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A taste of wine in Lafayette

By Pippa Fisher



From left: Doug Spear, Isabelle Ord and Bill English at Isabelle's Vineyard in Moraga. Photo provided

For anyone curious about the wine made from some of the many vineyards scattered around the Lamorinda hills, at last there is an opportunity to enjoy some wine tasting in Lafayette.

Meadow View Winery is going to be pouring on the first Friday of each month at Farmyard Darlings, right in the heart of Lafayette's restaurant row, making it convenient for a quick taste before heading to dinner. Meadow View is a boutique winery specializing in making wine from Lamorinda grapes.

Award-winning Meadow View winemaker Bill English hopes that people will wander in and taste. He says they will be pouring samples of their chardonnay, cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, rose, super-T and pinot noir.

"Now there is a place where people can try local by the taste," says English.

English has been making wines since 1976. He moved to the Bay Area in the early 1970s from Ohio. Initially living in Oakland, he said the climate was fine for storage but when he moved to the warmer climate in Orinda in the late '70s he dug a wine cellar under his home to keep his stored wine cool.

English points to the similarity in climate and hillside geography between Lamorinda, and the better-known wine-producing regions of Napa and Sonoma and says that this area can produce excellent wine.

In 2016 Lamorinda was established as an American Viticulture Area (AVA). "Local means something to some people," says English.

English made wine in small amounts as an amateur for many years before becoming bonded in 2014. In 2013 he started using grapes grown at Isabelle's Vineyard – a Moraga vineyard owned by his partners Doug Spear and Isabelle Ord. In 2015 he moved production of wine from his cellar to Spear's garage. He says they currently produce around 300 cases per year.

Almost all the wines are produced from grapes grown in Lamorinda, the only exception being the pinot noir for which he uses grapes from the Russian River. English says that Isabelle's Vineyard is their biggest producer – the vineyard is almost an acre and provides five tons.

The winery conducts yearly blending trials, using a small panel of experts to perfect the balance. In fact their cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and their super Tuscan-style wines are all blends.

On the shelves, Meadow View Wines can be found at Jackson's Liquor Store and Diablo Foods in Lafayette and at three of the Total Wine stores (Pleasant Hill, San Ramon and Pleasanton).

The next opportunity for tasting is Friday, April 6 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Farmyard Darlings, 20 Lafayette Circle.

Grateful Gatherings

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Both Somerville and Flitter have a background in television production, including HGTV. Flitter also worked at Shelter Inc. – one of the 15 agencies that Grateful Gatherings works with. Others include Save, Operation Dignity and Ruby's Place.

Flitter says the "gatherings" are exciting and heartwarming, noting that they always manage to gather everything on their list. She says each project starts with a drop-off of the donated items – a community affair – before the furniture is taken to the new home and set up by volunteers. She says it is as much about giving as receiving.

The Claire's House project, run by Catholic Charities of the East Bay, will be a little different, not least in terms of size. With 12 bedrooms, two living rooms, counseling rooms, a classroom, five bathrooms, kitchen, dining room and laundry room there is much to gather.

Currently Grateful Gatherings have some corporate sponsorship as well as local groups such as the Acalanes National Charity League

and some individual Lamorinda families sponsoring rooms. At this point Grateful Gatherings mostly has its entire list filled; however, they are still in need of donations to raise funds for mattresses, which they always buy new, and volunteers to help.

According to CCEB Director of Communications Mary Kuhn, one of the biggest problems facing those trying to help sex trafficking survivors is the lack of supportive homes for healing. Claire's House provides the security, long-term care and intensive counseling necessary to help minors overcome their trauma. Claire's House has space for 12 girls, aged 12-17, and will be opening in late May. The home, currently being renovated, is located in Alameda County. For reasons of privacy, the exact location is not being given.

Those interested in donating money for mattresses or in other opportunities to help in the May 5 event should sign up on the Grateful Gatherings website at <https://gratefulgatherings.org/upcoming-gatherings/>.

New sheriff

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Members of the community including Mayor Don Tatzin, Lafayette School District Superintendent Rachel Zinn, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson, Moraga Police Chief Jon King, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard, and retired Moraga Town Manager Bob Priebe interviewed Alldritt

as part of the selection process. Falk notes that Alldritt's time spent in Danville, a city similar in demographics and topography to Lafayette, combined with his years of experience in traffic enforcement makes him ideal for the Lafayette job.

Tatzin says he is looking forward to working with him.



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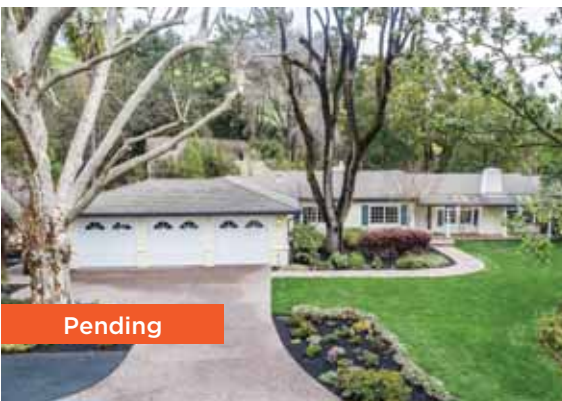
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