

Wine in Lamorinda?

By Richard Eber

Bill English is a great wine maker. As a member of the nationally renowned Contra Costa Wine Group, his entries in the group's annual professional-tasting competition have consistently won gold medals. He has also received awards from Wine Maker Magazine and the State Fair. This expertise has been gained with over 40 years experience, which began in the 1970's when English, an Orinda resident, first learned the trade. He purchased equipment from the iconic Wine and the People store in Berkeley.

His professional work as a chemical engineer was ideally suited for making vino, where science and art are meshed in this craft. Although he did not receive a formal education in wine making, five years ago English's talent in this field resulted in his going professional with his hobby. This transition was easy, as Bill explained: "I was making more wine than I could drink and decided that I either needed to make less or get bonded and make more."

Thus, the Meadow View Winery was created. It currently bottles a modest 200 cases per year -- with expansion occurring slowly each year. Their wines are sold locally in several stores including Jackson's Wine & Spirits, Wine Thieves, Total Wine, and Diablo Foods. The wines can be also be found at several restaurants in the area. Among these eating establishments are Home/Made Kitchen, Postino, Cine Cuvée, and Amoroma.

One of the unique aspects of Meadow View Winery is that it features grapes that are locally grown. There are approximately 125 vineyards in Lamorinda (Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda). Most of these vineyards are very small (well under an acre of vines), but a few have multiple acres. Almost all of these vineyards are located in residents' back yards.

Because of local growers' interest in producing locally made wines, this group got together and formed the Lamorinda

Wine Growers Association (LWGA). Their organization, with the backing of the membership and the board of directors, decided, in 2013, to have their growing area declared a unique appellation or what is termed a American Viticultural Area (AVA).

This was no easy task. To become an AVA, LWGA had to show that the association is in an area that has a unique climate, appropriate soil, and proper growing conditions, all of which distinguish LWGA from other areas in Contra County and other parts of the state that produce wine. After three years, the hillside vineyards, with their moderate climate, now produces excellent vintages such as Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sangiovese grapes. LWGA is now recognized as a unique AVA in California.

It was not an easy task that resulted in Lamorinda's having its status as a growing area, as is required by law, listed in The Federal Registry. Along with his colleagues in LWGA, Dave Rey, who developed data and paid for consultants to study geologic and climate conditions, played an important role in gaining approval for the new appellation's creation.

On this foundation, Bill English and his friends who grow grapes, while making high quality wines locally in Orinda, Lafayette,

and Moraga, have every reason to be proud of their achievements in putting this area literally on the world wine map. Like those who preceded

them, including those who go back thousands of years to Biblical times, local wine makers take pride and satisfaction in each bottle they create.

Most people who live in the Lamorinda area don't realize that the grape-growing

conditions are ideal where they reside. However, documentation that they live in a temperature-sweet spot near hillside vineyards and also reside in a residential suburban environment is not all that important when they open a bottle of the locally produced product.

All that matters is "taste," which can be found in abundance, thanks to Bill English and his associates who ply their trade in the American Viticulture Area known as Lamorinda.

Richard Eber is a frequent contributor to The Icon and is also an avid wine maker and member of the Contra Costa Wine Group. ■

Belly Fat & Movement

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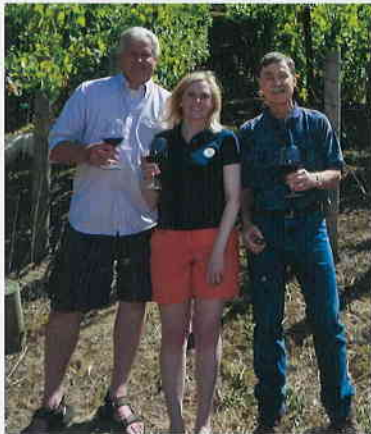
proteins that act as a natural protection against disease. In spite of the proof that moving is as vital as sleep, food, or water, less than 25 percent of the nation exercises.

Perhaps part of the problem lies in the mistaken vision of exercise as fitness training, often too tough for most mortals. Boutique gyms continue to augment the difficulty of their programs to retain the hardiest of their hard-core members. While a few exercisers may enjoy the endorphin "high" produced by the physical demand of these classes, the average member is soon discouraged and disappears in about three months.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the typical worksite, where the employee exercise program might be limited to moving one's fingers on a computer all day. Scientific evidence clearly shows that sitting for long periods of time heightens the risk of dementia, diabetes, depression, and, of course, obesity.

Now imagine that your workplace offers a program that can lift your mood and combat lethargy without reducing focus or attention -- and even dull hunger and cravings. What's the strategy? Stand up

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Bill English, right, holds a glass of Lamorinda wine.



Wine grapes like these are grown in Orinda.