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Tra di Noi Ristorante, Malibu

Malibu Family Wines



Ron and Lisa Semler are mulling over whether to commission bronze statues of their grandchildren. The Semlers live on nearly 1,000 acres in Malibu surrounded by Saddle Rock, Turtle Rock, and Castle Rock natural rock formations. Their ranch, Saddlerock, is dotted with bronze statues of their children Tami, Tabitha, Devin, Shane, Ashley, Dakota, twins Madison and Micah, and little 10-year-old Ronit. Perhaps it's time to honor the grandchildren with another round of sculptures, they think. Anyone who has visited the working ranch and vineyard with its steep hills, exotic animals, and collection of vintage cars and trailers would urge them to add more bronzes. They're such a beautiful symbol of the family behind Malibu Family Wines.

As Ron points out antique car after antique car artfully placed around his property, he laughs, "I like old cars and new women." Lisa, his second wife, mother to six of his children, and 17 years his junior chimes in with, "And I like new cars and old men." The two make a successful team, having built a vineyard from scratch that recently won its own American Viticultural Area Designation: the Saddlerock-Malibu AVA. "You have to prove your borders are different in soil and climate," Lisa explains about the complicated process for getting a new designation. Eight varietals of grape are grown on Saddlerock Ranch: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Malbec, Grenache, Mourvedre, and Viognier. Wines produced from these grapes get the Semler label. "It's all estate-grown," says Ron. "We'll produce about 12,500 cases per year." (The Saddle-

rock label produces Chardonnay, Rose, Blanc de Blanc, Orange Muscat, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Petite Syrah wines using grapes sourced from further north in California where the climate is cooler.)

Late in the harvest, some Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc grapes are used to make a type of ice wine. The grapes are picked early in the morning when the vines are still cool, and then rushed over to Oxnard to be flash frozen. The freezing concentrates the sugars in the grape. What results is a sweet, delicious dessert wine. Very few cases of the Semler Dessert Wine are produced, so only a handful of customers are given the privilege of buying it. Tra di Noi Ristorante in Malibu is one of the lucky few. Kevin Bening, the Western Regional Sales Manager for Malibu Family Wines, describes Tra di Noi as a special client because chef Francesco Velasco takes the time to sit down with him to taste the new vintages. Of the ice wine, Velasco says, "It is intense. Its sweetness is balanced by a bracing acidity that keeps the wine from becoming cloying."

Chef Velasco likes to serve it with his duck confit salad that contains dried nectarines, hazelnuts, and pickled cippolini onions. He also recommends it with his duck ravioli in a pecan and sage brown-butter sauce. And of course he suggests drinking the ice wine with dessert, maybe his Mascarpone Cremoso — a fluffy, gelato-like confection made with mascarpone cheese and served with pumpkin fudge. Beams Velasco, "I feel very proud to have a dessert wine that is from our own back yard."



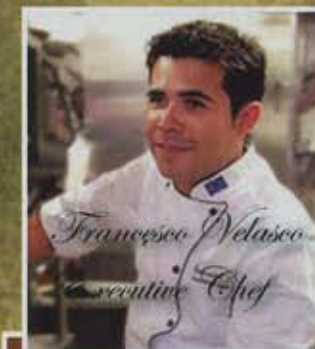
Introducing: Semler Dessert Wine

"It's intense. Its sweetness is balanced by a bracing acidity that keeps the wine from becoming cloying." - Chef Velasco



"If you don't know your wine grapes, know your winemaker." *Francesco Velasco*

Tra di Noi Ristorante brings local, Semler family wines to the dining table.



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"One of Malibu's Best!"

- Zagat Restaurant Guide

