

PICK & CHOOSE

JUST RED? JUST WHITE?
JUST CALIFORNIAN?
JUST ITALIAN?
HOW ABOUT A
COMBINATION?

CALIFORNIA WINES

Artisan Series –
\$29.50/month, a red and a white
Winemaker Series –
\$59.50/month, 2 reserve reds
Artisan red–Winemaker red –
\$46/month

ITALIAN WINES

Artisan Series –
\$32/month, a red and a white
Winemaker Series –
\$62/month, 2 reserve reds
Collector Series –
\$112/month, 2 collectable reds
Artisan red–Winemaker red –
\$48/month
Winemaker red–Collector red –
\$87/month

CALIFORNIA–ITALIAN COMBINATIONS

CA Artisan red–IT Artisan red –
\$33/month
CA Artisan white–IT Artisan white–
\$29.50/month
CA Winemaker–IT Winemaker –
\$62/month
Alternate CA & IT Artisan Series –
\$29.50/\$32/month
Alternate CA & IT Winemaker Series–
\$59.50/\$62/month

DOUBLE UP

You can also receive more than two bottles per month. California sales tax is included. Shipping is extra.

also because they're lower in alcohol than the trends are encouraging right now. Why?

A couple of reasons. The longevity of high alcohol wine is higher, and if people are paying a lot of money for good wine, it should be as good ten years from now as it is today. The other reason is that if they spend a considerable amount of money for a bottle of wine and sit down with one or two other people, they can enjoy the bottle without getting tipsy. Much more fruity flavors will come out of the wine too. If it's a dessert wine or a Port, I can see it being high in alcohol, but our wines are food wines and have evolved into a style that is much more like a Super Tuscan wine, very complementary to food. They don't overpower the meal that you're eating, which I think is important, no more than you would want the food to overpower the wine. Both have to be balanced. It's an elegant style and smooth, and it's a wine that we like to drink at home at the dinner table. Our wines may not be what everyone likes, but we like them. I'm not saying that everybody needs to like what we like.

Q Your parents are elderly, but you said that your father comes to the shop everyday.

A My mother and father spend half the year here with us and half the year in Burbank with my brother. When my father's here, he comes to the shop every day. He's usually here at four in the morning. Lately it's five or five-thirty, and he leaves at four

o'clock in the afternoon. He's been in the business for 60 years. The shop is like home. He sits and has lunch with a little bit of wine and later goes home, and my mother makes dinner. He actually works when he's here. He'll do some of the design work, the layout, some of the cutting. He doesn't do as much of the heavy lifting as he used to. He's interested in the winemaking and wants to be part of the crush. But he's gotten a little bit frail, so we don't let him do some of the stuff that he would want to do. But he enjoys all of the tastings, and he's there all day during the crush. His name is Alfonso Anthony, and my son's name is Anthony Alfonso. When they're in Burbank, he goes to the shop there, and my mother will go to the Enoteca several times a week. She cleans and brings lunch, something that she's made at home, like fried bell peppers, which are a tradition in our family. When she's here, she does the same thing. They're very alert and very healthy, knock on wood. We have three generations now, and it's good for the children to see the grandparents and everyone working together. We do that in our cabinet business and our real estate business too. We're all very involved. My brother Richard is in southern California, but we talk several times a day, specifically about the wine business, but we've been doing that for 30 years. All of us do that to a point, depending on how busy our schedules are. Most of the kids are in school now, so that's their priority. But when it comes to holidays or the harvests, they all show up. And they're all on the phone with one another too.



YOUR ACCESS TO OUTSTANDING WINES FROM CALIFORNIA AND ITALY



California

Winery of the Month

An Old Story D'Argenzio Winery



CelebrationsWineClub.com

Anna Maria Knapp, Owner
75 Pelican Way G1
San Rafael, CA 94901

1-800-700-6227

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celebrationswineclub.com

February 2005

The story is familiar. In 1918, seventeen year-old, newly-weds Enrico and Maria Nina D'Argenzio, who had never stepped beyond the borders of their mountain town, left their generational home in St. Angelo Cancelli, got on a ship in Naples, and headed for America, leaving behind an Italy in shambles, brought down by World War I and soon to be further devastated by World War II. What is perhaps less familiar about the story is the extraordinary dedication and cooperation that family members continue to express toward one another four generations later in California and the collective memory that they nourish, which circles back to St. Angelo Cancelli. ➤

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- Italian Artisan Series \$32/mo.
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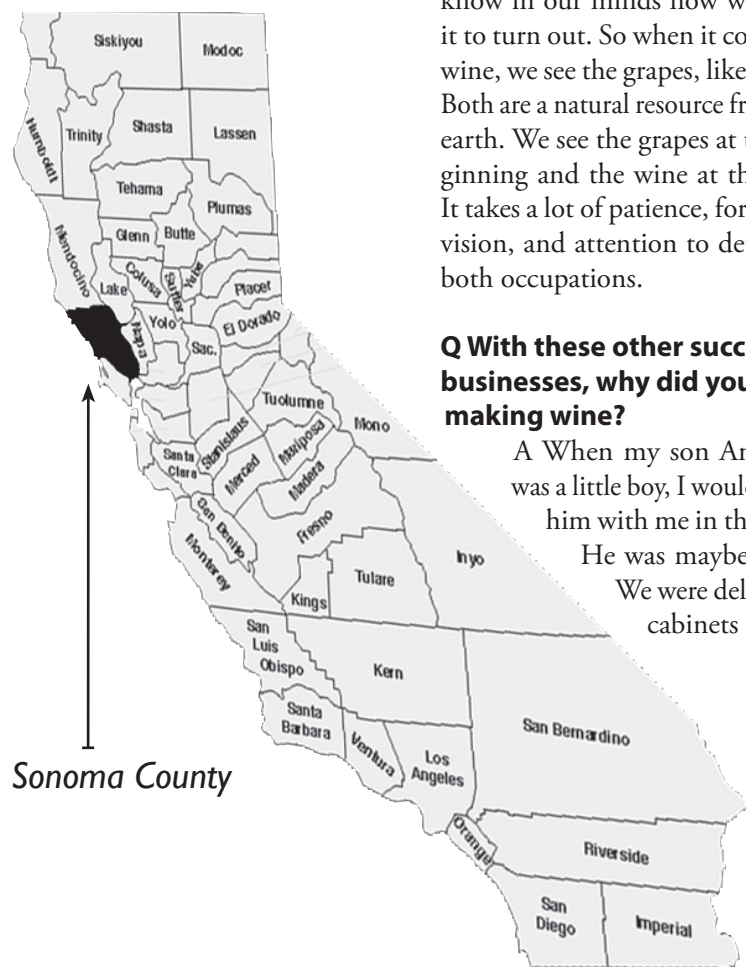
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In Italy, generations of family members were craftspeople, who worked with silver. Their surname, D'Argenzio, indicates the family's occupation. In Burbank, California, Alfonso D'Argenzio, oldest son of Enrico and Maria Nina, opened a cabinet shop. Of his four sons, the twins Raymond and Richard took up the occupation and count among their customers celebrities such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Dr. Laura. Oldest brother Enrico is a building contractor, operating in southern California and Arizona. Dino moved to northern California and invested in real estate, at which point Richard followed and opened another cabinet shop. But all family members, now three generations, participate in all businesses, the most recent one being the wine business, which they began in Sonoma County in 1994 in the same warehouse where the cabinet shop is located. So what



does wine making have in common with cabinet making? "Plenty," says Ray D'Argenzio, in a conversation, which I repeat here with minor editing for clarity.

A There's a guy who goes back about 2000 years, and he was a cabinetmaker and a winemaker. If you look at his very first miracle, it was winemaking, turning water into wine. Supposedly, he made some pretty good wine. And his father was not a carpenter, because actually a carpenter at that time made furniture. So he actually was a cabinetmaker. Besides that connection, all of our ancestors have been craftsmen, going back to Italy and to my father here and my brothers. We're all hands on, very creative with our hands and minds. The Italian heritage is artistic, and it's a way of expressing ourselves. We have a vision of what we want. When we're making a nice piece of furniture, maybe we'll draw it on paper, but we know in our minds how we want it to turn out. So when it comes to wine, we see the grapes, like wood. Both are a natural resource from the earth. We see the grapes at the beginning and the wine at the end. It takes a lot of patience, fortitude, vision, and attention to detail for both occupations.

Q With these other successful businesses, why did you start making wine?

A When my son Anthony was a little boy, I would bring him with me in the field. He was maybe eight. We were delivering cabinets to this

nice home in the Dry Creek Valley, and he asked me, 'Papa, what are they doing here with all these grapes?' 'They make wine,' I said. I had told him stories about when my grandfather, my father, and my brothers made wine, and he said, 'Let's make some wine.' I looked at him in kind of a daze, and said, 'Yes, you're right. Let's make some wine.' That fall, we bought 200



Ray D'Argenzio, winemaker and owner

pounds of grapes and made a Zin in the backyard. We got an old apple press, not a wine press, and we looked at some books and kind of experimented and had a lot of fun. The wine turned out very good and won some amateur awards at the Sonoma Harvest Fair. The following year, we decided to go big time, and we bought 400 pounds. We won more awards, and the next year we made a little more. All my nieces and nephews would come over, and they stomped the grapes in this big wooden tank, and we drank wine and ate and made more wine and ate more and listened to music. We did that for a couple of years. We decided to get a license and sell some of it because it was very good. We had dollar signs in our eyes at that point. That year in 1997, we made 150 cases. The following year we made 200, then 400, then 600, then up to 1,200. This past year, we made about 3,200 cases. Right now, we make four different Zinfandels, a Dry Creek Zin and three

different vineyard-designated Russian River Zins. We make a Petite Sirah and three different Pinots and a Cabernet. We started out with old equipment, but this year we bought a beautiful new Italian bladder press. We have a nice crusher now and really beautiful French oak barrels for the Pinots as well as some American oak for the Zins and the Cabernets. So we've modernized, but we do a lot of the work ourselves. When harvest season comes, my brother Richard and his son Nicholas, who is 21, and my son Anthony are here, and we have other workers too. Once the grapes are delivered, we do all the crushing, all the pressing, the fermentation, all the cold soaking, the racking, and all the bottling right here. We built this warehouse several years ago and converted the back of the cabinet shop into the winery.

Q Where do you sell your wine?

A We just opened a tasting room in southern California, called enoteca D'Argenzio in Burbank. It's actually right in the front of our cabinet shop in Burbank on the property where we used to live years ago when we were kids. It's in a very good location, so we completely remodeled the front of the building. It's been opened since November for sales, and in mid May, it'll be opened for tastings. Our wines are in restaurants and wine shops in northern and south-

ern California, and in Nebraska, Hawaii, North and South Carolina, and in Texas so far. We're keeping a positive steady flow upward.

Q You started during the biggest boom that the wine business has ever experienced, and then it crashed after 9/11, at least the market for premium wine that you're in. So you've been baptized by fire.

A Obviously 9/11 had a big impact on us, but also the dot com bust hurt us. The whole economy of California was badly hit by that, the San Francisco Bay Area more than southern California. We saw it all happening, but we see a lot of future in the wine business, and our wines are selling well. But it's made us cautious. We buy high-end grapes with vineyard designations with a very good track record. We use very good quality barrels, and we practice very good quality wine-making. But we're cautious. It's all hands on. We do it ourselves, and we do it in our own facility. We're self-motivated and self-educated because of the way we were brought up. Our ancestors were self-motivated and raised families and made it through hard times, the depression and other transitions, and things that have happened in our lives. We're resilient. Obviously, if you want to conquer something, you need to have a

good education and do some research. I still read books and articles, and I took classes at the University of California at Davis and also Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State.

Q How would you describe the style of your wines?

A We cold soak all our grapes, and that means that after we crush the grapes, we freeze the fermentation from two to ten days to get a better extraction, and it's better for the tannins too. The medical term for extraction that doctors are all talking about now, the "J Curve," helps make wine healthier. When they talk about two glasses of wine a day, it has to do with the soft tannins that are in the skins and in the fruit when you cold soak them together. It makes a better, healthier, and softer wine. It's not as stressed out, so it makes a gentler wine. We make our wines in small lots. With big tanks, you have to do much more pumping, and the pumps have large blades, which stress out the grapes. The metal contact is much more apt to cause a stressed out wine. Wine is a living organism, and it's like being beaten up when it's treated roughly. Our wines are very low in sulfites too. A lot of people tell us that our wine never causes an issue with their sinuses. Most of the wineries are doing 68 or 70 parts per million, but we're doing 30 to 38.

Q Your wines are distinctive

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