

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

John Bargetto takes the measure of one of his family's award-winning wines at Bargetto Winery near downtown Soquel.

# AGED to perfection

The Bargetto family  
has been making  
fine wines for decades

By CAROLYN LEAL  
Sentinel staff writer

*Wines Hunery*

**T**HE CUSTOMER ENTERS Bargetto Winery's tasting room in Soquel and asks for help. He knows nothing about wine, he admits, but he wants a gift for a friend's boss. A white wine, under \$20.

Tasting supervisor John Tuck knows just the wine. He pulls out a bottle of Pinot Grigio. "This wine won three gold medals this year. It's light, kind of fruity, nice and crisp, good with seafood," he says.

The customer buys the wine, picks out a gift bag and goes away happy — a regular occurrence at Bargetto Winery, 3535 No. Main St., Soquel, which has been producing and selling award-winning wines for decades.

The winery is known for its dessert wines, old-fashioned concoctions made from fresh olallieberries, raspberries, apricots and plums. The fruity wines are good for sipping after dinner or serving over ice cream. The olallieberry wine, made from berries grown in Watsonville, is particularly popular. It takes a gold medal every year in wine competition, Tuck said.

The fruit wines were launched in the 1960s when the winery had a bountiful harvest of Santa Rosa plums, said Beverly Bargetto, president of the winery. "We thought, what are we going to do with all of these beautiful plums? Then we thought, the Japanese make plum wine and so can we," she said.

Bargetto, a third-generation, family-run business with Italian roots, also makes a drink from medieval times, called Chaucer's Mead. This ancient drink, mentioned in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, is made from honey and is sold with a packet of

spices. Heated, it spreads a delicious spicy smell throughout the house.

"At first, we served mead cold, but we realized it was originally served warm in medieval castles, so we began heating it," Bargetto said. "Now, we heat it even in summer and people love it."

Also popular is Bargetto's Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay, made from grapes grown at the 36-acre Bargetto vineyard in Corralitos. This wine captured a gold and two silvers this year in wine competition.

The Bargetto family is especially proud to be making wine with the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation because, at the turn of the last century, Santa Cruz Mountains wines were highly prized, Bargetto explained. "In the 1890s, Santa Cruz Mountains wines captured awards in France and were considered among the best in the world."

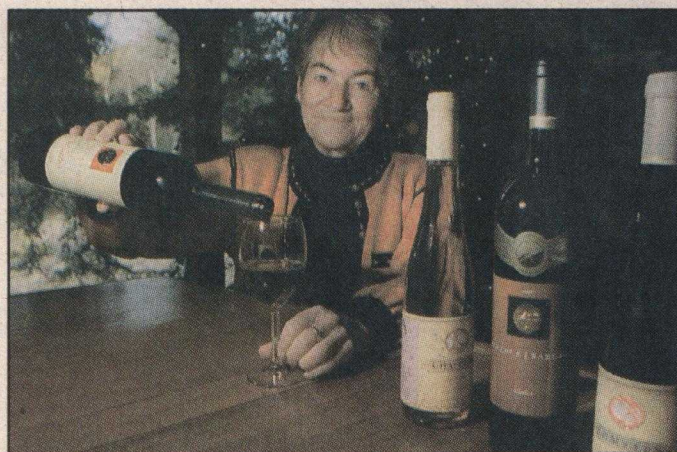
The mountain terrain, coupled with warm days and cool, coastal nights, creates wines with distinctive bold flavors.

**B**ARGETTO WINERY is the oldest continually operating winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Today, the management staff includes Bargetto's three sons, Martin, John and Richard Bargetto; her nephew, Tom Bargetto, and her daughter, Loretta Bargetto Mujal.

"It's a family-run winery; it always has been and it always will be," Bargetto said, pride edging her voice. A slim, gray-haired woman, Bargetto relishes talking about wine and family. She works in a small office in what was once her in-laws' house on the property.

A sense of history hangs over the winery.

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Beverly Bargetto pours a sample in tasting room.

# Bargetto

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A winery brochure says Bargetto Winery began in 1933, established by brothers Phillip and John Bargetto, who emigrated from Italy. But, in fact, the Bargetto brothers were making wine as early as 1917, and their father, Guiseppe Bargetto, was involved in winemaking as early as 1890 in the Redwood City area.

But in 1920, Prohibition struck and the business of winemaking came to a screeching halt. By law, winemakers were permitted to make 200 gallons of wine for their own consumption. The Bargetto brothers, with two families, were allowed to make 400 gallons for personal consumption, but they were prohibited from selling the wine.

They supported themselves in the lean years with row crops. "They had an orchard and sold produce and fruit up and down the valley," Bargetto said.

By the time Prohibition ended, many local wineries had gone out of business. Growers had abandoned their vineyards and the grapevines were hidden by weeds. It was difficult to find grapes to buy, but the two brothers resumed making wine for sale Dec. 5, 1933.

Eventually, John Bargetto and his two sons, Lawrence and Ralph, took over the operation. Beverly is Lawrence's widow and her children and nephew are the third generation of Bargetto winemakers.

"We specialize in wines from this region and we produce six different varietals," marketing manager John Bargetto explained. He ticked the wines off on his fingers: the whites, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Grigio, and the reds, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

gnon.

"The Santa Cruz Mountains wines, these are our heart and soul wines, produced since the 1930s," he said. Today, the winery markets its wine throughout the United States.

The winery has tasting rooms in Soquel and Monterey's Cannery Row. It produces 36,000 cases of wine a year. "It's big for the Santa Cruz Mountains but it's small when compared with other wineries in California," John Bargetto said.

The fact that health experts have decided that drinking wine in moderation is good for you is great news in the wine industry. "At our house, wine is an everyday event," John said. "It tastes great with food and is good for you."

And being part of a winemaking family that can trace its beginning to the early 1900s is very special, John said, "The roots are deep and the bonds are firm. It's a unique tradition to be part of."

Here's a favorite recipe from the winery:

## APRICOTED CORNISH HENS

**6 Cornish game hens, rinsed and patted dry**

**2 stalks celery with leaves, diced**

**1 lg. onion, diced**

**2 lg. cloves garlic, minced**

**3 Tbsp. butter**

**6 cups unseasoned stuffing mix**

**2½ cups dried apricots, quartered**

**2 cups Bargetto Apricot Wine, divided in half**

**¾ cup apricot jelly**

Sauté celery, onions and garlic in butter until onions are transparent. Add mixture to stuffing mix and toss until well blended. Add dried apricots and toss again. Sprinkle stuffing with 1 cup apricot wine and mix well. Stuff hens lightly to allow expansion of dressing during baking. Baste once with melted butter. Roast in preheated 375 degree oven for 45 minutes to an hour, basting every 15 minutes with remaining cup of apricot wine. Baste with melted apricot jelly 10 minutes before hens are done. Serves 6-8.

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*Bargetto Winery's Soquel tasting room, 3535 N. Main St., is open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 475-2258. The Monterey tasting room, 700 Cannery Row, is open daily, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 373-4053.*