



High school football

Sports: Annual showdown of South Bay powers looms; Serra coach reaches milestone.

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WINE

Branching out

Former Ridge winemakers undertake a golden venture. Page 5



PHOTO BY LAURA NESS

Shun Ishikubo, left, and Eric Baugher were part of the Ridge winemaking team in Cupertino for much of the past two decades before striking out on their own to start Deaurtus Wines.

WINE

Former Ridge winemakers undertake a golden venture

Pair also worked for Gali in Los Gatos before Deaurātus Wines

By Laura Ness

Correspondent

Eric Baugher and Shun Ishikubo were part of the Ridge winemaking team at the top of Montebello Road in Cupertino for much of the past two decades, and had an indelible impact on the wines associated with that shank of the label's international reputation. But now they have branched out on their own.

"We are making wines the way we have always made them, from fruit picked with the flavors we wait for and with great care and attention to detail," says Baugher, former Ridge Montebello winemaker, who left the legendary winery made famous by his mentor, Paul Draper, in 2021 to pursue his dream of making the best cabernet sauvignon in Napa. Now he and his business partner Ishikubo are tapping some of those vineyard sources, including Napa's iconic Mt. Veeder, for their portfolio under the Deaurātus label.

"Deaurātus is Latin for 'golden,'" explains Baugher. "We are using the best grapes, high-quality glass, special label paper that won't peel off in ice buckets, real tin for the closures and corks that are certified TCA free."

Making wine in a custom crush facility wasn't what they imagined, but they have carved out their niche. "Nobody touches anything of ours in here," says Ishikubo, a self-professed cleanliness freak who was born in Kagoshima near Okinawa, Japan's largest sochu production district. He moved to the US over 20 years ago to study wine.

"Shun likes to keep things

clean," says Baugher, who hired him at Ridge in 2008. "Being Japanese, I figured his attention to detail would be impeccable."

Baugher, a Santa Cruz native, joined Ridge as a chemist in 1994 and began making wine with Draper in 1995, working his way to senior winemaker and COO. Ishikubo, whose fermentation career began with sochu distillation, joined the Ridge team after earning a bachelor's degree in viticulture and enology from UC Davis, then working for a sake company in Berkeley. After that, he made wine to client specifications at a large Lodi custom crush house.

"Ninety percent of the wines in California are made exactly that way," says Shun. "I was ready to reach my goal of working for the best of the best."

For Baugher, who had tackled vintage 2007 solo after his assistant winemaker left, "Shun was a dream candidate, so deeply attentive and precise. He double- and triple-checked everything." Ishikubo fit right in, and everything ran smoothly in production.

"Our cellar team was literally family; so many of the people had been there so long, we had two generations working together," says Baugher.

Being in that cellar was a dream job, right up until it wasn't. When the smoke-tainted vintage of 2020 became a bone of contention, the two headed north to Napa in protest, Baugher to Merus and Ishikubo to Kuleto. Both left Napa in 2022, returning to the Bay Area to make wine for Gali Vineyards, with a tasting room in Los Gatos, and to start the

Deaurātus project.

As we tasted the Deaurātus wines from the inaugural 2023 vintage, the purity and intensity of the fruit flooded through the premium Kentucky oak Baugher favors.

"The ocean influence really shows," says Baugher of the 2023 Gali Vineyard Chardonnay from Watsonville, close to the Pacific.

"We do weekly batonnage until malolactic starts," says Ishikubo, referring to the process specific to chardonnay that allows a winemaker to displace the expired yeast cells at the bottom of a barrel throughout the wine barrel through gentle agitation.

The 2023 Adelaida Hills Cabernet Sauvignon from the Gillian Rose Vineyard is "our Pauillac-style Cab," says Baugher.

"It's very approachable," adds Ishikubo.

"We were so fortunate to get chardonnay and Melon du Bourgogne from Michael (Michaud) this year," Baugher says. They also got grenache and syrah from this white sand vineyard in the shadow of The Pinnacles.

Baugher and Ishikubo hope those who enjoyed their wines at Ridge will give Deaurātus a try.

"When it's your own project, everything you do has an impact, good or bad, and you directly feel the effect," Baugher says. "That's why Shun and I are so hyper-focused on our wines. There isn't room to fail."

The two 2023 whites are available for purchase at <https://deauratuswine.com>, and the 2023 reds will be bottled by year's end. They're considering selling futures on the 2024 vintage.

Community brief

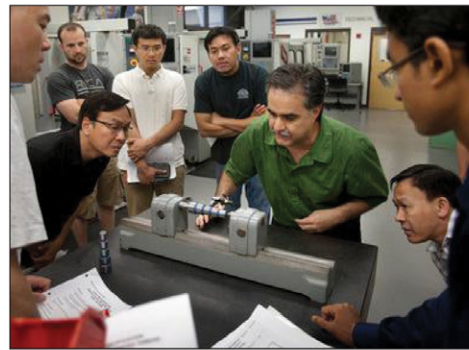
STAR Awards

Mike Appio, a long-time instructor and chair of De Anza College's Design and Manufacturing Technologies (DMT) Department, has been named this year's De Anza College Educator of the Year by the Cupertino Chamber of Commerce, which presents annual STAR awards to individuals who make outstanding contributions to the community.

The award recognizes Appio as a student-focused instructor who helped build the DMT program, which prepares students for highly skilled manufacturing jobs.

Appio's "deep commitment and dedication to our students extend beyond the classroom," Manisha Karia, dean of Business, Computer Science and Applied Technologies, said in a release. "He often arrives early and leaves late so his students have the opportunity to work on their projects. He ensures that they are not only gaining knowledge but also trains them to gain confidence and skills they need to succeed in the industry."

The Chamber of Commerce will honor Appio,



PATRICK TEHAN — STAFF ARCHIVES

Mike Appio, center, demonstrates how to use a test indicator to check the runout tolerance of a circular shaft as students learn to use computer-guided machining equipment and other skills in his manufacturing and CNC technology class at De Anza College in Cupertino in this file photo. Appio has been named this year's De Anza College Educator of the Year by the Cupertino Chamber of Commerce, which presents annual STAR awards to individuals who make outstanding contributions to the community.

along with Anna Kirsh, the Fremont Union High School District Educator of the Year, and Leslie Mains, this year's winner for the Cupertino Union School District, at a black tie event on Nov. 8, 5-8 p.m., at the Hyatt House, 10380 Perimeter Road in Cupertino. Tickets are \$95 at <https://cupertino-chamber.org/calendar>.

Other STAR award winners are STARS of Cupertino Cath-

rine Chen and Claudio Bono, Citizens of the Year Chuck and Nancy Harper and Lifetime Achievement honoree Jim Walker. Businesses of the Year are KeyPoint Credit Union and Vardy's Jewelers. Public service award winners are city employees Bill Mitchell and Tom Chin, Jeffrey Reihl of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office and Rob Campbell of the Santa Clara County Fire Department.

Contact us

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