



By Laurie Jervis/Wine Country

I've always admired the ebullient Joseph, owner/winemaker and "head fiddle" of Fiddlehead Cellars, but only in the past 10 months have I gotten to sample her wines.

In a column published last August, I detailed my first trip to Lompoc's wine "ghetto," a day when I literally drove in circles around the industrial complex before finding my way to Fiddlehead's tiny tasting room.

Winemaker Joseph focuses her talents just on pinot noir (Santa Rita Hills and Willamette Valley, Ore.) and sauvignon blanc (Santa Ynez Valley), the two varietals she loves best. Her annual case production remains about 5,000.

FiddleFest celebrates Fiddlestix vineyard, part of the magic behind Fiddlehead Cellars. If you, too, have enjoyed Joseph's estate pinots, Lollapalooza and Seven-Twenty-Eight, then we're on the same boat.

Fiddlestix, writes Joseph on her Web site, is the "confluence of an exceptional growing environment that meets the finicky demands of pinot noir." The vineyard lies on the north side of a tight valley that runs east to west. Here, fog hovers over the vines until midmorning, she writes, and the temperature barely rises above 75.

These ideal conditions turn Joseph's grapes into ideal wines.

FiddleFest will showcase not only Joseph's wines, but also those of winemakers who purchase grapes from Fiddlestix. Each winemaker pouring that Sunday will offer a pinot noir from Fiddlestix, as well as a white or pink wine of his or her choice.

Scheduled participants include Ampelos Cellars, Ancien, Anglim Winery, Arcadian Winery, Bonaccorsi Wine Company, Dragonette Cellars, Gainey Vineyards, Hartley-Ostini Hitching Post Winery, Jonata Winery, Ortman Family Cellars, Pali Wine Company, Prodigal, RN Estate, Rusack and Summerland Winery.

Providing the food will be the delectable Hitching Post II restaurant.

Music will be - what else - fiddling by The Southside Bluegrass Band, described as "kick up your heels" tunes.

A silent auction will offer items including large format signed bottles, intimate dinners with the winemakers and personal tastings. Proceeds from the auction and FiddleFest itself will benefit Arts Outreach.

Arts Outreach is a nonprofit educational organization created to promote the visual, literary and musical arts in Santa Ynez and Los Alamos schools. For information, visit <http://members.artsoutreach.net>.

Tickets for FiddleFest cost \$72.80 per person and are available both online and from the tasting room. (Fiddlestix is at mile marker 7.28 on Santa Rosa Road, and the tickets cost \$72.80. Very clever!)

For more Fiddlehead Cellars information and FiddleFest tickets, visit www.fiddleheadcellars.com, or call (800) 251-1225. Tasting room: 1597 E. Chestnut Ave., Lompoc. The tasting room is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday only.