

Time to get those bibs out, the annual Claws for a Cause is back 🐾 12

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# LOS GATOS WEEKLY TIMES

183

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## TOWN POLITICS TURN UGLY AS TWO COUNCIL CANDIDATES DROP OUT

*No election expected as Spector, Jensen running unopposed*

By JUDY PETERSON

Politics in Los Gatos have taken an ugly turn.

Two potential town council candidates, Dennis Byron and Colleen Wilcox, have dropped out after being discouraged from running for office. Vice Mayor Barbara Spector and Planning Commission Chairwoman Marcia Jensen will now run unopposed.

In fact, because Byron and Wilcox opted not to run, it is unlikely that there will even be an election.

The Aug. 20 town council meeting was moved to Aug. 22 at 5:30 p.m. to discuss canceling the election and simply appointing Spector and Jensen to their terms, which would begin in November. Canceling the election will save the town \$40,000 to \$50,000.

The drama began to unfold as word spread that Wilcox and Byron were joining the council race.

“Within a couple of hours I began receiving calls from people who said it would be a dirty campaign that would hurt my business,” said Byron, who is a real estate agent. “These were from people who I’ve known for a long time who said they were my friends. I definitely felt intimidated. It was uncomfortable.”

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## Fine Wine

Locals enjoy the perfect  
mix of wine, food and fun  
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Jill Sullivan, left, Dan McQuade and Joy McGivern enjoy wine and a few laughs during their visit to Testarossa Winery's new outdoor wine bar.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE SAKKESTAD

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Dusty Locke serves some wine to patrons Evelyn Wilson, left, and Laura Zabel at the Cinnabar wine tasting room in Saratoga. Cinnabar plans to offer live outdoor music in the near future.

# Good To The Last Drop

West Valley wine establishments offer friends an entertaining place to gather

By MARIANNE L. HAMILTON

Photographs by GEORGE SAKKESTAD

In his “Essays in Idleness” (circa 1340), Buddhist priest, scholar and poet Yoshida Kenko recommended that, “A man should not refuse a little wine when it is pressed upon him.”

If Kenko were alive today, he would likely be pleased to see that local residents are following his advice at a growing collection of West Valley establishments offering wine, food and fun.

For a few area wine bars and tasting rooms, the lingering effects of a sluggish economy have driven a quest to find inventive

ways to increase their customer base. For others, an easing of regulations restricting live music has breathed new life into once-moldering cellars.

In all cases, the customer is the winner—especially those seeking a “one-stop shop” for libations and lively entertainment on a balmy South Bay evening. Here’s a sampling of some of the best options.

## Savannah-Channelle Vineyards

Somewhere along the four-mile drive up Congress Springs

Road from Saratoga, a sense of serenity settles over each visitor. That sense is heightened at the top of the hill, where Savannah-Channelle Vineyards has been in operation since 1892. These days, local wine fans in the know visit the historic, 58-acre property on Friday and Saturday evenings for music and tastes of the winery’s best vintages. From roughly 5 to 8 p.m. through early fall, Savannah-Channelle offers an eclectic mix of entertainment, ranging from acoustic jazz to full-on rock ‘n’ roll. “People are free to come up, roam the property and go up to the

villa,” says tasting-room staffer Luke Piro, whose band, South City Blues, is a favorite at SCV. Savannah-Channelle also offers specials: bottles that are normally \$28 are \$14 when purchased by the case. Monterey County pinot noir and syrah are among the best sellers, and are available by the glass or bottle. Feel free to bring a picnic and settle in at one of the many Adirondack chairs and umbrella-topped tables. Outdoor entertainment continues through Sept. 22.

Located at 23600 Congress

Springs Road in Saratoga. Contact Savannah-Channelle Vineyards at 408.741.2934.

## Cinnabar Winery Tasting Room

Homes located in snowy climes almost always include a mud-room, where family members and visitors can stash soggy shoes and boots. At Cinnabar Winery, the moniker has an entirely different meaning: Its Mudd Room (named in honor of founder Tom Mudd,

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## Wine bar

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who died in 2007) is the site of Friday and Saturday evening music/tasting events. Cinnabar president Suzanne Frontz says the evolution of the space, which is located inside of the property's tasting room in downtown Saratoga, was prompted by the "cocooning" trend of the past several years. "We've become a café society," says Frontz. "People like to stay in their neighborhoods and patronize local businesses, but still have fun things to do." With input from their customers in mind, Cinnabar created the Mudd Room, which offers live music every Friday and Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m. Says Frontz, "We started slowly, and it's been received really well. And now that the Saratoga City Council has approved the test period for next year, we'll be able to have live music outdoors." In the meantime, visitors stepping inside of the Mudd Room can find everything from folk to flamenco at Cinnabar, along with artisan cheeses, charcuterie and other nibbles. Seating options include the wine counter, tables or the heated patio. "There's no cover

charge; seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. But we'd really like it if people would buy at least one glass of wine," Frontz says.

*Located at 14612 Big Basin Way in Saratoga. Contact Cinnabar at 408.867.1012 and visit <http://cinnabarwine.com>.*

### M4: Martella Wines and Michaud Vineyard

When winemakers Michael Martella and Michael Michaud joined forces earlier this month, it was natural that their enterprise be named M4. Their new Big Basin Way tasting room is located in the same building housing Cinnabar's facility, and offers outdoor patio tasting areas overlooking downtown Saratoga Village. While the Michaels await the official launch of live outdoor music next year, they've established hours of operation that take advantage of the area's glorious late-summer weather. "We're currently staying open until 8:30 or 9 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday," notes Martella, who's been crafting wines since 1972. "People are stopping on their way up to concerts at Mountain Winery. We're also seeing more and more folks mingling down-

town after enjoying dinner at one of the wonderful restaurants in Saratoga, and they're coming by to taste our wines. We offer two points of view in our winemaking, and two different styles that work well together." Food service at M4 will begin soon, and will include gourmet cheeses and meats specially selected to complement Michaud's estate-bottled wines, as well as Martella's locally sourced labels. M4's website is under construction, but when launched will offer a full listing of events and entertainment planned at the new facility. It's so new, in fact, that Martella cautions that no signage has been installed as yet. "Look for the red umbrellas," he advises.

*Located at 14598 Big Basin Way in Saratoga. Contact M4 at 408.647.2579.*

### Testarossa Winery

Beneath 90-year-old sycamores, Testarossa Winery now welcomes guests to its new Wine Bar 107 space, opened this past April. Named for the bond number of the property's former Novitiate Winery, Wine Bar 107 is located in the Niclair Courtyard.

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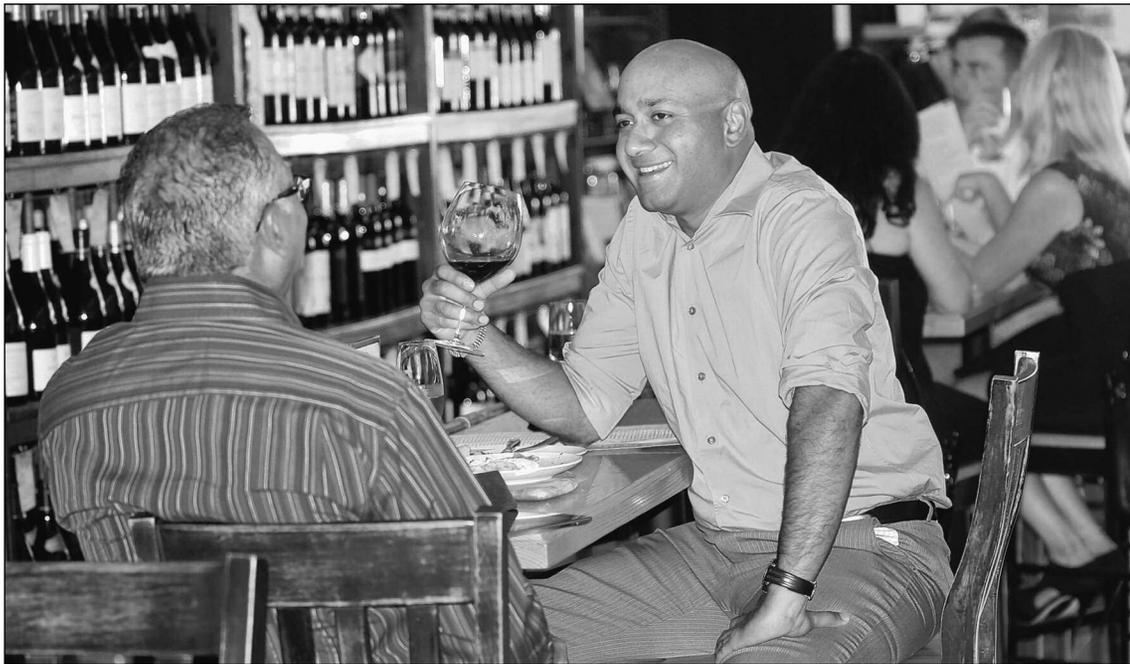
The fresh fruit and cheese plate is a popular item at Testarossa Winery.



Madison Souther, left, celebrates a toast with parents Jim and Kathy Demerit during their visit to Testarossa Winery.



Carmen Barrett, left, and Candace Holt enjoy some wine, food and a few laughs during a recent visit to Tessoro's Barrio di Vino in Campbell.



Vikram Kamath, right, has some wine and Italian delicacies during a recent visit to Enoteca La Storia in Los Gatos.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE SAKKSTAD

Jill Sullivan, left, Dan McQuade and Joy McGivern enjoy some wine and a few laughs during their visit to Testarossa Winery's new outdoor wine bar.

## Wine bar

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Thursdays through October from 3 to 7 p.m., visitors will find music, small plates and wines by the glass and bottle. "We normally pull out some of our library wines, and we have a whole range of entertainment each week," says proprietor Diana Jensen. "The response has been really positive, so we plan to keep this going until daylight savings ends, then we'll start up again next year." Wine Bar 107 is also open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, although no music is offered. Jensen and her staff request that outside food not be brought onto the property. But guests will find tasty treats and fine wines (as well as parking) available in abundance at Wine Bar 107.

*Located at 300-A College Ave. in Los Gatos. Contact Testarossa at 408.354.6150 and visit [www.testarossa.com](http://www.testarossa.com).*

### Rootstock Wine Bar

Few Los Gatos locales offer the premier people-watching potential of Rootstock Wine Bar. Situated on Santa Cruz Avenue across from Forbes Mill Steakhouse, the property delivers the unbeatable combination of stellar wines, sa-

very small-to medium-size plates, and one of the best spots in town to see and be seen. Though Rootstock does not present live entertainment on site, hunkering down near the outdoor fire pit with a favorite vintage is its own form of entertainment. Happy hour runs from 4 to 6 p.m. nightly (including weekends), with most wines available in the \$6-\$8 per glass range; select craft beers can be purchased for \$5. Recorded music wafts through the sleekly appointed wine bar and patio area. Rootstock manager Jim Hayter says the tunes can be specially selected to satisfy patrons' tastes. "I can actually go into my cell phone and program songs that our guests ask for," Hayter says with a laugh. "Depending on who's working, if we have a table asking for Maroon 5 or another group, they can pick their favorite songs and we'll play them. We want everyone to have the best possible experience here." Looking for your favorite Santa Cruz Mountains wine? Rootstock can fill the bill with its inventory of local labels, supplemented by international wines and top-quality beers from around the globe. Check their website for ongoing events featuring winemakers from the Santa Cruz appellation.



Monica DeLeon of Testarossa Winery opens a bottle of 2010 pinot noir in the winery's outdoor wine bar.

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Sharon Masleid, left, and Hannah Hagy have some wine and laughs at Cinnabar's tasting room in Saratoga.



Los Gatos residents Cindy Leonardi, left, and Roslyn Jones enjoy conversation, wine and gourmet food on the outdoor patio at Rootstock Wine Bar in Los Gatos.

## Wine bar

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*Located at 217 N. Santa Cruz Ave. in Los Gatos. Contact Rootstock at 408.354.7668 (ROOT) and visit <http://rootstocklg.com>.*

### Enoteca La Storia

In Italian, enoteca means “wine repository.” In Los Gatos, Enoteca means the perfect spot for sampling local and international wines and accompaniments, coached by a savvy staff. Launched in 2010 by Los Gatos resident Joe Cannistraci and partner Mike Guerra—both alumni of Santana Row’s Vintage Wine Merchants—Enoteca quickly established itself as one of the top wine-tasting destinations in the West Valley. Cannistraci and Guerra can be seen behind the bar nightly, pouring for patrons and sharing their considerable knowledge of the grape. Whether you opt for a single glass or purchase a bottle to share, extend the indulgence with some wine-bar fare, Italian-style, including cheese plates, salads and sandwiches. Finish off the experience with something sweet, such as seasonal house-made gelato, or wine-soaked biscotti. New on the menu: “Swingin’ Sundays,” when ELS presents acoustic jazz every other Sunday afternoon. “We put a duo or a trio just inside the front door, then open the door so they get maximum exposure to the people on the patio,” Guerra says. “They start at 4 and play three sets, so they’re usually through around 7.” Guerra adds that he and Cannistraci have just received the go-ahead to open up a second establishment in the same shopping center where Enoteca is located. “It will be a tapas bar, and we’re planning to serve exclusively Spanish wines.” On tap soon: a collaboration with Restaurant James Randall on Sept. 15, with Enoteca pairing Italian wines with a prix fixe meal prepared by RJR executive chef Ross Hanson, celebrating tomatoes of all stripe. If 2012 has been a year to remember, wrap it up at Enoteca at a gala New Year’s Eve event featuring beautiful bubbles.

*Located at 416 N. Santa Cruz Ave. in Los Gatos. Contact Enoteca at 408.625.7272 and visit [www.enotecalastoria.com](http://www.enotecalastoria.com).*

### Tessora’s Barra di Vino

There’s always something going on at Tessora’s. Nestled in a cozy corner of the Pruneyard in Campbell, the wine bar has earned a reputation as a purveyor of outstanding food, wine and entertainment in equal measure. On virtually any night of the week (save for Mondays, when Tessora’s is closed), owners Hamid and Carol Pouya entice patrons into their establishment with creative programs. Alternate Sunday afternoons attract local jazz musicians who come to network and perform during “Jazz Jams,” held 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. Ladies Nights are held on Tuesday, with 20 percent off on pours for any female guest. During happy hour (4-6 p.m., Wednesdays-Fridays), two whites and two reds can be enjoyed for \$5/glass, along with \$5 beers and happy hour munchies, also \$5. Friday and Saturday evenings see Tessora’s offering live, no-cover entertainment of all genres. Whether you’re a fan of blues, rock, Latin jazz or just about any other musical mix, you’re bound to find your favorite out on the patio. “My idea was to create a place where people could relax and enjoy good food, wine and music,” Carol says. “We like to say that we have a bit of ‘boutiqueness’ here; you’ll find different varietals that aren’t on the grocery store shelves, and we offer a nice selection of music. The jazz musicians who come in here and jam are phenomenal.” Tessora’s music manager Isis (lead singer of Cold Truth) will gladly rotate interested performers into the Jazz Jams; instrumentalists and vocalists are welcome. A full inventory of domestic and international wines are available for purchase. Add in chef Jen’s innovative menu that changes weekly, and Tessora’s patrons are not likely to refuse a little wine—or anything else—that’s pressed upon them. And neither should you.

*Located at 1875 S. Bascom Ave. in Campbell. Contact Tessora’s at 408.626.7711 at [www.tessoras.com](http://www.tessoras.com).*

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