

## Easton resident blends love of wine, people to become 'The Wine Coach'

By **CAROLYN SWIFT**  
Business Editor

**EASTON** — What do you get when you combine the skills of a life coach with the knowledge of a wine expert? “The Wine Coach,” according to Easton resident Laurie Forster, who has trademarked the name.

Describing her work as “edu-tainment,” Forster holds wine tastings and seminars throughout the country, educating participants about wine, all the while trying to keep them entertained.

“It’s wine education, but what I’m really passionate about, in addition to knowing as much as I can about wine, is being a great speaker and a great entertainer,” she said. “Wine can be very boring if presented in a dry way, so I try to get people laughing and connecting.”

A self-described former beer drinker, Forster’s interest in studying wine started when she was a sales executive for a software company more than a decade ago. As part of her job, she was required to entertain clients at restaurants, which she loved, but she always felt uncomfortable when faced with the challenge of choosing a wine to pair with the meal.

Embarrassed by her ignorance of the concepts behind wine and food pairings and her inability to even pronounce some of the wines, Forster began taking classes in wine stores and restaurants.

As Forster learned more, she began traveling through wine country and



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY LAURIE FORSTER

Easton resident Laurie Forster speaks to audience members during one of her wine seminars. After studying to be a life coach and a sommelier, Forster has dubbed herself “The Wine Coach,” traveling the country to host wine tastings and seminars.

holding tastings for family and friends.

Along the way, she fell in love with wine.

So when Forster left her software job, she began exploring how to combine her newfound passion with another passion of hers, people.

She then, nearly simultaneously, began studying to be a life coach and a sommelier, the French term for wine expert, while expanding her wine tasting audi-

ence.

The more tastings she held, Forster said, the more she noticed people talking about more than just wine, even broaching subjects often discussed with a life coach.

And so was born the name “The Wine Coach.”

See **WINE COACH**  
Page D2

## Senate passes repeal of 1099 requirements

Legislation awaits signature from President Obama

By **CAROLYN SWIFT**  
Business Editor

**WASHINGTON** — Legislation to repeal the expanded 1099 tax reporting requirements deemed burdensome by the business community passed Congress this week and is now awaiting a signature from the president.

Various repeal bills have circulated Congress since the provision became law in March 2010 as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. However, it took until Tuesday for both the House and Senate to pass the same version of a bill repealing the new requirements. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 87-12 on Tuesday, with Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., voting in favor of it and Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., voting against it.

The expanded requirements — which would have come into effect in 2012 — specified that businesses would need to file a Form 1099 for virtually all purchases totaling more than \$600 in a year, including day-to-day items like office and cleaning supplies, as opposed to only filing forms for services from unincorporated vendors totaling more than \$600, which is the current mandate.

These requirements would have dramatically increased paperwork and accounting costs, required businesses to institute complex record-keeping systems to track every purchase, and exposed businesses to costly and unjustified Internal Revenue Service audits, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Small businesses would have been particularly affected, according to the U.S., state and local chambers of commerce, since they tend to make more smaller purchases, as opposed to buying in

See **REPEAL**  
Page D2

## WINE COACH

From  
Page D1

"The Wine Coach' seems more approachable than sommelier," she said. "It's the whole focus of how I wanted my business to come off."

Currently, Forster's business is focused on the corporate market, as she mainly is hired for customer appreciation or employee team building events. However, she also holds some consumer-based events, including an upcoming wine and food pairing at the NightCat, and participates in various fundraisers, most recently putting one of her tasting sessions up for raffle at the closing event of Talbot Restaurant Week.

One of the challenges during all of the events, though, is to create a seminar that is foundational enough to appeal to the novices, yet interesting enough for people who are a bit more advanced, Forster said, as the level of knowledge ranges among participants.

"You have the novices that maybe have wine every now and then at an event or dinner, and then you have some collectors who may have a \$300 bottle in the cellar," she said.

Some of the more popular programs Forster presents include "Don't Drink, Taste," which teaches participants how to taste wine like a professional, and "Perfect Pairings," which focuses on the interplay between the food and the wine.

What's appealing about the "Don't Drink, Taste" program, Forster said, is that it grounds everybody, teaching the basics of why you swirl, slurp and look at wine a certain way.

"It's a really great event because by the end, the newbie knows the right language to talk to the collector about the

wines," she said.

In the "Perfect Pairings" program, the biggest concept to learn is how to match the weight of the food to the weight of the wine, Forster said.

"You have light-, medium- and full-bodied wines," Forester said. "Light wines tend to go better with light foods. A pinot grigio is going to be much more appropriate for a salad than a big, full-bodied cabernet sauvignon."

To help her audience fully understand that concept, Forster said, she often compares it to choosing the right shoes for an outfit when addressing women, and boxing match-ups when addressing men.

To the women, Forster says, "If you have a black business suit, you're not going to wear floral flip flops. But if you have a sundress, you're not going to wear black pumps. One just overwhelms the other."

The same goes for matching up boxers, Forster said, as "you're not going to put a heavyweight in the ring with a featherweight."

"I'm really passionate about making it interactive and relating wine to stuff that people know," she said.

Through all of the subjects she teaches, Forster said, people seem the most interested in the concept of pairing food and wine.

"To me, that's when wine is the best," said Forster, who is married to chef Michael Forster.

The couple often hosts wine and food pairings together and is preparing to shoot the pilot for a cooking show, "He Cooks, She Wines," which is set to premiere locally on MCTV in the coming months. During the show, Michael will

prepare various recipes with which Laurie will pair wines.

While the concept of wine and food pairings is well understood in Europe, Forster said, Americans often have a hard time grasping it, as many don't grow up drinking wine at the dinner table, as Europeans do.

"We often evaluate wine alone," Forster said. "To me, wine is OK by itself, but better with food. It's about the whole connection of sharing wine over a meal."

Although Forster admits she is partial to Italian, French and sparkling wines, she said she's always trying to just keep tasting.

"I love different wines for different foods for different times," she said. "The whole diversity of it is what makes it so exciting."

With that diversity, though, Forster said, comes an understanding that no one will ever know everything there is to know about wine.

"Every vintage is different every year; there are so many different countries and grapes and blends," she said. "That's the beauty of wine. You've just got to keep tasting and learning."

In addition to hosting tastings and seminars, Forster is a highly sought-after wine expert, frequenting radio shows across the country, including Martha Stewart Radio, on which she is a regular contributor.

She also writes wine columns for the *Washington Times* and *Baltimore Style* magazine and has penned the book, "The Sipping Point: A Crash Course in Wine."

For more information on "The Wine Coach," visit [www.thewinecoach.com](http://www.thewinecoach.com). To reach Forster, call 410-820-4212.