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Remarks by Representatives Jared Huffman and Mike Thompson

Honoring Martha Barra

December 7, 2021

Mr. HUFFMAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today with my colleague Congressman Mike Thompson in recognition of the 80th birthday of Martha Barra and her lifetime of work building the Barra family wine business of Mendocino County into an industry leader in sustainable, organic wine production.

Born on December 14, 1941, Martha's career in the wine industry began in 1980, when she married the late Charlie Barra, a trailblazer in Mendocino County's early wine industry. Under the stewardship of Martha and Charlie Barra, Barra of Mendocino and Girasole Vineyards broke new ground, setting the standard for ecologically friendly wine grape growing and wine making techniques, and becoming leaders in Mendocino County's nascent environmentally conscious green' wine industry. Martha Barra learned the wine business from the inside out, exploring ecologically conscious agriculture and production methods long before these practices were well known. She went on to directly-manage the winery's organic certification process herself for nearly 30 years. Today, all of the grapes grown on the 325 acre Barra vineyard in Mendocino County's inland valley are 100 percent certified organic. Thanks to her pioneering efforts in eco-friendly agriculture, close to 25 percent of the vineyards in Mendocino County are also certified organic.

Barra of Mendocino and Girasole Vineyards remains an independent, family-owned and operated business under Martha Barra's leadership. As the matriarch of a multi-talented family, Barra employed the skills of her adult children to continue to elevate the business. Today, her son and daughter assist her in growing nine different varietals, producing and marketing two wine brands, operating a 2.8 million gallon custom crush facility, and running a uniquely charming events center located along Highway 101. Originally designed to look like an inverted wine glass, the 5,000 square foot Barra Winery Event Center hosts private events enjoyed by both Mendocino County residents and visitors from near and far. The Barra Winery Event Center reflects Martha Barra's community-minded values by also providing a uniquely beautiful space for fundraising opportunities to support local nonprofits, and her BARRA of Mendocino donates to a range of charitable organizations, with a special dedication toward causes of promoting and supporting the needs of children, cancer research, awareness, and patient support and improving our local community.



In the face of changing and challenging times including the COVID-19 pandemic, Martha Barra has led the family business to continue to prosper, offering COVID-safe wine tasting to guests at their winery, as well as virtual tasting events and wine distribution in 35 states and several countries. Martha Barra currently spends most of her time overseeing the vineyard operations, doing local tastings and events, working with the winemakers to set flavor profiles, and managing the organic certification processes. At wine events, she is known fondly for handing out shiny stickers of bees, representing her commitment to the importance of sustainable agriculture. From learning the intricacies of organic wine production, to food and wine pairing, studying architecture and remodeling houses, Martha Barra is a person of many talents.

Martha Barra's enduring commitment to protecting the environment and the people of Mendocino County, while also producing premier, award-winning wine, is remarkable and a benefit to the region. Madam Speaker, please join us in recognizing Martha Barra for her many contributions and wishing her a wonderful birthday.