

Locals' Best Kept Secret—Urbano Cellars Celebrates 10 Years

Pioneering Berkley-Based Wine Maker Thrives on Fourth Street

@urbanocellars

Berkeley, CA (August 17)—Nestled deep among warehouses and factories on Berkeley's Fourth Street, [Urbano Cellars](#) has become a destination of choice for “in-the-know” locals. There vintners Bob Rawson and Fred Dick hand craft a rich array of small-batch artisanal wines, poured in their friendly, no-frills tasting room.

This month the locally-owned, independent winery celebrated its 10th anniversary, marking a long journey from the vintners' beginnings as “garagistas” to accomplished producers of award-winning wines. In an age when 7 in 10 new businesses fail in the first 10 years, Urbano has beaten the odds by offering an eclectic mix of Mediterranean-inspired wines as well as their popular blends in refillable one-liter bottles—a big hit in environmentally-conscious Berkeley.

“We love bringing new blends, unusual varietals and Mediterranean-inspired, food-friendly wines to the local marketplace. Today's wine consumers are more adventurous and looking for something besides the standard-issue supermarket chardonnay or cab,” said Bob, whose garage in San Francisco was the site of the team's first wine-making project “since I happened to have a slightly larger garage.”

“The triumph of producing great wines and feedback from our customers is what keeps us going,” said Fred. “It's a privilege to be doing something we love—and being part of a community that values locally-made, sustainable wines. Our vision has always been to make high-quality, affordable wines for people to enjoy every day. Our ‘regulars’ from all over the Bay Area stop by the tasting room weekly to get refills of our red or white Fourth Street table wines, taste, and hang out with us,” he added.

“Our Berkeley location is perfect because being close to the Bay, we get cooler temperatures, fog and breezes. Our building is well insulated and cave-like, so it stays dark and cool—ideal conditions for making wine,” Fred explained. Urbano has the space to double production from its current 1,200 cases per year at its current location. “As long as we have quality grapes and increasing demand, we expect to continue creating delicious and affordable wines for the next 20 years.”

The tasting room open Friday afternoons and weekends features rotating displays of art, and plenty of camaraderie from the unassuming winemakers, who are often on hand accompanied by vineyard dogs Amigo and Islay. Meads produced on the premises by Mead Kitchen are also poured.

After several years of moonlighting to make their wine, Bob and Fred left their careers in finance and advertising respectively to pursue their passion for wine-making full-time. In 2006, they became urban vintners, long before this increasingly popular business

model became mainstream. As an urban winemaker, Urbano doesn't own vineyards but sources its wine grapes from the abundance of Northern California vineyards. Immediately upon harvest, Urbano transports the grapes to its Berkeley winery. There, the grapes are crushed, de-stemmed and fermented into wine under their watchful eye.

Besides their regular tastings of current vintages, Urbano has hosted special events, such as a cheese-making class, movie screenings, wine and chocolate pairings, and sipping and painting as well as events to celebrate newly released wines. For special events, both the winery and tasting room are open and a diverse crowd of people arrive by bike, car or BART for an afternoon of music, wine-tasting and mingling. The wine club currently has about 200 members, plus many regulars who drop in to refill their bottles of Fourth Street table wine.

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Urbano Cellars, founded in 2006, produces small-batch, hand-crafted artisanal wines at its winery in Berkeley, CA. Urbano's award-winning wines can be found at high-end restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as purchased directly at the tasting room at 2323 B on Fourth Street. Its popular Fourth Street brand red and white blends, are available in refillable one-liter bottles at the tasting room. For more information, please visit www.urbanocellars.com or on [Facebook](#) and [twitter](#).

Media contact

Kamran Shaikh

415-875-0416

kshaikh@hardenpartners.com