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A sparkling business



ANDREA ROTH/REGISTERPHOTOS
Mike Sjoebloom owns a computer company in Sweden and a winery in the Napa Valley. He just released his first wine, Chauvignon Crystal, a cabernet sauvignon sparkling wine.



Chauvignon Crystal, a cabernet sauvignon sparkling wine made by Sjoebloom Winery.

Winery brings a Scandinavian flavor to Napa

By SASHA PAULSEN
Register Features Editor

Mike Sjoebloom's Napa winery may be the only one in the valley whose Web site offers a choice of English or Swedish text.

A native of Sweden, Sjoebloom found his way to the Napa Valley via Silicon Valley through connections with his Swedish-based computer company.

"I am an entrepreneur," Sjoebloom explains. "I like building things. I like ideas, the creative part of launching them."

It followed, therefore, that he would get an idea about creating wine. As a newcomer to the winemaking world, he said he hardly wanted to plunge into competition of creating another cabernet. He decided to take the valley's renowned cabernet grapes, however, and try something different. Sjoebloom Winery, established in 2000 released its first wine last fall, Chauvignon Crystal, a sparkling wine, made from 100 percent cabernet sauvignon grapes.

"Although it was created using the Méthode Champenoise (the traditional French method), it is not made from traditional chardonnay and/or pinot noir grapes, but rather from 100 percent cabernet sauvignon grapes, making it uniquely individual. Chauvignon Crystal is the first sparkling wine of its kind," said Sjoebloom.

"If cabernet is the king of grapes, and Champagne is the queen of wines," he added, "then this is a royal marriage."

The first production, 2,500 cases, has met with an enthusiastic reaction, Sjoebloom said. "Sales were very strong during the holidays," he noted.

He said he has also found a cordial welcome in the local winemaking community. "Everyone is helpful, ready to share information," he said. "If only there was the same attitude in computers, our software would be much better," he noted with a laugh.

As his interest — and success — in his winemaking venture

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Winery

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grows, Sjoebloom finds himself flying back and forth between Sweden and the valley. Recently, he relocated his family — wife, Susan, a flight attendant, and children,

Stephanie, 7, and Christopher, 4, — from Stockholm to Napa. His daughter has enrolled in Salvador Elementary School, and Sjoebloom says his family is enjoying life in the valley.

Encouraged by his initial success in incorporating classic European winemaking, with experimentation, Sjoebloom is busily thinking up more ideas. His next? "A winery in Sweden," he says. Already relatives of his are

planting vineyards in the Gotland section of Sweden.

Realistically, he notes, the product will be ice wine.

Sjoebloom's Chauvignon Crystal is available at JV Liquors in Napa, Vintage 1870 Wine Cellar in Yountville and Dean & DeLuca in St. Helena, and is on the wine list at Zuzu in Napa. It is also available online at www.sjoebloomwinery.com.