

People & Places

Officer becomes partner in wine

Greg Bergersen finds parallels in winemaking, corrections

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

MADERA, Calif. — Greg Bergersen, co-owner of Solitary Cellars and a former corrections officer at one of California's most notorious prisons, developed a respect for agriculture at an early age.

"I grew up in Fresno and my introduction to ag came from my friends who grew up on farms and ranches," he said. "Although I was a 'city slicker,' like other kids my age we spent some time in the fields picking beans and grapes. It was during that time my respect for farmworkers was developed."

He applied to become a corrections officer in 1989 and began work at California State Prison-Corcoran later that year. Convicted murderer Charles Manson is serving time there.

"I began making wine at my home in 2008 as a pet project," he said. "I started with kits and worked my way to fruits and juices."

As he got better, he got the attention of a local winery.

"I was a member of a local winery's wine club, and they would let me bring my homemade wine in to be tested in their lab," he said. "The winemaker offered me the opportunity to make wine on



Courtesy of Solitary Cellars
Greg Bergerson, co-owner of Solitary Cellars wines in Madera, Calif., is a retired California corrections officer. The tasting room is decorated in a "jail" motif.

a commercial scale and from there Solitary Cellars began."

He buys fruit from Monterey, Lake and Amador counties and the Lodi region.

"We love our relationships with our growers," he said. "When we take our customers on the journey of Solitary Cellars wines, the first stop is in the vineyard."

Bergersen said experience in the prison system helped in his winemaking.

"Working in a correctional setting you are keenly aware of small things that look unusual," he said. "This attention to detail has helped me immensely; there are no short cuts."

Bergersen's partner in Solitary is Rick Quesada, who lives in Fresno with his

wife and three children.

He experiences daily life "behind the wall" as the personnel assignment lieutenant at Valley State Prison in Madera County. The men met when they were corrections officers at the facility.

"The partnership works well because we both bring different elements to the Solitary Cellars experience," Quesada said.

Their tasting room is decorated in a "prison motif," and customers can get their mug shot taken and enjoy the playful atmosphere.

"I am a natural people person and love to interact with our customers. Greg is more into the technical aspects of our wines and winemaking. Together we offer our cus-

tomers a complete experience that is both fun and inviting as well as educational."

The winery produces about 1,400 cases a year. Most wine sales are direct to consumer and through the "Chain Gang" wine club.

Several former inmates have visited the North Block Tasting Room.

"I am a firm believer in redemption, and my approach has always been to not judge on the past," Bergersen said. "I take the person for who they are at that time without being judgmental. I learned that lesson working at Corcoran."

He said one of the most respected sergeants he ever worked for had a brother doing a life sentence.



Western Innovator

Greg bergersen

Hometown: Chowchilla, Calif.
Education: Fresno City College

Occupation: Retired as a correctional lieutenant after 25 years, founder of Solitary Cellars Wine Co.

Personal mission statement: "Our customers make the experience happen, and the experience is what they will leave with. It is my job to make sure that experience is positive and memorable."

"Sometimes things just happen," he said. "I remember having a discussion in the tasting room with a guy who did 14 years for attempted murder. He is a business owner now and is respected within the community."

He said he and Quesada tell their customers that their growers have the dustiest boots in the world because of the time spent in the vineyards.

"That love for farming can be enjoyed in each glass of Solitary Cellars wines," Bergersen said. "We cannot stress enough our admiration and respect for the farmers and field workers who bring the world's finest wine grapes to market."

Oregon State Fair offers new attractions

By JANAE SARGENT
Capital Press



SALEM — The 151st Oregon State Fair will feature new attractions, including an FFA greenhouse, a motorsports competition and a new carnival.

The fair runs from Aug. 26 through Sept. 5.

Fair spokesman Dan Cox said management this year is focusing on increasing attendance and drawing new audiences to the fair.

Fair management has also restructured several programs for efficiency. Managers combined the 4-H and FFA horse competitions and several other programs.

more efficiently.

The restructured management increased fair attendance by 18.9 percent in 2015 and Cox expects that number to grow again in 2016.

"As a quasi-public corporation, we are able to function more like a business with more flexibility and nimbleness," Cox said.

The biggest addition to the fair will be Machine Mania, which offers a variety of motorsport competitions each day. It will feature tuff trucks, a demolition derby, freestyle motorcycles, truck and tractor pulls, flat track motorcycle racing, outlaw kart racing, professional speedway kart

racing and monster trucks. Admission is free with paid admission to the fair.

Portland-based Rainier Amusements will provide carnival rides and attractions to the fair. Rainier will bring Bobsled, a full roller coaster, to the carnival.

Cox said while the fair is adding a lot, it is holding onto all of its popular recurring programs.

In 2015 the Oregon State Fair drew 268,000 attendees, not including employees or vendors.

The fair will be the first in the nation to host a cannabis exhibit in 2016. The Oregon Cannabis Business Council

Oregon State Fair

Admission: \$8 for adults, \$5 for children and \$1 for seniors. Admission is cheaper if bought in advance online. Military veterans, first responders and immediate families get free admission on Labor Day, Sept. 5.

Dates: Aug. 26-Sept. 5

Parking: \$5

Location: 2330 17th St. NE, Salem

Website: <http://oregonstate-fair.org/>

will exhibit nine non-budding plants in a secure greenhouse for attendees 21 and over.

Old steel mill will soon be world's largest vertical farm

By TED SHAFFREY
Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Stacks of leafy greens are sprouting inside an old industrial building in New Jersey.

"What we do is we trick it," said David Rosenberg, co-founder and chief executive officer of AeroFarms. "We get it thinking that, if plants could think: 'All right, this is a good environment, it's time to grow now.'"

AeroFarms is one of several companies creating new ways to grow vegetables indoors year-round to solve problems like the drought out

West, frost in the South or other unfavorable conditions affecting farmers.

The company is in the process of building what an industry group says is the world's largest commercial vertical farm at the site of an old steel mill in New Jersey's largest city.

It will contain 12 layers of growth on 3½ acres, producing 2 million pounds of food per year. Production is set to begin next month.

"We want to help alleviate food deserts, which is a real problem in the United States and around the world," Rosenberg said. "So here,

there are areas of Newark that are underprivileged, there is not enough economic development, aren't enough supermarkets. We put this farm in one of those areas."

The farm will be open to community members who want to buy the produce. It also plans to sell the food at local grocery stores.

Critics say the artificial lighting in vertical farms takes up a significant amount of energy that in turn creates carbon emissions.

"If we did decide we were going to grow all of our nation's vegetable crop in the vertical farming systems, the

amount of space required, by my calculation, would be tens of thousands of Empire State Buildings," said Stan Cox, the research coordinator at The Land Institute, a nonprofit group that advocates sustainable agriculture.

"Instead of using free sunlight as we've always done to produce food, vertical farms are using light that has to be generated by a power plant somewhere, which is an unnecessary use of fuel and generation of carbon emissions," he said.

Cox says that instead of moving food production into cities, the country's 350 mil-

lion acres of farmland need to be made more sustainable.

But some growers feel agriculture must change to meet the future.

"We are at a major crisis here for our global food system," said Marc Oshima, a co-founder and chief marketing officer for AeroFarms. "We have an increasing population that by the year 2050 we need to feed 9 billion people. We have increasing urbanization."

Rosenberg also pointed out the speeded-up process.

"We grow a plant in about 16 days, what otherwise takes 30 days in the field," he said.

Calendar

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To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Friday, Aug. 26
Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-11 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Western Idaho Fair, 5610 Glenwood, Boise, 208-287-5650, <http://sharemyfair.com/>

Saturday, Aug. 27
Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-11 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Century Farm and Ranch In-

duction Ceremony, 11 a.m. Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE Salem, Ore. oregonstatefair.org/

Western Idaho Fair, 5610 Glenwood, Boise, 208-287-5650, <http://sharemyfair.com/>

Sunday, Aug. 28
Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Young Farmers and Ranchers FFA Tractor Driving Contest, Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. oregonfb.org

Western Idaho Fair, 5610 Glenwood, Boise, 208-287-5650, <http://sharemyfair.com/>

Monday, Aug. 29
Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-10

p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Tuesday, Aug. 30
Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Wednesday, Aug. 31
Rice Field Day, 7:30 a.m.-noon. Rice Experiment Station, Biggs, Calif.

Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Thursday, Sept. 1
Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-

6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Friday, Sept. 2
Washington State Fair, 10 a.m.-9 p.m., 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup. (253) 845-1771, <http://www.theair.com/>

Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-11 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Saturday, Sept. 3
Washington State Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup. (253) 845-1771, <http://www.theair.com/>

Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-11 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Eastern Idaho State Fair, 97

Park St., Blackfoot. 208-785-2480, <https://funatthefair.com/>

Sunday, Sept. 4
Washington State Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup. (253) 845-1771, <http://www.theair.com/>

Oregon State Fair, 10 a.m.-11 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, 971-701-6573, <http://oregonstatefair.org/>

Eastern Idaho State Fair, 97 Park St., Blackfoot. 208-785-2480, <https://funatthefair.com/>

Monday, Sept. 5
Washington State Fair, 10 a.m.-9 p.m., 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup. (253) 845-1771, <http://www.theair.com/>

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