

Temecula Valley



Vine

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**Smaller is Better at
Palumbo Family
Vineyards**

Nick Palumbo, co-owner and winemaker at **Palumbo Family Vineyards**, has a problem that is unique in Temecula's Wine Country. While all those around him get bigger, Palumbo is trying to remain small. Small in Palumbo's eyes is good. It means premium wine made in small batches from grapes grown on his 13 acres on Monte Del Oro Road in the heart of Wine Country. "It's been a struggle keeping it small," said Palumbo, whose bedroom is right outside his winery's stainless steel fermentation tanks. But even small needs more elbow room. And so it is for Palumbo and his boutique winery that produces 2,000 cases a year. Over the next four to five months the winery will be adding a 2,700-square foot building that will give it badly needed storage space for case goods, an office, laboratory and restrooms. The \$500,000 project will also give Palumbo the capacity to double wine output to 4,000 cases a year. "We are growing a little bit but I've tried to be real careful to keep our small winery charm intact," he said. "It's the kiss of death if you go big." Palumbo still prides himself on his original 1,200-square-foot winery and tasting room and the fact he has "no restaurant, no weddings and no dancing bears." If the 11-year-old winery grows, he said it would occur very slowly. "We needed this building anyway," Palumbo said.

**Winegrowers Host 26th
Grape Day on April 2**

The **Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association** invites members of the media to attend the 26th annual Grape Day on April 2 from 7:30 a.m. to 4 pm. at Wilson Creek Winery. The day will include seminars on the state of the wine industry, sustainable grape growing, update on the Piece's Disease control program, water issues and enhancing wine quality. Speakers, vintners, growers and association directors will be available for interviews during a wine and cheese reception at 4 p.m. Cost is \$65 for TVWA members, \$75 for non-members and includes seminars, continental breakfast, lunch and a wine and cheese reception. For media passes, press kit or agenda call 800-801-WINE or request at: winecountrydir@aol.com

FOOD: *New Executive
Chef at Pinnacle
Restaurant*

Gianni Ciciliot, who worked at Tommy Bahama's in Newport Beach, Ritz-Carlton in Laguna Niguel, Yardhouse Restaurant in Irvine, Tutto Mare in La Jolla, and Amici's and Lugano's in Costa Mesa, has joined **Pinnacle Restaurant at Falkner Winery** as executive chef. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena, Gianni specializes in Mediterranean cuisine, particularly Italian cooking. "We are excited to have Gianni join us as we strive to become the best eating establishment in the Temecula area," said Ray Falkner, winery co-owner. Gianni also will handle all the catering for Falkner's wedding and banquet business. Beginning in mid-April, he will introduce his new summer menu that shows off his unique cooking skills. The Pinnacle offers great panoramic views, outstanding Mediterranean style food, and high quality service for lunches 7 days a week. For more go to: www.falknerwinery.com.

WINE CLUBS: *Keyways
Goes Stemless*

Keyways Vineyard & Winery has added something new to the tasting room experience by taking something away. Wine glasses used by members of its Master Key Wine Club have no stems. These high-end wine tumblers have caught on with the 100 or so members of the club, who receive up to a case of wine from the winery every other month. The uniqueness of the glass in

Temecula tasting rooms helps separate the higher end wine club from others. "It's just one way that Keyways makes us feel special," said Debbie Bowen, Temecula resident and Master Key Wine Club member. Even though Keyways is the only woman-owned and -operated winery in Southern California, the fashionable tumblers are just as popular with the men. Keyways Master Key Wine Club member Richard Ferriera has traveled all over the globe and has discovered that wine tumblers are the rule rather than the exception. "Actually it's the only wine glass that I use at home," he said. "I was surprised and pleased when Keyways started pouring my wine in a tumbler." Tumblers get good marks for more than their looks and novelty. They are hard to tip over and less likely to break in the dish-washing process than a traditional, more fragile stemmed glass. So much for glass distinctions.

WINE: *La Cereza Wins Gold in Major Wine Competition*

La Cereza Winery won a gold medal for their 2005 Garnacha (\$29.95) at the 25th annual Dallas Morning News Wine Competition. The competition is the largest U.S. commercial wine competition outside California and the fourth largest in the United States. More than 550 wineries from around the world participated, with renowned national and international judges awarding gold, silver and bronze medals in 250 different wine categories. The Grenache wine won a bronze medal at the recent San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. The vintage 2002 Garnacha also was judged the best red wine in the Temecula Valley in 2005. "We're still developing our Garnacha wine program," said winemaker Gus Vizgirda. "But it's encouraging to know we're on the right path."

MUSIC: *Jazz Season Kicks Off at Thornton*

What could be cooler than sampling quality wine and good food while listening to world-class jazz. **Thornton Winery** announced that its 2009 Champagne Jazz Series kicks off in smooth style with Mindi Abair and David Benoit on April 26 at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$55 for general admission and \$130 for the gourmet supper package. On May 3 it's

Keiko Matsui and Warren Hill and Euge Groove, Jeff Golub, Jeff Lorber and Jesse J on May 9. Go to www.thorntonwine.com for times and prices. On Saturday afternoons, Cougar Winery offers live music from 2-4 p.m. March 21 John Roberts and Lily McCabe perform. March 28 listen to the guitar of Harvey Freedman. Call ahead if you'd like to reserve a table for eight or more. For more go to: www.cougarvineyards.com.

FOOD: *Wine Country
Easter on Its Way*

Now is the time to start making plans for a Wine Country Easter. Bring the whole family to **Ponte's Easter Celebration: Alice in Wonderland**. Enjoy several brunch stations including breakfast, fresh seafood, and children's buffet and decadent desserts. Egg hunts will be offered for children. Mimosas, bellinis and sangria featured at the open bar. \$70 per person; \$30 for children under 12. South Coast Winery's Easter Champagne Celebration among the vineyards includes the Easter Bunny, egg hunt, live musical entertainment, buffet and complimentary glass of sparkling wine. \$42 for adults; \$25 for children. **Pinnacle Restaurant at Falkner Winery** will offer a special Easter Champagne Brunch from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. \$54.95 per person cost includes complimentary glass of champagne. Children 6-12 are \$24.50; Kids under six are free. **Thornton Winery** is cooking up a multi-course Easter menu that will be served from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cost: \$49.95 per person plus tax and tip; children 12 & under \$19.95; under 5 free. Celebrate Easter April 10-12 at brunch at **Creekside Grille at Wilson Creek Winery**. Order off the regular special Easter prix fixe menus. \$45 per person; \$60 with wine pairing.

FOOD: *Cougar Brings a
Bit of Chicago to
Temecula*

Cougar Winery is bringing a little of Chicago to Wine Country on March 28 with a Taste of Polonia, which features authentic Polish cuisine and dancers from 6-8:30 p.m. It's a great opportunity to reacquaint your taste buds with pierogis and kalachkis. The one-day event is modeled after the Taste of Polonia in Chicago, which attracts more than 30,000 people who want to enjoy Polish food

and culture. Authentic music and entertainment at Cougar will be provided by Podhale Folk Dance Company. Authentic Polish cuisine flown in from Chicago delicatessens to include: Polish sausages and sauerkraut, Kasia's pierogies, honey baked ham, potato salad, carrots, rye bread and butter, and kalachkis all enjoyed with a glass of wine. Before March 22 cost of the event is \$25. After that it goes to \$30 per person. For more go to: www.cougarvineyards.com.

FOOD: 7-Course Wine Paired Evening at Stuart Cellars

Stuart Cellars Vineyard & Winery winemaker dinner on March 21 promises a candle-lit evening in a rustic style barrel room, featuring a seven-course gourmet menu prepared by Chef Jorge Alvarado and paired with Stuart Cellars wines. Festivities start at 6:30 p.m. and include live entertainment provided by Sounds Of Today - Ian Kauffman. Cost: \$115 per person. For more call (951) 676-6414.

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For more information about items in this newsletter, to request media passes to Wine Country events or to schedule a private media tour of Temecula's Wine Country, contact the Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association at 1-800-801-9463 or winecountrydir@aol.com

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