

Wine Buzz: Jim Moore has an alias

By Chris Macias
cmacias@sacbee.com

Published: Wednesday, Apr. 7, 2010 - 12:00 am | Page 3D

[Jim Moore](#) can still remember that first sip of vermentino, enjoyed on a trip to Tuscany.

He'd always loved Italian varietals; he even developed an Italian-style wine when he worked for [Robert Mondavi](#). But he was struck by this fruity and unpretentious white wine – and had a vision of bottling his own vermentino.



Now, Moore is on a mission to make vermentino more popular on domestic palates. Through his winery, Uvaggio, he bottles vermentino and other Italian varietals from [Lodi](#)-grown grapes. Moore has also created a private-label vermentino for [Hot Italian](#), the trendy midtown Sacramento pizza spot, labeled as Bianco by Uvaggio for [Hot Italian](#).

Moore knows it isn't easy to get white-wine drinkers out of their chardonnay and sauvignon blanc comfort zones.

"Maybe I have to become '[Johnny Vermentino Seed](#),'" says Moore. "I'm still waiting for it to become a blip on the [radar screen](#)."

Moore is preparing to release his fifth vintage of vermentino; he produces 3,000 cases annually. The grape is common in Tuscany and Sardinia, and is favored for its refreshing character, acidity and fruity lemon flavors. The grape is known as "rolle" in southern [France](#) and is sometimes referred to as "favorita."

Whatever the name, vermentino has a home in [Lodi](#). Moore sources his vermentino from two [Lodi](#)-area growers, has the grapes pressed nearby at Peltier Station winery and completes his winemaking in Napa, his home base.

Then he has to sell wine drinkers on why they should give vermentino a taste.

"It's the thinking person's pinot grigio," Moore says with a chuckle. "The flavors are of green melon, like honeydew near the rind, and citrus and lime. There's also a hint of a musky quality. It works with all types of cuisine."

That's what [Andrea Lepore](#) thought when she was looking to create a house wine for [Hot Italian](#). Moore ended up crafting two wines for [Hot Italian](#): the vermentino and a red blend of barbera, primitivo and nebbiolo called Rosso.

"He's really the guy in our area who's so well known and respected for Italian varietals," says Lepore. "We knew we wanted to do an Italian wine but wanted it to be local, as well. It was the perfect fit for us."

Moore has championed such Cal-Ital wines since the 1980s when he helped launch a brand called La Famiglia di Robert Mondavi. Moore served as assistant winemaker at Bonny Doon Vineyards in [Santa Cruz](#) before starting his own wine company, L'Uvaggio di Giacomo.

"It means, 'Jim's Wine,' " Moore deadpans.

We'll just call it Uvaggio for short.

Vermentino accounts for about two-thirds of Uvaggio's production. He also bottles 228 cases of a sweet yet crisp moscato and 10 barrels of [Rosato](#), a rosé made from barbera and primitivo.

He's looking to boost his presence in the marketplace. The vermentino can be found locally at [Corti Brothers](#) and select Nugget and Whole Foods stores. His wines crafted for [Hot Italian](#) can also be found at Taylor's Market.

Moore plans to open his own [tasting room](#) in [Lodi](#) and hopes to run the entire Uvaggio winemaking operation in [Lodi](#), too.

For now, Uvaggio wines are poured at [Ma\(i\)sonry's tasting room](#) in the [Napa Valley](#) and at the [Lodi Wine & Visitor Center](#).

Moore will also speak about vermentino in [Italy](#) for a research symposium sponsored by the Tuscan government. Call it another chapter for "[Johnny Vermentino Seed](#)."

"People really need to get (the vermentino) in their mouth and taste it," says Moore. "That's the best way to educate people. We're here to have fun, and make wines with flavor and style."

[© Copyright The Sacramento Bee. All rights reserved.](#)

Call Bee food and wine writer [Chris Macias](#), (916) 321-1253.

Read more: <http://www.sacbee.com/2010/04/07/2659583/wine-buzz-jim-moore-has-an-alias.html#ixzz0kRYVY5XU>

