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# Bargetto winery plants roots in South County

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WATSONVILLE — The first of what will eventually be 25,000 grape vines were planted Saturday on a rolling Pajaro Valley hill.

Bargetto Winery has established a new vineyard on 47 acres off Green Valley Road. The first fruits of the labor that began last September should appear in three years, said John Bargetto, third generation of the Soquel winery family and general partner of the vineyard named Regan Vineyards after his mother's maiden name.

Although a light crop is expected in three years, the first real crop won't be available until fall 1996, Bargetto explained.

The newly planted vineyard is a sizeable investment for the family winery that has taken on a number of limited partners as investors. Expenses will run into the millions of dollars, Bargetto said. An acre of vineyard costs about \$30,000 to maintain. The venture won't make a profit until at least the year 2000.

Saturday morning, as the sun broke through a coastal overcast, about 30 friends, family and investors planted the first vines on the vineyard's southeast corner at about 600 feet elevation on the slopes of Mount Madonna.

A clone of a Chardonnay grape unique to the Santa Cruz Mountains is the first to hit pay dirt. The vines were grafted to fungus-resistant root stock at a Yolo County nursery. Eventually, Pinot Noirs and Merlots, two varieties that also grow well in this area's cool climate, will be planted.

Bargetto said some classic northern Italian varieties will be added later in honor of the family's heritage.

Grapes grown in the area from Mount Madonna to Woodside are designated as part of the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation that denotes an elevation and climate zone. The area has only about 1,000 acres of vines, about 100 acres within Santa Cruz County, Bargetto said. The 47 acres of Regan Vineyards will be a sizeable increase in

the local wine-growing industry. It is the only South County vineyard so far, he said.

The Chardonnay clone "tends to be a shy bearer" with small clusters that carry a fuller flavor, Bargetto said. When mature, the grapes will be hand-picked and crushed and fermented at the winery on Main Street in Soquel.

The project began about four years ago, Bargetto said, with a search for the right property and a search for investors.

"I walked a lot of goat trails," he said.

Bargetto needed to satisfy what he called the "five S's" — sun, slope, soil, street access for equipment and, perhaps most importantly, sales price.

By coincidence, the site he selected was the same place his father came close to starting a vineyard 20 years ago, Bargetto said.

The land was planted in apples. Last September, the apples were pulled out and the soil "ripped" to a three-foot depth to break up

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Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Kate Ingber had good reason to come from Los Gatos to help at Regan Vineyards — she's the fiancée of Richard Bargetto, whose family owns the vineyard.

hard-pan. A series of support poles and a drip irrigation system were installed over the winter.

Saturday, eight workmen moved well ahead of the one-day planters with post-hole diggers, digging two-

foot holes for the vines.

They have about 24,000 more to go.