

Estate winery breaks ground at Hockley Valley

MONO, Ont. — At the groundbreaking of Adamo Estate Winery, co-owner John-Paul Adamo proudly raised a glass of the winery's vidal to those who thought they would be making a lot of vinegar up there in Hockley Valley.

That vidal was made from fruit of the first rows of vines his father Mario Adamo hand-planted about three years ago with his late best friend Frank Ianni.

Reminded of the rolling hills of his native Calabria, Italy, Mario Adamo planted grapes about a kilometre south of Hockley Valley Resort, which he purchased with his wife Nancy in 1985.

With the opening of Adamo Estate Winery, the family behind Hockley Valley Resort in Headwaters are hoping not only for the success of their own wines, but for the area to become a wine destination.

The Adamo winery operated out of a barn beside the 16-acre vineyard, which is being torn down to make way for a 19,000-square-foot building, which will house production, a tasting area and retail store when it opens later this year.

Mario Adamo's children John-Paul Adamo and Julie Adamo Cass are heading up operations at Hockley Valley Resort and the winery. The family brought on Shawna White as vineyard manager and Hinterland Winery's Jonas Newman as consulting winemaker.

"It's been really fruitful already," said Adamo Cass. "I think [Mario] has worked harder than ever before ... If you have the chance to walk the vineyard, there's stone, there's gravel — that's sheer determination."

Mario Adamo started with a test plot out front of the resort and when those vines took, he and his friend began hand-planting the first rows about a kilometre from Hockley Valley Resort.

From Prince Edward County, Newman said there were a number of people who said wine couldn't be made there and now the county is a VQA region producing more than 100,000 cases of wine per year.

"When I came up there was a lot more in common with what's happening in my region than Niagara," said Newman, pointing to the cooler temperatures. He said the vines are insulated with dirt to keep them warm during the winter.

"When I first walked the farm, just looking at it, it looked like a place to grow grapes," said Newman. He said they are focusing on cool region varieties and letting what grows well there determine how they carry forward.

"Our philosophy is whatever we're going to make, we want to make it really well," said Adamo Cass.

White is using organic and biodynamic methods to care for the vines and Adamo Cass



From left: Julie Adamo Cass, Mario Adamo, Jonas Newman and John-Paul Adamo.

said they plan on offering vineyard tours when they open later this year.

With current production of 5,000 cases, Adamo Cass said she and her brother hope to increase that to 7,000 cases with the new facility and that the plan is to have the production areas ready for the fall harvest.

Licensee-direct sales have allowed them to start selling their wine at the Hockley Valley on-site restaurant Cabin in mid-May and to nearby restaurants and those in the GTA. Adamo Cass

said they plan to focus on foodservice and online sales rather than getting onto LCBO shelves.

Adamo Cass said they plan on taking it slow and testing the market and would rather have other wineries open in the area over time than become a large-scale producer. "That would, for us, be a dream, that we're not the only winery in this area. We're hoping that other people catch on and realize that they can grow grapes here and they can do well and that other wineries will come up," said Adamo Cass.