

malibu times

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FROM MARKET
TO TABLE: A
SCRUMPTIOUS
FEAST

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THE HOLIDAY
'BU LIST:
FROM HIGH-TECH
TO LAP LUXURY

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MALIBU'S
PHILANTHROPISTS
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

IT'S A WOMAN THING...

VIRGINIA MADSEN

Tra di Noi Ristorante, Malibu

Malibu Family Wines



Ron and Lisa Semler are mus-
ing over whether to com-
mission bronze statues of their
grandchildren. The Semlers live
on nearly 1,000 acres in Malibu
surrounded by Saddle Rock, Tur-
tle 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 Madi-
son 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 ani-
mals, and collection of vintage cars and trail-
ers 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 an-
tique 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, Sau-
vignon Blanc, Syrah, Malbec, Grenache,
Mouvedre, 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 hand-
ful 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 spe-
cial 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's 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 nectar-
ines, hazelnuts, and pickled cipolini onions.
He also recommends it with his duck ravi-
oli 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. Bening 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.



Advertisement

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"One of Malibu's Best!"

- Zagat Restaurant Guide

