

Miraflores Winery embraces vintage varietal

By Mike Dunne, Sacramento Bee

Marco Cappelli is pouring six wines into six glasses lined up on a counter at Miraflores Winery in the Pleasant Valley district of El Dorado County, just southeast of Placerville.

He is about to give a visiting wine writer a lesson in the making of angelica, which just may be California's rarest wine and almost certainly its most historic.

"This wine, or rather this grape product called wine, dates from the earliest mission period. It was nothing more than unfermented grape juice run off into casks containing spirit. The spirit brought in alcohol to prevent spoilage and the grape sugar gave sweetness and flavor," wrote Sacramento grocer Darrell Corti in the chapter he contributed to the thick University of California/Sotheby "Book of California Wine," published 30 years ago. "Some of the finest examples of old California wine that I have tasted have been very old angelicas. Silky, harmonious, and elegant, they have been paragons of liqueur wines."

Each glass that Cappelli has arranged holds a splash of wine fermented from mission grapes, with five of the six representing a different vintage over the past decade. The sixth contains a taste of the first angelica that Cappelli is releasing under his own eponymous label.

"Angelica is a wine without broad general appeal," Cappelli is saying as he continues to pour. "It appeals to people who like sweet wines and who appreciate California history."

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