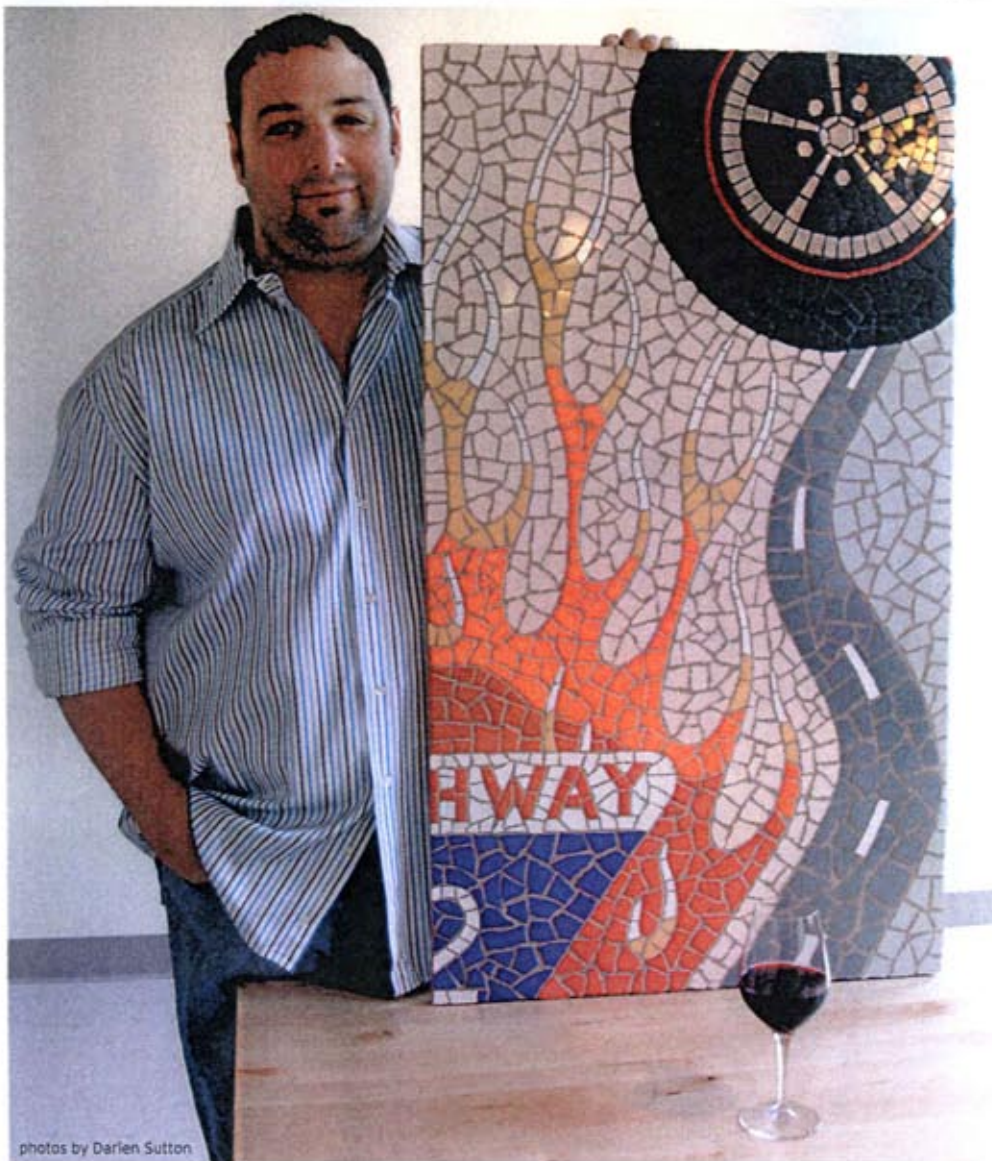


The Vine Man Cometh

RONNIE SANDERS: VINE STREET IMPORTS



photos by Darlen Sutton

IT ALL BEGAN AS A TEENAGER, WITH HIS FIRST SIP OF 1982 BORDEAUX...

This initial taste was the springboard that elevated Ronnie Sanders' passion of the vine - a pursuit that now has him owning and operating Vine Street Imports, one of the country's fastest-growing importers of fine, rare and artisan wines, harvested from some of the world's top vineyards. Due credit, however, should really go to his late father, Harold Sanders - a true oenophile in his own rite.

"He was a lover and a collector," Ronnie now recalls.

"When most kids were drinking milk or grape juice at dinner, my father was pouring me classified-grown Bordeaux. When he passed away in 1994, he left me with his 2,500 bottle collection. Wine, you can say, is truly in my blood."

It is also in his Port Richmond warehouse, served at many world-class restaurants and stacked high in prized private cellars throughout the land. Since he started Vine Street Imports in 2000, it has be-



come one of the most respected and notable brands in the wine industry.

To name drop: Le Bec-Fin, Lacroix, Buddakan, Susanna Foo, The Capital Grille, Savona - they all include several of Vine Street Imports varietals within their vast inventories.

Many regional distributors such as the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board and big-name merchants like Canal's Bottle Stop in Marlton, New Jersey have also been major supporters of Ronnie Sanders since his founding of VSI.

Charles Beatty, Wine Director at Canal's is one such fan. "I carry approximately thirty different kinds of wines supplied by Vine Street Imports. Other wine shops may cater to those strictly seeking the big-name national brands. Our discerning clientele, however, prefers quality over marketing. I guess that's why we are the number one seller of his wines in the country."

Ronnie's father may have been the catalyst for his ongoing passion, but it was a man by the name of Michael Twelftree, a mate from Australia, who fostered his business along. Back in the late 1990's, Twelftree had a fledgling vineyard and approached the American. "Why don't you import my wine?" Yet Sanders remained noncommittal until 2000, when he imported his first 200 cases of Two Hands Wines. By 2004 that number had grown to 30,000 cases, with Twelftree's wines earning some of the top accolades in the industry. "He's one of the greatest wine success stories out there," Ronnie states proudly. "And his Two Hands helped make VSI what it is today."

All Johnnie Walker Labels Available at Canal's Bottlestop. Route 70, Marlton, NJ - 856-983-4991