

Panetta's prize for bin Laden's capture: a \$10,000 bottle of wine

Panetta wins bet with restaurateur

By [Kevin Howe](#)

Global Research, November 01, 2011

Monterey County - The Herald 1 November 2011

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#)



Ted Balestreri holds a bottle of 1870 Chateau Lafite Rothschild in the... (VERN FISHER/The Herald)*Clarification: An earlier version of this story said the prize was for the death of Osama bin Laden. Ted Balestreri, co-owner of the Sardine Factory, promised Leon Panetta he would share his bottle of 1870 Chateau Lafite Rothschild if Panetta, then the director of the CIA, captured Osama bin Laden. A story and its headline on Wednesday inaccurately portrayed the intent of Balestreri's offer. "No one celebrates the death of anyone," he said Wednesday.*

The capture of Osama bin Laden will be toasted locally on New Year's Eve with a \$10,000, 141-year-old bottle of wine.

The libation will be the result of a bet made by Monterey restaurateur Ted Balestreri, co-owner of the Sardine Factory on Cannery Row, at a dinner party last New Year's Eve with 28 friends in the restaurant wine cellar.

Among those in on the bet: then-CIA Director Leon Panetta and his wife, Sylvia Panetta.

"I was talking about the wine collection," Balestreri recalled Tuesday, "and somebody asked me what was the oldest bottle of wine I had."

It was a bottle of 1870 Chateau Lafite Rothschild, "and I told them I wasn't going to serve it up," he said.

"But I said, 'If Leon catches Osama bin Laden, we'll open that bottle.'"

Panetta immediately replied, "You're on!"

Balestreri said that at the time, he was kidding.

Five months later, on May 1, he was having dinner at the Monterey Peninsula Country Club with friends when he received a phone call.

It was Sylvia Panetta.

"She said, 'Ted, get the wine opener ready,'" Balestreri said. "When I asked why, she said, 'Go turn on your TV.'" Sylvia Panetta said Tuesday, "Leon called me about 7:15 on a Sunday evening and told me to turn on CNN because the president was going to make an announcement, and by the way, to call Ted and tell him to get ready to open that bottle of wine. I had a quick flashback" about the New Year's Eve bet.

When her husband told Balestreri that "you're on," she said, "Leon had that certain glint in his eye. I thought something was up."

Balestreri heard the news that a team of Navy Seals and the CIA raided bin Laden's hideout in Pakistan, shot him dead and spirited his body away.

"I was out 10 grand," he said, "but it was worth every penny. It will be my honor to honor one of America's great heroes, probably of the century. Leon has made us all proud. I consider him and Sylvia the first family of the Monterey Peninsula."

Balestreri said he will serve up the 1870 Chateau Lafite Rothschild at the Sardine Factory at the traditional private gathering in the wine cellar.

"I'll probably have to serve it up with an eye-dropper to all 28 people," he said.

"It should be fun," Sylvia Panetta said. "There'll be close to 30 people, so I suspect we're going to get a little teeny bit each."

Kevin Howe can be reached at khowe@montereyherald.com

The original source of this article is Monterey County - The Herald
Copyright © [Kevin Howe](#), Monterey County - The Herald, 2011

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Kevin Howe](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca