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## Adopt-a-Vine for Fine Wine

ST. HELENA, Calif. (AP) -- Hundreds of dormant vines in Peter Story's St. Helena vineyard wear stainless-steel tags bearing the name of the vine's "owner," part of an adopt-a-vine marketing program which has paid big dividends.

For \$80, the adoptive owner gets the tag, a certificate, a picture of the vine and a bottle of St. Helena Winery's \$80 wine or two bottles of its \$40 wine.

The payoff for the tiny winery, which for its 2003 vintage will produce 500 cases of cabernet sauvignon, is in the wine sales it generates by the adopting owners, Story said.

Story said the program "has raised \$48,000, but quadruple that amount in people who have received it as a gift and then wanted to buy another half case or case. The vine adoption program is one way of getting me into the market."

Since the program was introduced a year ago, Story said they have sold 600 adoptions, of which 70 percent were to individuals and 30 percent to corporations giving them as gifts.

Bourassa Vineyards in American Canyon, which produces 1,800 cases, is the only winery with a similar program, which it began in January.

So far, 20 people have paid \$90 to adopt a vine, for which they get the plaque, certificate and, at the end of the growing season, a cutting that they can replant.

Jaime Douglas, executive director of the Sonoma County Wineries Association, said the program was not in use by Sonoma County wineries.

Pam Nigliazzo, Napa city clerk, said she initially received an adopted vine from St. Helena Winery from her mother as a present, and since then has herself given them to her children, friends and colleagues.

In all, she said her family has adopted 10 vines and have a picture taken every year in their adopted vineyard for their Christmas card.

"It is the perfect gift for the person who has everything, for the person who loves wine," she said.

Nigliazzo also said she thought it was a clever marketing technique.

"He is a small winery competing with the bigger names and he has come up with a unique way of promoting his wine. I think it is a pretty slick deal," she said.

Story, a retired Sun Microsystems sales director, bought 18 acres in St. Helena in 1992, building a house, guest cottage and 750-square-foot winery, and planting 15 acres in cabernet sauvignon grapes.

Adoption tags



Peter Story affixes wine-bottle shaped adoption tags to vines at his Napa Valley winery as part of a marketing program recently in St. Helena Calif. For \$80, the adoptive owner gets the tag, a certificate, a picture of the vine and a bottle of St. Helena Winery's \$80 wine or two bottles of its \$40 wine.

The Associated Press

The bulk of his grapes are sold to five wineries, with just about a third going into his own wines.

Using custom-crush facilities, Story said he produced 75 cases in 2000, 120 cases in 2001, and 350 cases in 2002.

In 2003, he sold 40 tons of grapes to wineries and kept about 20 tons for his own winery, which was completed in September and will produce 500 cases. Revenues were \$500,000.

So far, he has invested about \$2 million in St. Helena Winery, which will have the capacity to produce 1,000 cases.

Story said his wines are sold through the winery, which has tastings by appointment only, on his Internet site and through a St. Helena retailer.

His 2000 vintage is sold out, he has 11 cases left of the 2001, the 2002 will be bottled in June and the 2003 is still in barrels.

On the Net.

<http://www.sthelenawinery.com>