

GLOBE SOCIETY

A celebration of la dolce vita, South Okanagan style



More than 220 guests from Vancouver's Lower Mainland and beyond attended an invitation-only celebration of food, wine and fine living in Osoyoos over the August 27-28 weekend hosted by boutique winery LaStella. The event drew attention to the South Okanagan region and LaStella's distinct spirit and approach to winemaking. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

The brisk pace of harvest may have replaced the care-free days of summer in the South Okanagan, but in the charming wine-country town of Osoyoos, the memories of what many recall to be *the event* of 2010 still linger sweetly.

The two-day affair – which took place over the August 27-28 weekend – proved a perfect send-off to summer. For many guests who travelled from the Lower Mainland and beyond to attend the soiree, it was also a warm introduction both to the region and the passion behind LaStella – the upstart, boutique winery that generously hosted the two-day celebration of food, wine and music.

“Our goal was show our guests this beautiful destination and what we are trying to accomplish at LaStella. I am thankful for the wonderful friends and business associates who made the trip,” says LaStella proprietor Saeedeh Salem.

“We had friends cycling, waterskiing, walking in the vineyards, and others just relaxing and visiting wineries. They loved Osoyoos and Oliver.”

Arguably, for many of the 220-plus guests, the show-stopping attractions were the consecutive evening events held at LaStella in a grand tented ballroom flanked by the winery's vineyards overlooking Osoyoos Lake.

August 27. The festivities began with an elegant reception on the winery veranda as guests arrived by shuttle bus and limousine from nearby hostels, including Spirit Ridge and Osoyoos's tony, new Watermark Beach Resort.

Moving on to the ballroom, lit by the warm glow of several large, rustic chandeliers, Saeedeh and husband and co-proprietor Sean

inspired

A passion pursuit

Inspired by their enriching experiences travelling in Italy and the opportunity to bring



the best of Italian-inspired culture to the South Okanagan, Sean and Saeedeh Salem set out to establish LaStella winery.

Just three years since its first vines were planted, LaStella is already producing award-winning boutique wines.

“Like the winemakers of the Super Tuscan movement that began in the late 1960s, who had the courage to venture beyond traditional wine-making methods, our goal is to use innovative practices in our vineyards and cellars to produce exceptional, hand-crafted wines that are ready to drink on release, and that have the structure to gracefully mature over time,” says Sean.

Salem welcomed the crowd to an evening honouring South Okanagan vino, cuisine and fine living.

The gesture was by design. LaStella wines, crafted in a spirit of Italian culture, are a collection of Super Tuscan-inspired reds and Northern Italian-style whites named after Italian musical notes. Among them, for example, LaStella's un-oaked Chardonnay carries the name “Leggiero,” an elegant and graceful note.

To a backdrop of live music performed by Okanagan Symphony Strings, guests enjoyed a gourmet menu that began with hors d'oeuvres including Okanagan organic peaches wrapped with Canadian prosciutto and basil handsomely paired with a 2009 Lastellina Merlot Rosato, a wine that recently earned rank as a finalist at the prestigious Sélections Mondiales des Vins Canada international competition.

Next, a salad of organic greens with lemon and Amelia olive oil and grilled prawns was served with Leggiero. For the main, a luscious offering of morels and truffled gnocchi along with braised short rib with sauce bordelaise, and slow-roasted heirloom tomato and eggplant caponata were matched perfectly with a 2007 Fortissimo, a powerful, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc blend.

Selections of cheese, fruit and Similkameen Apiary honeycomb, and dark chocolate truffles served with the 2009 Moscato D'Osoyoos completed the culinary tour.

Following dinner, the talented, youthful Vancouver-based ensemble Classical Nouveaux wooed the audience with melodic renditions of romantic, operatic ballads.

“Italians have a wonderful way of bringing beautiful wine, cuisine and music to the world,”

benvenuti!

LaStella Wine Society

Looking to add a little more of “la dolce vita” to your life? LaStella winery has an offer worth considering. The award-winning boutique vintner's Wine Society is ideal for those who share a passion for food, wine, music...and value. Each fall and spring, LaStella Wine Society members receive one case (12 bottles) of the winery's exclusive yield, including new releases of LaStella's flagship Maestro Merlot, ultra-limited La Sophia Cabernet Sauvignon and at least one library wine annually, for a total of 24 bottles per year.

Members also receive invitations to exclusive events, access to reserve tours of LaStella vineyards and cellars, and chances to spend one-on-one time with LaStella winemakers, plus a 10 per cent discount on LaStella wine purchases – all this and more for just \$1,200 per year. Care for a taste? Contact the



Wine Society concierge at concierge@lastella.ca or 604.697.0989.

says Saeedeh, who is passionate about Italy and travels there each year. “Sean and I created LaStella with a vision to embrace Italian culture and approach to winemaking, and to bring that feeling of Italy to B.C.'s Okanagan Valley.”

Mission accomplished. Brava! Bravo!

August 28. As much as LaStella emulates the best of Italy, it is equally focused on conveying the South Okanagan's hearty spirit. That quality was well conveyed in a festive evening that intermeshed LaStella wines with gourmet barbecue and dancing under the stars. The sensational rhythms of recording artist Jarvis Church of the Philosopher Kings and renowned DJ “Girl on Wax” kept the audience on its feet well into the wee hours.

Throughout the affair, Sean, Saeedeh and the entire LaStella team played the consummate hosts, generously sharing their zest for life and LaStella wines throughout the weekend.

Cause and benefit. In addition to kicking up their heels, LaStella's guests also opened their wallets, participating in a silent auction that raised \$10,000 for South Okanagan General Hospital in Oliver.

“We give back to the community in different ways, and on this occasion, we felt that a charitable dimension was the right thing to do,” says Saeedeh, noting, “The town of Oliver has a population of 3,000, but the hospital – which serves all communities south of Penticton – gets 18,000 visits a year. We were pleased to help support South Okanagan General through this event.”

A fitting toast to a weekend focused on living well and living right.

This report was produced by Randall Anthony Mang (www.randallanthony.com) in conjunction with the advertising department of The Globe and Mail.

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