

Capcom CEO's new project: Wine?



Kenzo Tsujimoto with some of his wine

Despite the rest of the world suffering through some tough economic times, it seems that Capcom are doing okay. How do we know this? Their CEO, Kenzo Tsujimoto, has just opened a winery in California's Napa Valley – a \$100 million investment that's taken 20 years to prepare.

Kenzo Estate opened to the public earlier this month, with visitors treated to food and wine from a collection of "Napa all-stars". Doesn't look like Kenzo himself has much to do with the food – that's been handed to Thomas Keller of the French Laundry. The wine is actually a collaborative effort between vineyard manager David Abreu and Heidi Barrett, a consulting winemaker who has worked with several local wineries.

The 4,000 acre Mt George property was an Olympic equestrian training centre back in 1990, when Kenzo picked it up – and he had no intentions of building a winery. Those plans all changed when he tasted a Napa Valley wine! He sought out more California Cabernets to sample while travelling, and two years after purchasing the property, he started planting vineyards. Today there are 70 acres covered in grapes, with a further 30 currently being planted. With so much room to spare, don't think Kenzo's wasting an inch – the grounds have been effectively converted into a nature preserve – something you may not expect in California.

Currently, the winery produces four wines, each one estate-grown: two Cabernet blends – Rindo (US\$75) and Murasaki (US\$150), Ai – a Cabernet Sauvignon (US\$150) and Asatsuyu – a Sauvignon Blanc (US\$60). The debut vintage from 2005 was sold primarily in Japan, with the 2006 reds currently being served at the winery.

Those prices reflect the “post-recession” Napa Valley finds itself in these days, with the winery’s general manager explaining that other projects from the same winemaking team would have carried a much higher price tag. If you were curious about the names, each of the reds are named after a variation of the word “purple” in Japanese – not just due to the colour of the wine, but a hat-tip to the traditional colour of Japanese royalty.

If you’d like to try some of these ‘royal’ wines, make a reservation at Kenzo Estate. There are three different tastings on offer: four 1-ounce pours for US\$30, four 2-ounce pours with selected cheeses for US\$50, and US\$60 will get you a wine-paired lunch with choices from chef Thomas Keller’s Bouchon restaurant.

So. If you ever wondered where your purchase price for Street Fighter, Resident Evil and *Mega-Man* was going, now you know. Kenzo Tsujimoto’s been investing it, and he’s got a nose for good wine.