

Wine making musician brings his blend to S. Tahoe

By Jennifer Eddy

On a day off from skiing in Lake Tahoe, Paul Cullen discovered a wine he wanted to make his own. On Oct. 5 Cullen will be at Après Wine Company in South Lake Tahoe where there will be a tasting of his Sonata wines and performing his signature jazzy, cool acoustic guitar.

Cullen discovered his love of wine while he was touring as a bassist for the band Bad Company.



Paul Cullen
will be at
Après Wine in
South Tahoe on
Oct. 5.
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“My intro to wine was Mick Ralphs, our guitar player. He turned me on to Chateneauf-de-Pape, it was my first taste of really good red wine,” Cullen told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We were on the back of the bus, pulling an overnigher and sharing a couple of bottles together and from that point on I’ve been a huge fan of wine.”

Many years later he came to Tahoe and discovered a winery in the Sierra foothills.

“It was our first time skiing in 16 years, so our bodies were a mess,” Cullen said. “We decided to take a day off to go wining and we found some of the best wineries going toward Placerville. That’s when we found Drytown Cellars.”

After discovering Drytown Cellars, Cullen contacted his Italian wine distributor and all his contacts on the East Coast. He held a comprehensive wine tasting that included a combination of aficionados and friends.

“We did three tastings of 30 wines each and Drytown Cellars was consistently voted the best,” Cullen said of the Amador County winery.

His Italian mother and grandmother first introduced Cullen to wine and food’s intrinsic relationship.

“I learned how to cook from my mom and grandma. I was making pasta, gnocchi and sauces at 8- or 9-years-old,” Cullen said. “It was a combination of two things, they wanted to teach me and they wanted to sit down together and drink wine.”

Two years ago he was able to go to Italy to see his mother and grandmother’s principles in action.

“My mom and my grandma would make something fresh everyday, we never had a salad on the table with tomatoes on it if tomatoes weren’t in season,” Cullen said. “In Italy everything is based around the seasons and the regions. Every region has its own style of cooking based off local ingredients, and it just so happens that the wines within that region go with the food because they all come from the same soil.”

Cullen’s love for Italian wines also influenced why he chose Drytown Cellars to produce his Sonata wines.

“Its amazing, half of their varietals are Italian and I understand why,” Cullen said. “Their growing area is like being in Piemonte, Italy; hilly, with a perfect microclimate.”

There are three Sonata wines; the Sonata Rosso: a rich red fusion made from Cab Franc, Zinfandel and Syrah grapes; Sonata Bianco: a clean, full bodied Pinot Grigio with a honeysuckle bouquet and his new Sonata Rosé combines the Petit Syrah and Giano grape that Cullen claims is unlike any Rosé.

The Après Wine Co. event begins Wednesday at 6pm. It is free. The wine venue is at the corner of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard in the Red Hut center.

More information about Cullen and his wines is on his website.