



## Go, Gianni, Go!

BY ERNESTO BROGLIO

Gianni Manucci roamed his grandfather's vineyard near Naples when he was very young. Only hazy memories of the place and of his grandfather remain. But something imprinted.

He grew. He lived in Northern California. The climate is like that of the Mediterranean. He went to school in Berkeley. He attended the University of California at Santa Cruz, which is known as a school for the offbeat. Perhaps, but it has produced several practical and inventive winemakers.

Randall Gramh of Bonny Doon Winery; Keith Hofeldt, who owned Sunrise Winery, now Picchetti Winery, in Cupertino; and Greg Nolten, owner and winemaker of Zayante Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains all are UCSC graduates. Maybe it was something in the air they all breathed.

Manucci became educated in architecture and computer graphics. Italians have a genetic advantage when it comes to design. When he was at Santa Cruz, he would hear the beat of the waves against the beach and be reminded of Naples. He would sometimes look down the slopes toward the town and see vineyards where there were no vineyards. He wasn't a dreamer. He was a hard worker. But he dreamed anyway.

He graduated in 1978. He lived in Marin County and worked in that place often known as The City. He was in the financial world and was successful, but something kept pulling. He brought balance to his life by sculpting stone.

The pull became stronger. In 1996, he fell in love. He fell in love with land. He bought a 40-acre site on Adelaida Road on the west side of Paso Robles. That area has even more of a Mediterranean climate than Berkeley or Santa Cruz. It was a dry farmed orchard. He loved the virgin soil of the hillside. He loved the extreme climate. He loved the nearness of the wineries that produced the fine red wine varieties of the Central Coast.

He said that he knew from the get-go that this was to be a hard journey. He transformed the land. It was as if a beautiful sculpture were emerging from a

block of stone. He planted his favorites—Merlot, Syrah and Zinfandel. He chiseled away at the limestone to terrace the vineyard.

His first wine was produced in 1998 and was released in 2000. In April 2001, he calculated that he was yet four years from his goal of 3-5,000 cases. It's a goal and a limit.

He is designing a new winery. It's inspired by one of the oldest living architectural styles—the adobe pueblos of Taos, N.M. He visits there every year to slow down and walk the path of spiritual retreats. A five-bedroom bed and breakfast inn will be built alongside the new winery. He hopes to open his door and his heart to kindred spirits who would appreciate his handcrafted wines and humble winery.

He especially would welcome those who want to discuss architecture and participate in sculpting workshops. He hopes that his experience could help inspire others in search of their own roots and path of life to a harmonious balance. He hopes to have his new buildings up and going by the time 2002 ends.

Every Sunday, Manucci packs up and gets going to the farmers' market in Beverly Hills. It's another of his roads. By the time he packs up, travels, unpacks, sells some wine, packs, retraces his steps to Adelaida Road and unpacks, a full day has passed. He sells only a few cases. On a strict dollar view, it makes no sense. But he believes in the farmer's market, and he goes.

The farmers' market is an exciting, vital place. It hasn't caught on yet, but it will. Manucci thinks that people go to farmers' markets to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, freshly baked bread and fresh flowers and are not yet thinking of wine. But, he said, wine is the product of the earth, and the wine sold at farmers' markets must be from grapes grown by those making the wine. So, this hard working dreamer keeps going.

He's a long way from his grandfather's vineyard outside of Naples, yet he is right there. His Sangiovese, Syrah and Zinfandel are his awards and yours.

*Coyote Creek Vineyard, 3775 Adelaida Road, Paso Robles, 805.239.4770, [www.coyotewine.com](http://www.coyotewine.com). Tasting by appointment.*