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Orinda Wine Class Helps Wagner Ranch

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Orinda sommelier Vlatka Bathgate describes the benefits of decanting at a recent wine class in her home. Photo Andrew Bathgate

educational and at the end of the class he was able to smell not just blackberries but blackberry tart in the Bordeaux blend.

Orinda sommelier and enologist Vlatka Bathgate has wine in the blood. Growing up on a winery in Croatia and for years assisting in the wine making and blending of classic Napa wines, she hosted a wine class in her home May 19 to benefit Wagner Ranch Elementary School. Bathgate gave a light-hearted but technical presentation on wine tasting methodology and jargon. She also provided numerous wax scents for the audience to practice detecting. These scents included primary aromas such as honeysuckle, rose, violet and fruity aromas like grapefruit, apricot, peach, litchi, and raspberry. There were also some not-so-pleasant aromas associated with flaws; these included mold, detergent and ... cat pee.

The participants were swirling and swooshing a variety of wines including 2007 Grgich Hills Carneros Chardonnay and 2009 St Emilion Grand Cru Chateau Croix Figeac and many more wines from the New and Old World. By the end of the evening the tasting cards were filled with descriptions of 'legs,' 'meniscus,' 'tannins,' 'tartrates' and primary, secondary and tertiary aromas. There was of course a lavish meal to accompany the great wines. One participant, Jane Greenthall, said, "We learned so much about wine and had such great time doing it." Eric Papke felt that the class was

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