

Twins beat hard knocks, bottle pomegranate wine

Posted at 12:44 PM on Friday, Jan. 29, 2010

By Robert Rodriguez / The Fresno Bee

Hospitalized after surviving a plane crash, Brian Davis could think about only one thing: wine.

No, he didn't want a drink. Davis was anxious to get back to his family's plans to launch Twin Poms, a specialty wine made from pomegranates. "This was a dream of ours, and I didn't want it to stop because of the accident," said Davis, 26.

Davis and his twin brother, Nick, shelved their plans after the March 28 plane crash that nearly killed him and his father.

The two were flying home to Madera from Harris Ranch in Coalinga when the engine in their small plane failed near the Madera Airport. At 300 feet in the air, they tried desperately to glide the single-engine plane to safety.

"All of sudden it was quiet, and I could hear the whistling sound of the air around the plane," Davis said. "We were falling out of the sky." The plane tore through a barbed-wire fence and skidded into a vineyard.

Both Brian Davis and his father David suffered major injuries. The younger Davis underwent weeks of intense physical therapy, including relearning how to walk, but he kept thinking about the wine company.

Nick Davis, a pest-control adviser for a local farm-chemical company, admired his brother's passion, but his hands were full running the 860-acre family farm of pomegranates, almonds and wine grapes.

"I was thinking I had enough on my plate," Nick Davis said. "But I also didn't want my brother to go crazy in there. Besides, he kept asking me if I had called this guy or that guy."

But the Davis brothers had other setbacks. As Brian and his father recuperated, Nick was diagnosed with a systemic yeast infection that sidelined him for several weeks.

After regaining their health, the Davis brothers — both Cal Poly graduates — regained their momentum. They partnered with a San Luis Obispo winery to make the wine that's sourced from the family's pomegranate orchards.

The Davises also helped fine tune the flavor. They wanted a lighter, more refreshing drink than the sweeter-tasting pomegranate wines already on the market.

Their goal is to tap the popularity of wine and pomegranates. Farmed for hundreds of years, pomegranates are known as antioxidant powerhouses, and in California most come from the San Joaquin Valley.

Although they had no experience in marketing wine, they chose to sell the wine themselves rather than use a middle man.

After many e-mails and much perseverance, they were given a 15-minute meeting with Wes Risdon, manager of SaveMart's Beverage Alcohol & Tobacco Category. Persuading Risdon to carry the wine would be huge. The Modesto-based SaveMart operates 245 stores.

The brothers were nervous, and it showed.

"They were pretty green as far as selling wine," Risdon said. "But I got a kick out of them, and they had a fairly unique product that has a refreshing taste."

Risdon allowed the brothers to stock 25 SaveMart stores in the Valley.

These days the brothers are working on expanding their reach and their products. They are close to releasing Twin-Tini, a wine resembling a pomegranate martini. And they will be pouring their wine at the Madera County Arts Council as part of the Madera Wine Trail Wine and Chocolate event Feb. 13 and 14.

"There were moments when we didn't think we would get to this point," said Nick Davis. "But we knew people would like what we are making."