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A taste of wine in Lafayette

By Pippa Fisher

For anyone curious about the wine made from some of the many vineyards scattered around the Lamorinda hills, at last there is an opportunity to enjoy some wine tasting in Lafayette.



Meadow View Winery is going to be pouring on the first Friday of each month at Farmyard Darlings, right in the heart of Lafayette's restaurant row, making it convenient for a quick taste before heading to dinner. Meadow View is a boutique winery specializing in making wine from Lamorinda grapes.

Award-winning Meadow View winemaker Bill English hopes that people will wander in and taste. He says they will be pouring samples of their chardonnay, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, rose, super-T and pinot noir.

From left: Doug Spear, Isabelle Ord and Bill English at Isabelle's Vineyard in Moraga. Photo provided

"Now there is a place where people can try local by the taste," says English.

English has been making wines since 1976. He moved to the Bay Area in the early 1970s from Ohio. Initially living in Oakland, he said the climate was fine for storage but when he moved to the warmer climate in Orinda in the late '70s he dug a wine cellar under his home to keep his stored wine cool.

English points to the similarity in climate and hillside geography between Lamorinda, and the better-known wine-producing regions of Napa and Sonoma and says that this area can produce excellent wine.

In 2016 Lamorinda was established as an American Viticulture Area (AVA). "Local means something to some people," says English.

English made wine in small amounts as an amateur for many years before becoming bonded in 2014. In 2013 he started using grapes grown at Isabelle's Vineyard - a Moraga vineyard owned by his partners Doug Spear and Isabelle Ord. In 2015 he moved production of wine from his cellar to Spear's garage. He says they currently produce around 300 cases per year.

Almost all the wines are produced from grapes grown in Lamorinda, the only exception being the pinot noir for which he uses grapes from the Russian River. English says that Isabelle's Vineyard is their biggest producer - the vineyard is almost an acre and provides five tons.

The winery conducts yearly blending trials, using a small panel of experts to perfect the balance. In fact their cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and their super Tuscan-style wines are all blends.

On the shelves, Meadow View Wines can be found at Jackson's Liquor Store and Diablo Foods in Lafayette and at three of the Total Wine stores (Pleasant Hill, San Ramon and Pleasanton).

The next opportunity for tasting is Friday, April 6 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Farmyard Darlings, 20 Lafayette Circle.

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