

Pair hoping their Arizona wine rocks

by **Richard Ruelas** - Apr. 9, 2008 04:03 PM
The Arizona Republic

The event is a bottle signing to mark the release of the first Arizona Stronghold wine to the market. But Eric Glomski, the winemaker, has a higher ambition: to get more people to drink Arizona wines regardless of who makes them.

"Really, Stronghold is all about a broader recognition for Arizona," Glomski said, "So everybody can say, 'Wow, Arizona can really do it.' "

The aim is to make a lot of wine, price it at around \$20 a bottle and sell a lot of it, he said. Whole Foods Market, the grocer hosting the signing, may take the label to its stores nationwide, Glomski said.

The vineyard, spread out over 80 acres in southern Arizona's Cochise County, will allow the label to make a lot of wine.

And the fact that the winery's co-owner is a bona fide rock star may help move a lot of bottles initially. He's Maynard James Keenan, the lead singer and songwriter of Tool who has lived in Arizona for several years.

But regardless of why people buy Stronghold, Glomski said the key to a successful wine is quality.

"People might buy the wine because it has an Arizona sun on it or because it was made by a rock star," he said. "That might ultimately get people in the door. But we want them to stay in the room because of the quality of the wine."

The first bottle released is a white called Tazi, named after Cochise's oldest son.

"He was kind of a peacemaker," Glomski said.

The wine is a blend of four grapes: Sauvignon blanc, Riesling, Chardonnay and Malvasia Bianca. It's aromatic and fruity, Glomski said. Two red blends, Nachise and Mangus, are slated for release in the coming months.

"It's really all focusing on what Arizona can do," he said. "It's not any European regional influence. Here it's what Arizona is all about."

Glomski and Keenan have other labels that produce smaller quantities of wine. Glomski's Page Springs and Keenan's Caduceus are both made at Glomski's Page Springs Cellars in Cornville, east of Cottonwood.

Wines from each of those labels also will be available at today's bottle signing.

Page Springs and Caduceus try to make wines in European styles and come with higher prices.

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"Stronghold will be more wines that I think have a broader appeal and that represents what Arizona can do," Glomski said.

For the Stronghold wines, Glomski used mostly grapes from the Cochise County vineyard, one of the oldest in the state. Some of the vines are 25 years old.

Because Glomski splits his time between his vineyards in central and southern Arizona, he credited Fabian Grandoli for tending to the crop at the Stronghold property.

"I'm a firm believer that wines are made in the vineyard," he said.

Glomski expects a fair number of Tool fans at the signing for the chance to meet Keenan. But Keenan will sign only bottles purchased on site. He won't autograph CDs or old ticket stubs from Tool concerts.

"This is not a Tool Army event. It's a winemaker event for Maynard," Glomski said.

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