

Quady Winery

Madera, California



A REMOTE WINERY HAS BLAZED A PATH FOR CALIFORNIA DESSERT BOTTLINGS.

CATHERINE FALLIS, MS, ACWP

At three hours from San Francisco and two and a half from San Jose, Calif., Quady Winery is very much off the beaten path. Tucked in between switchbacks of the Sierra Nevada and the farmland of the Central Valley, this family-owned winery is renowned for its quirky labels and sweet wines.

Co-owners Andrew and Laurel Quady left Southern California careers in pyrotechnics and merchandising, respectively, to move to Davis, Calif., in 1971. Andrew Quady earned a master's

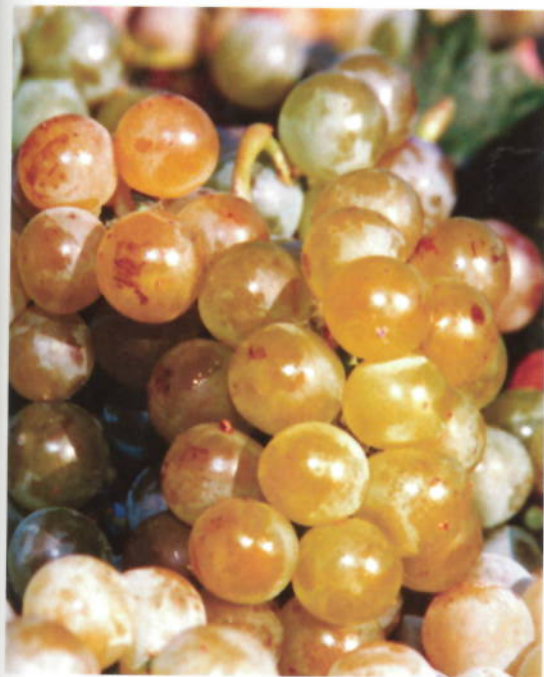
degree in food science with a specialization in enology from the University of California-Davis in 1973; Laurel became a certified public accountant. In 1975, with the encouragement of Sacramento wine guru and retailer Darrell Corti, they made their first wine—a Port-style bottling produced at Lodi Vintners, where Andrew was assistant winemaker. He worked for several other wineries before taking a job at Heublein Wines in Madera.

While continuing to work their day jobs to

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pay the bills, the couple started turning out Port-style wines based on the grapes and methods of the Douro Valley, naming their line Starboard to distinguish it from Port. The non-vintage Starboard Batch 88 is blended from Madera-grown grapes, mostly Tinta Roriz (aka Tempranillo); the Vintage Starboard is made primarily from Tinta Cão and Tinta Amarela grapes grown in granitic soil, 1,800 feet above sea level, in Amador County.



Quady winery (far left); Orange Muscat grapes (top left); winemaker Michael Blaylock and Andrew Quady (left); Laurel and Andrew Quady (bottom).

In 1980, Andrew Quady discovered a vineyard in Reedley, south of Fresno, that was planted to Orange Muscat (known in Italy as Moscato Fior d'Arancio). A year later, his new wine, called Essencia, was outselling his Ports. In 1983, when the Quadys were offered a load of Black Muscat, or Muscat Hamburg, from a vineyard in Manteca, Calif., they noticed a particularly acute aroma of red roses emanating from the wine as it left the tank. The resulting sweet wine, Elysium, is richer and stronger than the ethereal Essencia and pairs nicely with stronger flavors.

As production grew, so did the staff and the facilities. In 1984, Michael Blaylock joined as winemaker and Cheryl Russell as general manager, and a new winery was finished. "The winery before our expansion was a simple 40-by-40-foot building with an air conditioner stuck into the side," Andrew Quady remembers. "There was space only for four tanks and a stack of barrels. With the help of an SBA loan, we expanded. The building was designed by myself and Stanley Saitowitz, who at that time was a professor of design in the school of architecture at UC-Berkeley. The 1983 construction was just one-third of what Stanley and I designed—it was finally completed in 1998."

Catherine Fallis, aka grape goddess, is a popular and entertaining speaker and event host for corporate and private events. She is founder and president of Planet Grape LLC (www.planetgrape.com), a wine consulting firm providing education, content, and sommelier services, and is the first person in the world to have earned both the Master Sommelier diploma from the International Court of Master Sommeliers and the Advanced Certified Wine Professional title from the Culinary Institute of America.



General manager Cheryl Russell and Blaylock (right) in the tasting room.

In 1990, the Quadys introduced Electra, a lighter, fresher, grapiier version of Essensia, made with free-run Orange Muscat that is fermented at low temperatures for a month and bottled as soon as it reaches 4% alcohol. A Red Electra, produced by adding Black Muscat, was added in 2000. These wines are intentionally a bit fizzy because they are filtered during fermentation, which removes the yeast, but leaves a spritz. Screwcap closures are used to preserve that fizziness.

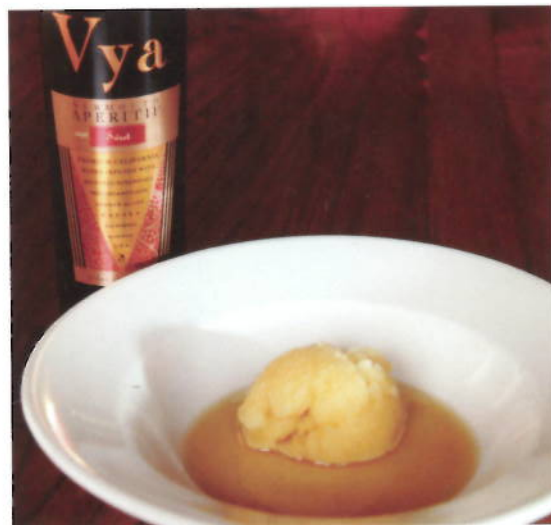
Deviation, with its striking blue label, is one of the most unique dessert wines I have come across in a long time. It's an Orange Muscat infused with scented pelargonium (rose geranium) from South Africa, which adds layers of lemon and rose, and damiana, a reputedly aphrodisiac blend of leaves and flowers from Mexico and South America. Like vermouth, Deviation falls under the category of aromatized wines; unlike vermouth, however, it is very sweet, with 15% alcohol.



In 2000, Quady introduced two Vya vermouths. The Extra Dry is made with Orange Muscat and Colombard grapes infused with fresh and dried herbs and plants such as angelica, lavender, and rose petals. Vya Sweet, made from Tinta Roriz and Orange Muscat, is a California version of Punt e Mes, which involves mixing one part bitters and a half-part sweetener with white vermouth. Other recent additions to the Quady line include Purple (Professor Peabody's Purple Potion)—a candied concoction made from the Sunbelt variety of the Concord grape family—and an Amontillado-style Palomino Fino.

The family has also been working on Salt of the Earth, "a long-range project, actually a separate business from Quady Winery, where we believe we can put out a great-value Moscato type that can retail below \$10," according to Quady. "Right now, there aren't enough Muscat Canelli and Orange Muscat grapes planted and under the care of the right growers to make this happen. So we are developing the new vineyards

Chocolate-orange-anchovy-chili cake with Essensia sauce (below); sorbet with Vya Sweet Vermouth (bottom).



OUTSTANDING RECENT RELEASES

Starboard Batch 88

N.V. \$24

This multi-vintage blend is soft and rich, with notes of raisins, figs, and dark chocolate.

Vintage Starboard

1996 \$35

The vintage version is intense and tightly wound upon release, but softens with age. Both Starboards are ideal for serving with dark chocolates, strong cheeses, and fine cigars.

Essensia

2009 \$21

Exotic, spicy, and delicately sweet, Essensia is delicious on its own, but the winery recommends serving it with chocolate-orange-ancho-chili cake with Essensia sauce, or with pound cake, biscotti, or freshly baked macaroons. It also pairs beautifully with chèvre.

Elysium

2009 \$21

Rich, sweet, and strong, with an inviting note of red roses. Pair it with lemon genoise with white-chocolate yogurt and cream and Elysium berry sauce, or with strong dark chocolate. Gorgonzola and other blue cheeses, especially when accompanied by pears, are perfect matches.

Electra

2010 \$13

A lighter, fresher, grapier version of Essensia, Electra is slightly fizzy, making it terrific with moderately spiced Asian or Indian dishes, with summer stone fruits, or as a palate-cleansing sorbet.

Deviation (375 ml)

N.V. \$25

This uniquely exotic, sweet, aromatized Orange Muscat displays notes of lemon, rose, and herbs.

Vya Extra Dry Vermouth Aperitif (375 ml)

\$13

Soft and fruity, with complex aromas of lavender, rose, and dried herbs in the glass.

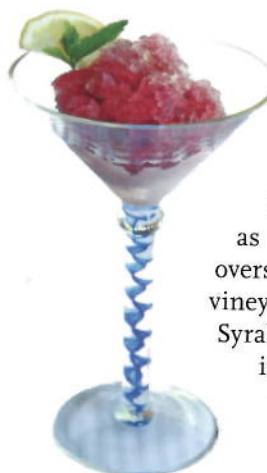
Vya Sweet Vermouth Aperitif (375 ml)

\$13

Sweet and rich, with a strong underlying bitter character, like a Punt e Mes.

Prices are current estimated retail.

WINERY SPOTLIGHT



with long-term contracts with the growers." The family's newest venture, Quady North, is under development as well, with son Herb overseeing a small 15-acre vineyard planted to Viognier, Syrah, and Cabernet Franc in the Applegate Valley of southern Oregon.

Today, Quady's California winery sells more than 40,000 cases a year—about 10% of that through direct retail. When

asked what sommeliers can do to sell more dessert wines, Quady suggests including selections by the glass as well as the half-bottle on the dessert menu. Bringing the bottle to the table and pouring a glass there, while offering a complimentary plate of homemade biscotti or the like, creates a head-turning show that is almost impossible for other guests to see without ordering some for themselves. Quady also insists that the staff should suggest wine when guests order dessert; if a dessert requires preparation time, the server can recommend a glass to be enjoyed while waiting. "There is also the possibility of increasing total wine sales by having a light sweet-wine offering to accompany the main course," he adds.

Considering all the brands he has created, I wondered how Quady would like to be known. "Well, the truth is," he says, "I would like to be called The Muscat King." Long live the king. 🍷



Red Electra slushie (top).