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THE LOS ANGELES
FILM SCHOOL FOUNDERS
PAUL & DIANA KESSLER
and 6 other industry leaders weigh in

+ THE STATE OF
THE INDUSTRY IN
CALIFORNIA

By Austin Beutner & Steven D. Lavine



Chef Francesco the Winemaker



Francesco Velasco, the chef-partner of Tra di Noi Ristorante in Malibu and La Focacceria Tra di Noi in Beverly Hills has a deep affection for Malibu. He surfs in her waves, rides his mountain bike along her hills and canyons, and forages for wild-growing herbs in her parkland. He'll open his second Malibu restaurant, called Mangia Italian Eatery Beach Cafe, this year. While cooking and pairing foods with wine in Malibu, Francesco has also gotten to know Malibu's farmers and vintners. He's learned about the new Saddle Rock-Malibu AVA (American Viticultural Area) from Lisa and Ron Semler of Malibu Family Wines who secured this new designation. Emilio Estevez and his fiancée Sonja Magdevski explained to Francesco how the Pinot Noir grapes on their land near the coast called Casa Dumetz need constant pruning in order to yield the most fruit.

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The general manager of Michael's restaurant in Santa Monica, Chas McCarty taught Francesco that Syrah grapes grow well in the drier Malibu hilltops where the ocean mist doesn't rise high enough to keep the vines chilled and moist.

McCarty's dad Michael was one of the first modern vintners in Malibu, planting vines above Carbon Beach way back in 1985 around the time that vintner George Rosenthal got his start. Jim Palmer of Malibu Vineyards taught Francesco how to tell when the grapes are ready for crushing by watching the bees gather on the clusters. And Chef Francesco has barrel-tested wines at many points in their development to see how the grape juice changes during each stage into something smooth and drinkable.



Francesco's dream is to purchase a ranch in Malibu where he can plant his own organic vines—Chardonnay below 1000 feet, Bordeaux and Pinot Noir in the temperate zone, and Sangiovese and Cabernet higher up on the crest. But in the meantime, Francesco has created his own wine label marked with a colorful, brush-stroked "F." He works with other Malibu vintners to bottle his own blend that he calls a Super Malibu. It's a pun on the Super Tuscans of Italy—big red wines that are blended in non-traditional ways. He's also in the process of making a white wine from Chardonnay grapes, and a rosé from Cabernet grapes, all grown in Malibu. Alessi-Velasco Family Wines will be producing them.

Coming Soon to Tra di Noi
and La Focacceria Tra di Noi
Francesco Velasco F label wines

La Focacceria
TRA DI NOI



La Focacceria Tra di Noi
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