



Photos by Joe McIntyre/staff photographer

Long Point Winery owner Gary Barletta explains Friday the fermentation process of the winery's award-winning cabernet sauvignon that takes place in American and French oak wooden barrels. The winery's 2004 cabernet sauvignon won best wine at the New York State Fair Commercial Wine Competition in June.

# Cortland vintner wins best wine

## Annual State Fair wine judging crowns 2004 cabernet sauvignon

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AURORA — A Cortland couple that owns a winery in Aurora won best wine at the State Fair's annual wine-judging competition last month, beating out more than 370 New York wines.

Gary and Rosemary Barletta, owners of Long Point Winery, received the award for their 2004 cabernet sauvignon wine.

"This is probably the best cabernet I've made in 32 years," Gary Barletta, 56, said Friday, holding up a bottle of the wine inside his business.

The wine contains flavors of black cherry, black currants and cassis, and is finished with a hint of vanilla and oak.

Judges picked the wine for best of show among the 19 wines that received double gold awards at the June 21 competition.

He aged the wine, which he bottled last year, for 33 months in a combination of French and American oak barrels.

"It's one of the grapes that ages the longest," Barletta said about cabernet sauvignon.

Since the grape takes a relatively long time to age, it picks up a nice oak flavor, he added.

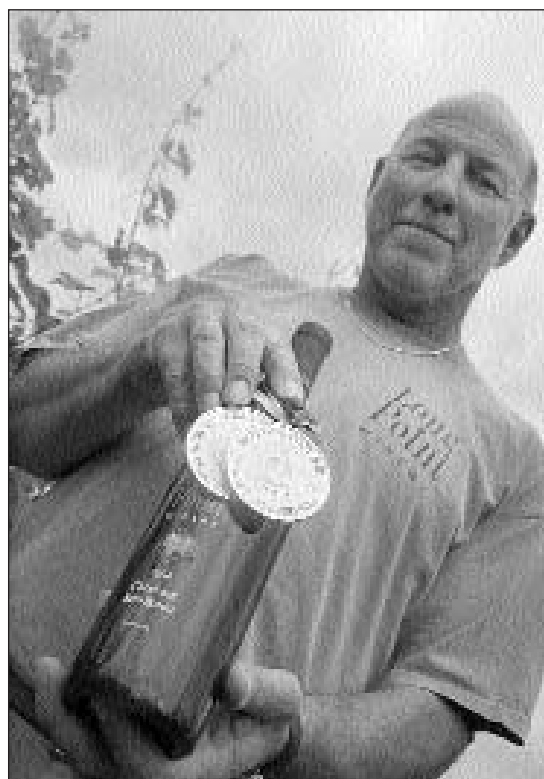
Other grapes, such as merlot, typically take between 18 and 20 months to age, he said.

Barletta, who buys his cabernet sauvignon grapes from California, said he made a lot of little decisions to make the 2004 cabernet sauvignon just right.

The grapes sat in their skins for 14 days throughout the juice-pressing process, the pressings were conducted three times a day and the grapes underwent a second fermentation.

The award-winning wine, of which the Barlettas made about 280 cases, is for sale at Cortland area liquor stores. It is also served at Fabio's Italian Restaurant in Cortland.

"It goes great with beef, red sauces and tan



Barletta, a Cortland resident, shows a bottle of Long Point Winery's double-gold metal winning cabernet sauvignon at his winery in Aurora Friday.

sauses," Barletta said.

Long Point Winery also won a double gold medal for its 2007 riesling, of which it made 230 cases.

According to Larry Jordan, one of the organizers of the wine competition, double gold means all four judges at the New York State Fair Commercial Wine Competition gave the wine a gold medal.

All of the wines that won a double gold medal, including the Barletta's best of show wine will be

on display at the New York State Fair later this summer.

Barletta said since he and his wife, who also have jobs at the Cortland Regional Medical Center, started their winery nine years ago they have won more than a hundred local, state, national and international awards for their wine.

The couple enters wine in the State Fair competition every year, and won best of show one other time — for their 2001 merlot.

Barletta said he prides himself on constantly improving his wine, much of which comes from grapes grown on his 70-acre Aurora property.

He has been making wine for 32 years, first learning from his grandfather in Syracuse.

"It was always a dream of mine to start a commercial winery," he said.

Long Point Winery makes about 10,000 gallons of wine a year, for a total of 4,500 cases. Cabernet sauvignon makes up about 10 to 15 percent of the wine produced, while other wine varieties include chardonnay, zinfandel, sauvignon blanc and syrah.

The winery has about 190 oak barrels storing wine. Some were made in the United States, some in France and some in Hungary.

The foreign-made barrels are made of a tighter grade of oak, creating a more subtle oak flavor, Barletta said.

The business has two full-time employees and three part-time employees. It hires seasonal workers in the middle of September when grape harvesting begins.

The Barlettas are in the middle of building a kitchen at their winery so customers can eat food while sampling wine.

It should be ready sometime next year, Barletta said.

Barletta said he's convinced that anyone is capable of tasting his wines, and wines in general.

"You don't to be a connoisseur," he said. "You just need to know if you like the wine or not."