



uncorked
at Oxbow

OPENS IN THE OXBOW DISTRICT

BY KARI RUEL

TWO DIVERSIFIED AND
INCREDIBLY LIKE-
MINDED NAPA VALLEY

RESIDENTS HAVE COME TOGETHER
TO INVEST ONCE AGAIN IN A
STRUGGLING DOWNTOWN NAPA.
CELESTE CARDUCCI AND HER
FIANCE, LAWYER TURNED VINTNER,
BRUCE AHNfeldt ARE OPENING
UNCORKED AT OXBOW, A UNIQUE
TASTING ROOM, JUST IN TIME FOR
AUCTION NAPA VALLEY. THE PAIR
IS NOT LETTING A QUESTIONABLE
ECONOMY, A CLOSED STREET AND
A BANKRUPT TOURIST ATTRACTION
ACROSS THE STREET STOP THEIR
VISION FROM PROCEEDING.



PHOTO BY ART & CLARITY

“Several people think we are crazy,” said Carducci. “But we believe in the potential of Downtown Napa and the new Oxbow District.”

“I agree,” said Ahnfeldt. “*Uncorked at Oxbow* will be a place for people to come in, taste wine and have fun. We will not be a stuffy old traditional tasting room.”

Uncorked at Oxbow combines Carducci and Ahnfeldt’s extensive wine backyard with their desire to restore, preserve or recreate old buildings in Napa. Carducci purchased a historic mansion in 1988 and turned it into the McClelland-Priest Bed and Breakfast Inn in Old Town Napa. Just around the corner Ahnfeldt is responsible for the restoration of the Victorian that houses COPE. Their new tasting room will feature the award winning Ahnfeldt Wines and Carducci Wines.

Even before COPIA closed its door suddenly early this year, Carducci and Ahnfeldt wanted to continue the education of wines similar to its neighbor.

“We didn’t want to open just another tasting room,” said Carducci. “We wanted it to be different, kind of a mini COPIA that will serve both the locals and the tourists. *Uncorked at Oxbow* will offer food, wine, art, music and education.”

The two purchased a 1900 circa home at 605 First Street, which in the early years were three separate mini homes. From the 1930’s until present, it operated as a single family dwelling.

“Our VIP Room actually saw seven births in that one room,” said Carducci. “It makes me smile to think about it. Life was created here. Now we are creating new life ourselves.”

The house has gone through a complete renovation.

“We wanted to preserve the integrity of the building, but at the same time make it upscale and give it a Mediterranean feel,” said Ahnfeldt. “We’ve incorporated plaster, wood and bronze to create a distinctive atmosphere with hopes of creating a destination point as well.”

Another unique feature of *Uncorked at Oxbow* is it is the only tasting room in Downtown Napa that will offer bonded barrel storage behind a glass wall for barrel tasting and private tasting salons for small groups.

Carducci and Ahnfeldt believe that wine starts in the vineyard. As part of their tasting experience and education, they will be offering tours of their combined 18-acres of vineyards.

Celeste worked in the wine business and studied wine in France, Italy and Washington D.C. prior to moving to the Napa Valley. Ahnfeldt planted his Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard when he

moved to the Napa Valley in 1985. He has been growing grapes since that time and has planted and developed multiple vineyards. He sold grapes to numerous well known wineries. His knowledge of viticulture and its many nuances led him to produce his first Ahnfeldt Wine in 2002, which received 94 points from the Wine Spectator and was the number one California Merlot in 2005. Since that time, they continue to produce many fine wines including the Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley Provocative, Quid Pro Quo, Syrah, and Cabernet Franc.

Carducci was born in upstate N.Y. and has an extensive background in the hospitality, food, and wine industries. Her forte is in marketing, sales, management and development in each of these industries.

“When I relocated to the Napa Valley I had the vision to create a blend (great word for Napa) from those industries that I have so much passion,” said Carducci, who started in the Hotel industry at the age of 14 working for her mother who was a general manager of a hotel in upstate N.Y. She went on to become formally educated in the hospitality industry.

Carducci traveled all over working with top hospitality groups.

“One of my favorite career opportunities was with Forman Brothers in Washington D.C. where I was hired to open up the Diplomatic Community in Wine Marketing and Sales. Daily I would visit each embassy and meet with ambassadors, social secretaries and attaches. I assisted in planning special diplomatic parties, matching food and wine for their special events back in the 70’s!”

In moving to California, she soon began to create this niche where she could blend the careers that she so much enjoyed.

“It was also very important for me to be able to spend time with my children and be present in their lives,” she said. “The investment, development and commitment to my bed and breakfast allowed me to raise three amazing children.”

Another passion for Carducci is staying healthy and fit. She has taught sports nutrition and physical Fitness at Napa Valley College and Health Clubs in the Valley and was a personal trainer for Napa Valley Vintner Stars i.e. Andy and Betty Beckstoffer- Beckstoffer Vineyards, Beth and Gil Nickel,- Far Niente and Carl Doumani and Pam Hunter from back then - Stag’s Leap Vineyards.

Ahnfeldt was born and raised in California. He and his two brothers and father took care of their wheelchair bound mother. After graduating

from High School he went on to study Law, graduating with honors. He worked a short term for a law company on the Peninsula and then went on to develop and establish a practice of his own. He is one of the top attorneys in asbestos litigation.

“Bruce is a visionary, said Carducci. “I guess that is where the East Coast meets the West Coast in our relationship. We both have a tremendous work ethic and family pride, and we have each raised three amazing children.”

In the 1940’s/50’s his father was an architect and Ahnfeldt inherited that creative gene. Over the past 30 years, he has designed and built homes, planted vineyards, invested in real estate throughout northern California, and sold grapes to some very high end wineries.

“In mid 2006, Bruce and I began traveling and selling wine across the US to distributors,” she added. “After many trips, we decided that distribution was a valid selling channel but with 3000 cases, we might do a better job selling direct to consumers. Business models such as Dario Sattui, Vince Arroyo, Francis Coppola, and several others inspired our ideas to sell direct. In 2008, it was an opportune time to establish our “blend together” as both of us were looking at creating the “next” project. You know that great business concept “what next?” We seem to ask that question daily! Hence the birth of our own



tasting room *Uncorked at Oxbow*. So fun is where it begins.”

Uncorked at Oxbow will debut on June 4 during one of Auction Napa Valley’s Kick-off Parties. Ahnfeldt Wine is also on the auction block. Carducci and Ahnfeldt will combine many of their talents and interests to ensure their guests at *Uncorked at Oxbow* will leave with a memorable occasion. Ahnfeldt, a 30-year classical and flamenco guitarist, may entertain guests as well. **NVL**