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**Fogarty ushers in new wine line**

**Oakland Tribune**, Oct 27, 2005 by [Tim Simmers, BUSINESS WRITER](#)

"AS WINEMAKER Michael Martella takes a sip of a new pinot noir from a barrel at the picturesque Thomas Fogarty Winery & Vineyards, he says he's impressed with the quality of this year's red wines."

"They've got great color, flavor and density," said the burly Martella, enjoying his 25th harvest at the hillside winery celebrating its 25th anniversary as a Santa Cruz Mountains wine producer.

The winery, perched up on Skyline Boulevard, is releasing a new line of special wines on a new teal label this weekend. The new wines are the result of cherry-picking some of the best grapes in the vineyard, and bottling them to create top-quality offerings.

Martella is keenly aware that some blocks and rows of the Fogarty vineyards produce better fruit and wines. The new lines eventually will include about a dozen new releases. The first to bear the new label will be Rapley Trail Pinot Noir 2002, the Lexington Santa Cruz Mountains Meritage 2002 and the Santa Cruz Mountains Camel Hill Vineyard Cabernet Franc of the same year, ranging from \$40 to \$45 a bottle. The new redesigned label recalls a simplified script used to brand the winery logo in earlier years.

"We're bottling some of the most distinctive parts of our vineyards," said Martella, who grew up on a peach farm in the Central Valley and has been winemaker here since Fogarty Winery's inception.

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Sitting in the mountains at an elevation of about 2,000 feet, the vineyard gets a combination of hot sun, cool nights and fog. It is known for its pinot noir, chardonnay and gewurztraminer. The bucolic, 24-acre vineyard produces about 15,000 cases a year -- small by most winery standards, but the biggest winery in San Mateo County. Prices range from \$16 to \$65 a bottle.

This year's harvest is smaller than usual. The spring was short and much of the summer was cool, pushing down grape yields, but not quality, says Martella.

Fogarty marketing chief Anne Krolczyk says the winery is celebrating that both the vines and winemaker Martella are reaching peak performance.

"It became apparent to (Martella) that blocks of the vineyards here deserve to be bottled separately," Krolczyk said. "We're just pulling the creme de la creme out of the small vineyards."

Martella stressed that part of the strategy is to give more choices to a growing group of wine lovers who thirst for more knowledge on where grapes come from, how they're grown and why they taste the way they do. This allows him to feature grapes that get more sun or a special microclimate that makes for a better flavored wine.

"(Martella's) pinot is big and well structured, and has lots of color," said David Bruce, founder of David Bruce Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Los Gatos, which specializes in pinot noir. "He's just trying to bring out the crown jewels of his vineyard, and he's doing a good job."

John Akeley, who manages the wine department at Roberts Market of Woodside and has stocked Fogarty wines for years, said his customers like the quality of the local winery.

"Fogarty represents Santa Cruz Mountain wines nicely," he said. "If the winery starts making small batches of wine to create superior quality, our clientele will respond."

One of the special new wines comes from Fogarty's Rapley Trail Vineyard, named for a trail forged by early pioneers to link Portola Valley with the mountaintop now called Skyline Boulevard. Winery owner Thomas Fogarty planted six acres of pinot noir in 1981 along the trail. Martella says it has a "favored exposure, coupled with a cool Pacific climate that provides great structure and complexity" to the pinot noir wine.

The winery is unveiling the 2002 Rapley Trail Pinot Noir and other wines at a tasting from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at the winery (\$25 charge) at 19501 Skyline Blvd.

As part of the anniversary celebration and new wine, the winery is also hosting a Nov. 11 harvest dinner, catered by Le Papillon restaurant (\$125 per person). For information, call (650) 851-6777 or go to Fogartywinery.com.

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