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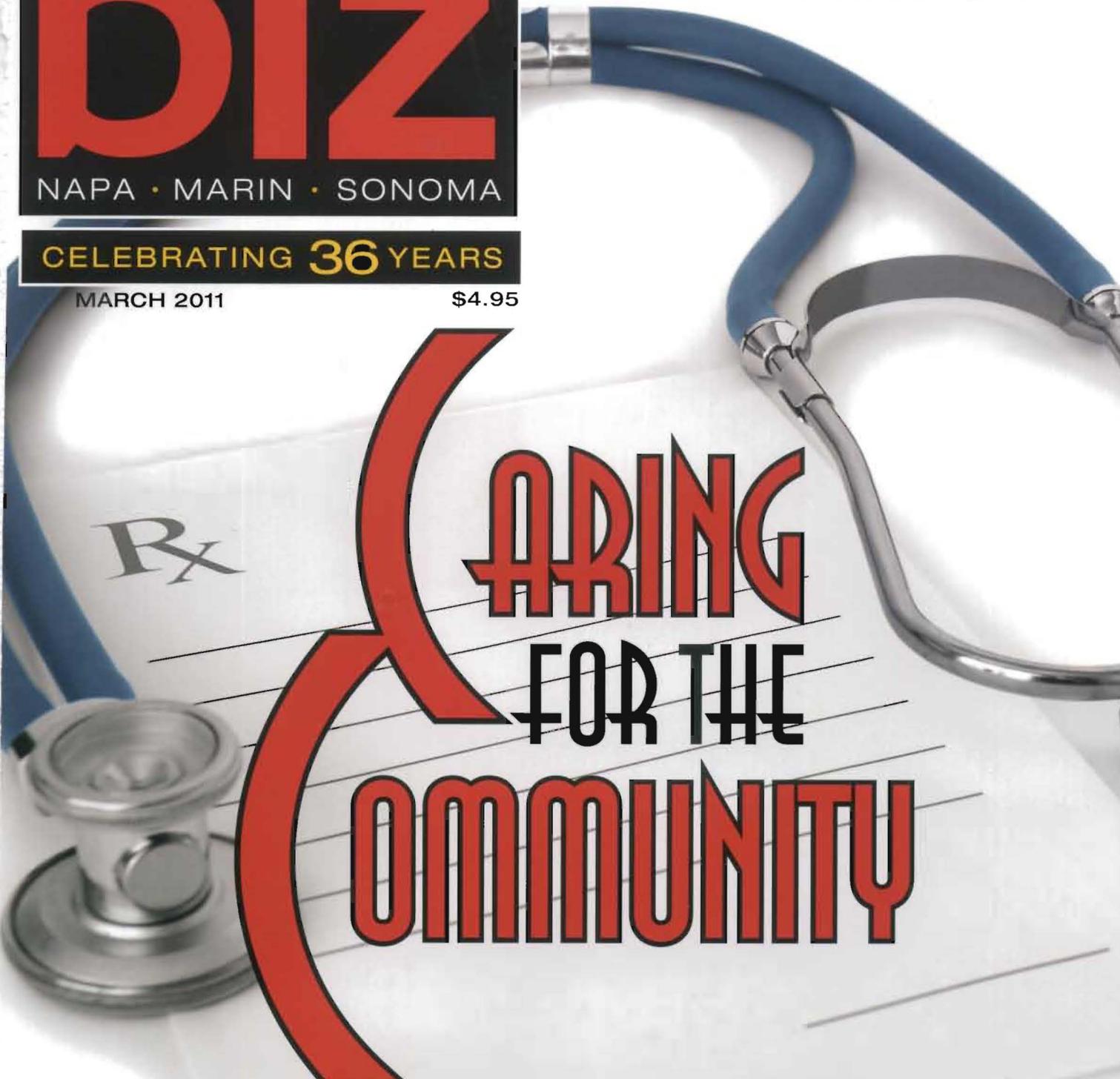
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Charlyn Belluzzo created Amorosa Bella to inspire people to better enjoy their lives. (Duncan Garnett Photography)



Living in the Moment

*Amorosa Bella
is about improving
your quality of life by
engaging all your senses.*

By Julie Fadda

“I’ve always been a scientist, classically trained in the academic sense,” says Dr. Charlyn Belluzzo, creator of Amorosa Bella and author of *Authentic Sensual Living*. “I’ve made it my mission to expand our path on the road to wellness by living a sensual life. Doing that work in the wine industry is where I focus now.”

The goal of her company is to inspire people to better enjoy their lives by living more in the moment and engaging all their senses. In other words, *slow down*.

It took coming within inches of getting hit by a San Francisco Muni train to jolt Belluzzo out of what many of us have come to consider “normal:” being disconnected from your surroundings because your mind is racing with a stream of other things. For example, when was the last time you drove somewhere and couldn’t clearly remember doing so once you arrived at your destination? Or had a meal and couldn’t remember what it tasted like because you were watching television, working at your computer, talking on the phone or otherwise preoccupied?

We’re addicted to technology, to what’s happening next, to being the first to get there, to being able to multitask because it’s asked of us on so many levels. But what’s it all for? Are any of us truly taking the time to enjoy our lives? Or have we reached the point where the demands placed upon us have completely trumped what’s most important? The sad truth is that, in many cases, the answer is “yes.” So let’s see what we can do about turning that around, shall we?

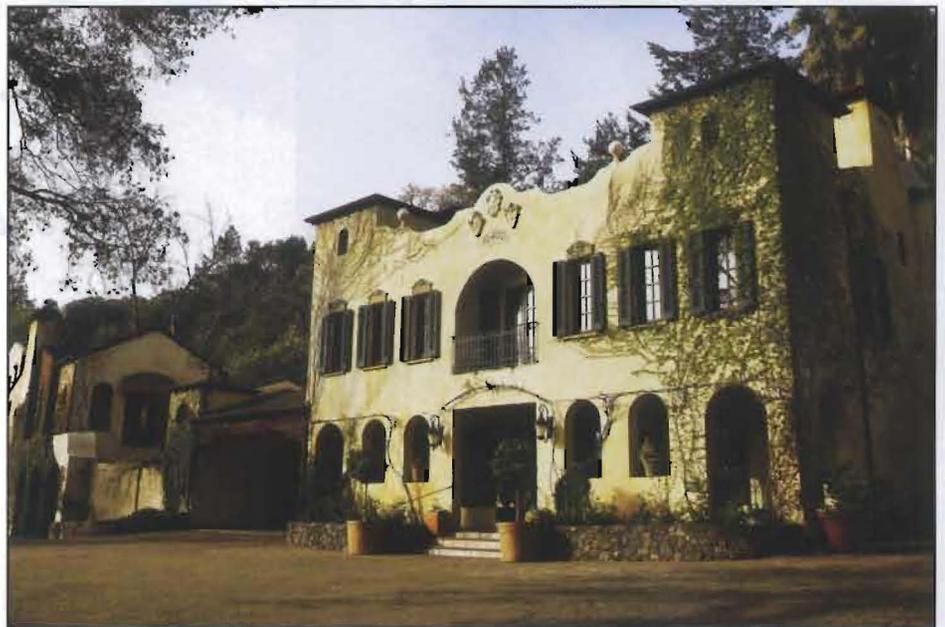
A little background

Before Belluzzo became a world-renowned humanitarian, activist, philanthropist and speaker on global health, she started with a background in radiology and pharmaceutical research. But years before that, when she was a child, her grandparents grew grapes, and her grandfather put a rope swing under a canopy of vines. "We used to play there and would watch how the grapes changed and matured. I got used to the smells and knew when the grapes were ripe and ready," says Belluzzo. That's the place she took a step back to when she conceived of Amorsosa Bella. Her efforts still focus on making the world a healthier place (she continues philanthropic pursuits as well), but now she's doing it in a way that hits closer to home on many levels.

"We're highly influenced by primal thoughts in everyday decisions," says Belluzzo. "Animals use all their senses to experience everything. They're so aware. We have all those skills. We select what parts we use in our teens—that's why it's easier to learn things when we're younger.

"I'm trying to help people engage all their senses again naturally, daily, so the quality of their life will improve."

Think about it: Have you ever smelled something that immediately took you back



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to a specific time and place? Or heard a song that did the same? Those remembered times were when you were experiencing things through all your senses. Doing so will not only improve your present but will also improve your memories in years to come. "Memories are what make your life meaningful," says Belluzzo.

It's all about sensuality

Amorsosa Bella, translated from Italian, means "beautiful lover" or "sweetheart." It's bottom line: enjoying life through all six of your senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and intuition.

"It's about your relationship with yourself, your community and others. The Amorsosa Bella website [www.amorosabella.com] is a gathering place. I'm creating a community and the products to enjoy it with," says Belluzzo. "We speak to people who want extra adventure, romance and excitement, so we picked products that speak to all the senses."

While the company is most known for its sparkling wine (more about that later), it also produces Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.



Charlyn Belluzzo with Cellars of Sonoma owner Scott Jordan

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Let's start with the sense of smell. "My perfumier [Mandy Aftel] is one of the top in the world. She only uses natural ingredients [as opposed to synthetics] because they respond to each person's chemistry differently, and they don't degrade over time. Some of the ingredients in the perfume are 100 to 200 years old and are no longer available in the marketplace."

The candles ignite even more of the senses. When you light them, the pure soy protein melts (at a very low temperature) into a clear, warm massage oil. It feels light rather than sticky and blends into the skin without residue. You can smell the fragrance, feel the warmth, enjoy the silkiness of the oil and the look of their glow.

"A family named Maddison makes them in Illinois with sustainable soy products. The candles are 100 percent soy oil and dye-free," says Belluzzo. "We blended the candles like the wine; we took natural elements from the area and, when we reached the aroma balance we were looking for, we went with that."

Some of them smell good enough to eat.

Speaking of eating: "The chocolates are dark on the outside, sprinkled with sea salt and cut into a heart shape," says Belluzzo. "The only liquid inside is sparkling wine-infused caramel, which was a trick in itself. Funny things happened. [The caramel] kept expanding because of the sparkling wine's effervescence. At first, we thought, 'Oh my God! We created Flubber!' We learned a lot about cooking with sparkling wine."

Belluzzo's next food project is a book she's putting together with Chef Christopher Greenwald, called *The Four Seasons of Authentic Sensual Cooking*. "I'd just finished as chef at Iron Horse Vineyards," says Greenwald, who now owns his own catering company, Bay Laurel Culinary in Petaluma. "I didn't realize [when I first met Charlyn to pair some food with her wine] that this would be a lasting relationship. Then Charlyn said, 'You're going to be our sensual chef.'"

"We started talking about doing a cookbook right away," he continues. "It's structured with the seasons and has three sections to each season: pampering yourself, intimate dinners for two and gatherings."

"The pampering part is about self-pampering by shopping at the farmer's market and getting the most out of what's in season. I chose Sonoma County as a place to live because it's the perfect place to do that. It's such a diverse growing region;

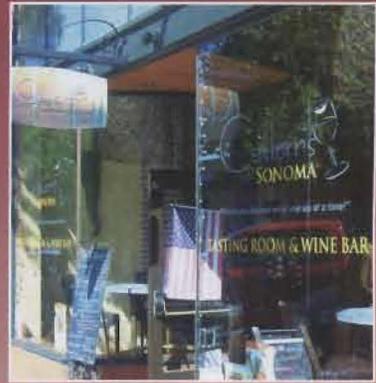
Cellars of Sonoma Shines

By Julie Fadda

Cellars of Sonoma opened in Santa Rosa's Railroad Square in March 2009.

"Our vision was clear right out of the gate," says owner Scott Jordan. "We'd operate like a tasting room at a winery, with similar hours and no barstools." But it soon came clear that people wanted something more. "It would tend to get crowded around 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. People wanted to come later and stay longer than we'd anticipated." So they made some changes by extending the hours—and adding barstools. The feeling of being at a family-owned winery still remains, but with some extras. "There's live music here every Friday and Saturday evening, and on most Thursdays," he says. "It's a tasting room during the day and a wine bar at night." The company also offers live web broadcasts directly to its website (www.cellarsofsonoma.com) every Tuesday at 6 p.m., where wine is tasted and discussed, winemakers and chefs are interviewed, and guests can tune in and ask questions live.

There are assorted wines from nine small lot, boutique vintners at Cellars of Sonoma. "I only choose vintners who have impressive wines across the board," says Jordan. "Amorosa Bella is one of those." The company also offers wine club shipments from its vintners and an attractive space for private events, wine education and gatherings. You can also find Amorosa Bella's candles and chocolates there. Hours are 10 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. Sundays through Wednesdays, and until 10 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays.



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Chef Christopher Greenwald is Amorosa Bella's "sensual chef."

you can get lettuce at the coast then go to Healdsburg for tomatoes on the same day.

"The intimate dinners for two are included because a lot of cookbooks have stuff for four or six servings. The recipes for gatherings are based on groups of 12 people, so you can use the book by plugging in your season and size of your party," he says. "We hope to finish it by late spring for release in 2011."

The wine

Charlyn's husband, Rick, has family living in Verona, Italy, some of whom are grape growers and winemakers. "Rick's dream is to eventually shift family life to Sonoma County from high-tech [he's the former president/COO of Microsoft and chairman/CEO of Quantum Corp.] and spend more time supporting my winemaking," says Belluzzo. Now, it's become a labor of love for the both of them.

"Wine touches all the senses," she says. "Try different ways of tasting it. Hold the first sip in your mouth for 10 or 15 seconds before swallowing. Keep your eyes open. Smell it without looking at it first. Get your feel and interpretation of the wine and then appreciate the color."

The couple were guests at the Kenwood Inn and Spa while their Santa Rosa home was being built, and that's where they met David Di Loreto, CEO of Vero Westside/Westside Grapes, which owns both the Kenwood Inn and Hop Kiln Winery. "I wanted to have our wines at the Inn because it embodies what Amorosa Bella is all about. It's a different experience every

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time I go. The product line has grown through being at the Inn," says Belluzzo.

"The Hop Kiln and Amorosa Bella brands are very different from each other, because there's a different approach to branding and style. The wines are unique, which says a lot about the art of a winemaker when you can create such different wine profiles from the same vineyard. It's a living thing.

"We started in the wine business in 2008, and our first bottling was in October 2009. We produce Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, which are also combined to make the sparkling wines, which have become the signature wines.

"At Hop Kiln Vineyards, we select the grapes we want, and they're all estate grown. In the future, I'd love to do Pinot Grigio, but right now we want to focus on Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, because we want to be really good at what we do before going further. We presently sell more internationally than in the United States."

You can taste the wine at Cellars of Sonoma in Santa Rosa's Railroad Square (see sidebar on page 49). It's also at Zazu Restaurant and Farm, Syrah Bistro and Rendezvous Bistro in downtown Santa Rosa. Currently, there are four offerings: Mendocino Sparkling Brut, which has elements of Asian pear and toast and a lively mouthfeel; Mendocino Sparkling Brut Rosé, which is the company's best seller and smells of strawberries and cream with fine bubbles to enjoy; Russian River Valley Chardonnay, which has toasty, vanilla cream aromas and an incredibly smooth mouthfeel with an element of butterscotch on the long finish; and the Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, which has a classic cherry nose with a bit of spice and anise, a silky mouthfeel and a hint of vanilla on the finish.

Sparkling in many ways

Penelope (Penny) Gadd-Coster is winemaker and consultant at Rack & Riddle, a custom crush facility located in Hopland, which has 50 clients, about half of which produce sparkling wine. The company puts out 500,000 cases of wine (grape-to-bottle), and has additional contracts for strictly bottling.

Gadd-Coster has been at Rack & Riddle since it started business in 2007. Prior to that, she spent 13 years at Jordan Vineyard & Winery, then moved to J Vineyards & Winery, where she spent eight years learning the art of making sparkling wine with Oded Shakked, who now owns Longboard Vineyards in Healdsburg.

"Charlyn came in as a potential client looking for a sparkling wine producer," says Gadd-Coster. "We talked about it, had the same philosophies about what to produce and went from there. She's able to get really nice fruit, which makes my job easier. We come up with the final blends and dosage [sugar] levels together, according to her philosophy. "I want to make sure I'm really going with her vision, which is elegant, fun, lively and fresh—but mostly fun. She has a vibrant personality. People love her on sight. For me, it's fun to work with someone like that."

Gadd-Coster's own brand is called Coral Mustang (Tempranillo). "I wanted to do something I really loved, not so mainstream, that went well with foods." Her first vintage was 2004.

While 2010 was a challenging harvest overall, sparkling grapes come in earlier than others, so they didn't get the hits some of the other grapes did. "The sparkling grapes are looking good, with really good flavor profiles. If you have good fruit, you're moving grapes to be the best they can be. I'm a minimalist. I want the fruit to be the star. Amorosa Bella ferments in stainless tanks, is



Penny Gadd-Coster of Rack & Riddle crafts Amorosa Bella's sparkling wine.

Pan Roasted Lamb Chops with Chocolate, Rosemary and Lemon Sauce

By Christopher Greenwald, Amorosa Bella's "Sensual Chef"

Cooking a cozy warm meal at home with someone you love is the perfect way to enjoy a winter evening. Try this sweet, savory and tart marinade for your favorite lean meat dish.

- 1 rack of lamb (8 chops)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ onion (minced)
- ½ carrot (minced)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 teaspoon dried coriander
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ cup Pinot Noir
- 1 cup veal stock
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon rosemary (minced)
- ½ lemon (juice only)
- 1 oz. unsweetened chocolate 99 percent cacao (cut into little pieces)



Prepare lamb by cutting rack into individual chops. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Season the lamb chops with salt and pepper and set them aside to marinate at room temperature for 10 minutes.

On the stove, heat a sauté pan over high heat. Add olive oil and, when almost smoking, carefully sear chops, a few at a time, until all are nicely caramelized.

Place seared chops on a sheet pan and place the sheet pan in oven for five minutes or until chops are just barely medium rare.

Remove lamb and loosely cover with foil in a warm place to rest.

Meanwhile, prepare sauce. To the pan with the lamb drippings, add the onion and carrot. Sauté until nicely browned, about two to three minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for a minute more. Add the dried spice and herb and the tomato paste.

Stir to incorporate, then add wine. Reduce wine until almost dry, then add stock and bay leaf.

Reduce the liquid by half and strain through a fine mesh sieve into a small saucepot. Add rosemary and lemon juice, then slowly whisk in little pieces of chocolate a few at a time.

Add any accumulated lamb jus from the resting chops to the sauce and serve sauce with chops.

Serves 2



Amorosa Bella sources its grapes from Hop Kiln's vineyard in Russian River Valley.

filtered for second fermentation, then rests. It's riddled [which moves the yeast into the neck], then goes through disgorging and dosage, then rests in the bottle. The wine is making itself; I'm just guiding it down the path.

"Amorosa Bella sparkling is done with Charlyn's style, flair and personality. There might be a bit of me, but just my winemaking style. She works with the folks at Hop

Kiln to discuss acid levels, when it's time to pick and so forth," says Gadd-Coster. "Working with Charlyn is lots of fun. She lets me express myself. I think that how fun she makes it helps to make the wine really good. The expectation is to enjoy it and have fun with it."

Keeping still

Hop Kiln CEO David Di Loreto and wine-

maker Chuck Mansfield both work closely with Belluzzo on Amorosa Bella's still wine program and selecting estate grapes for sparkling. A former professional pilot and real estate developer, Di Loreto's goal is to improve the Vero Westside properties as much as possible over time. Mansfield has roots in Placerville, Calif., where his dad has vineyards and fruit orchards.

"I grew up working in both the vineyards and orchards but always enjoyed vineyard work the most," says Mansfield. He met Di Loreto there as a child and, after getting a degree in winemaking at Cal Poly and doing some winery work, he came to Hop Kiln Winery in March 2008.

Di Loreto started in the wine business at Monticello Cellars in Napa with his own label, Per Sempre, until 2003, when he teamed up with a Seattle group and they purchased Hop Kiln in 2004 under the company name Westside Grapes. "We've found a unique niche in this market at this particular property. When we added the Kenwood Inn & Spa in 2006, we saw a very significant opportunity to cross market both by combining the experience in as many ways as possible."

The historic Hop Kiln has been a bonded winery for 44 years. And while its original owners were making value wines, the Westside Grapes group saw something different and "very special," says Di Loreto.

"We've steadily replanted it to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to move it to a high-end product. In 2006, we launched HKG [Hop Kiln's premier wine program]. Our focus is on new vineyards and improvements to the ranch, viticulture and winemaking programs. When you talk incredible Pinot Noir in the United States,

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Belluzzo takes in the aromas of her newly harvested Pinot Noir grapes.

you're talking Russian River Valley. We're thrilled and excited about being part of that."

Di Loreto met Belluzzo when her daughter got married at Kenwood Inn & Spa about four years ago. "She was starting Amorosa Bella and began using Kenwood as her event place. Wine was just one product she was interested in. She eventually asked if I'd be interested in selling her grapes from Hop Kiln and having the wines made here as well. It was good timing, and our goals of extreme quality and creating a sensual, emotional experience were mutual and well-aligned.

"We also work with Charlyn at Kenwood Inn & Spa, including with her candles and other products and regular Amorosa Bella events held at the spa. Her approach and enthusiasm fits very well with our vision and intentions for Kenwood. It's a place where you experience everything with all of your senses. It has its own kind of spirit; you leave your cares out on Highway 12. At Kenwood, it's all about morphing into the surroundings and tapping into an emotional experience. It's about living in the moment and noticing what's around you and how it makes you feel."

Today, Belluzzo works a lot with Mansfield on the wines. "I was excited to work with her because she's so passionate and has so much energy," he says. "She just wants her wines to reflect that passion. Who wouldn't want to work with someone like that? She has true passion, shares her opinions, walks with me in the vineyards, tastes the grapes. It makes it so fun. I'm always excited when she comes here. Her smile transcends itself into her wine."

To create her own wine from Hop Kiln's grapes, Belluzzo first laid out her goals for Mansfield. "I took notes on which wines in our cellar she liked and what she wanted for Amorosa Bella. I wanted to make a wine to fit her passion for the project. She likes wines with powerful aromas and silky textures. We then forged a farming and winemaking program to realize her vision. We use techniques like whole berry fermentation to promote a long, slow and cool fermentation. During barrel aging, I get her feedback on her favorite barrels while tasting with her." The wine is aged further in the bottle, because Mansfield likes to cellar it before it's released.

"With both these labels, I'm very fortunate. With Charlyn, there's passion. When I ask David for resources, he asks if it'll make the wine better or my job easier. If I say yes, he gets me what I need to succeed. I have freedom of creativity."

While Hop Kiln has its own style of winemaking, Mansfield is able to make something different for Amorosa Bella. "The grapes come from the same place," says Di Loreto. "What's different is, we ask that Charlyn be highly engaged in defining her style, and we produce wine that meets her criteria. Chuck and our vineyard manager, David Smith, really understand this ranch and will bring forth the best fruit to make the best wine in the styles desired by both of us."

"She chooses grapes for a whole different reason than others do," adds Mansfield. "Many clients shop for Pinot based on much more of a technical approach. Charlyn takes a more metaphysical approach."

Hop Kiln is a highly focused estate winemaking program. There are distinct layers on the ranch of elevation, soil type and proximity to the river. "I want to showcase these vineyards' subtle differences," says Mansfield. "We're at an early stage in these young vines' lives. We're just getting to the exciting point, and now comes the fun part. I'm big on having a destiny for each grape that's grown, and it's that sense of destiny that lets us make these two distinct yet amazing wines."

Hop Kiln makes approximately 11,000 cases of wine annually, and the property is approximately 250 acres. After additional plantings this year, there will be close to 100 planted acres of Pinot



Chuck Mansfield is winemaker for Hop Kiln and Amorosa Bella.

Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. Amorosa Bella uses only a small amount of those grapes for its wines, producing about 1,000 cases per year so far.

"I want the company to stay boutique so I can keep a close relationship with customers and providers," says Belluzzo, who spends her free time with her horses, playing tennis, skiing, scuba diving, "anything outdoors" and traveling, mostly to Italy and to distribute her products in Europe or to visit her children and granddaughter.

So how does someone with so much going on remain so energetic and fun? By living in the moment. ■

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