

## Vintner/restaurateur Michael Mondavi releases flagship "M"

**NAPA, Calif.** — Michael Mondavi, who founded Folio Fine Wine Partners after leaving the Robert Mondavi Winery in 2004, has just released his flagship label: M by Michael Mondavi — a 2005, 100 percent Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon reserve (\$199). The very limited, 700-case production is available nationally at exclusive wine shops and restaurants. Balanced, age-worthy, yet ready to drink now, this supple wine is bright, full-bodied and floral scented with classic

cabernet flavors of cassis and spice, and braced by oak and fruit tannins.

Mondavi's 15-acre estate Amino Vineyard, located close to 1,500 feet in the Atlas Peak AVA, is the source for M's fruit. "The cool, long growing season in 2005, combined with the rocky, volcanic soil, delivered delicate grapes with exceptional depth and balance," he said. According to Mondavi, as many as twelve pickings over three weeks were required to obtain the layers of flavor he desired. He cites this labor-intensive method for achieving balanced, ripe fruit with an alcohol of just over 14 percent. "It's a wine made to be enjoyed on its own or with a meal," Mondavi noted.

Both lunch and dinner are available at his recently opened *Folio Enoteca & Winery* in Napa's newly restored Oxbow Public Market. The 50-seat, bistro-style eatery and wine bar features seasonal menus that draw from the abundance of the region's artisanal farms. Wines, many from Folio's impressive stable, are sold at retail and can be uncorked table-side at no extra charge.

True to its name, *Folio Enoteca* houses a wine cellar that holds five barrels each of Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon, which are racked and aged in a glass-enclosed area visible to diners. "During harvest, we're trying to have our customers taste our grapes, grape juice, the fermenting juice and a barrel sample," Mondavi noted. "When [they] taste the grape and the juice, a light goes on. They say, 'Wow, now I understand what you mean by varietal character.' A barrel sample, alone, can't duplicate that." — *John Intardonato*



## Resident Italian expert earns high Brunello honors

**MONTALCINO, Italy** — Ferruccio Ricci, vice president of Brunello's growers' union, presented the Premio Consorzio del Brunello di Montalcino award to *Wine News* contributing editor Kerin O'Keefe here on September 20, for her cover article titled "Brunello De-con-structed," which appeared in October/November 2007. O'Keefe received the very prestigious annual wine writing award, part of the Premio Casato Prime Donne program, during a ceremony held at the town's historic Teatro Degli Astrusi. The Italian resident has a particular expertise in the country's wines and formidable knowledge of the Montalcino region. Her work was singled out by a jury that searches globally for the most authoritative article written



Contributing editor Kerin O'Keefe accepts the Premio Consorzio del Brunello award for her 2007 article titled "Brunello De-Con-Structed." She reports in depth on Barolo on page 28 of this issue.

on Brunello di Montalcino each year. Past recipients include British wine writer Jancis Robinson. — *KFS*

## Riserva Amarone enters U.S. market

**VERONA, Italy** — In April, a handful of producers rolled out their highly anticipated 2003 Amarone Riservas at VinItaly. Although they were technically available for sale November 1, 2007, their makers opted to make the inaugural presentation to the trade at this annual wine fair. In early summer, they began to appear on U.S. retail shelves.

Regulations for this new Amarone stipulate that the wine cannot be released until four years after the grape harvest, as opposed to two years for a traditional Amarone bottling. While most other requirements — such as allowed percentage of varieties — remain the same, another major difference for the *riservas* is that the wines must be tasted by a regional panel to determine their special qualities.

The number of producers that opted to make a 2003 Amarone Riserva was small, composing roughly "five percent of the total production of Amarone from that year," according to Emilio Pedron, president of the Consorzio di Tutela Vini Valpolicella, Amarone's regulating body. Pedron believes that more producers will craft a 2004 Riserva because it was a more successful vintage.

Among those producers that debuted their 2003 Amarone Riservas at VinItaly, Masi and Novaia shared a common thread because they included the rarely seen local grape *oseleta* in their respective blends.

Sandro Boscaini, director of winemaking for Masi, explained, "As *oseleta* has a higher tannin level than other varieties used for Amarone (corvina, rondinella and molinara, for example), it is perfectly suited to create a wine meant for greater aging potential than our regular Amarone."

— *Tom Hyland*