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Wine Tasting Party preparations
photo provided by Carmela Winery

Carmela Winery
210 W. Broadway
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to Texas soon after. They opened their doors for business in downtown Prosper in May of last year.

Mr. Anselmo named the business Carmela Winery after his grandmother who immigrated to America from her native Sicily as a young girl. Indeed, the business is a family affair. Daughter Tina runs the day-to-day operations, while her sister Kate, a college student, has contributed her talents by creating the artwork pictured on the label.

Carmela Winery has a fairly extensive list of twelve wines - split evenly between whites and reds - as well as one fortified wine, a port. But you won't find row after row of grapevines growing behind the winery. Mr. Anselmo uses grape juice that he purchases from vineyards in California and Oregon, as well as distant wine regions in Italy and Chile. "Texas doesn't have an ideal climate for growing grapes. They need hot days and cool nights in order to develop flavor," he says.

His passion found recognition - he won a bronze and two silver medals at international amateur winemaking competitions.

Though the lack of a vineyard limits the romance of the winery, Mr. Anselmo says it allows him to create better wines. "I can react quickly to wine consumers' changing tastes," he says, "making wine from different grapes without being limited by slow growing vines." It also allows him to buy juice from grape growing regions that have had particularly good seasons and far off regions that specialize in hard-to-find varieties.

A Touch of the Grape in Prosper

By Lee Ratliff

JOSEPH ANSELMO looks perfectly at home behind the tasting bar of the Carmela Winery. Peering into the wine room behind him I can see a gleaming row of stainless steel tanks containing hundreds of gallons of fermenting grape juice--juice that will eventually become the bottled nectar he now holds in his hand. Vintners like Mr. Anselmo must have the patience of saints. While I'm short on that particular virtue, luckily, I don't have to wait - he's pouring me a Syrah right now.

A few years ago, Mr. Anselmo was the busy owner of a local ATM sales

and service business, making homemade wine in his kitchen as a hobby. But the hobby became a passion, with winemaking equipment gradually taking over his kitchen and dining room. His passion found recognition - he won a bronze and two silver medals at international amateur winemaking competitions.

When Prosper voted to allow beer and wine sales in early 2004, Mr. Anselmo decided to turn his dream into reality. He called his daughter, Tina, in New York and asked, "How would you like to help me start a winery?" She agreed, moving



Rating their favorite wines

photo provided by Carmela Winery

Although much of the business at Carmela Winery is wholesale, Mr. Anselmo has been surprised at the popularity of their wine tasting parties and retail sales.

The winery hosts private wine tastings, parties or get-togethers any night of the week. A typical two-hour tasting begins

with a tour of the winery, then moves to the tasting room where each taster samples eight wines. "People are usually loosening up a bit after their fifth or sixth sample," says Mr. Anselmo with a grin. "They get a lot more talkative." Guests can then choose a full glass of their favorite wine and mingle with friends or chat with the Anselmos.

The events start at \$15 per person for wine, cheese, and crackers; and increase in options to \$75 per person for a full-blown catered feast. All events require a minimum of ten guests and any of the events can be customized. At their recent Valentine's Day party, they hosted a wine and chocolate pairing in partnership with the Belgian premium

chocolatier, Godiva. Representatives from Godiva attended and helped match their various chocolates with Carmela Winery's tasty vino. Guests left with a bottle of wine and a box of Godiva chocolates.

For those who just want to try the wines without booking a tasting party, Carmela Winery encourages people to stop by any time to sample a wine. "Definitely try before you buy," says Mr. Anselmo. The winery will also host an open house event during the Prosper Arts and Music Festival on April 23rd.

A unique option for customers is the winery's private label program. For a \$20 set-up fee and a two-case minimum, customers can have a personalized label created for the wine bottles. This has been popular for weddings, parties, Christmas gifts, and business gifts.

Wines start at \$9 a bottle for White Burgundy and top out at \$16 for the Big Mama Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve. The port is slightly more at \$17.

Oh... and the Syrah? Delicious.

Lee Ratliff is our new expert "foodie" and owner of Ambrosia Creamery.



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