

# WINE

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culmination of a month-long collaboration between the Earle Baum Center of the Blind and Santa Rosa's Balletto Vineyards.

Headquartered in Santa Rosa, the Earle Baum Center is a nonprofit serving people with sight loss and blindness in the North Bay. Wedler is a board member.

During the "Tasting in the Dark," he will challenge the sighted to embrace their other senses when tasting and will talk about how the center changed his life.

Wedler created "Tasting in the Dark" with Francis Ford Coppola in 2011. The Academy Award-winning director experienced a blind food tasting in Japan and wanted to create a blind wine tasting at his namesake winery.

When the Geyserville winery reached out to U.C. Davis, it recommended Wedler, who was working on his Ph.D in chemistry.

"I think the most compelling aspects of truly blind tastings are that they allow us to focus on wine differently than we probably ever have before," Wedler said.

"They allow us to get intimate with texture, flavor and aroma of wine and they focus our attention so we can very accurately listen to what is being said by everyone involved."

Wedler did this blind tasting regularly for Coppola until 2016, and now he does it occasionally. He also hosts the tasting for other wineries, trade groups and organizations.

Typically, people blindfold themselves for the tasting, but during the pandemic Wedler asks tasters to either use their mask as a blindfold, close their eyes or simply sip along with him.



BALLETTO VINEYARDS

**Santa Rosa's Balletto Vineyards is collaborating with the Earle Baum Center of the Blind in Santa Rosa, below, to offer a Zoom "Tasting in the Dark" event.**

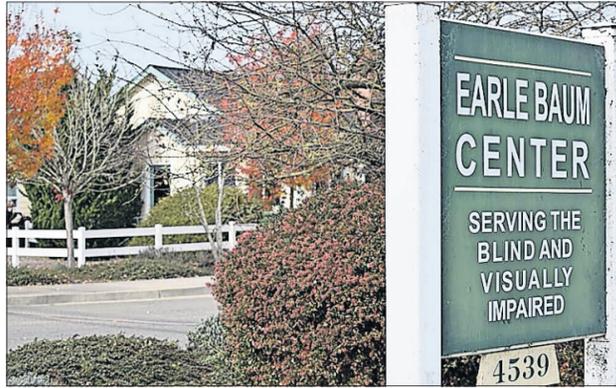
Wedler begins the tasting by offering sample aromas for tasters to smell. This calibrates their noses for aromas they might pick up in the wines. Tasters are welcome to guess what they're smelling. A discussion of Sonoma County's microclimates will follow.

"I want people to leave with a new outlook on wine flavor, wine and food pairing and a renewed sense of confidence with it comes to wine," he said.

The fresh perspective extends well beyond the glass.

"I like to think that I remind sighted people that they don't need to have eyesight to thoroughly enjoy life," Wedler said.

"I tell them that I live an extremely fulfilling life. ... The message I like to help everyone see in themselves, blind, sighted or not, is that life should be enjoyed however we can."



JAMES DUNNE, FILE

When Wedler was a junior at Petaluma High School, he learned how to walk 2 miles from his home.

That feat gave him the confidence to break through the glass ceiling of convention.

"From then on, Hoby knew he would be able to be independent," his mother Terry Wedler said.

At U.C. Davis Wedler studied with the help of Braille, sighted assistants, a 3-D printer and

reading software that translates text into synthesized speech.

Helen Keller, Wedler said, would be "blown away" by how computers have revolutionized learning for the blind.

While a college student, Wedler founded a nonprofit called Accessible Science, offering chemistry camps for blind and visually impaired high school and college students.

In 2012 Wedler traveled to the White House to accept a Champions of Change award, given to 14 people for enhancing opportunities for those with disabilities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

Today the 33-year-old spends most of his time building Senspoint, a company he co-founded in 2017.

The mission is to help develop sensory literacy in those who sell and market products.

The company has worked with Google on diversity and inclusion. Other clients include the French Laundry in Yountville and the Farmhouse Inn in Forestville, as well as Safeway and Sierra Nevada Brewing Company.

Wedler credits his father, Reed Wedler, for inspiring him to be independent and optimistic.

"He told me, 'You were given something — a life — and you've got to take responsibility for yourself, love what you have and embrace it.'"

To sign up for the tasting, visit [EBCTastingintheDark.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ebc-tasting-in-the-dark). The event is free, but donations are appreciated. Visit [ballettovineyards.com](https://www.ballettovineyards.com) to set yourself up with the wines in the flight.

When you enter promo code EBC, you'll save 5% per bottle and the Earle Baum Center also will receive 5% of each bottle purchased.

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