

# A winemaker's tribute to growers

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By Ramona Frances

A local winemaker honored specialty grape growers who have adapted grape growing practices to accommodate the creativity of specialty winemakers during a special event Thursday.

A wine tasting and recognition dinner, hosted by Ray and Tammy Krause of Westbook Wine Company in O'Neals, was attended by a small group of growers and enthusiasts who met to eat and click glasses at the Vineyard Restaurant.

Krause welcomed the attendees, teasing them for paying \$60 a plate without knowing what would be served.

"But you know if you come here, it will be good," Krause said.

The purpose of the event, Krause said, was to present checks to three growers, the highest amount ever paid to specialty growers in Madera County at \$1,800 a ton. Growers honored included John Simpson, Ken Wara and Gary Kalagian representing Lamanuzzi & Pantaleo Vineyards of Madera County.

Introducing his own wine over dinner, Simpson said he once harvested 11,000 acres producing as much as 6,000 tons of grapes in day said he now has 100 acres.

"I get more gratification with specialty varieties used in small modern wineries than with all that I did before," he said. "I still hold the record with Gallo for harvesting 6,000 acres of grapes in one day."

Food served began with oysters on the half shell served with Ober Rhenish 2006 Dry Riesling produced by Ken Wara Vineyard in Madera. A tomato and mozzarella tart was served with Rosato Romantico Dry wine produced by Lamanuzzi & Pantaleo Vineyards. Roasted quail stuffed with figs, almonds and thyme was served with 2006 Blanc de Blanc de Noir, produced by John Simpson Vines and Lamanuzzi & Pantaleo Vineyard.

Filet mignon and sweet pepper Napoleon with TD Willey Farms and Lone Willow Ranch vegetables.

A cheese plate with served with local cheeses and 2005 Petite Sirah produced by John Simpson Vines.

The last wine was not served with a dessert but "as a dessert." Simply called "Purple," it smelled of sweet grape juice made from four rows behind Simpson's home.

The featured wine presented by growers of Westbrook Wine Farm, 2004 Fiat Accompli, is a red bordeaux-style, hand-picked from six varieties.

Krause spoke respectfully about the art of winemaking as a continually evolving science that takes into consideration many things, seasonal temperatures, grape variety, grape maturity, selection of grape bunches and human perception.

"If you don't use the very best grapes, there is no chance of making above average wines.

Krause said he believes Madera can produce wine at least as good as the best type of vintage of its kind around. Simpson who has been growing grapes since 1966, is one of three growers with Krause to produce better than average wine.



Ray and Tammy Krause host an event to specialty winemakers in Madera.

Photo by: Ramona Frances / The Madera