the Roudon Smith Winery, on Bean Creek Road in Scotts Valley.

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Wine & Food Companion and has had its wines highly rated by the Wine Spectator.

The winery has the capacity to produce 10,000 cases a year; for the past two to three years, Roudon and the Smiths have been in semi-retirement, producing 2,000 cases and renting out the extra space. But lately, thoughts of full retirement began creeping in.

"We're well past retirement age," says June Smith. "And you start thinking about how you want to do some other things in your life, so you've got to take steps to make that happen."

Their successor will be purchasing a 1,600-square-foot house, about 3 acres of land (a half-acre of which is planted with Chardonnay grapes), a 4,000 square-foot production and storage facility (which also includes a small tast-

ing room), winemaking and bottling equipment and an inventory of wine.

But perhaps the most important thing the buyer will inherit is a winemaker's license. Obtaining a use permit for a Santa Cruz Mountains winery nowadays is very difficult.

"For retail wine selling, there are only a certain number of permits available," says Tom Sanders of Monterey Bay Properties. "You have to go through planning and have the neighborhood involved and so forth, because this area wasn't zoned for a retail operation."

"Back in the '70s getting a permit was easy, but now it wouldn't be," agrees June. "But one nice thing about our permit is that it's a low number, which is kind of prestigious. We're one of the first bonded wineries in Santa Cruz."

Roudon and the Smiths are

looking for the right buyer, one who has a clear passion for wine and winemaking. The candidate might be someone who is ready to make a change, or someone who is successful already and wants to slow down, and is a serious wine hobbyist or wants to learn to make wine.

"Producing 10,000 cases a year is not insignificant, but it's manageable," says Brezsky. "You're not going to be a Mondavi or a J. Lohr, but that fits with the lifestyle."

June says they'd be happy to act as consultants to a new owner who needed to learn about winemaking.

"Also, we have a fantastic association, the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association, which is a big support system for all of us," she says. "The wineries get together, buy grapes together, share equipment, whatever.

There's a wonderful camaraderie among the wineries here."

The winery has one full-time employee, Assistant Winemaker Michael Walters, who is interested in staying on with the new owners.

As for the Smiths and Roudon, who have spent so long building their business and reveling in their passion for making high-quality wines?

"We all like to travel," says June. "Jim and I have grandchildren now. And I always really wanted to be a writer, so now I can devote time to that."

And after all these years in the forest of the bucolic Santa Cruz Mountains, she'd like a house where she can see the ocean.

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