

2023 Business of the Year

El Vaquero Winery

El Vaquero is a family owned and operated winery in Corralitos that specializes in producing small lot single vineyard designate wines from Corralitos, Santa Cruz Mountains, and neighboring appellations. Bob and Dean Prikazsky's passion for wine and horticulture turned into the dream of planting a vineyard and starting a winery in the late 90s. After taking a winemaking class at Cabrillo College, Bob was empowered to make his first wine at home in 2009. Their Estate vineyard was planted on a hilltop overlooking the Monterey Bay in Corralitos in 2011, and 2013 they celebrated the estate vineyard's first harvest by making their first vintage of commercial wine.

El Vaquero is truly a family business with daughter Alex working as the winemaker. Alex began making wine and working in the vineyard in 2013 while apprenticing under Mikael Wargin of Wargin Wines. She took over winemaking for El Vaquero in 2015. Alex's intuitive sense for wines and vines makes her integral to all facets of the business. Recently El Vaquero was given a score of 93 and awarded a Gold for their 2019 Merlot in the Los Angeles Invitational Wine and Spirits Challenge. They were also awarded two double gold medals in the San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. Their 2019 "One-Eyed Charlie" carignan earned double gold in the carignan/carignane category and its 2018 cabernet franc won in the cabernet franc \$30-\$39.99 category.

Bob and Dean's son, Danny joined the team in 2021 to help steer the ship that is the business of El Vaquero Winery. When anything isn't running smoothly, it is his job to grease the wheels and work together with the team to come up with solutions.

El Vaquero is so much more than an excellent winery, they have become a lively part of the community. Locals gather to enjoy trivia nights each Thursday, as well as live music on the weekends. El Vaquero is often the hub of afternoon and evening activity.

Bob Prikazsky has become an active member of the Freedom Rotary Club and hosts club meetings at the winery every other week. He was an integral part of

the planning of the “Uncork Corralitos” event held in October which provided a playground structure for one of the Pajaro Valley Shelter Services properties. They have also hosted many fundraising events. They hosted two fundraisers for Ukraine. The first went to those affected by the war via World Central Kitchen and care and later, “Keep the Lights On in Ukraine” was a fundraiser to provide generators for those without power in Ukraine. They have also held several fundraisers featuring the Alex Lucero & the Live Again Band which benefitted the Sand Bar in Capitola which was devastated during recent storms. Project Purr, Birchbark Foundation and the Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter have also been recipients of their fundraising generosity. They have also donated their wine to many local organizations for auction or raffle.

El Vaquero has been the venue (free of charge) for several other fundraisers, including: The Ruben Mejia Annual STEM Scholarship, the Fireman Scholarship – in honor of Bobbi Jo Palmer’s Husband, Community Music School of Santa Cruz and a benefit for Seniors with Dementia.

El Vaquero Winery is an outstanding example of a family working to bring the community together, create a fun atmosphere and give back in a positive way.