

Food & Wine

On the menu

Vintners give \$250K to housing group

Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) has awarded Calistoga Affordable Housing \$250,000 from Auction Napa Valley 2008 proceeds. "This is one of our biggest grants ever, and represents another milestone in our efforts to build and preserve affordable housing in Calistoga," said Erica Roetman Sklar, the executive director of the organization who accepted the funds at a ceremony last week.

The majority of the funds, \$200,000, will be used for the predevelopment planning and technical studies for Cottage Glen, a 31-unit subdivision planned near the Napa County Fairgrounds. "We're very pleased that our newest project will provide self-help homes affordable to low and moderate income members of the community," said Sklar. "The Auction Napa Valley grant will be instrumental in securing the rest of the financing for our project."

The remainder of the grant, \$50,000, will be used to support CAH's on-going operating expenses in implementing its housing goals.

Calistoga Affordable Housing is a private non-profit corporation working with the city of Calistoga to increase the affordable housing stock in Calistoga. The organization will have built or preserved a total of 50 houses and apartments when its Palisades Apartments rental community is completed next spring.

Wine generates \$11 billion in this county

The Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) recently released the latest findings on the economic impact of wine from America's most valued wine region.

While Napa Valley produces just four percent of California's winegrapes, the region is responsible for nearly 30 percent of the economic impact of wine in California, and nearly 34 percent of the economic impact of California's wine to the U.S. economy, \$42.4 billion annually.

The impact on Napa County's economy alone is valued at nearly \$11 billion annually.

The research, conducted by wine industry analyst Barbara Insel of Stonebridge Research, found that the local impact had grown by 15 percent since the 2005 report. The research was prepared for the NVV, the non-profit trade association representing 330 Napa Valley wineries.

Napa Valley's wine and vineyard sector directly, and indirectly through the services and products they consume or generate, provides nearly 40,000 jobs in the county.

Lava Vine and Zacherle

Artisanal wines on the trail

By Sharon Brooks
Tribune Correspondent

Fans of handcrafted, small production wines can take a short walk from downtown Calistoga and taste some very special releases now, at the new tasting room for Lava Vine and Zacherle.

The tasting room, which was a barn at one time, is located next to Calistoga Beverage Company on Silverado Trail, behind a two-story home that serves as office space. Lava Vine is a new label and Zacherle has only been available through a mailing list up until now.

Nile Zacherle, the winemaker for both labels, is from a family that has always been interested in wine. He was born in Marin County, but his father came to the Napa Valley for grapes to make wine for the family's personal use, and his uncle owned a cooperage in Calistoga. Zacherle says, "We kids actually stomped grapes in trash cans for my dad's wine."

Zacherle was originally interested in brewing beer, and attended the University of California at Davis to learn the science of brewing. He eventually branched out into winemaking, and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in fermentation, viticulture and enology, along with becoming a master brewer. After college, he worked for a while as a brewer for Anderson Valley Brewing Company in Mendocino, but his creative side led him to change his focus to wine and he went to work for Navarro Vineyards. He says, "It's much more artisanal and flexible; it changes with the seasons and the soil. It gives me more creative freedom and many more challenges."

Then the travel bug struck and Zacherle headed around the world, hitchhiking through New Zealand and traveling to Australia and France, working and doing winery internships along the way. Upon his return to the Napa Valley in 2000, he became the assistant winemaker for Chateau Montelena, then winemaker for Barnett Vineyards and is presently the winemaker for David Arthur Vineyards and Montagna.

Lava Vine owners Jill and Joe Cabral came to Calistoga from the Bay Area in 1995. Joe worked as a building contractor in the valley for other companies until branching off on his own as an owner-representative for remodels and spec homes. Jill is an interior designer with her own company, Dogwood Interior Design, and consults for businesses and residential projects.

Their interest in wine and farming inspired Joe to learn more about growing grapes. In 2000, Jill's family purchased some property with an old vineyard on Franz Valley School



PHOTO BY SHARON BROOKS

Winemaker Nile Zacherle (top photo, at right) talks about his wines with tasters Brandon and Sonny Sowell, on their honeymoon from Georgia. Above, Zacherle checks in with his partner, Lava Vine owner Joe Cabral. The new tasting room on the Silverado Trail features two labels, Lava Vine and Zacherle.

Road. In 2004, Zacherle and the Cabrals formed a partnership and began replanting the old vineyard with petite sirah and cabernet sauvignon; Lava Vine Vineyards was born. Joe is the grape grower and general manager while Jill handles the marketing and artistic design for the company. They chose the name Lava Vine because of the distinctive soil in the area. Zacherle says, "The soil contains actual fragments of petrified wood and volcanic ash, and in the driveway there is an ancient lava flow."

Lava Vine wines available at the tasting room include a 2006 Napa Valley Chardonnay (200 cases) for \$35 and a 2006 Napa Valley cabernet sauvignon (200

cases) for \$63, sourced from various Napa Valley vineyards, and a 2006 Knights Valley sirah (233 cases) for \$42.

The Zacherle label also offers wines from the alluvial soil of the Franz Valley School Road vineyard. They include a 2007 Rose (50 cases) for \$18, a 2007 Viognier (120 cases) for \$29 and a 2005 Syrah (235 cases) priced at \$40.

In addition, Zacherle has two Napa Valley wines—a 2005 sirah (100 cases) from Spring Mountain for \$60, and a 2005 cabernet sauvignon (60 cases) from the Wall vineyard on Mt. Veeder for \$90.

The new tasting room for Lava Vine and Zacherle wines is locat-



ed at 965 Silverado Trail just north of Calistoga Beverage. Follow the driveway around the light gray, two-story house which fronts the road, to the tasting room at the back. It is open seven days a week, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. No appointment is necessary. For more information about either label, call 942-9500 or go to www.lavavine.com.