Jerold O’Brien, with Jeff Emery behind him, teaches a Surf City University class. Additional winemakers for this class were Barry Jackson and Michael Sones.

Imparting wine wisdom

Wine U’s third sipping semester starts Sunday

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SANTA CRUZ — Learn what flavors you like in wines by blending your own; discover the regional flavors of pinot noir and Chardonnay; understand the mystery of terroir; and explore matching wine and cheese at Surf City Wine University.

Sponsored by the Santa Cruz-based collection of wineries Surf City Vintners, this series of wine appreciation classes is about to kick off its third “semester,” led by winemakers in their tasting rooms. It starts May 27 with Blending Your Own Wine with Katie Fox of Vino Tabi, and continues one Sunday a month through September.

“We can solve some of the mysteries of why wine tastes the way it does,” says Fox, whose Vino Tabi winery offers winemaking classes on a regular basis. “It’s a way of involving people in the process, to go behind the cellar door and see what winemakers do to get the wine to taste the way it does.”

Fox is excited to share her knowledge: “Bordeaux blends can taste really differently. If you take those wines and blend them in different ways, it lets (students) understand their palates.”

The blending class is a way to discover what flavors in wines you like so that later you can find wines to better match your tastes.

“It’s shocking all the things you learn about how wine is made,” she says. “We have good speakers on good topics.”

Individual classes are $30, $25 for wine club members of any of the Surf City wineries. The Make Your Own Wine class is $40, $35 for wine clubbers. Class sizes are limited. If you take all the classes, students receive a tasting card to all Surf City wineries valued at $60 and will earn a diploma in “sip-ology.” Contact 408-333-2510 or visit www.surfcityvintners.com.

Here’s the schedule:

MAY 27: Make Your Own Wine, with Katie Fox of Vino Tabi. An exercise in blending five classic Bordeaux varietals: cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, petit verdot and malbec. Participants will make their own bottle.

JUNE 24: Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noirs with Nick Guerrero of Vine Hill Winery. Taste and explore the pinot noirs of subregions of the mountains and find out what makes them distinct and similar.

JULY 15: Chardonnay Styles with Steve Storrs of Storrs Winery. Learn about the distinctive mountain Chardonnays, including the acidity and minerality for which it’s known, by tasting wines from different vineyards.

AUG. 12: Terroir: Understand the Mystery with Joe Miller of Rexford Winery. Better understand the influence of soil and climate on wine by tasting Santa Cruz pinot noir and Burgundy from France.

SEPT. 9: Wine and Cheese: Explore Perfect Pairings with Sue Slater of the Cabrillo College Culinary Arts Program. Learn the basics of food pairings with wine and how tastes like salty, sweet and acid influence choices.