

'Hey, Let's Start A Winery'

Two Friends Turn A One-Time Dream Into Reality

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If you set out to look for a fine winery, the first place you probably wouldn't look is Felton.

Southern France, Germany's Mosel Valley, or California's Napa Valley would probably come to mind.

But come May, you may be able to end your search a little closer to home.

Two young men — one an airline pilot, the other a grocery store manager — are establishing a new winery on the outskirts of Felton.

Its 15 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon and White Riesling grapes were once part of an award-winning winery started approximately 34 years ago by Chaffe Hall.

They hope to continue his tradition.

The new winery, called Two Friends, is exactly that — a winery started by two friends who share an acute appreciation of the centuries-old drink.

As co-owner John Pollard, 31, tells it, he and his partner, Jim Beaugard, 29, were at a party and Beaugard said "Hey, let's start a winery."

"I said, 'yeah, let's do it.' And that's how it happened," he said.

They approached current vineyard owners — Marie and Penry Griffiths — and soon the seeds of the winery-to-be were planted.

The pair plans to produce 4,000 gallons of wine this year. Some of it — the Johan-

nisberg Riesling — will be on the market in May.

The Cabernet will take more time and could be at least three years away.

Their vineyard sits on a sloping hillside west of Felton.

Drive up Highway 9 until you reach Felton Empire Road and you will see the green vines shimmering in the sun.

Their winery is located in the basement of a home that nestles in oak trees and wild grass.

The two friends do not enter the business of winemaking with little experience.

Beaugard, despite his young years, has been involved in grape growing for at least 11 seasons at his father's ranch in Bonny Doon.

Pollard has made his own wine for more than three years.

And the pair has hired a biochemist, Leo McCloskey, to give them a hand in the winemaking process.

The secret to their wine is the grapes, according to Pollard.

The vineyard was planted more than 30 years ago with vines imported from Europe.

Good climate and soil have joined to create a grape with a "lot of character," said Pollard.

To prove it, he points to awards won by Chaffe when he was bottling his own wine from the vineyard.

Just as the old saying — "It's quality, not quantity" — the vineyard doesn't produce the six tons of grape per acre that

is found in areas such as Lodi, said Pollard.

Their grape vines produce only one and a half to two tons

per acre. But, that is what makes them so good, said Pollard.

The two are putting a lot of

stock in their grapes, but equipment plays a big part in winemaking and they know it.

Some of the newest equip-

ment available will be used in the processing of the Two Friends' wine.

Production of the Johan-

nisberg Riesling is the more complicated of the two winemaking processes used on the vineyard.

First, the grapes are dumped into a stemmer-crusher device. The machine does exactly what it is called — it smashes the grape and spits out the stem.

The stem causes extra acid in the wine, Pollard explained.

The resulting skins and juice is called "must," or new wine. The must is pumped into a press which extract all the juice from it.

Then the juice is pumped into a large stainless steel tank.

It stays in the tank one day and then is "racked." That means the sediment is taken out of the juice.

Then, it goes back into another stainless steel tank.

That is where the advanced technology comes in.

The huge vat is wrapped in a thermal jacket which controls temperature in the tank.

When the wine reaches its peak flavor, the winemakers can stop any further fermentation by turning on the cold.

Usually, this happens after one month.

The wine is then filtered and chilled in the tanks for nine months before it is bottled and sold.

The Cabernet relies on a century-old process that has changed little over the years.

The grapes are crushed and put into a bin with a lattice board to hold the grape skins under the juice.

This prevents infections from

growing in the must, said Pollard.

The must stays in the bin for 10 to 20 days fermenting.

Then, when the flavor and color is right, the wine is put into barrels and stays for about two years.

Periodic rackings are done to make sure the wine is just right.

Nothing is added to the Two Friends' wine. It is pure and natural.

The two say their wine won't be cheap.

It will be premier estate-bottled wine to rival any of the best, they say.

(Estate-bottled means that all the wine inside the bottle comes from one vineyard, during one year and is one type of grape, Pollard explained.)

Both are excited about their new venture, but neither plans to make their vineyard a full-time project, said Pollard.

He said he will never give up his pilot's job. Beaugard feels the same way about his market job, said Pollard.

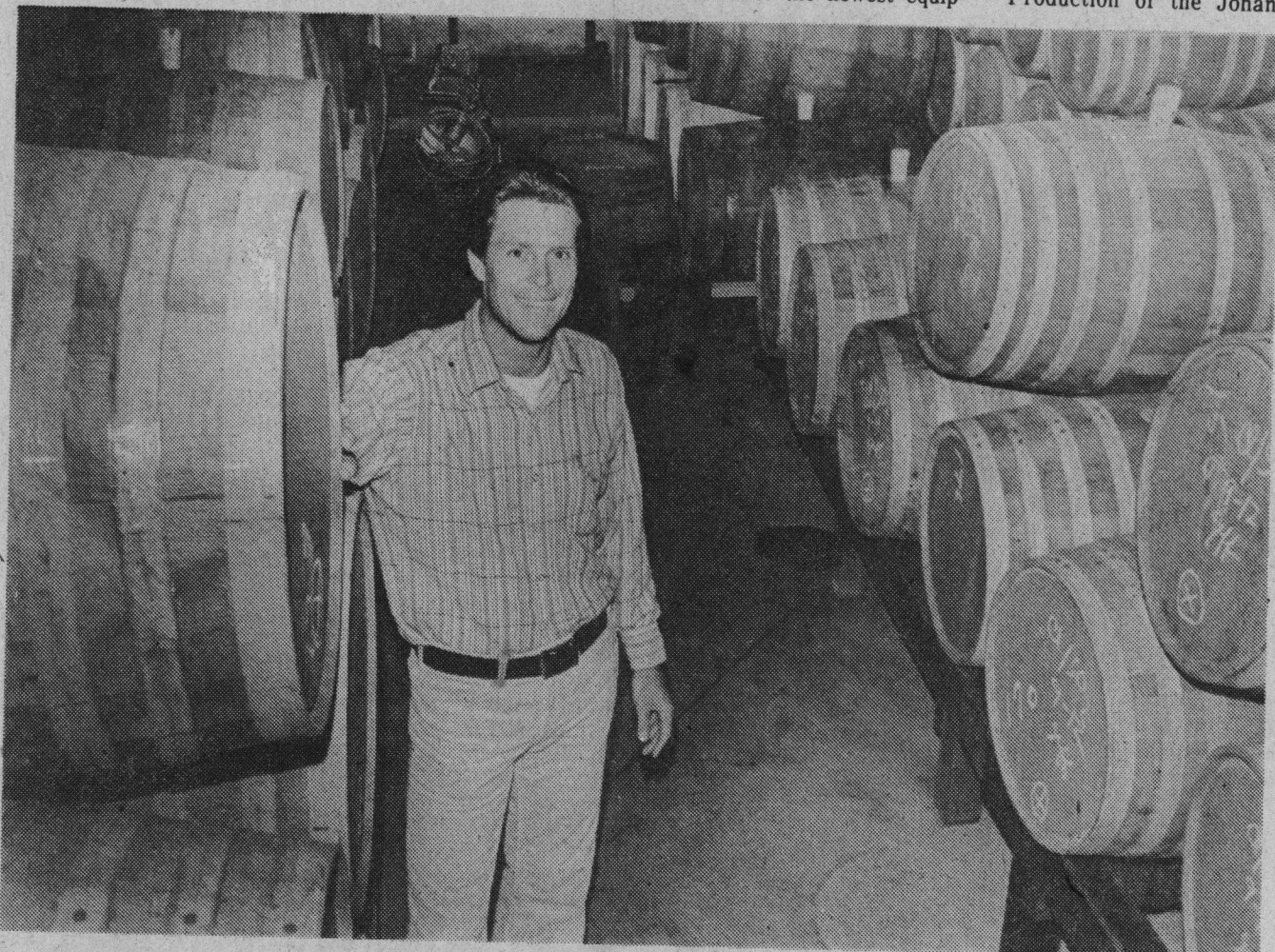
But whenever they are not working at their other jobs, they will be at the vineyard.

"We call ourselves a Mercedes on a shoestring," said Pollard.

Everything we've got is the best we can buy, he explained. But they are still young and can not afford the large scale found in other wineries.

Pollard hopes and believes their wine will be a success.

But no matter what, they will still be two friends.



John Pollard, co-owner of the Two Friends Winery, stands with the oak barrels that will soon hold gallons of their Cabernet Sauvignon wine. The winery, located on the site of the old

Hallcrest Vineyards, makes its debut in 1977 with its Johannisberg Riesling wine. The vineyard is located in Felton