

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Andretti wines on fast track to success

Mario Andretti's last year on the auto racing circuit was 1994. Call it serendipity if you like, it was also Joe Antonini's last year as chairman, president and CEO of K-Mart Corp.

Andretti and Antonini have teamed up, in all places, the wine business. In today's competitive wine industry, name recognition is a must. They've got that. Wine consumers expect top quality every time they pull a cork. That's handled. Andretti Winery is on the fast track to success.

As a venture capitalist, Antonini is currently president of JEA Enterprises, an investment firm which he founded. Andretti, the famous race car driver, is also an entrepreneur. In 1994, Andretti organized a farewell from auto-racing tour where he gave out souvenir bottles of wine. It was organized by a less-than-savvy marketing group. To make a long story short, after the tour, Andretti was still interested in a wine concept, but the marketers lacked know-how. Antonini to the rescue. The two had met previously through a K-Mart promotion.

"Due to his ancestral history of winemaking in his native Italy, Mario has had a lifelong passion for good wines," Antonini said. "Together we know that reliance on a famous name to sell wine is not enough in today's market. It is our intent to produce world-class wine."

To accomplish this, veteran winemaker Robert "Bob" Peppi was hired. Peppi was hired, known for his winemaking tenure at the family-owned Robert Peppi winery (which was sold to the Kendall-Jackson Artisans & Estates group a few years ago).

He is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

For a 43-acre vineyard in California's Napa Valley, Antonini and Andretti have a three-pronged strategy to be implemented over the next few years. A major replanting of the vineyard is a third complete. A 6,000-square-foot house on the estate will be remodeled as a hospitality center with tasting room and a 42,000-case capacity winery will be built. Currently, the Andretti wines are being made

in a converted garage. The winery is also recognized as a pioneer in sangiovese grapegrowing and winemaking as well as a developer of new-age sauvignon blanc. He headed the learning curve on growing this variety and took it from a green, too-often grassy vine, to one with luxurious, ripe, tropical fruit.

ON THE CUTTING EDGE



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMEYER

Prep work: Derin Moore was recently named Executive Chef of the Golden Mushroom. He follows in the footsteps of Chef Steven Allen and Certified Master Chef Milos Cihelka.

Attention to quality makes the Mushroom Golden

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Excellent food and service, no gimmicks, this is the Golden Mushroom's secret, the reason why they've stayed in business for 25 years.

"Keeping the customer coming back. Repeat business is the success, not looking for a fast buck," said Certified Master Chef Milos Cihelka who with owner Reid L. Ashton made the Mushroom "Golden."

"I always wanted to have a very good restaurant," said Ashton a Michigan State University hotel management graduate who worked for Marriott and Ford Motor Co. in corporate real estate prior to opening his restaurant.

He chose the Golden Mushroom, formerly the Rascal House Deli, which was closed, for its location, and didn't have a concept in mind. Ashton leased the building and opened on Monday, July 31, 1972. It had been a deli upstairs and banquet room downstairs.

Opening a restaurant is a lot like giving birth - there's a lot of labor involved, and not all of it is easy. Coming up with a name was difficult. After months of thought he visited a friend who operated a restaurant in Grand Rapids. The friend explained how he made his mushroom soup by adding a little sherry to give it a nice golden color, calling it Golden Mushroom Soup.

"That clicked for me right there," said Ashton. "Mushrooms never go out of style. You even see them in Renaissance paintings of food. The word 'golden' adds that touch of class. It just kind of fit for me."

Building the Golden Mushroom's reputation, and customer base was his next task. The physical layout of the building lent itself to a two-restaurants-in-one concept. Ashton turned the upstairs into a fine dining room, and created the pub-like "Mushroom Celler" downstairs with a menu that included hamburgers and sandwiches.

Next, he needed a chef. "Milos was the premier chef of Detroit, the best known in the Detroit area," said Ashton. Cihelka was working at the London Chop House in Detroit, and not looking for a job.

"At the time, the London Chop House was the most prestigious restaurant, and I had no intention of leaving," said Cihelka.

Please see QUALITY, B3

Catering to customers

Good food, consistency, the Golden Mushroom is known for these things, but there is more.

"Our success involves more than elegant cuisine," said owner Reid L. Ashton. "We ensure that our tablecloths are ironed properly; our valet holds the door for our guests; our hosting staff greets guests pleasantly; our flowers are fresh; they're all part of the big picture."

In a never ending search for excellence, Ashton recently upgraded the interior and exterior features of the Golden Mushroom. The main dining room is now one contiguous open space, highlighted by deep wood patterns. New lighting helps create a cozy atmosphere, and there are four new oval-shaped booths along the back wall.

The Golden Mushroom has always offered catering at your home or office, but they recently expanded their offerings to provide food service for the St. John's Conference Center, a part of St. John's Armenian Church, 22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. Their banquet facilities can hold up to 750 people.

For more information about planning a

Please see CUSTOMERS, B3

The Golden Mushroom

Where: 18100 West 10 Mile Road, Southfield (just west of Southfield Road) (248) 559-4230.

Hours: Monday through Friday, lunch 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and dinner 5:11 p.m. to midnight.

Special events: Wild Game Dinner - 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 4, \$85 per person.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Dinner - 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, \$75 per person. Call (248) 559-4230 for information/reservations.

Accommodate family members, guests who don't eat meat

LIVING BETTER TOGETHER



BEVERLY PRICE

It was a cold, snowy evening in November when I met my husband to be, David Price, at a vegetarian restaurant in Royal Oak. Because David was a vegetarian, and new in town, and I, too, a vegetarian, I thought that the Inn Season's Cafe was an appropriate choice for a first date.

Our first Thanksgiving as a married couple was spent at my in-laws. I was pleasantly surprised at how many of my husband's family members followed a vegetarian lifestyle. My brother-in-law, two of my husband's cousins, and a few close family friends, who were always part of family get-togethers, were also vegetarians. You may be wondering how did all these family members come to share the same food practices?

My mother-in-law, Esther Price, frequently reminds our family of how she used to support the local kosher butcher until her son, (my husband) David returned from a summer trip in Israel at the age of 16, and exclaimed, "Mom, I'm not going to eat meat anymore (which included poultry as well)."

The following summer, David's younger brother, Marty, returned from swim camp and told the family of his decision to give up meat as well. Marty simply became very sick on a piece of meat, and would never eat animal products from there on out.

David's two other siblings eventually gave up red meat, but continued to eat poultry.

So, how does a mom go from watching her kids eat "Dagwood sandwiches" (meat piled thick and high on a roll) to preparing vegetarian meals for them?

"We simply readjusted," said Esther Price. In addition, two cousins who attend most family holiday dinners became vegetarians for animal rights

reasons. Another close family friend began preparing only vegetarian dishes for our celebrations after developing heart problems. I also tried to become my father-in-law's personal dietician as he had a long-term history of diabetes and desperately needed to reform his diet.

All of these special needs make our Thanksgiving Day spread quite interesting. Typical dishes include vegetarian chopped liver, vegetable stuffing, meatless lasagna, vegetable pasta, and many other mouth-watering, colorful vegetable casseroles, and of course, pumpkin pie.

At my first Thanksgiving with the Price family I tried to locate the turkey out of curiosity. After a long look, I found it sitting by its lonecom self behind the other dishes on the buffet table. The turkey looked untouched, dried out and not very appetizing.

As I loaded my plate with all of the wonderful vegetarian dishes, I realized that my stomach would be very content

after dinner. At typical Thanksgiving dinners on my side of the family, the emphasis was on turkey, and there was a lack of side dishes. I would usually leave the meal hungry and raid the refrigerator when I got home.

You may be able to identify with this situation - a family member suddenly has to radically change his diet for health reasons, or your daughter comes home from college and tells you she won't eat anything "with a face."

If this sounds familiar, you need to learn to break out of the mold ("but this is what we've always done"), and be flexible to accommodate your family members and guests. Here are some things to consider:

■ Don't take your health for granted. Many health professionals do a disservice to their clients when they tell them it's OK to splurge during holidays. Visits to the emergency room are highest at Thanksgiving, Christmas,

Please see ACCOMMODATE, B3

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- 2 Unique
- Main Dish Miracle