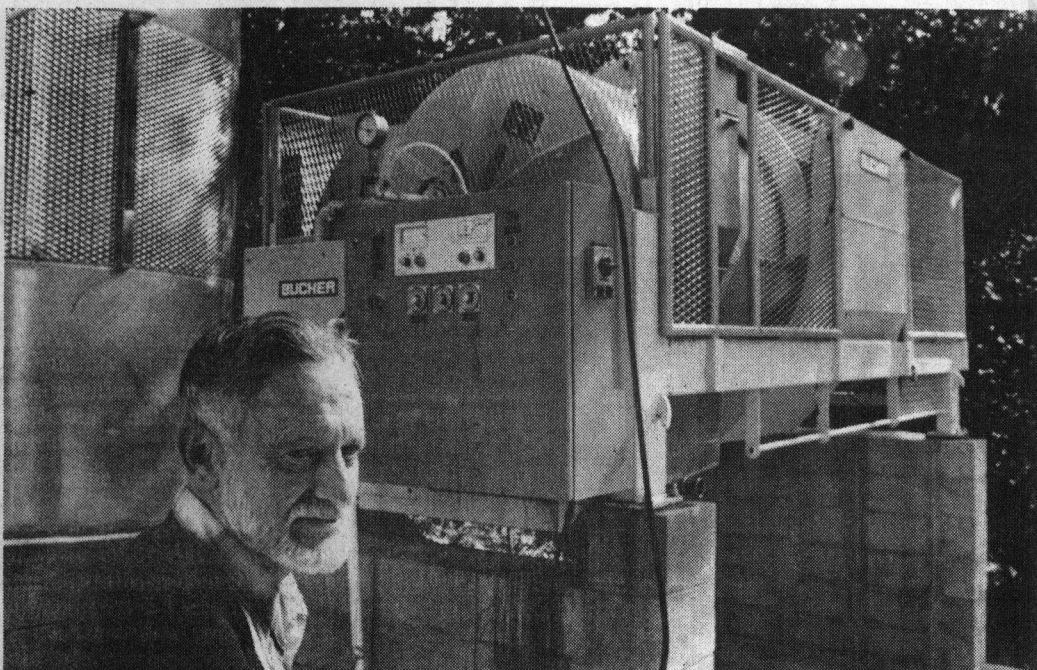


*'People are more aware. . . they want to know why they like this wine more than that one. They're realizing that the things that matter include oak, tannins, brix, acid level. . . '*



## Time for wine

By JEFF HUDSON

**T**en years ago, when Bob Roudon and Jim Smith decided to open a winery, it was something of a speculative venture. They had been home wine makers for years, but there were only a few wineries in Santa Cruz County, and both men were working full-time as engineers in the field of computer manufacturing.

Time, however, has shown it to be a shrewd decision. The Roudon-Smith Winery is now an established name among wine lovers. The winery is presently preparing several special releases to mark its tenth anniversary. Along the way, Roudon-Smith's wines have gathered several awards and built a devoted following both locally and around the state.

The winery stands next to Smith's Scotts Valley home. Built in 1978, the building features both ultra-modern equipment and traditional, time-honored wine making tools, as well as some special inventions by the founders.

Smith is particularly proud of the new wine press, which he

describes as "the absolute latest in press technology." The machine, of Swiss design, uses "very low pressure" according to Smith, resulting in "less solids in the wine, which makes the juice ferment cleaner. The cleaner the fermentation the better the wine."

But not everything is modern. "We use small cooperage for all our wines - we don't put out wine that's seen nothing but stainless steel tanks," says Smith. Like many small, quality-oriented wineries, Roudon-Smith uses 50-60 gallon barrels of French or American origin.

Of course, oak barrels and new presses aren't cheap, but Smith likes to point out that it's reflected in the quality of the wine. The first year they went to the Los Angeles County

### Sixth in a series

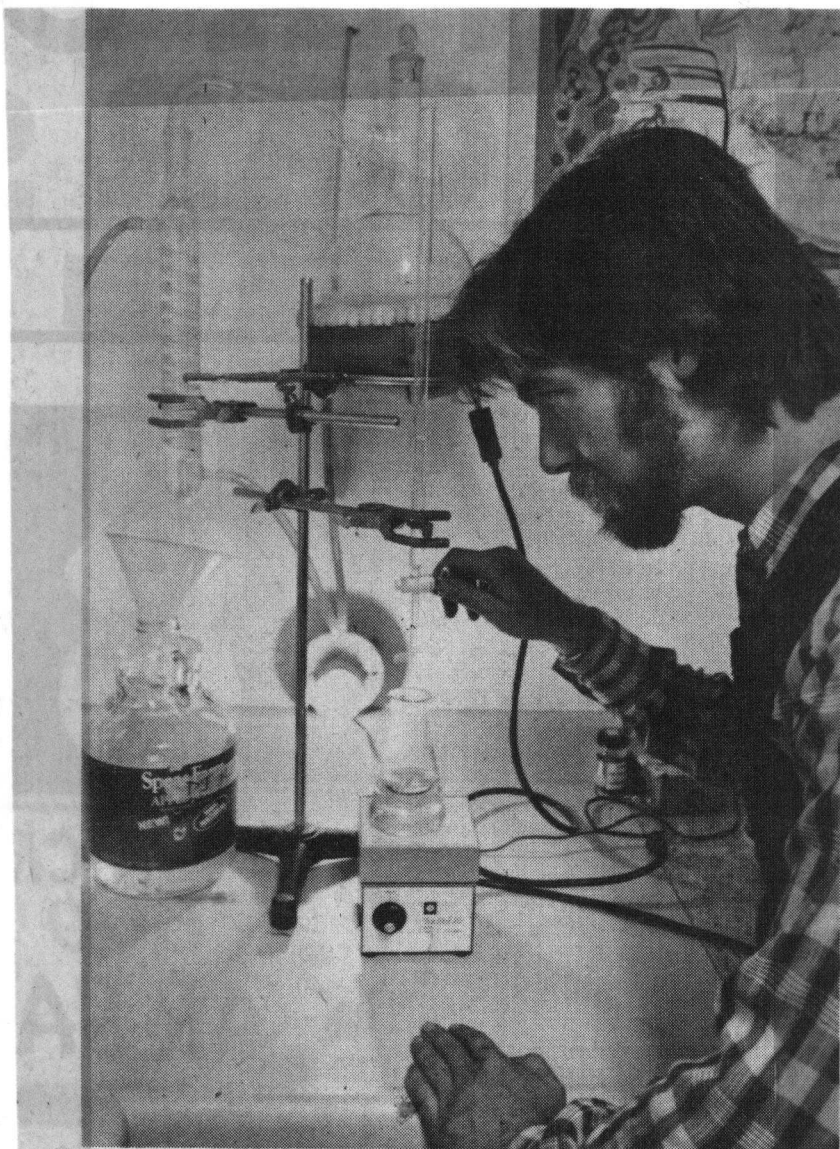
Fair, they entered two wines, both of which won gold medals. This year they entered a San Jose Mercury professional tasting, winning four medals in that competition.

Smith is quiet and soft-spoken, and shows an engineer's dislike of wasted space and energy. The whole winery is compact and

trim, and its design was no accident. "It's very important to use the facility efficiently - we're very efficiency minded," says Smith. This is particularly evident in the winery's bottling line, a unique arrangement they designed themselves. Smith modestly terms it a "home-made" contraption, but it allows Roudon-Smith to accomplish the dreary task of bottling and labelling at a dumbfounding pace. Which, as he points out, leaves more time to concentrate on the wine itself.

Smith feels that wine is gaining wider and wider acceptance in all circles of society. "We deal with a lot of people who have wine and spirit shops. They tell us that hard liquor sales are disappearing, while wine sales go up like crazy. People are more aware. . . they want to know why they like this wine more than that one. They're realizing that the things that matter include oak, tannins, brix, acid level. They're much more aware of varietal character and even regional character within varietals. North coast wines are very different than central coast wines."

Smith admits that the wines are "aimed at the connoisseur. We find a good percentage of the people



Photos by Sam Vestal

**Jim Smith (above left) shows off the winery's new "low pressure" press, of Swiss design and German manufacture. Smith describes it as "the absolute latest in press technology." Lester Hardy (above) does lab work on a recent vintage. Wines are lab-tested for sugar content and acid levels, among other things.**

who buy the wine take it home and cellar it for a few years."

Roudon-Smith started out making around 2,000 cases annually, mostly reds. They now release around 10,000 cases, including Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, and Petite Sirah. They are dropping several of their whites (Gewurtzraminer among them) in order to concentrate on the Chardonnay. This year they found a good supply of Pinot Noir and plan to do their first release of that varietal in a few years.

The grapes are drawn from several areas around the state, including San Luis Obispo County's Edna Valley, Glen Ellen and Alexander Valley in Sonoma County, and Mendocino County. They also buy small amounts from other vineyards for tiny "experimental lots," testing the potential of grapes before buying enough to make a wine for general release.

The winery is open on Saturdays from 10 to 4, and is located at 2364 Bean Creek Road, above Scotts Valley.