

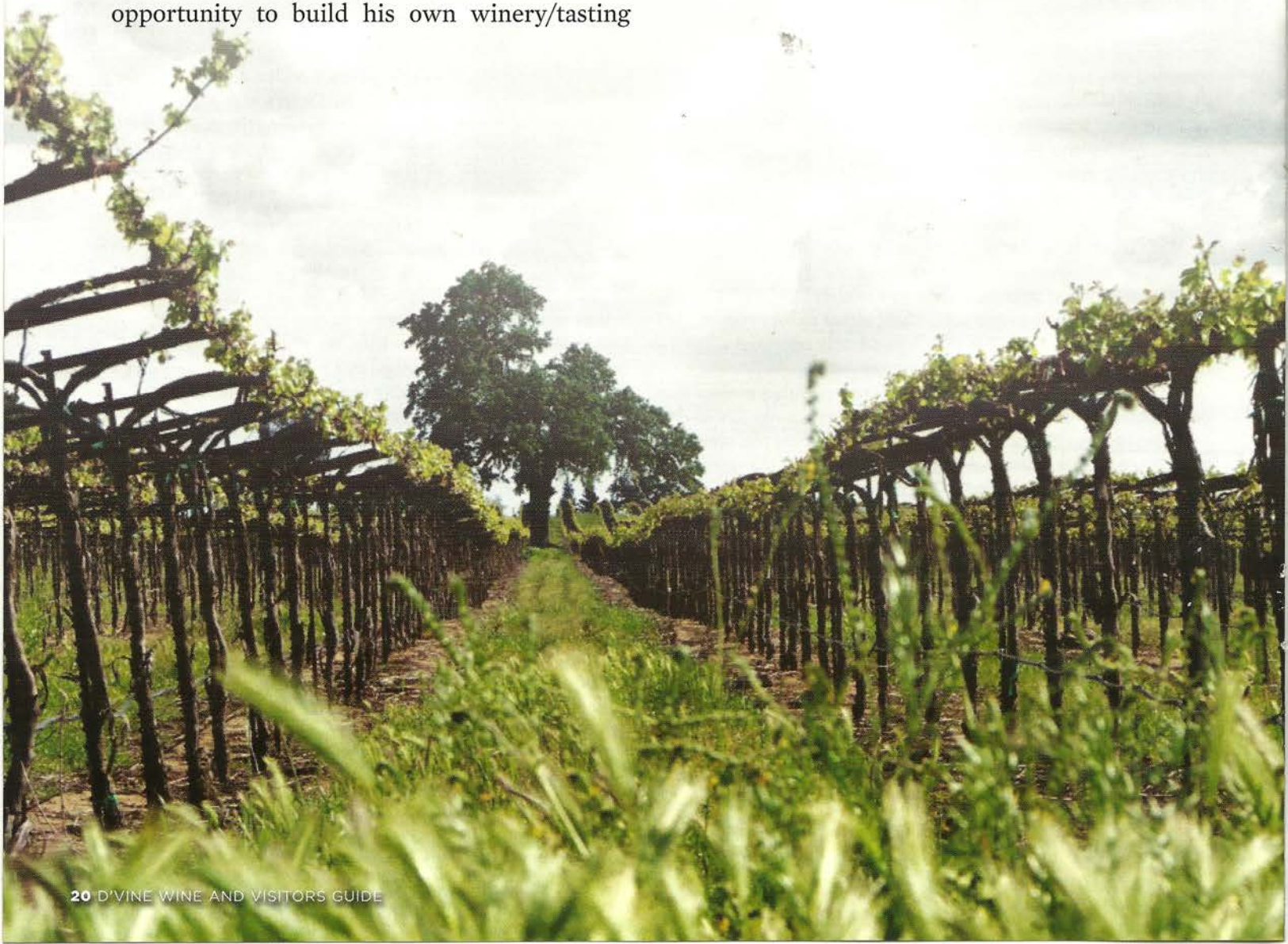
# *Take a Sip of Excitement at* **Watts Winery & Vineyards**

BY FRAN BENAVIDEZ

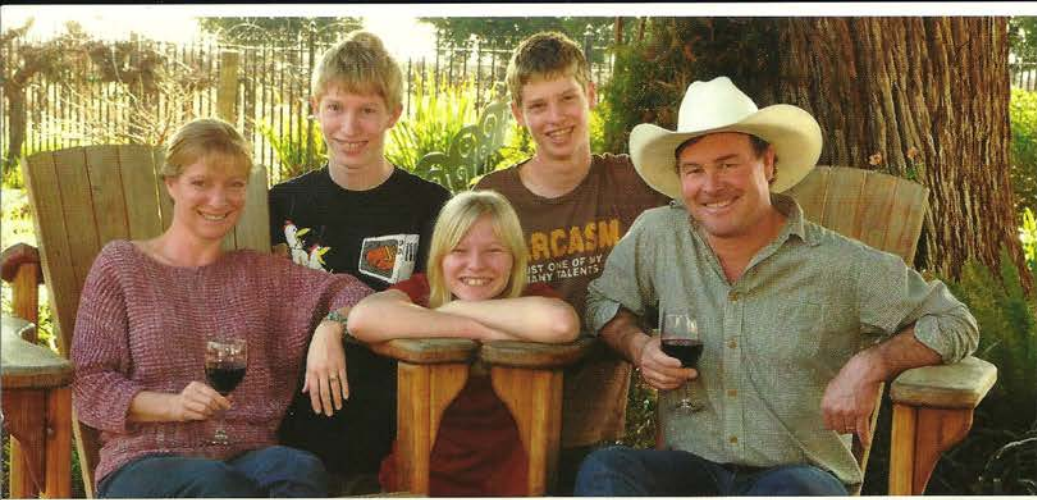
**S**tanding in the intimate tasting room at Watts Winery, I'm giddy. Yes, giddy. It's not enough the wines are excellent; it's the excitement and enthusiasm pouring out of Craig Watts as we taste and talk about his sparkling new winery, and he's waving a big *Watts Welcome to wine lovers!*

After spending eleven successful years at Lockeford's *Vino Piazza*, Watts jumped at the opportunity to build his own winery/tasting

room/production facility on the family property located just east of Lodi. Pointing to his boyhood home nearby, Craig mentions the winery is surrounded by the Watts family's award winning *Iris Vineyard* planted in solid gold zinfandel. Could this be his pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? "We're finally on our estate ground," he smiles. "We're working hard and we're 100% into this."







"This is becoming a beautiful location," he continues. "We're putting up a big waterfall and lights on the trees. We're revamping the landscaping surrounding the plaza. This will be a great place to come see...and taste!" On this particular day there are flats of colorful flowers, foliage and fresh dirt just waiting to be dropped into the ground that will transform a bare plot of land into a scenic picnic spot.

"We're a Ma and Pa operation," Craig grins, speaking of Sheri, his bride of 17 years. Even the Watts' three children are involved; twelve year old daughter Kelsey designs and sells jewelry in the boutique-style tasting room where pretty chandeliers sparkle above the tasting bar. Sons Josh, 16, and Kyle, 14, sell unique rocks

and fossils they've collected, and parents take note: during a recent wine event, the boys sold over \$250 worth of nuggets. "They're learning a lot!" says dad.

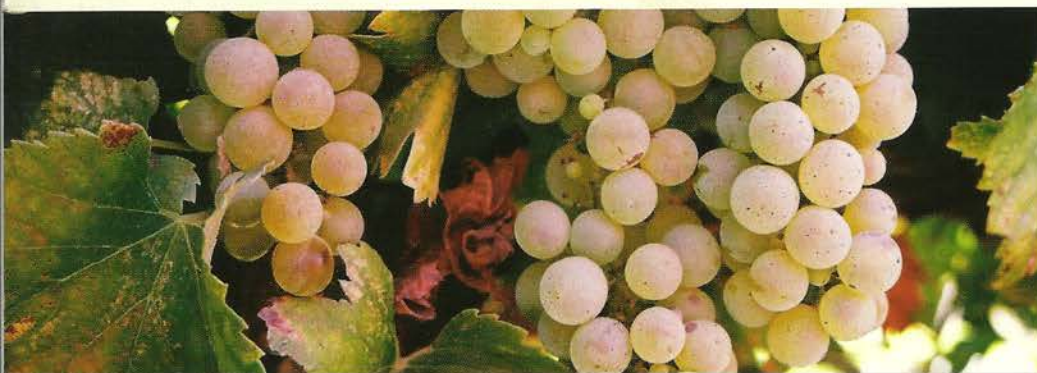
Rounding out the Watts "family" are the winemakers, Bill Ghiglieri and Franck Lambert. Ghiglieri was considered a veteran winemaker long before he ever began working with Watts, around eleven years ago. "Bill's an old school Italian and I'm kind of his apprentice. I think like he does," Craig explains. The two share affection for the old Bordeaux varietals. With regards to flavor, Craig explains, the Bordeaux have a start, middle, and a finish and you don't have to worry about getting all front fruit because you want to see the whole thing when it evaporates into that hauntingly long finish!



Sometimes, it's those long finishes that finish first. "We were the first Lodi winery ever to win the Best of California for a Bordeaux blend (California State Fair Wine Competition)," he says, citing his 2002 Lodi Dos Amores blend of cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon. "That means we beat all of Napa Valley for what they're supposed to be famous for."

Another delicious favorite is Watts 2007 Old Vine Zinfandel. Made 100% of fruit picked from his Pescador Vineyard located in the Mokelumne sub-appellation; the grapes were planted in 1937, the same year the Golden Gate Bridge was completed. Significantly, it was Grandpa's first field. "We are so proud to show that

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vineyard. Our '07 Old Vine Zinfandel is a classic wine," says Craig.

Not for the faint of heart, this selection is a must for anyone who appreciates the true boldness and beauty of an original Watts-style zinfandel, one that carries the signature spicy flavor that devoted Watts followers have come to know and love.

Lambert, a friend of Craig's since settling in Lodi by way of France, joined Watts in early 2010 as a consultant and winemaker. "Craig grows exceptional grapes, and that matters when making good wine," he explains. "Now he's at home and that's a big step for a winery."

While the tasting menu can vary, here is a list of current releases you won't want to miss sampling:

**2011 Yellow Swallowtail Chardonnay Casa Azul Vineyard Lodi** Bright green apple notes with balanced acidity and a lingering tropical fruit finish. Enjoy fresh out of the bottle, not too chilled, or straight from the tank! Did I just say that?\*

**2011 Rosado Los Robles Vineyard,**

**Clements Hills** According to Franck the winemaker, this is a pure drill-down of Syrah; a true Rose'. Fresh aromas of strawberries and watermelon, with crisp mouthwatering flavors of strawberries, cranberries and watermelon.

**2009 Old Vine Zin Pescador Vineyard Mokelumne** From the famed 1937 vineyards tended by Craig's grandpa! Aromas of cherries, plum and black pepper ready the senses for the smooth flavors of vanilla, cloves, blackberry fruit and earth tones from that good old "Pescador Terroir."

**2006 Volt from the Blue Los Robles Vineyard, Clements Hills** According to Craig, five different varietals went into this wine, each individually fermented then blended, then aged in oak for at least two years. "When we went to bottle, the laws changed, so we could not call it a port. My expressions at the time were rather violent over this and the only thing I could think of to say was 'What a volt from the blue!'" says Watts. An Old World style wine with aromas of fresh backed

cherry pie. Cherries jubilee is the first thought, with a juicy flavor of baked cherries, hints of tobacco, olives and blackberries.

**Blue Swallowtail Red Wine Blend Los Robles Vineyard, Clements Hills** Aromas of blueberries and violets with toasty notes of oak. Velvety tannins with juicy blueberries in the mid-palate and a lingering berry/cocoa finish.\*

\*The Butterfly label was created to help raise funds for children's cancer research and a portion of the net sales of these wines goes directly to professors conducting that research.

Stop by this weekend! Pack your pals, grab a lunch, visit their beautiful new tasting room, enjoy the relaxing plaza and picnic area and get a taste of the excitement pouring at Watts Winery.

**Watts Winery and Vineyards is located** at 17036 North Locust Tree Road, Lodi. Tasting Room Hours are Thursday-Sunday 12pm to 5pm. Phone (209) 329-1569. Website: [www.wattswine.com](http://www.wattswine.com) and on Facebook.