

## ZIN DIN

Just in time for the summer grilling season, David Gregory will host a five-course meal today paired with eight zinfandels. 6:45 to 10 p.m. 2030 M St. NW. \$75 per person; reservations required. Call 202-872-8700.

**SCOTT GREENBERG** *Vine Guy*

# Clap your hands for Two Hands

Michael Twelftree is not your typical wine proprietor. First of all, he has none of the swagger and attitude that so many of his colleagues seem to adopt these days. On the contrary, Twelftree is a down-to-earth guy who just wants you to enjoy his wines. Secondly, he was not born into this life. In fact, Twelftree didn't even start drinking wine until he was 26 years old — positively ancient in a business where most are exposed to wine at a much younger age.

Lastly, Twelftree can't quite recall how this all started. He was attending a mate's bachelor party with a good friend, now his Two Hands partner, Richard Mintz. The next morning, the phone rang and Michael answered in somewhat of a post-celebratory fog.

"Richard was all excited to get to work on our plans," Twelftree

recalled.

"What plans are you referring to?" Twelftree asked.

"Why the plans to make the best possible shiraz in Australia," Mintz, a chartered accountant, cheerfully responded. Three weeks later, the business plan for Two Hands Wines was born. That was in 1999 and Twelftree and Mintz have never looked back.

Today, Twelftree and Mintz make more than a dozen wines, and while their state-of-the-art winery itself is located in Barossa Valley in South Australia, their fruit comes from vineyards throughout the country. As proof of their dedication to quality, each vineyard block is crushed, vinified and aged separately with the top lots destined for their

"Flagship Range" and "Garden" series.

Twelftree was in town recently for a charitable event, during which I had an opportunity to taste several of his newly released wines with him.

Here is a list of the Two Hands wines I sampled. Retail prices are approximate. Many of the wines are available at the following stores: Wide World of Wine, Schneider's of Capitol Hill, MacArthur Beverages and Calvert Woodley, all in the District. Finewine.com and The Vineyard, both located in McLean; and in many Montgomery County liquor stores in Maryland.

**2004 Two Hands Bull and Bear, Barossa Valley Shiraz and McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon, Australia (\$60)**

Named for the infamous saying, "bulls and bears get rich, pigs get slaughtered," this blend of big fruit is most definitely rich. A prominent, fruit-driven wine, the blackberry and black cherry fla-

vors are supported by sweet tannins and ample acidity. Notes of menthol make an appearance on the medium-but-lengthy finish. Great with steak.

**2005 Two Hands Max's Garden, Heathcote Shiraz, Australia (\$65)**

My tasting notes literally say, "wow." Wonderful full flavors of warm black fruit upfront and a fulfilling dose of black pepper on the long, velvety finish. Lamb shish-kabob is in this wine's future.

**2005 Two Hands Samantha's Garden, Clare Valley Shiraz, Australia (\$60)**

An elegant and pretty wine, this is a lighter-style shiraz that highlights notes of red cherry and red plum with hints of orange peel on the soft finish. This would pair well with a subtle meat such as veal.

**2005 Two Hands Lily's Garden, McLaren Vale Shiraz, Australia (\$65)**

Another big, beautiful, forward-styled wine with

loads of jammy black plum, mocha and chocolate flavors supported by sweet/soft tannins. Notes of crushed stone and black pepper make a memorable finish. A sure winner with lamb chops.

**2005 Two Hands Harry and Edward's Garden, Langhorne Creek Shiraz, Australia (\$65)**

I actually described the nose on this wine to my dinner companion as "Girl Scout Thin Mint Cookie." The chocolate and mint theme can also be found on the palate, where it is joined by rich blackberry fruit and notes of cigar box on the lingering finish. The significant structure and chocolatey flavors would pair well with a dense chocolate tart.

**2005 Two Hands Bella's Garden, Barossa Valley Shiraz, Australia (\$65)**

A well-structured shiraz featuring soft-but-ripe fruit (black plums and blackberries), cassis and vanilla flavors up front and ends with just a touch of sweetness on the plush finish. Perfect for a cheese course.

**2005 Two Hands Sophie's Garden, Padthaway, Australia (\$65)**

This shiraz is almost port-like in its appearance and character. Firm tannins support solid black fruits and warm licorice notes on the palate. Just a whisper of tar and cedar on the big finish makes this wine a good candidate for game fowl.

**2004 Two Hands Ares, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$140)**

A "Flagship Range" bottling, this wine represents the best shiraz from the Two Hands portfolio. Aged in 100 percent new French oak, it is massive and brooding, with flavors of jammy blackberry, cassis liqueur, spicy plums and black licorice that all play across the tongue on the shoulders of big tannins. Give it a few years in the cellar before pairing it with garlic-studded roast leg of lamb.



Do you have a favorite royalty of wine? E-mail me at [scott@vineguy.com](mailto:scott@vineguy.com).

