

15 MINUTES

Nature's treasures

Kirk Jefferson would be content spending the rest of his retirement working in his backyard wood shop. He's already jokingly told his wife, Kay, to sell their RV. "We like to travel, but I'm just as happy home in the garage," he said during a recent interview in his Chico home, shooting Kay a mischievous grin. After working 43 years for PG&E, Jefferson, 63, rekindled his passion for woodworking, which he started in his high school days. He sells his works under the moniker Oleander Sawdust, creating "useful art" from recycled wood and wine barrel staves. You can find Jefferson's recycled walnut charcuterie boards and magnetic knife racks at Zucchini & Vine in Chico as well as at Dave & Ruth's woodwork arts and crafts shop in Los Molinos. You can also contact Jefferson personally at kirkjefferson@gmail.com.

How did you get into woodworking? When I was young, I always liked woodworking. When I started [at] PG&E ... my career picked up and wood got pushed aside. I didn't have time, had kids, had a family, did all that. And then, when I was getting ready to retire, my lovely wife—I was telling her, "I kinda want to get back



PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

into doing woodworking" ... She goes, "Why don't we fix up your garage for a wood shop?" I'm like, *That's an open checkbook right there from the wife saying fix up the shop!* So I gutted it, poured a new foundation in there, put in a 100-amp service and rewired the whole thing to handle a bunch of power tools, and slowly started buying tools.

Why recyclable materials?

About a year ago, I went to a garage sale and bought some wood tools. And this guy was moving and he had to get his yard clean, and he goes, "Y'know, I've got a bunch of scraps of walnut." It was weathered and, I mean, [I thought], *You can't use this*. He gave me a truckload. I didn't want to be ungrateful, and I thought, *Well, [I'll] at least take it and see what I can do*. I had to mill it and then, all of the sudden, god, there's this gorgeous piece

of wood out of that literal crap pile. So, I started making a bunch of stuff [i.e., decorative and serving trays, key chains, candle holders, wine gift boxes, signs and cellphone holders]. I fell in love with the grain on the wood. I go, *It looks gorgeous! I've got to make something out of that*.

What do you enjoy most about it?

To me, I find that the challenge and the art of woodworking is coming up with something useful out of really crappy, recycled wood. [I enjoy] being creative. I brought a truckload and a half of this firewood from [Wineland Walnut] I'm going to make something out of. To me, that is so satisfying, to have something useful that was going to be in a fireplace 'cause it was no good. Maybe I see something in other people's trash, so to speak.

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THE GOODS

Fruit of the vine



by
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I had an opportunity this past weekend to attend the Arc of Butte County's 19th annual **Wine, Beer & Food Tasting** benefit, and it was, as anticipated, a ton of fun. Over a dozen local wineries and breweries took part in the festivities, providing an opportunity to taste a lot of the region's bounty all in one place.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect, as the **CN&R** last week quietly announced this summer's inaugural **Butte County Wine Week**, and it gave me a chance to hobnob with local winemakers and drum up some excitement. Several of them informed me they already were percolating on special events to coincide with the week—actually 10 days, June 7-16. Think **Chico Beer Week**, but with wine—check buttecountywineweek.com for updates, including how to participate.

The event also featured live music, an auction, and art by some of Arc's clients, and I bought a rad little multidimensional painting by an artist named **Renee**. I spoke to **Alan Carrier**, longtime Arc art teacher, who works with adults with developmental disabilities, about the pieces on display and he beamed when I said I was going to buy one. "That'll make Renee really happy," he told me.

Something new that I noticed in visiting with the various winery owners and staff on Sunday is that two distinct geographical areas have banded together to market themselves. In south county, **Bangor Ranch Vineyard & Winery**, **Cobble Ridge Artisan Distillery**, **Hickman Family Vineyards** and **Spencer-Shirey Wines** have joined forces to represent the **Bangor Wine & Spirits Region**. (Look 'em up on Facebook.) And just south of Chico, **Almendra Winery & Distillery**, **Dog Creek Cellars**, **Gale Vineyards** and **Nascere Vineyards** are marketing themselves as the **Durham Wine District**. Very cool!

Speaking of Nascere, if the name sounds almost familiar, it is. Earlier this month, winemakers **Jess and Vanessa Pitney** announced that they were changing the name of their **Nesseré Vineyards** to Nascere after learning that another winery, in Calistoga, had already claimed the former. Check out Nascere—Italian for "to be born"—and its gorgeous new cornhole setup at 3471 Durham-Dayton Highway, Sat.-Sun., noon-5 p.m.

Some tasting highlights from Sunday: the **Atomix** red blend from Butte Valley's **Straw House Cellars**, the **Drama** blend by Oroville's **Live Vine Vineyard & Winery**, the **PM Frenzy** blend from Spencer-Shirey and Almendra's **Luna** blend. Apparently I was feeling the blends that day!

COOL BEANS Chico roaster **Tender Loving Coffee** released its **RISE** blend over the weekend (March 23) to benefit Camp Fire survivors. "We know that many impacted by the tragedy fear that support will dry up just as they are ready to receive it," TLC co-founder **Heath Dewey** said in a press release. "Our goal is to raise funds that can benefit Butte County in the long-term."

Purchase 12-ounce bags of **RISE** for \$14 at TLC's cafe (365 E. Sixth St.). In addition, TLC raised \$7,150 through private donations and an art auction organized by the **phoenix530** collective and handed out checks to residents of Concow and Magalia. Nice job!

CHECK OUT TINY HOMES AT THE SHOW!

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