

## VINEGARDEN OF EDEN

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Ceàgo is a dream in progress for this soft-spoken intellectual. The \$6 million facility located right off Highway 20 could be the centerpiece of a booming agritourism trade in Lake County, attracting visitors from urban areas including Sacramento and the Bay Area.

Lake County is being touted as one of the last hidden gems of California, with a wealth of natural splendor. Ceàgo sports a 340-foot pier and may be the only winery in the state where visitors can arrive by boat. Fetzter expects another first this spring. He has partnered with a Bay Area travel company to provide tours via float plane. The planes would arrive near the winery's dock, with visitors having a short walk to the tasting room.

Fetzter has transplanted olive trees from a farm in Tehama County and planted 2 acres of lavender to add color and diver-

sity to the property, plus amp up Ceàgo's Mediterranean-style appearance.

Fetzter also received final county approval last spring on a major expansion, creating a biodynamic resort and spa that will take five years to build. The project includes a 50-room hotel and spa on the west side of the lakefront and turning the existing facility into a restaurant, tasting room and a few retail shops. Fifty additional cottages will go on the east side of the lakefront. On the opposite side of the highway, a cluster of up to 70 villa-style condos will be built overlooking the vineyards.

"We think it's the future in Lake County, where you can protect agriculture but also offer a lifestyle that people can buy into," he said. "They can come and share our farm-oriented lifestyle, which is very much like the way we farm—very organic.

"Our vision is to get people more in-

involved in agriculture," he said. "We will hold events where they can get involved in the olive harvest and oil pressing, as well as walnuts, grapes, sheep and chickens. It's the whole idea of what we do here—the healthy lifestyle."

This multifaceted approach provides challenge and contentment to the man presiding over it all.

"It excites me to see the excitement from my children and the younger generations in what we're doing," Fetzter said. "I think it makes me feel young to be able to be part of this and grow with it."

*Jim Morris is a reporter for the California Farm Bureau Federation and administrative producer of the popular weekly television program "California Country." He can be reached at 800-698-FARM or jmorris@cfbf.com.*

Ceago Vinegarden is located at 5115 Hwy 20 East along the north shore of Clearlake between the villages of Nice and Lucerne. The tasting room is open 7 days a week from 10-5pm during the winter and until 6pm during the summer months. Consider a day trip to visit the tasting room and enjoy a bottle of wine with your picnic in the courtyard. The Ceago wine club offers special discounts on wine purchases, regular shipments of select wines during the year, and invitations to fantastic club events at the lake. Visit the Ceago website for more information.



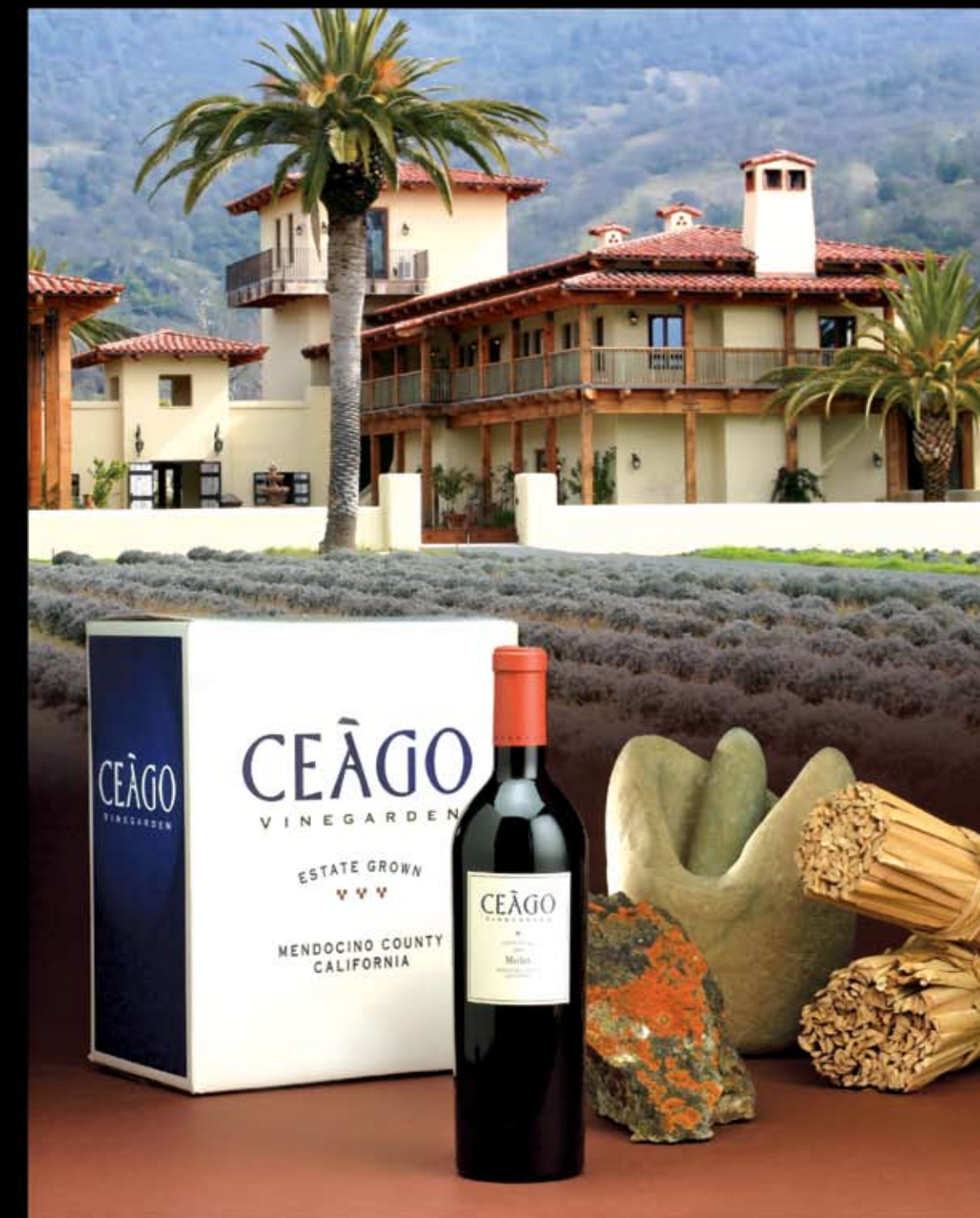
**CEÀGO**  
VINEGARDEN

5115 Hwy 20 East, Nice, CA 95464

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www.ceago.com

*Everything has its place at Ceàgo Del Lago. Livestock have room to roam and provide a multitude of benefits, while visitors are treated to views where the winery seamlessly blends in with the picturesque countryside.*



**CEÀGO DEL LAGO WINERY**

# VINE GARDEN of Eden

*Jim Fetzer has found peace and prosperity growing grapes biodynamically.*

Enterprising grower  
creates his own utopia

Story and photos by **Jim Morris**

**Kneeling between** grapevines, surrounded by fiery-colored mustard plants, Jim Fetzer feeds his chicken flock and marvels about how far and how fast his dream winery has come to reality.

His Ceàgo Vinegarden is one of the few biodynamic farms in California—a holistic approach popularized by Austrian scientist and philosopher Rudolf Steiner.

“We work with the life forces,” Fetzer said. “By working with the rhythms and forces of nature, be it solar, lunar or cosmic, we can align our cultural practices with these forces and rhythms to make our job much easier, more efficient and more effective.”

His 163-acre farm, located on the north shores of Clear Lake between the villages of Nice and Lucerne in Lake County, is among only about a dozen certified biodynamic wineries in California and among fewer than 100 in the world.

Biodynamic involves an extensive set of practices that stress diversity and a natural approach to building the soil and controlling pests and disease.

This increasingly popular practice includes rotating crops between the vine rows to provide whatever is needed, be it erosion control, nitrogen, reduced soil compaction or habitat for beneficial insects.



Livestock is another important component. Chickens and sheep at the farm provide multiple benefits, including manure for composting and a natural control of weeds and insects. Chickens, for example, are masters at rooting out cutworms from the vineyards. They also provide egg whites for fining the red wines, a traditional French method that removes sediment and other unwanted components. In addition, eggs nourish the farm's work force and are sold in the winery tasting room.

Two homeopathic sprays are used on the farm. Cow manure is buried in a female cow horn in the autumn and dug up in the spring. It's mixed with 98-degree water and sprayed on the soil to promote root activity, stimulate soil micro-life and increase beneficial bacterial growth in the soil.

A second spray, known as Horn silica, is made from ground quartz rock and cold water and is sprayed as a foliar application, as Fetzer puts it, “to bring light and heat

into the vine to enhance photosynthesis and formation of chlorophyll.”

These unconventional steps have brought vintage results, with a steady stream of awards and kudos from publications including *The New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Ceàgo Del Lago Winery—the name derived from a Pomo Indian word meaning “grass seed valley”—currently produces about 7,000 cases of wine. That figure is expected to double in two years and could approach 40,000 cases in eight to 10 years.

Fetzer has heard skepticism about this farming practice, but he said he derives two major benefits from it—producing quality wine and capturing a growing, though specialized, niche in the marketplace.

“We see developing interest from master sommeliers, restaurateurs and retail trade in pockets around the United States,” he said. “Boulder, Colorado; Austin, Texas;

and Berkeley are examples of those places of interest. They are very much in tune with biodynamics and it's very well received.”

Fetzer said biodynamics have been a good economic move.

“We've taken sauvignon blanc vineyards that were conventional and were used in our premium white table wine program at Fetzer that were selling for \$3.99 a bottle,” he said. “With organics, we were taking the same vineyard and generating Fetzer sauvignon blanc for about \$6.99 a bottle. That same vineyard farmed biodynamic today is generating \$18 to \$20 a bottle for our Ceàgo ‘Kathleen's Vineyard’ sauvignon blanc. Gimmick or not, it works.”

Fetzer grew up with his 10 brothers and sisters on a winery in Mendocino County. He served as president of Fetzer Vineyards, which during his tenure produced 2.5 million cases of wine and had an international following.

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