



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Andre and Ryan Beauregard in the family's older vineyard in Bonny Doon.

Totally Stoked on Wine

Beauregard brothers carry on family tradition

Wineries

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By PEGGY TOWNSEND
Sentinel staff writer

The big Ford 350 pickup is straining under the load. Hooked behind it is a trailer piled with 22,000 pounds of farm tractor.

In front of it is a steep, dirt road that winds into 32 acres of hilltop vineyard.

"This is really pushing it," 28-year-old Ryan Beauregard says a little worriedly as the truck bucks and groans up the hill.

His brother, Andre Beauregard, 20, leans forward in the back seat.

He's not sure the truck and its load are going to make it either.

Finally, yellow dust spitting into the air, the truck and tractor crest the rise.

"Whoa, we made it," Ryan says. "That was kind of hardcore."

Ryan and Andre are brothers, part of a family tradition set more than 50 years ago in the hills of Bonny Doon.

They are a new breed of winemaker — guys who discuss cover crops and fruit sugars in conversation peppered with surf slang. A kind of old world meets "Real World."

This year, Ryan and Andre, great-grandsons of the man who first bought land on the hills that fall steeply down to the ocean, will turn out about 6,000 cases of wine under the

the driveway of the family property earlier in the day. Before he and his brother dragged farm equipment up to the other vineyard in their own version of a tractor pull.

"This is where I was born," he says, "and this is where I will die."

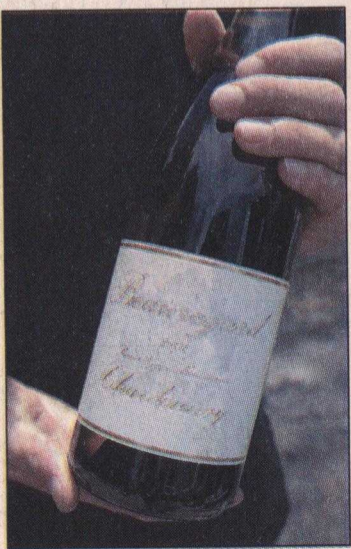
In their blood

Dwight Amos Beauregard, a sheriff who, Ryan says, was fired after he got into a fistfight with a judge, bought the family's first 200-acre piece of Bonny Doon shortly after World War II.

Later, Ryan and Andre's grandfather, Bud Beauregard, planted the first grape vines on the property with his friend, Frank Avidano.

The men planted Zinfandel, Chardonnay and Cabernet the

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The Beauregard family label.

Beauregard label.

Their father and mentor, Jim Beauregard, predicts that in a few years, the winery will be turning out 10,000-15,000 cases of estate-bottled wine.

It's a vision the boys share with their father and their grandfather, and perhaps even with the old Italian mountain man who taught them how to make wine when they were barely out of diapers.

They love the land, the brothers say, and love the tradition that runs in their blood.

"I'm totally connected up here," says Ryan, standing in



The Beauregard brothers unload the tractor at the family's new vineyard.

Beauregard

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old way, following the soil types, snaking the vines over the hillsides in rows that weren't always perfectly straight.

"It was the way winemaking used to be," Ryan says. "They did it for the hobby and the sport of it."

Families would gather for the crush, donning rubber boots to stomp the juice out of the grapes, sipping red wine out of tumblers under a big oak tree at the Bonny Doon ranch.

Frank would give the kids wine watered down with water and sugar in the old Italian way.

"I could tell the difference between Zinfandel, Cabernet and Chardonnay by the time I was 5," Ryan says.

Ryan's father, Jim, grew grapes and made wine too, opening the Felton Empire Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which he later sold.

But the land and winemaking was in his blood, says Jim, who also runs the family's longtime business, Shoppers Corner grocery store.

He and his sons began planting more vineyards. They have four vineyards in Bonny Doon and three scattered around the county that they oversee.

Ryan and Andre talk almost reverently of the land and of the men who went before them — their grandfather, father and Avidano.

"Frank (Avidano) grew vegetables and rabbits. He made wine and hunted mushrooms. He never had to go to the store. He was a true mountain man," Ryan says.

"That's the way I want to live, exactly."

If You Go

WHAT: Beauregard wines.

WHERE: Vineyards in Bonny Doon, winemaking at the Mirassou winery in Saratoga.

WINES: Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Chardonnay. Price range: \$15-\$35.

AVAILABLE: www.beauregardvineyards.com and many local stores and restaurants.

'It's the grapes'

The Beauregard brothers' truck is heading down a steep, twisting road to their Bald Mountain Vineyard with the ungainly tractor in tow.

Ryan is dropping the truck into lower gears, pumping the trailer brakes with a little console hooked to the dashboard.

It's the kind of stuff young guys like to do. Except, Ryan and Andre are talking about wine, not trucks or gear ratios.

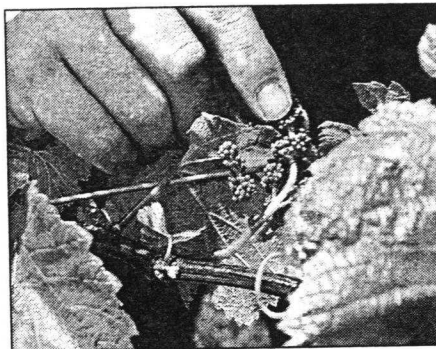
"Our Cabernets are very rich, but not over tannic," Ryan says. "They're very fruit forward."

Their Chardonnays have a pleasing mineral taste that is not too buttery or over-oaked, he explains. They are wonderful with food.

"People say I have a style of winemaking, but it's not me, it's the grapes," Ryan says, as the truck bumps down the road. "The hill has its own flavors."

The hill he is talking about is Bonny Doon, where the soil can range from sandy to loamy. But it's the ocean that is the biggest factor in their winemaking.

The area has a major coastal influence that cuts down on the big temperature swings that occur in places like Napa and Sonoma, Ryan says.



The abundance of tiny fruit shows the Beauregards this will be a big year for their Chardonnay grapes.

Here, the climate is more moderate, so the grapes ripen slowly, making for a more intense fruit, he says.

"It's the same climate as Bordeaux and Beaun (in France)," says Jim who helped establish the Ben Lomond Mountain growing appellation which includes Bonny Doon.

"We have the potential to produce some of the finest wines in the world," Jim says. "It's not a boast. It's just the climate."

The boys are no less enthusiastic. "We take the beast," Ryan says, "and turn it into a beauty."

Restaurants and stores around the state now carry the family's wines, which have been well-received by critics and enthusiasts.

On the land

After Ryan and Andre unhook the tractor, they head off on a tour of their Bald Mountain Vineyard.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

Ryan and Andre Beauregard of Beauregard Vineyards in Bonny Doon.

They harvested 120 tons of grapes out of here last year.

"Last spring was warm, and we got a good fruit set," Ryan says. "It's going to crop really heavy this year."

Next year won't be as heavy, he predicts, surveying the rows of Chardonnay vines that stretch in perfect lines over the rolling land.

The brothers climb out of the truck and head into the vineyard in their surf T-shirts and baggy jeans and talk about things like vertical shoot positioning that makes the vines more fruitful and how they're going to start discing the cover crop into the ground to add minerals to

the soil.

They love it here, they say. They love working the land and seeing the harvest. They love the way there are meadows and hills and tall redwood trees.

"When you get here," Andre says, "you're finally home."

They stand on a small rise and look out over their vineyard, thinking of the men who worked the land before them.

"Frank," says Ryan, "would be stoked on this place."

Contact Peggy Townsend at ptownsend@santa-cruz.com.