

THE LESSER GODS OF WINE

Whoa Nellie. Now this is what we've been waiting for; May 1st with still miles of green countryside. Weedwackers, discs and mowers are burnin' thru the fuel to chop it down before fire season starts. However, on a bazillion acres, there are some darn happy grape vines! They're out there just sucking up all the delicious rain we had and they're thinkin' to themselves, "Humans are gonna have some great wine and some awesome parties this year--thank us very much, please!" If you fit that bill, I have just the place for you! Right in time for Wine Festival, here's a relatively new and a downright good place to visit, taste and party. Come on -- jump in the Buick and let's get over to



By **Chuck Desmond**



MONDO CELLARS



Nineteen years ago, three entrepreneurial brothers from down in Disney-country visited a friend here in El Paso de Robles, liked everything about the area and in short order, bought 123 acres on Nacimiento Lake Rd. just five miles from Spring Street. They figured it would be a good investment and maybe a get-away family spot. The views were stunning, there was water, the town was growing and, there were two old mobile homes already on the property. Heck, if they got tired of their day jobs, why not try a winery?

"Mondo" is Italian for "World" but the boys were really 1/2 Sicilian and 1/2 Scottish. With that gene pool, the men were armed with a "work hard" attitude mixed somehow into a "Let's negotiate a way we can party with our friends" mentality. **DOUG AND MITCH MONDO**, now in the last half of their 40's, eventually moved here full-time about five years ago while the third brother decided to keep his work in the south.

The two new Roblans easily concluded that they knew nothing about farming so planting grapes was just out of the question. However, with brain power bursting from their pores, building a business was right up their alley. With the great open spaces and superb views, it would have been a great place to live but Jayna, Doug's wife, and the kids rebelled because they wanted to be in town with neighbors around. No problem; "We'll use the property and build a fabulous tasting room,

design and build three luxury guest suites and have a den-type room for breakfasts, add a kitchen, and deep porches outside. A brand new B&B annexed to the tasting facility was on the drawing boards! Doug, normally deeply involved with non-profit organizations as his passion, became the "site guy."

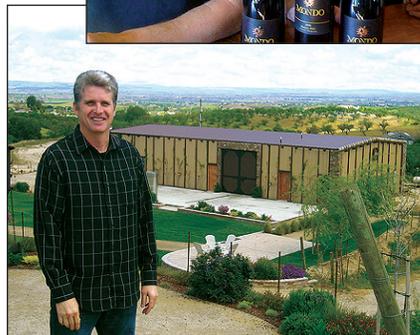
As I said earlier: Whoa Nellie on

vor in as well!" Mitch is the "Real-Deal" behind the wine business these days. He found Kevin Riley, a local wine maker, schooled at Cal Poly and then really educated by working his way through a few super wineries in our area. While Mitch and Kevin searched for the right grapes, they had Doug get started on a barrel storage building with the



MONDO
CELLARS

Brothers Doug, left, and Mitch Mondo. Lower left, Doug overlooking the barrel room building, and below right, the entrance to the tasting room and Villa nel MONDO.



capability of making wine in it; one of these years. Organization is the key and these two brothers had it down cold.

all that! Just a little problem here: "Shouldn't we maybe have some wine too?" "Oh, yeah, I guess so."

Brother Mitch said, "I can do it and I'll add a lot of our ancestral fla-

Just one year ago, the cash register rang for the first time as there were 700 cases covering six different

and distinct blended wines, an ongoing B&B, great tasting-room and maybe, the best was yet to come. There aren't any flies sittin' on Mitch and Doug! They quickly realized that virtually all wine tasting facilities shut down about 5 p.m. Perfect time to start the party now that everyone is already happy. Friday nights - 5:30 or so until sunset, there is live music, catered appetizers and wine by the glass or bottle on the verandas. The term "sunset" is sorta loose as it might be very late into the night or even early in the next morning! No cover charge, no admission! All wine is 7 bucks for a full pour and most appetizers (which might be enough for dinner) are in the 10 buck range. Hey, hey, hey - now we're talkin'!

Back to the vino. **MONDO CELLARS** just finished bottling 1350 more cases of what is now a list of eight wines. five reds and two whites and one Rose'. All are blends; all are in the 14.1 to 15.5% alcohol range and most hover at the \$20 price per bottle. The wine club is called the **MONDO MOB** which is easy to join but to get out, a guy with no neck might pay a visit first! Half a dozen restaurants carry the wines as well as Albertsons in Paso which has some of the choices. Jayna came up with the wine names and they seem to be discretely tied to some deep Italian images. You decide!

Tasting room is open daily 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., call 226-2925 or the B&B. Web is www.villanelmondo.com. Yes, it is spelled that way!

Enjoy the Festival, use a designated driver, and we'll be back soon from another Paso Area Winery of the Lesser Gods. Until then, Cheers! Chuck