

Sun-Sentinel

FOOD

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Miami's Tobin produces French-style wines in N.Y.

Mark Tobin knows, loves and produces wines that I really like.

Tobin is a lawyer with offices in Miami, but he has a home on the North Fork of Long Island where he has his winery. He travels there regularly during the growing and crushing seasons.

And in 2005, Tobin produced his first vintage of Mattebella Vineyards wines, which are not easily found outside the confines of New York shops and restaurants. Fortunately for wine lovers in South Florida, however, Mattebella wines are available here at prices that are amazingly low considering their quality.

Tobin always wanted to make wines that mirrored the better wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy. His hands-on approach to the entire process, from the vineyards to the bottling, has made that happen. To say his venture is successful is an understatement.

The **Mattebella Vineyards Famiglia Chardonnay** is a user-friendly white that has the style and characteristics of a true French Chablis. Not a California jug "chablis," but a clean white wine that's a crisp complement to a variety of foods.

The **Mattebella Vineyards Famiglia Red Wine**, a blend of merlot with a bit of cabernet franc, tastes as if it comes from the Right Bank of Bordeaux not the tip of Long Island. Indeed, if I tasted this wine without knowing its origins, I would have thought it was from Pomerol.

The biggest star in Mattebella's portfolio, I think, is the **2005 Mattebella Vineyards Old World Blend**, a classic blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. Produced only in exceptional years (so far, 2005 and 2007), it's a smooth, mellow, very easy-to-like wine.

If the Famiglia Red tastes as if it came from the Right



TASTING NOTES

Bank of Bordeaux, the Old World Blend makes me think of that region's Left Bank chateaux wines.

Serve with: Savor the Famiglia Chardonnay with crab cakes, Florida lobster, oysters on the half shell, steamed mussels, grilled fish and roast chicken. The Famiglia Red complements beef and pasta as well as cheese fondue and even grilled cheese sandwiches. The Old World Red is meant to be enjoyed with lamb, steak and pasta.

Availability/suggested retail: Currently sold only at Crown Wine and Spirits, the Famiglia chardonnay and red retail for about \$15 a bottle and the Old World Blend for \$30. The wines can also be ordered at mattebellavineyards.com.

Wine tasting/Mattebella: Crown Wine and Spirits Boca Raton, 3500 N. Federal Highway, will host a free Meet the Winemaker event with Mark Tobin of Mattebella Vineyards in from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday. Information: 561-392-6366.