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Crystal Lake restaurateur chosen to create wine in Napa Valley

By JAMI KUNZER - jkunzer@shawmedia.com

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Restaurants nationwide will feature a wine this summer that 1776 owner Andy Andresky helped create.

Andresky's photo and bio will appear on the wine, alongside seven other sommeliers, or wine stewards, selected from throughout the country.

He was chosen to travel to Raymond Winery in Napa, Calif., last month to create the 2010 Raymond Cabernet Sauvignon Sommelier Blend.

Fewer than 50 sommeliers exist throughout the country, said Andresky, who describes himself as "self-taught."



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He has visited wineries in Chile and Argentina and said the trip was an honor.

Expected to be available in June in restaurants, including 1776 in Crystal Lake, the wine will cost \$23 to \$29 a bottle. Any restaurant will be able to buy it and offer it for sale both by the glass and bottle.

Likely selling for about \$12 a glass, the wine is intended as "an affordable, by-the-glass offering" for restaurants, said Peggy Gsell, brand manager for the California Wineries of the Boisset Family Estates, which includes Raymond Winery.

The winery invited sommeliers from various geographic regions based on recommendations from sales representatives in those areas, she said.

A sales representative from the Chicago area recommended Andresky.

"There was a belief he had a tremendous history as somebody who is very knowledgeable within the wine industry with a great palate and a nice selection of wines on his own wine list," Gsell said.

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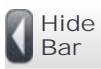






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Andresky said he expects the wine to draw patrons interested in tasting it, while the local draw could entice other restaurants to buy it.

"They like the idea an average, normal person actually did it," he said.

Not to mention, he said, the wine as "really drinkable."

It is the result of an involved blending process in which the sommeliers each created blends, tasted and ranked the results, along with the winemakers and owner of the winery.

In many ways, he said, they couldn't go wrong because of the five base wines they were given. Similar to a "handyman building a house," it's easier to put on second story if the first story is solid, he said.

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He was flown to Napa in February and treated to a dinner with wine, of course, at the winery before rising the next morning to a breakfast and the beginning of the blending process.

The process took place in a sort of laboratory with beakers and measuring tools.

The idea of blending goes back centuries, but is "a hot area in wine today," Andresky said.

"Most everything can be blended and successfully," he said.








"The first couple usually stink," he said. "You have to get the cadence to what works best. ... It takes a little bit of tweaking and manifesting and bringing all that together, but it's a really fun experience. It's kind of like making a car and driving it off the lot."

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