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*"With Gold Medal Wine Club,
The Road to Great Wine
Begins at Your Door."*

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BRUTOCAO CONTINUES EXPANSION, ADDS NEW VINEYARD AND TASTING ROOM

In a small town called Treviso near Venice, Italy, the Lion of St. Mark is prevalent wherever you go. The lion has been a symbolic figure in the cathedral of St. Mark in Venice for generations. So ingrained in the heritage of Venice and the surrounding area, it has become a symbol for the city of Venice itself.

In America that symbol has become synonymous with Brutocao Cellars, a small winery in Mendocino County. Owned and operated by Leonard Brutocao and his wife Marty, the winery's Lion of St. Mark logo is a perpetual embracement of the Brutocao family's

Italian heritage that originated in Treviso.

We doubt that many of you have heard of Brutocao (pronounced brute´ oh coe) Cellars, even though they've been producing wines since 1980. In the early 1940s Marty Brutocao's father, Irv Bliss, bought the 500-acre property where Brutocao Cellars now sits. It was comprised of 60 acres of grapes and figs back then but the land was used mostly for raising livestock. Irv soon discovered the area was suited for growing grapes and expanded the property's vineyards. By the 1970s he was harvesting over 100 acres of mostly

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Brutocao Cellars produces just 12,000 cases annually, but is one of the largest grape growers in Mendocino County.

Gold Medal Wine Club features two wines each month from only the best small wineries of California. Featured wines include those which have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by a respected national wine publication. On occasion we feature a wine which is of high medal-quality, but due to its very limited availability or by preference of the wine producer, may not be submitted to these venues for review. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with limited distribution. There are over 1,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



1996 MERLOT

The Brutocao 1996 Merlot has won so many medals we ran out of room to list them all below! This beautiful Merlot offers billowy aromas of ripe black cherry fruit, with a touch of oaky spice and dried herb. The aroma follows through with deep and dramatic flavors of black fruit and a touch of spice. Velvety smooth mouthfeel as it rolls across the palate to a very long finish. Whether you're a Merlot fan or not, this delectable wine has wide palate-appeal. A few of the winery's own tasting notes read, "Hints of blackberry, ripe fruit and fresh earthy/oak nose. Flavors of coffee, dark chocolate and rich plum are very approachable now, and will continue to improve with age." 100% Merlot.



1997 CHARDONNAY

Brutocao's Bliss Vineyard is well known for producing ultra-premium Chardonnay fruit. Before the Brutocao family began producing wine under their own label in 1991, their fruit was sold to other "high-profile" wineries who in turn, produced hundreds of medal-winning Chardonnays over the past few decades. This is yet another in a long line of Brutocao, palate pleasing Chardonnays. "Soft apple and pear tones that fit well with lightly creamy aromas of oak and vanilla. Rounded and viscous, carrying rich fruit in harmony with supporting oak flavors. Supple lemon, green apple and ripe melon hints lead with lactic richness for a soft, lingering finish," say the winery's notes. Try it with veal piccata or a savory chicken casserole. 100% Chardonnay.

WINE CREDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

1996 VINTAGE: *Gold Medal and Best of Class*–New World Wine Competition; *Gold Medal*–World Wine Championships; *90-Points*–Wine Enthusiast magazine; *5 Silver medals, 3 Bronze medals*

LEGACY: Best of Class honors for two years straight. Gold Medal winner virtually every year. Merlot is a flagship varietal for Brutocao Cellars.

1997 VINTAGE: *Silver Medal*–Taster's Guild International Wine Tasting; *Bronze Medal*–West Coast Wine Competition; *Bronze Medal*–Los Angeles County Fair Wine Competition.

LEGACY: An award-winning wine each and every year since 1991.

Just the facts:

pH	3.60
Total Acid	.63 g/100 mls
Alcohol	12.9%
Cases Produced	2,533
Aged in French & American Oak	16 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2010+

Just the facts:

pH	3.58
Total Acid	.68 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.3%
Cases Produced	2,007
Aged in French Oak	7 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2004+

GOLD MEDAL SPOTLIGHT

Len Brutocao

Times were tough in Italy at the turn of the century and distant lands were calling all comers with the hopes of new prosperity. In 1910, Leonard and Albert Brutocao's father, Leonard Brutocao Sr., left Italy with his family, at the age of one, to settle in Canada. He and his two brothers, Louie and Angelo, grew up in Ft. Erie, Ontario, across the border from Buffalo, New York.

As adults, the three Brutocao brothers took the opportunities of their new homeland to heart, involving themselves in a myriad of entrepreneurial businesses. They started companies that manufactured everything from grass mats to stove radiators. But at the heart of their enterprises was their construction business that specialized in building houses and apartments.

Leonard's sons, Albert and Leonard Jr., also grew up in Ft. Erie. In 1949 while the two were still teenagers, the entire Brutocao clan emigrated to the U.S. They moved to the town of Covina, in southern California and continued to prosper

in the construction business. Their entrepreneurial spirit persisted, starting new enterprises such as the first modern bowling alley west of the Mississippi. They also dabbled in real estate and chicken farming!

Meanwhile, son Leonard went to college at U.C. Berkeley to obtain an engineering degree. Out of college he worked for the Federal government for a while, then joined brother Al at an engineering company in Merced. In 1967, the two brothers struck out

established as the backbone of their operations they began a hand full of other ventures one of which included running a pasta store! When the opportunity arose to buy back the family vineyard property in Mendocino that Len's father-in-law had sold years earlier, Al and Len jumped at the chance. They both liked the thought of owning a farm and being outdoors; and someday they hoped to build a couple of houses on the land to retire there with their families.



Len Brutocao and wife Marty, are founders of Brutocao Cellars.

Al decided he would manage the vineyard while Len continued to run the construction and other businesses in southern California. However, his untimely death in 1989 changed everything and accelerated Len's timetable to spend his time at the vineyard.

Len is now busy fulfilling both his and Al's dreams. The winery is making serious inroads as they had both hoped it would someday. Len "retired" in 1994 but still directs the strategic direction of the business. He and his wife, Marty recently built a house on the Mendocino vineyard property where they now reside. 🍷

on their own to form Brutocao Engineering. Their company specialized in heavy construction projects, building bridges and highways throughout California and Arizona.

True to the Brutocao tradition, once the engineering company was



WINE WIZARD

- 1) True or False. Among red wines, a purple hue is associated with older, bottle aged wines and the brick red hue is characteristic of young wines.
- 2) True or False. The higher the alcohol content of a wine, the thicker the streams produced when the wine falls back down the side of the glass after it is swirled.
- 3) True or False. Women are more able to learn to identify odors than men.

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Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel.

Irv Bliss retired in 1969 and sold the ranch to Sonoma Vineyards. They in turn planted 100 additional acres of the land to Chardonnay, Petite Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, and added to the existing Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon vines. Five years later ownership of the property returned to the family when Sonoma

Vineyards ran into financial trouble and sold it to Irv Bliss' son-in-law Leonard Brutocao and his brother Albert.

The vineyards were not in good shape and the two brothers had never before been involved with grape growing. They recognized the opportunity though, and as with their other entrepreneurial ventures (see Spotlight on page 3), they were determined to make it work. The basic idea was to nurse the vineyards back to health, sell the majority of the crop to other wineries and make a little bit of wine in the process.

By 1980 the plan was well on its way. The vineyards were back in shape, the grapes were being sold to local area wineries such as Beringer, Mondavi and Fetzer, and the Brutocaos made several hundred cases of Cabernet Sauvignon to sell under their own label. For the next decade the operational plan remained unchanged until 1989 when Al Brutocao, who managed the day-to-day activities, suddenly passed away.

Brother Len Brutocao, who up until then had been directing the family's other enterprises in southern California, became actively involved in the wine business. Len counted on Tony Stephen, who was the grape grower and vineyard manager, to continue handling that aspect of the business. He also decided to get serious about being in the winery business. Starting a winery and making a real impact with their wines was something

the two brothers had talked about for years and Len was finally going to make it happen.

One of the first tasks was finding an experienced winemaker. His search didn't take him far. Tony Stephen's wife, Nancy Walker, was working as assistant winemaker at Clos du Bois. She was already a veteran in the wine industry having gained previous experience at McDowell and Cresta Blanca wineries. "I had long been aware of the great potential of Brutocao Vineyards," Nancy tells us. So she jumped at the opportunity to head her own winemaking program for Brutocao Cellars.

The new Brutocao Cellars was off and running with the 1991 harvest. That first year, a mix of 1,200 cases was made of Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. The wines hit with immediate critical success. *The Wine Spectator* rated the 1991 Sauvignon Blanc 90 points, its highest rating of the year. The ensuing years brought steady increases in overall production and more critical success for their wines. Thirty-five hundred cases were made in 1992, 8,000 cases the following year, and 10,000 cases were produced in 1994. "At 15,000 cases or so we would have been at maximum capacity," says Len Brutocao. "So we knew we had to make plans right then to expand our facilities," he added.

In 1995 Brutocao Cellars finished construction of a brand new, larger winery. "Our comfort level will eventually reach 25,000 to 35,000 cases," Len Brutocao reveals. At roughly the same time the new facilities were completed, the Brutocaos purchased an additional 275-acre vineyard on the opposite side of the road from the winery. The property is planted to Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, so as Brutocao wine production increases, the additional grapes will secure the luxury of using only the best grapes for their own brand. And in 1999, the winery started development of a new vineyard they call, *Contento* located adjacent to their Bliss Vineyard. The experts are convinced the site's red volcanic soil will yield top-of-the line, ultra-premium Cabernet Sauvignon that will be

ready to harvest by the year 2004.

Continuing their expansion mode, the Brutocaos recently purchased the defunct Hopland High School and have turned the property into a fabulous visitor destination center called School-house Plaza. In the old school building, a huge new tasting room was constructed along with an Italian restaurant. Next door in the old school gymnasium, plans are underway to house several small retail shops, along with offices, and a conference center.

On the grounds, the Brutocaos have completed six regulation Bocce ball courts where official tournaments are held, attracting Bocce players from far and wide. The final result is a fabulous, attractive, multi-use complex for both locals and tourists.

To help guide the winery to new heights and well into the next

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Winemaker Fred Nickel (left) with owner, Len Brutocao (right).

ANSWERS TO WINE WIZARD

1) *False. The color intensity of red table wines ranges from pink to light red, medium red, and dark red. At any color intensity, the wine may have a brick red or purple hue. The purple hue is associated with young red wines and the brick red or tawny hue is acquired as the wine ages in the bottle. When the red fades completely and brown takes over, the wine is likely too old and will have taken on a greater resemblance to sherry than to, say, Cabernet Sauvignon. As red wines age they lose color.*



2) *False. When a glass of wine is swirled, the wine divides into streams as it runs down the sides of the glass. The higher the alcohol content of the wine, the thinner the stream it will produce when the wine falls back down the side of the glass.*

3) *True. Women are significantly better in all aspects of odor recognition and learning than are men. Odor research has also discovered that the young learn new odors faster and the blind surpass the sighted at odor identification. Other tidbits: Pregnant women often feel that they are more sensitive to smell, but actually the data suggests that olfactory sensitivity actually is reduced during pregnancy. And how about this one—after the age of 30 our ability to recall the names of all odors begins to decline.*



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

INVITE THE NEIGHBORS OVER STEAK POT

2-3 lbs. New York, filet mignon or any other tender beef steak
1/4 cup butter
1 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup Merlot
1/4 cup catsup
2 teaspoons cornstarch
Freshly ground pepper

Accompaniments: chopped green onions, parsley or chilies, sesame seeds, melted cheese, sour cream, or chutney

Trim all excess fat from steak. Cut into bite size cubes and 1/2-inch thick. Brown steak quickly in butter. Brown just until rare or medium rare, remove to heated chafing dish.

Blend salt, wine, catsup, cornstarch, and pepper (to taste), stir into pan drippings. Cook and stir till mixture boils and thickens. Pour over steak cubes, stirring to combine meat and sauce.

Serve with picks for spearing meat and dipping into accompaniments. Serve with 1997 Brutocao Cellars Merlot.

SOUTHERN ITALY SHRIMP APPETIZER

2 lbs. Fresh shrimp
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon lime peel
1/4 cup lime juice
1/2 cup Brutocao 1997 Chardonnay
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons green onions
1/4 cup chopped Anaheim pepper
(like it hot? Use a jalapeno pepper)
1/2 teaspoon each: sugar, salt, pepper,
parsley lettuce leaves and papaya

Thaw shrimp if frozen, peel and de-vein. Bring 4 cups water to a boil, add shrimp and simmer uncovered 1-5 minutes until shrimp turns pink, stirring occasionally. Rinse with cold water, drain and set aside. Set a heavy plastic bag in a medium bowl. Combine garlic, lime and juice, olive oil, green onion, pepper, parsley, salt, sugar, and pepper in bag, mix well and add cooked shrimp. Turn bag to coat shrimp and marinate in the refrigerator 2-5 hours, turning occasionally. To serve, drain shrimp, discard the marinade. Line a platter with lettuce leaves, arrange papaya slices around outer edge of platter, place shrimp in center. This recipe also makes a great dinner for two with a nice salad and French bread. Enjoy with a glass of Brutocao 1997 Chardonnay.



The Winery's new Venetian-style Tasting Room, complete with a mural of the Brutocao hometown of Treviso, Italy

BRUTOCAO WINE SOCIETY

The Brutocao family invites all Gold Medal Wine Club members to become a member of their own wine club which they call *The Lion of St. Mark Wine Society*. The club has two levels based on the amount of wine you wish to receive. Deliveries take place the first week of April and October.

As a special offer to new members, a one-time charge of \$45.00 gets you a Jerobaum of Brutocao wine (3-liter bottle.). If you would like more information, call the winery direct at 800-433-3689 and tell them, "Gold Medal Wine Club sent me!" 🍷

JUDGE-THE-WINES RESULTS

In this section we publish the cumulative, on-going tallies of the Judge-the-Wines Scoresheets which are provided in each delivery of wine and mailed back in by Club members. We believe it is fun as well as educational to think about and record the different characteristics of the wines you sample. No matter how acute you think your palate is, the person next to you will probably have a different thought or opinion about a certain characteristic of the wine you are sampling. It can also prove beneficial to record your impressions of the wine for reference at a later date.

Below are the most recent tallies of the Scoresheets returned. Gold Medal Wine Club specializes in featuring small-sized wineries and small-production wines. Depending on availability from the winery, all members may not receive every wine that is listed below. The Scoresheet results which are printed in green indicate the wine selections that as of press time are still available for reorder.

Perry Creek – 1997 Sangiovese

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	6%	4%

Perry Creek – 1997 Zinfandel

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	5%	5%

Perry Creek – 1997 Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	89%	5%	6%

Hanna – 1996 Cabernet

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	94%	6%	0%

Hanna – 1997 Sauvignon Blanc

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	5%	5%

Thornton – 1992 Brut Reserve

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	93%	6%	1%

Thornton – 1997 Cote Red

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	89%	5%	6%

Oakville Ranch – 1997 Sangiovese

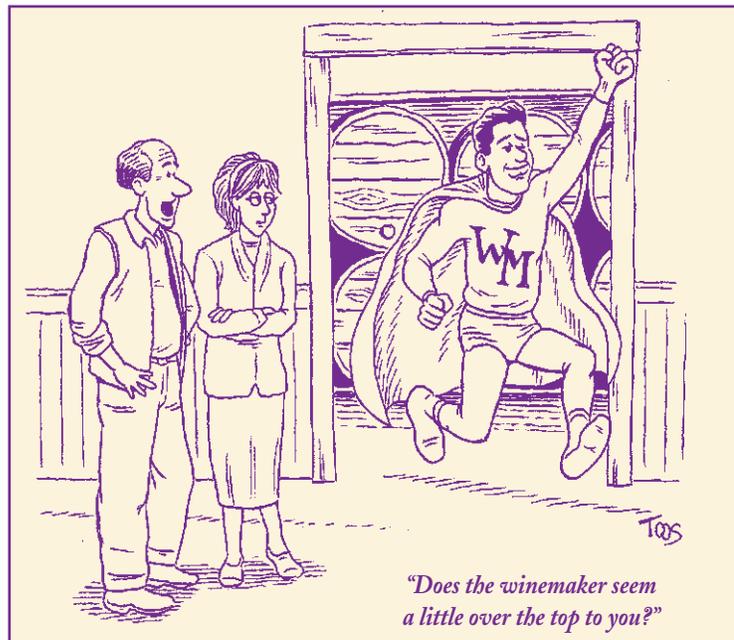
MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	6%	4%

The above wines were recently featured. Due to space limitations the entire list of available wines is not listed—please call to inquire about other previous favorites.

■ Indicates wine is still available

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millennium, Len & Marty's son Steve, directs the winery's sales and marketing efforts. The winery's new winemaker, 20-year wine industry veteran, Fred Nickel, arrived in 1997 to handle all aspects of production. Steve Brutocao's sister, Rene, manages the tasting room merchandise sales and writes the winery newsletter. Len's daughter-in-law handles sales in the southern California area. Len Jr. recently moved into a ranch house on the vineyard property and manages the facilities and construction projects. And even though Len Brutocao claims he's retired now, when we ask who runs the show—he just smiles. 🍷



“Does the winemaker seem a little over the top to you?”

THE GRAPEVINE

Comments from us and Club members

It's time once again to review and reminisce about the top wines featured during the past year of 1999. This is a quick trip down memory lane of wines that were rated Gold Medal winners by at least 90% of Club members who mailed, faxed, and e-mailed in their scores and comments. The year on the whole from a wine standpoint was utterly amazing. We had more wines finish above 90% Gold than any year in recent memory. Those right at the 90% cut-off were: *Sandstone '97 Chardonnay*, *Smith & Hook '95 Cabernet & '95 Merlot*, *Monte Volpe '97 Pinot Bianco*, *Mazzocco '97 Chardonnay*, *Oakville Ranch '97 Sangiovese*, *Hanna '97 Sauvignon Blanc*, and *Perry Creek '97 Sangiovese and '97 Zinfandel*.

Those rising well above the 90% mark were: *Sandstone '96 Merlot*, *Rabbit Ridge '96 Zinfandel*, *Bommarito '97 Merlot*, *Monte Volpe '96 Dolcetto*, and *Mazzocco '94 Cabernet*.

Top three wines of the year? Drum roll please The three best wines of the year as rated by YOU, were 1) *Rabbit Ridge 1997 Reserve Chardonnay*, 1) (tie) *Thornton 1992 Brut Reserve*, and 2) *Hanna 1996 Cabernet Sauvignon*! (As a foot note, early scoring and reorder activity make the *Dante 1997 Cabernet* look like a solid favorite and quick sell out too.)

As always, we appreciate all of the scorecards and comments that so many of you take time to send us throughout the year. Have a great 2000, and stay tuned for more great wine!

R E O R D E R

The Brutocao family has been growing wine grapes in Mendocino County since the 1940s. After seeing other wineries win medals using their grapes, they finally got in on the action in 1991. Their wonderful Merlots and Chardonnays have helped put them on the list of wineries to watch.

BRUTOCAO WINERY	Retail Price		Club Price		Club Price	
	Winery-Direct		2-Bottle Members		4-Bottle Members	
1996 Merlot* Estate Bottled	Half Case-6	\$108	\$85	(21% Off)	\$79	(27% Off)
	Full Case-12	\$216	\$159	(26% Off)	\$147	(32% Off)
1997 Chardonnay* Estate Bottled	Half Case-6	\$87	\$68	(22% Off)	\$63	(28% Off)
	Full Case-12	\$174	\$129	(26% Off)	\$115	(34% Off)

Reorder Hotline: 1-800-266-8888

Reorder Faxline: 1-800-266-8889

**Availability is extremely limited.*

Note: Tax & shipping are not included in the above prices. Call for details.