



- News
- Classifieds
- Community
- Directory
- Shopping
- My Zwire!

Home -> News -> News -> Top Stories

Wednesday 7 April, 2004

NEWS SEARCH

Top Stories

[Advanced search](#)

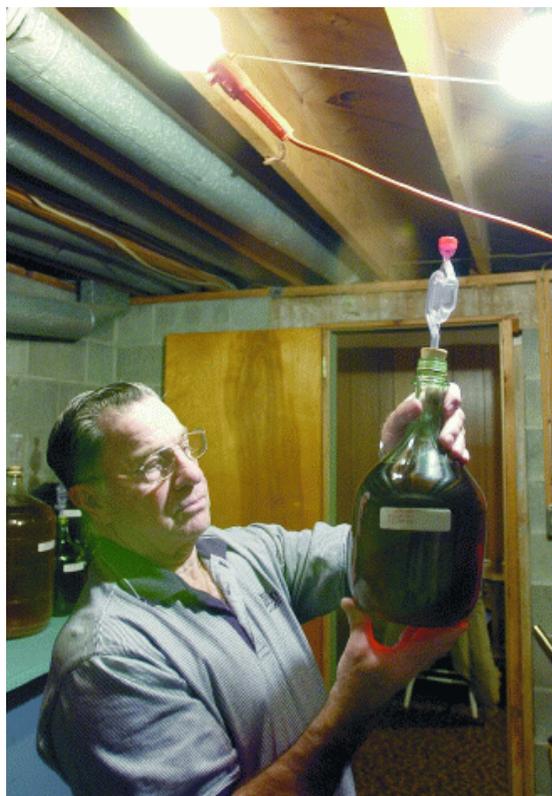
Partners in Wine

By: JON HALBERG, Gazette Staff Writer

January 31, 2002

*Click Here,
Learn More*

- News
- Top Stories
- Subscribe
- Contact Us
- Photo Guidelines
- AP News
- Today's Photos
- Sports
- Local Scores
- AP Sports Wire
- Outdoors
- Obituaries
- Weather
- Indiana Co. Bicentennial
- Family Leisure
- Health
- Technology
- Women in Business
- Business
- Automobiles
- Bridal Guide
- Announcements
- Columnists
- Archives
- Letters
- Submit A Letter
- Letters to Home
- Guestbook
- Entertainment
- TV Guide
- PA Lottery
- Sports Almanac!
- Sports Wire!
- School News
- Photo



Lifelong friends from coal-mining town find spirited hobby in retirement.

Holding a jug to the light lets Tony Sottile see whether the particles in the wine have settled. (Gazette photo by Tom Peel)

To hear them tell it, Tony Sottile and Ed Salerno of Indiana are following an old family tradition with their new hobby of the past couple years: making wine in the basement.

"When we were growing up, our folks made everything for themselves," said Sottile. "They grew their own vegetables in the garden - our mothers canned the tomatoes and made their own ketchup and tomato paste."

"I helped my dad make wine starting when I was 10 years old," Sottile added. "We'd squeeze the grapes and make the wine in oak barrels."

"Yeah, his dad made wine in the basement," Salerno said. "And we'd take a little taste now and again," he added with a chuckle.



Trader Horn

Click here for more information!

Gallery	"Two years ago, my brother said, 'You guys ought to make some wine,'" Sottile said. "I looked at Ed and he looked at me, and we said, 'Let's do it!'"
▶ Community	
▶ IUP	
▶ Classifieds	
▶ Coupons	The friends delight in showing off the rows of glass jugs full of young wine maturing in Salerno's basement.
▶ Millennium Project	Though it's still weeks away from being ready to bottle, the men say this season's vintage looks as if it will be another good one for Tony's Vino and Casa da Salerno.
▶ Business Directory	
▶ Our Newspaper	Custom-made labels for the two vintages, made by Sottile's son, a graphic designer, honor the origins of the pair of paisanos.
▶ Cool Links	
▶ Fun and Games	
▶ Consumer Guide	Tony's Vino features a map of Sicily on the label, showing the city of Messina, where Sottile's ancestors came from.
▶ Personal Finance	Casa da Salerno shows the town of Benevento, on the Italian mainland, home to Salerno's forefathers.
▶ Lifestyles	

A copy of the book "Winemaking for Dummies" sits on the shelf near the 5-gallon glass jugs full of wine, but Sottile insists the title doesn't apply to the two in their second year producing wine.

READER POLL

What should be done with the Pledge of Allegiance and the phrase "under God?"

E-mail us with your comments.

- Leave it as it is**
- Remove the phrase, but keep the pledge**
- Leave the phrase in, but make the pledge optional**
- If the phrase remains, remove the pledge from public schools**

"We're not dummies anymore," Sottile said.

Wearing his "Got Wine?" baseball cap, Salerno held a bottle of pinot chardonnay up to the light in his basement wine cellar at the opposite end of the furnace.

"See? The sediment's almost gone," he said, looking through the reddish liquid now almost clear of particles. "One more racking and it'll be ready to bottle."

From start to finish, the winemaking process these two follow takes a little more than six months to go from jugs of juice to bottles of wine.

In the first step, they transfer the juice from 6-gallon plastic jugs to the 5-gallon glass jugs, using only enough additives to make it ferment at just the right speed.

Ninety days later - after the first racking - the fermenting juice is siphoned into clean jugs, leaving any sediment behind. Even more sediment is left behind when the wine is again siphoned into clean jugs in the second racking, 60 days later.

Then, after 30 to 45 days, "if the wine looks clear enough" they'll put it into bottles and label the finished product, Salerno said.

"The first year, I made Burgundy, muscato, and red and white zinfandel," Sottile said. "This year, I'm trying Chianti

[Submit Vote](#)
[view results](#)


**Click here
for more
information!**

white zinfandel, Sottile said. This year, I'm trying Chianti, too."

Salerno made merlot, cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay and Burgundy last year. This year, he's also trying the muscato, he said.

The two men, who've been neighbors nearly all their lives, born a month apart almost 70 years ago in Sagamore, have been friends practically since the day they were born.

"My dad and mother were friends with his parents," Sottile said.

"When my mother was pregnant and Mrs. Salerno was pregnant, the company doctor would go from one house to another. We've had a very close friendship all our lives."

"Very close," agreed Salerno. "All the way through grade school and high school, we were inseparable."

Salerno's parents were godparents for Sottile's sister, as were Sottile's parents for Salerno's sister.

And their friendship continues into retirement, with the twosome golfing together nearly every weekday.

"We leave the weekend for people who have to work during the week," Salerno said with a grin.

Growing up in a coal-mining town, the sons of Italian immigrants had to make things for themselves and find ways to have fun.

"We'd go swimming in the summer, ice-skate in the creek in the winter," recalled Sottile. "We couldn't afford to buy a sled, so we made our own out of a piece of corrugated metal."

When the two were teen-agers, Sottile said, they both had a taste for banana splits, but the high price at a Sagamore shop - 25 cents - irked them.

"So we hitchhiked the three miles to Plumville and bought a whole stock of bananas to save the money," Sottile said.

Now that their tastes have matured from banana splits to fine wine, Salerno and Sottile say they are again making a little effort to save on goodies with their hobby.

After spending \$255 on the 5-gallon "carboy" glass bottles, air locks, hoses and other equipment - Salerno saved all the receipts - and from \$32 to \$40 each for the 6-gallon jugs of California grape juice, the partners in wine figure the first batch cost them about \$2.35 a bottle. They figure their costs will average about \$1.30 a bottle this year.

"It's equivalent to something you'd pay \$7 or \$8 a bottle for," said Salerno.

After last year's production of 300 bottles turned out well, according to the friends and family who got most of it, the winemaking duo is shooting for 450 bottles this year.

"It's a nice hobby," Salerno said, adding with a grin, "and we don't have to worry about Christmas gifts anymore."

©Indiana Printing & Publishing Co. 2004

Reader Opinions

Be the first person to voice your opinion on this story!

Back to top 



E-mail this story
to a friend



Voice your opinion
on this story

Copyright © 1995 - 2004 [PowerOne Media, Inc.](#) All Rights Reserved.