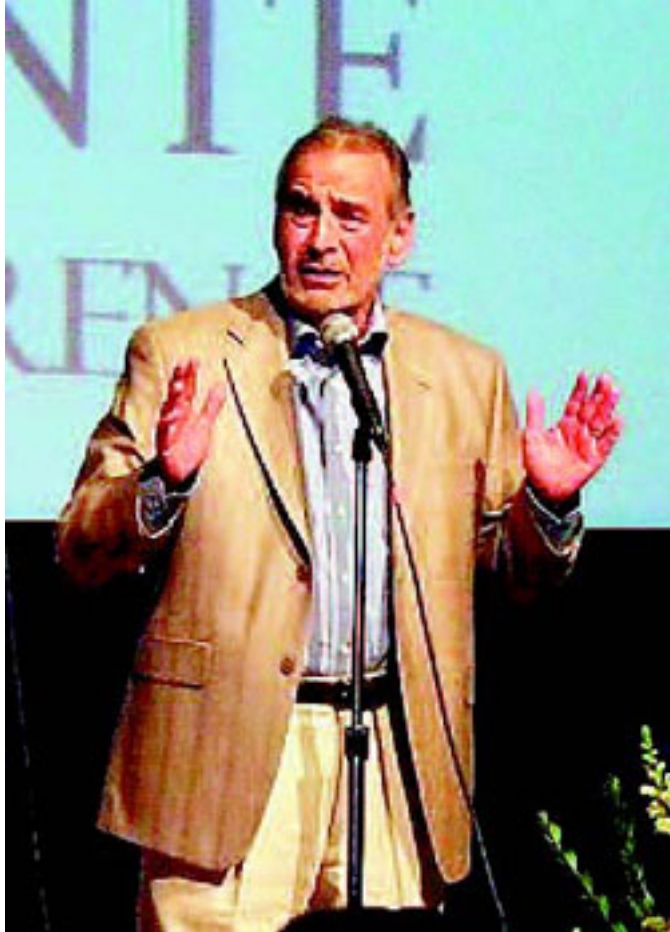


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Vines to Wines: A New Class at LLLC

By Franette Armstrong



Alex Saragoza Photo provided

Even the most ardent wine lovers will have their eyes and taste buds opened during a six-week course, "Hands on the Vines: The California Wine Story," beginning Jan. 29 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, taught by Alex Saragoza - a professor who grew up with grape stains on his fingers.

In his class, Saragoza, who is an author and history professor at UC Berkeley, will survey the centuries leading to the current wine boom, profiling the owners and wine masters who made it happen, the wines they produced, and the \$60 billion economy that resulted.

"It's hard to imagine now what California was like before Mike Grgich's chardonnay won the Paris Wine Tasting in 1976," Saragoza said, "before grapevines lined Highways 101 and 5 and many of the places between. Everything from wine tourism to wine-pairing dinners grew out of that single event, as did much of the foodie movement of the last 40 years."

But even before all of that, pioneering immigrants from several countries began to replicate here what they had learned in vineyards at home. Later, a handful of Mexican immigrants came to California under the 1942 Bracero guest worker program and bootstrapped themselves from working the fields into owning thousands of acres.

"They made a little money picking grapes and saved a bit until finally they could buy a little land. At first they sold their grapes to other wineries until they were able to leverage those profits into the multi-generational wineries we know today."

Saragoza's family is an embodiment of the forces that drove immigrants to succeed; when he was only 5 he worked alongside his parents picking cotton in California's central valley. "My parents were extremely hard working," he said. "Eventually they both got jobs at an olive bottling plant but took their vacations during the grape harvest seasons so that they could make extra money."

When Saragoza graduated from college he spent a summer tending vines to help his parents out, then he was off to graduate school at Harvard and earned his Ph.D. at UC San Diego before beginning his 37-year career at Cal.

His new class will feature guests such as a wine critic, winery owners and a winemaker. Tastings in each session will underscore the concepts presented and trends in wine will also be examined.

"Every generation has its hallmark drink for celebration, holidays and romance. In the 1920s it was hard liquor, in the '50s it was mixed drinks, and since the mid-70s it has been wine in one form or another," Saragoza maintains.

Each bottle of wine reflects a particular historical, social and cultural background - that is part of the romance of wine, he said. "Those of us of a certain age might remember drinking Mateus and Lancers during our younger days. Those tastes morphed into an appetite for heavy reds and oaky chardonnays. Then one film, 'Sideways,' which we will briefly view in class, won an Oscar, and

suddenly many of us moved to pinot noir. Now the young and hip are discovering rosos ... like Lancers and Mateus."

This class is Saragoza's fourth for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Most recently he taught a Spanish Civil War history class in Lafayette, and earlier, one on Cuba. In June he will be leading a 12-day OLLI Travel Study trip to Catalonia.

For more information on Saragoza's class or the upcoming Catalonia trip, go to olli.berkeley.edu or call (510) 642-9934.

New OLLI Classes in Lafayette

Three new six-week courses from UC Berkeley's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) begin on Jan. 27 at the Lafayette Library. Instructors will present their courses as well as the travel study program to Catalonia offered in June by Dr. Alex Saragoza during a free Info Session on Thursday, Jan. 8.

Exploring Philosophical Issues Through film, taught by Richard Lichtman, examines how the dynamic of "moving pictures" can reveal the flow of everyday life and the grandeur and minutia of being. Tuesdays from 1 to 3 p.m.

Hands on the Vines: The California Wine Story surveys the history of the California wine industry from its roots in Europe to its present boom. Taught by Alex Saragoza on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to noon.

Dilemmas in Biomedical Ethics explores the ethical issues arising from new biomedical technology and its effect on society, patients, families, and consumers. Taught by Marjorie Schulz on Thursday from 1 to 3 p.m.

For more information, visit olli.berkeley.edu or call (510) 642-9934.

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