

Published August 5th, 2009

## Wine at Saint Mary's, The Celebration Continues

By Sophie Braccini



Guests at the 2008 festival, Jack McClanahan and Drue Hulmer Photo courtesy of Saint Mary's College

On August 16, Saint Mary's College will celebrate local wines at their fifth Wine Festival. The elegant event will be held in the air-conditioned Soda Center and is limited to 500 people. The occasion will be both festive and educational, and attendees will be able to taste the wines of and speak with more than 25 different local winemakers about their vocation and techniques. 100% of the event's proceeds will fund student scholarships.

Christian Brothers and wine share a long tradition. In her "Brief history of wine" (Breve histoire du vin) Laurence Lucas explains that grapes almost completely disappeared from Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire and that "It is the Church who, to honor the tradition of the Last Supper saved vineyards." So 120 ago when San Francisco Archbishop Joseph Alemany suggested to the Saint Mary's Christian Brothers to produce altar wine from their vineyard at their Villa de la Salle in Martinez they engaged in the development of their production. The operation became the well-known Christian Brothers Winery. Heublein bought it in 1989 when the Brothers decided that wine making was

taking too much away from their primary educational mission.

But the love of great wines continues as a tradition on the campus. In the 80's Saint Mary's used to organize an outdoor wine festival that became too large and a bit unruly. More recently, Cindy Cooper proposed a more restrained version. Cooper is a college alumna who has served as the Vice President of Events for the past few years. "I suggested five years ago that we organize a wine festival to raise money for student scholarships and welcome back alumni, friends, family, and neighbors to the college."

The 2009 Festival will feature both large productions and more intimate family-owned labels, including California Cellars, Concannon Wines, David Arthur Vineyards, Parkmon Vineyards, Pride Mountain Vineyards, Mantra Wines and Realm Cellars. The afternoon event takes place from 2 to 5 p.m., and will include appetizers and microbrews from area breweries. It will be preceded by a special private tasting, for those with VIP tickets, of old vine Zinfandels presented by a testing panel of SMC Alumni.

The alumni group "Gaels in Wine" was instrumental in the organization of the festival. It was founded in 2001 by Robert Kozlowski. The 81-year old gentleman's life took him from chemistry to winemaking.

"I graduated in 1950 in organic chemistry, and worked for Chevron for 36 years," says Kozlowski, "in 1962 I started to make wine at home with a friend from Lafayette, then I became an advisor for Kenwood and ended up being one of the six owners of the company." Kozlowski founded Gaels in Wine eight years ago and the group now counts more than 80 members. "Many of our members will be pouring at the Festival," says Kozlowski, "they will be identified by a special sign."

Mike Kumelis is a younger member of the group who will be pouring from his winery, Mantra Wines in Hillsburg, at the event. A '91 Saint Mary's graduate, he runs the family winery. "Being part of Gaels in Wine is of great interest to me," says Kumelis, "we share wine making ideas, and all wine makers are open and free. Bob (Kozlowski) was at Kenwood, his generation had a different way to winemaking, and it is enriching to share with him."

This year's event will include a silent auction, because many wineries have donated tastings and tours of their facilities, as well as signed magnums. "It is a great opportunity to add to your wine cellar, or just get started," says Cooper. "Also, each attendee will receive a beautifully etched wine glass with the signum fidei logo."

Tickets are \$30, VIP tickets are \$40. For information call 631-4200 or visit [www.stmarys-ca.edu/wine](http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/wine)

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