

 **the daily sip**TM
by bottlenotes

Tips & Tools



Cabernet for zombie killers



Capcom CEO launches his dream California winery.

If you look online for hype in the video game world, plenty of it's over whether *Resident Evil 5* will ever come to the Nintendo Wii. And if you look for hype in the wine world, there's plenty over newcomer Kenzo Estate in Napa. What do the two have in common?

Both have the same boss, Kenzo Tsujimoto. He's not only the CEO of Capcom, one of the world's most successful video game companies, he's also the proprietor of Kenzo Estate on Napa's Mt. George. If your youth was spent mashing buttons for hours on end in epic *Street Fighter* marathons and you later traded the controller for a corkscrew, Tsujimoto might well be your hero.

Lest you think he's just another bigwig CEO with a winery, know that Tsujimoto takes his wine as seriously as he takes his games. The most important thing for both, he says, is having the best people working for you: Team Kenzo boasts Screaming Eagle's former winemaker and Colgin's vineyard manager--but Kenzo's flagship wine costs only about as much as a new video game (\$75).

Read our interview with Tsujimoto below, whose latest release of wines was announced Aug. 15. And in our comments section below the interview, tell us what wine you drink while dusting zombies or handing out Ryu-inspired smack-downs.

Kenzo Tsujimoto bought his 4,000-acre estate 20 years ago, though developing the property--there are 100 acres planted with vines--and making wine has taken 13 years; Kenzo's consulting winemaker is Heidi Barrett and the vineyard manager is David Abreu. Tsujimoto, who drinks wine every night (no beer, liquor or saké), spoke to Bottlenotes through translator Hiro Nishida. .

When did you first get interested in wine?

Tsujimoto: I've traveled to San Francisco quite frequently over the past 30 years because there's a Capcom office in San Mateo. During work, I've had several opportunities to experience fine wine in San Francisco--it's been 30 years that I've been [doing so].

How closely involved do you hope to be with the growing or winemaking processes?

Whenever I'm in San Francisco, I always stay on the estate. I live there so I can closely watch and monitor the vineyards and the winery situation. But I do not comment on every tiny thing that I see in the vineyard or winery, but I will carefully see how organized the operation is, and from that I evaluate different situations.

Why did you decide to make wine in Napa, not France, since you like Médoc wines?

Because I established my main video game business in Silicon Valley--it's almost fate for me to be in Napa.

You teamed up with French Laundry's Thomas Keller for the food at Kenzo. Are you trying to make especially food-friendly wines?

Not only with Thomas Keller's food, but Kenzo Estate wines fit very well with Japanese food in general. The Sauvignon Blanc we sold out in seven months in Japan. I think our wines are very pure and elegant.

Do you see any crossovers between great games and great wines? Does it take the same intelligence, commitment and determination to make one or the other?

In order to create or achieve the best quality, it's very important to maximize the talent and ability of each creator--such as Heidi and David. Of course, management is very important to be making sure that the staff is never satisfied with the current situation--that you already did the best. But it's also necessary to apply appropriate resources, such as labor and money, to create the quality of the product. And also construct the right environment to be able to achieve a quality wine. In that, the gaming business and the wine business are quite similar: managing the top creators to maximize their talent and ability. I always say I'm very happy and blessed that video games are more for a young generation, up to 40 years old, but the wine business is for those from 40 and up. I'm very lucky that I can provide the service or product for all types of people in America and in Japan.

--Editor's note: We asked Tsujimoto which Resident Evil heroes he'd compare to Heidi Barrett and David Abreu, but he declined to answer--probably for good reason. If you have a wine you like to drink while mashing the controller buttons, tell us about it below.