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Life in LAMORINDA

From Law to Jam: Local Attorney Gets "Best in Show" At State Fair

By Sophie Braccini



Joan Edelson in her kitchen preparing to jam

Photo Sophie Braccini

Joan Edelson is an attorney defending insurance companies during the day, but come the night she trades her business attire for a chef's hat. Standing over her stove, she brews new jam recipes. One of the latest, an Apricot Amaretto jam, recently won the "Best of Show" award at the California State Fair. As far as canning recognition is concerned, you can't get any higher.

"I was shocked," says the Moraga mom, "my jam first won the 'Best in Division' (Jams) and it was already a great honor. I didn't even stay long enough to hear the final results and heard I had won 'Best in Show' two days later."

The idea of competing with her cooking came to Edelson after her daughter Sienna was invited to present a wood table she had cre-

ated, in Campolindo High School, at the State Fair. "I've always liked to cook and we make almost everything from scratch in our family," says Edelson, "I was interested in canning but really didn't know how, so I taught myself with books and particularly experimented with jams." She confesses that her favorite breakfast is toast with butter and jam, and she has about ten different varieties of homemade concoctions from which to choose. "I like the whole process," she adds, "but it can be very time consuming preparing the fruit when you want perfection."

To make her blackberry jam, she removes all the little seeds from the fruit and to make marmalade she makes sure to remove any part of the outer and inner skin of the cit-

rus. Edelson enjoys the alchemy of jam-making as well, "You can never be completely sure that the jam or marmalade will 'take,'" she says, there is always an element of surprise."

Edelson believes that the secret of her success is the quality of the ingredients she uses. "I enjoy shopping at the Moraga Farmers' Market on Sunday morning," she explains, "I can taste the produce, and that's how I select it: I close my eyes, I taste and if I feel that it's one of the best fruits I've ever had, then I buy it for jam." She believes that only perfect fruit can become amazing jam. She gets base ingredients from friends and colleagues as well. "My husband works in the Central Valley, a lot of people have a lot of fruit there," she says, they

give us fruit and in return we give them jam." Edelson confesses that if the fruit does not pass her taste test it will not be processed into jam.

For recipes, she started with the basics and then added items culled from different cookbooks, listened to friends' suggestions and tried out her own ideas. "The simplest way to start is to follow the recipe that is found on the package of Sure Jello Pectin," she explains, "when it comes to jam-making you have to follow the proportions to the letter." She confesses that her first year she made a lot of ice cream sauce, but not much jam that took. Now that she has been 'jamming' for three years she is experimenting with such personal creations as blueberry-lemon jam, blackberry Cabernet Sauvignon jam and Bing cherry marmalade.

Edelson's kitchen is very large; it can accommodate many cooks at the same time and contains all of the utensils and apparatus necessary for good producing. Joan's passion has infected the entire family. Her three children, now all in college at UC Santa Cruz, participate in the family endeavor and all had entries at the last State Fair; their father David, an anesthesiologist by day, entered his homemade biscotti.

Edelson cooks full batches at a time, which means that for one recipe, such as apricot jam, she will make 14 jars and she produces 20 to 24 batches a year. She does not sell her creations, they are solely for gift giving and private consumption. "When my kids leave for college I make sure to add a few jars of their favorite jams in their luggage," she says.

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Supporters Push for Passage of Measure G

... continued from page 1



Miramonte High School

Photo Andy Scheck

According to AUHSD Superintendent John Stockton, there is no cogent state-wide conversation taking place regarding the funding of public schools, and funding from the State over the last decade has primarily been devoted to low performing schools.

"The high performance of the Acalanes Union High School District is due in large measure to the funding provided by the parcel tax," he says. "Over the last five years the District has only been able to offer its high quality programs through the support of the parcel tax and additional donations from the community."

Additionally, Stockton underscores that the District has had a parcel tax for approximately 20 years. Returning to a constituency that is largely in favor of a parcel tax every four to five years is costly, and labor-intensive.

"The human and fiscal expense of election cycles, along with the inability to make long term plans, is a serious handicap to a school district," he says. "While money is not the only factor in the success of a district, it is the key to programmatic success."

Even with the parcel tax, Stockton says the AUHSD's budget has been reduced by over \$6 million during the last two years. State funding for AUHSD this year went from \$56 million to \$49 million, forcing the District to lay off 19 teachers, 17 staff members and delete 95 sections to make up for the shortfall.

"We've made many, many cuts and it's been difficult," Mulvaney says. "The Acalanes Union High School District is the number-one-rated high school district in the state academically. If we want the districts to maintain high quality ed-

ucation in the state of California, we're going to have to pay for it. What young people get is top-flight public education."

If the Measure fails, however, the District will be in a tight spot.

AUHSD Associate Superintendent for Business Services Christopher Learned says losing nearly \$7 million in funding would be catastrophic.

"Without the parcel tax, over 70 full-time teachers would be eliminated," adds Stockton. "Las Lomas High School, the largest school in the district, currently has 75 full-time positions. A dynamic educational program is not a realistic expectation should one-quarter of the AUHSD teaching staff be released."

Education Foundation of Orinda (EFO) president Joan Kiekhaefer says there is no way that EFO can come close to bridg-

ing the gap at Miramonte if the Measure fails. "Nearly one third of the EFO contribution to Miramonte already goes back to the District to fund salaries for counselors, librarians and leadership teachers which would have been cut this year because of the state budget shortfalls leaving less funds for Miramonte-specific programs."

For Mulvaney, the passage of Measure G is a way for the District to avoid descending into a world of mediocrity given the current state of California.

"I believe I can have an impact in my small way at the Acalanes Union High School District and hopefully try to maintain some quality there," he says. "I believe Measure G is going to pass because these communities believe in public education. But it's a fight. It's going to be a fight."

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