

Photo courtesy of D'Argenzio Winery.



Italian-American Winemakers

The Realization of a Dream

Photo courtesy of Palmira





From left: Ray and Ricci D'Argenzio as young boys. The D'Argenzio family's pride and joy, the grapes that are used to produce their wines.

Bella Luna's Sangiovese and Sangiovese-Cab blends represent much more than a bottle of wine. They recognize the importance of friendship, passion and following your dreams.

wine, as one might imagine, is brimming with flavor, color, aroma and an inimitable Old World flair.

In more than a few ways, D'Argenzio has sought to keep close ties to Italy. The family traces their roots to St. Angelo Cancelli, a mountain town just outside of Naples in the region of Campania. Their ancestors were well-known artisans of ornate silver work destined for the noble families of Campania—a tradition reflected today through the rich silver used to create the D'Argenzio family's logo on each of their wine bottles. The Lo Iodice crest on the bottle pays tribute to Raymond's mother's ancestors.

"Our winery has a lot of love and passion and family unity," says Raymond. It is a place where dreams are made—dreams of doing something new and seeing if you can accomplish it. With everyone working together, things are possible."

BELLA LUNA

Small lots, limited production, premium location...all the ingredients for great wine. But Bella Luna isn't your typical high-profile winery, preferring to stay under the radar and in the sights of the true aficionados of Cal-Ital wines.

Bella Luna prefers to keep it simple, growing only two varietals: Sangiovese and Cabernet. The vineyards, which are entirely dry-farmed and head trained, are located in the

Paso Robles AVA (American Viticultural Area) on California's central coast. The territory is a familiar stomping ground for winemakers Kevin Healy and Sherman Smoot, who grew up as best friends in the area.

So how do two childhood friends go from roughhousing on the playground to making very stylized, characteristic wines? Well, through a lot of time and a lot of introspection. Although the idea for Bella Luna had been on the minds of Healy and Smoot for nearly 30 years, the two pursued careers in the military and airline industries before returning to their dream of making wine. While Healy spent a decade in the Adelaida Hills just west of Paso Robles learning the craft of viticulture and winemaking from seasoned dry farmer, Mel Casteel, Smoot continued his career in the commercial airline industry, never missing the opportunity to sample wines from every corner of the earth. When Smoot's stepfather, Dominic Marietta, who told his stepson stories of his Italian family's winemaking tradition, died in 1979, Smoot knew where he was headed. He decided to start his own Italian-inspired winery with his longtime friend, Kevin Healy.

The Sangiovese and Sangiovese-Cab blends they make represent much more than a bottle of wine. They recognize the importance of friendship, passion and following your dreams—a quality that appears to be as universal for turn-of-the-century Italian immigrants as it is for 21st century Americans. **CI**