

AT THE TOP OF

# the wine trail



## 2014 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition

2010 BARBERA ROSÉ – BRONZE MEDAL

2010 LATE HARVEST BARBERA – BRONZE MEDAL



*Bear River Winery Owner* Jeff Evans at Viani Vineyards in Pilot Hill



Owners Mike Walker (left) and Jeff Evans (right) talk with guests outside the Bear River Winery tasting room. (Photos courtesy Bear River Winery)



## Bear River Winery's medal-winning barberas top label heavy on reds

By Paul Cambra | Foothills Entertainer

If every winery in Placer County can be considered “boutique” — that is, producing less than 20,000 cases — then Bear River Winery is that kiosk in the mall.

“We produce less than 500 cases a year,” said co-owner Jeff Evans.

The winery's location is so far up the wine trail that if it were a kiosk it would be the one at the far end of the mall, tucked between the security guard's office and the hearing aid repair shop. But they're not complaining. They figure if people are having a hard time getting up to Meadow Vista to taste their wines, they'll just bring some down the hill to them.

Bear River is currently one of five wineries pouring at Sip Auburn, a 3,500 s.f. tasting room/art gallery/dessert diner in Old Town Auburn.

Bear River's wines all sit on the red side of the color spectrum, though their award-winning Barbera Rosé lightens things up just a bit.

“A lot of people come in and ask to taste a Chardonnay and I want to tell them that Chardonnay doesn't grow well in the foothills,” Evans said.

For now, they get their grapes from vineyards in Pilot Hill and Chicago Park. But 100 Cabernet plants sit on the deck of their winery, waiting to go in this



Bear River Winery owner Jeff Evans considers Barbera to be their signature wine. They also pour a Cabernet, a Sangiovese and a Syrah.



## **Bear River Winery**

**Hours:** Noon-5 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday

**Where:** 2751 Combie Road, Meadow Vista.

**Info:** (530) 878-8959, [bearriverwinery.com](http://bearriverwinery.com)

## **SIP Auburn**

**Hours:** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** 337 Commercial St., Old Town Auburn

**Info:** (530) 878-5558, [info@sipauburn.com](mailto:info@sipauburn.com), [sipauburn.com](http://sipauburn.com)



year, which means by 2018 they will be pouring wine grown from grapes grown on site. Syrah and Barbera vines will follow.

Evans and co-owner Mike Walker started out making wine as a hobby, until they started making more than the 200 gallon limit for home winemaking. They were having a lot of fun doing it, so they thought, why not go into business?

"We both like to drink wine, and we figured since we are making it, maybe we should share our good wine with everybody else," Walker said.

This year's vintage will include three Barbera wines, including a late harvest and a Rose; a Merlot, a Primitivo and a Cabernet. Their 2010 crop produced two bronze medal winners at the 2014 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, the Barbera Rosé and Late Harvest Barbera.

Their tasting room is open from noon to 5 p.m. every Friday through Sunday. Make the drive to Meadow Vista and sample the 2009 Grizzly Syrah, which has powerful flavors of blackberry. Then check out the Blackbelly — sheep that is.

There are 36 American Blackbellies — a derivative of the Barbados Blackbelly — that were left behind by the previous owner of the property. Right now they serve as a low-maintenance lawn mower.

"We just feed them," Walker said. "We don't have to shear them; they are a hair sheep, they shed themselves."

And Evans points out that they are good eating, really mild with no gamey taste. But what wine, I wondered, would you serve with such a meat?

"That Grizzly Syrah," he said.