

Good wine is worth the wait

By ADAM LAPIERRE

News staff writer

It's a great metaphor, and a question worth asking in almost any pursuit:

Is the juice worth the squeeze?

Making fresh lemonade with paper-cut hands; probably not worth it. Tasting honey straight from a beehive; probably not worth it. Investing your life savings in Wall Street and hoping for the best; clearly not worth it.

Moving to Hood River from Italy, growing your own grapes, making one-of-a-kind blends of delicious red and white wine and starting a vineyard in the Hood River valley with your family name on every bottle: Definitely worth it.

Franco Marchesi is just getting started with his vineyard on Belmont Road, but he knows already that every drop is worth the squeeze, so he has been busy squeezing all week.

"Spring was a couple weeks late, and the fall was right on time," Marchesi said on Wednesday.

While sorting through freshly picked grapes on an autumn Wednesday to pick sour ones out of the bunches, Marchesi explained that



Photo by Adam Lapierre/Illustration Ben McCarty

FRANCO MARCHESI pouring wine grapes.

a frost had recently hit several vineyards around the valley, including his, which forced him to pick a couple weeks before the grapes were ready.

If frost hits and kills the vine's leaves, he said, the grapes will not mature any further because the leaves are no longer photosynthe-

sizing and turning the sun's energy into sugar for the grapes.

Because of the frost damage and the limited amount of grapes he can grow so early on in his vineyard, Marchesi blended his grapes with some from The Pines Vineyard to use for his 2008 wines.

After sorting through bundles of purple and white, Marchesi added the grapes to his wine press for the next step in the several-month process that will conclude in the spring with the bottling of his 2008 Pinot Grigio.

After the squeeze, Marchesi will store the

juice in a 250-gallon stainless steel fermenter, where it will sit for a few months as the sugar turns into alcohol.

For red wine the process is slightly different: The process starts in a fermenting bin, where the grape skins are fermented along with the juice before they are crushed.

"That is what gives red wine its color," Marchesi said.

The juice for red wine is then added to large wooden barrels, where it ferments and ages for at least a year before being bottled.

Marchesi will open his new tasting room in February 2009. And although he'll have to wait until about that time to taste the work he is currently doing, he is confident his wines will hold up to the test and verify that the juice is definitely worth the squeeze.

This article originally appeared in the Oct. 18, 2008 edition. The vineyards and tasting room of wine distributor-turned-vintner Franco Marchesi are located on Belmont Drive, just west of the intersection with Indian Creek Road.