

■ THE SOMMELIER JOURNAL

JUNE/JULY • 2018
\$10.00 US/\$12.00 CANADA

THE SOMM JOURNAL



THE PATH *Forward*

**FEDERICA ROSY
BOFFA PIO
IS THE FUTURE
OF PIO CESARE**

*Fourth-generation
vintner Pio Boffa
of Pio Cesare with
his daughter,
fifth-generation
proprietor Federica
Rosy Boffa Pio.*



PREMIER ESTATE VINEYARDS.
RENOWNED SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS APPELLATION.
RECOGNIZED QUALITY.

94

WINE ENTHUSIAST
December 2017

92

ROBERT PARKER
WINE ADVOCATE
September 2017

91

ROBERT PARKER
WINE ADVOCATE
September 2017

90

WINE SPECTATOR
September 2017

91

WINE SPECTATOR
August 2017



THE SOMM JOURNAL

JUNE/JULY 2018 • Vol. 5 No. 3

PUBLISHER / EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Meridith May
mmay@sommjournal.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Anthony Dias Blue

CONTRIBUTORS

Jeremy Ball, MW, Cal Bingham, Dustin Downing, Jay Fletcher, MW, Melody Fuller, Nick Klein, James Lechner, Albert Letizia, Rich Manning, Rachel Macalisang, Lori Moffat, Timothy Murray, Mona Shield Payne, Rebecca Peplinski, Joseph Phillips, MW, Alexander Rubin, Alex Russan, Sara Schneider, Fred Swan, Tony Tran

Published six times per year
ISSN 1944-074X USPS 02488i

The SOMM Journal is published bi-monthly for \$52 per year by The SOMM Journal, The Sommelier Journal, 6345 Balboa Blvd.; Ste 111, Encino, CA 91316. Periodicals postage at Van Nuys, CA and additional mailing offices.

Subscription rate:
\$52 One Year; \$100 Two Years.
Single Copy: \$10
For all subscriptions, email:
subscriptions@sommjournal.com

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
The SOMM Journal
6345 Balboa Blvd.; Ste 111
Encino, CA 91316
818-990-0350

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

THE SOMMELIER JOURNAL

The material in each issue of *The Sommelier Journal/The Somm Journal* is protected by U.S. Copyright © 2018.

USPS Publication number: 02488i, ISSN 1944-074X

Filing Date: May 18, 2018.

Published 6 x a year. **Annual Subscription Rate:** \$52.

Mailing address: 6345 Balboa Boulevard; Ste 111; Encino, CA 91316.

Phone: 818-990-0350. Contact: Meridith May, Publisher Email: Mmay@SommJournal.com

Total copies run: 71,665. Outside County Paid: 20,495. In-County Paid: 10,240. Sales through dealers and carriers: 17,500. Requested Copies Distributed by other mail carriers through USPS: 4,100.

Paid and/or requested circulation: 49,441. Outside County non-requested: 4200.

Total paid and/or requested circulation: 52,435. Outside county non-requested 5100. In County non-requested: 3120. Non-requested copies distributed through USPS by other classes of mail: 4260. Non-requested copies distributed outside the mail: 4750.

Total non-requested circulation: 12,480. Copies not distributed: 2000.

Total distribution: 66,915. Percent paid and/or requested: 80%.

MANAGING EDITOR

Jessie "JABS" Birschbach
jabs@sommjournal.com

VP/ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Rachel Burkons
rburkons@tastingpanelmag.com
818-990-0350

VP/SALES & MARKETING

Bill Brandel
818-322-5050
bill@sommjournal.com

VP/FINANCE DIRECTOR

Anna Russell
818-990-0350
anna@tastingpanelmag.com

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR

Michael Viggiano

SENIOR EDITOR

Kate Newton

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR

David Gadd

GLOBAL WINE EDITOR

Deborah Parker Wong

EAST COAST EDITOR

David Ransom

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Randy Caparoso

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Cliff Rames

ROCKY MOUNTAIN EDITOR

Ruth Tobias

LONDON CORRESPONDENT

Steven Spurrier

SPIRITS EDITOR

Mara Marski

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Michelle Ball, Bob Bath, MS, Kim Beto, Carl Corsi, John Curley, Fred Dame, MS, Janet Fletcher, Richard Carleton Hacker, Karen MacNeil, Chris Sawyer

©2018 The SOMM Journal, The Sommelier Journal. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is prohibited.
Sommelier Journal USPS 024881, ISSN 1944-074X

Who Do You Admire?

Philip Dunn, Wine Director at Spago Beverly Hills

by Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor, *The SOMM Journal*



IN MY DAYS OF SERVICE AT SPAGO, I'd watch Philip Dunn strut about the floor with a bit of smirk and a puffy chest. He almost reminded me of a dapper, formal version of Foghorn Leghorn, and although this probably sounds magisterial, he was anything but. Guests adore him. It could be his genteel Montgomery, Alabama charm that keeps them captivated, but I think it's because his open-mindedness and sheer love of wine is palpable. The Southern gent runs one of the best wine programs in Los Angeles, but you'd never suspect this given his modesty and receptiveness.

However, watching guests fall under his spell isn't quite why he ranks as one of the people I most admire in the industry: It's the benevolent support he provides to his team of somms. Philip's generous directorship is the kind that breeds loyalty—undying, bona-fide, free-willed loyalty.

The Advanced-level somm knows a whole lot about wine, weather, and whiskey. He helped to make me a better sommelier and did so with patience and kindness. During the days and nights spent in the wine room or cellar with Phil, the knowledge he'd impart felt more like being let in on a secret rather than a hearing a lecture, and what's more, he was your audience just as much as you were his—your biggest fan, even. That's a rare quality for a person in his sort of position.

Philip Dunn is the best man I've ever worked for and I'm really not sure where I'd be without him.

John Teeling, General Manager at Calcareous Vineyard in Paso Robles, CA

by Jacqui Pailing, In-House Sommelier, Calcareous Vineyard

JOHN TEELING IS A CERTIFIED SOMMELIER, world traveler, and General Manager of Calcareous Vineyard in Paso Robles, California, but he's also my good friend, mentor, boss, and neighbor.

As a friend, John is generous and kind. He previously owned a fine-dining restaurant and international wine shop and has shared his cellar with me, as well as his knowledge and adventures in food, wine, and hospitality. Beyond mentoring my enthusiasm for wine with patience and encouragement, he also helped me pass the Level 2 sommelier certification.

As a boss, John is a good listener. He's expressive, funny, fair, and firm, and in the heat of a challenge, he maintains a steady outlook that's bigger than the current situation.

Finally, as a neighbor, he understands that life takes a village, and I am so grateful to be a part of that village. ❧



John Teeling, General Manager at Calcareous Vineyard.

To submit to "Who Do You Admire?", email Managing Editor Jessie Birschbach at jabs@sommjournal.com.

ON TREND

LED BY A PASSIONATE
WINEMAKER, THE LARGE
AND LOVED WINE BRAND
CUPCAKE VINEYARDS
LAUNCHES ... WAIT
FOR IT ... TWO NEW
CHARDONNAYS

*Cupcake Winemaker
Jessica Tomei ensures
the brand shows a
sense of place by using
Monterey County fruit.*

first press



by Sara Schneider / photos by John Curley

Jessica Tomei makes wine for the people: a lot of the people. Under the Cupcake Vineyards brand, Tomei shepherds an immense number of cases annually from vineyard to bottle, and she takes deep satisfaction in each of those bottles. “These are wines that people have access to all across the country,” Tomei says. “They’re enjoying them with their family and friends on a weeknight without putting out \$30.”

Her obvious pride in the product is grounded in vineyard sites, grower relationships, and resource-intensive winemaking, which is somewhat surprising for such large productions. Monterey County is ground zero for the Chardonnay Cupcake launched in 2008, but until recently, the wine wasn’t clearly connected to the place Tomei believes gives it a uniquely appealing balance of great acidity to ripe fruit. She feared the perception was of place-free bulk wine, so to clarify the connection and identify it as a wine of a particular place, Cupcake relabeled the Chardonnay with its Monterey County appellation. With that bright acidity (natural, not added, assures Tomei) turning its lemon to zest, and with apple and melon flavors wrapped in creamy texture, the wine shows its 100 percent barrel quality—and, at an \$11 suggested retail price, goes to market as a terrific deal.

Along with the move to more clearly identify Cupcake’s original wine with its source, the brand is doubling down on Chardonnay itself. Perhaps counterintuitively to an industry that speaks of white wine lovers moving beyond their early infatuation with the category—and especially their love of buttery wine—



Cupcake Vineyards 2016 Chardonnay from Monterey County; Cupcake Vineyards 2016 Winemaker’s Blend Chardonnay, also from Monterey; and Cupcakes Vineyards 2016 Butterkissed Chardonnay from California.

Cupcake is adding two new Chardonnays to its portfolio this year: One is overtly styled for the oak and butter mavens (and equally overtly named Cupcake Vineyards Butterkissed, also with an SRP of \$11), while the other is an elegant expression of what Tomei and her team can do with the best lots of Chardonnay from their Monterey vineyards. Called Cupcake Vineyards Winemaker’s Blend, it has an SRP of \$25.

There’s no marketing campaign gone awry here. From the outset the brand was hooked into consumer trends, some might say to a fault: Remember the cupcake craze of a decade ago? Now, both consumer research and anecdotal blind tastings are telling them, 1) Cupcake’s loyal fanbase is growing up and ready for more variety as many move beyond the basics to appreciate the nuances of a more complex style; and 2) a sizable proportion of Chardonnay drinkers still love a butter bomb and aren’t afraid to admit it. As Tomei explains regarding the addition of new

style choices to the Chardonnay lineup, “We want to grow with our fans.”

She cites a remarkable awareness of Cupcake’s wines in that base. While pouring at a recent consumer tasting in Texas, Tomei offered one attendee the brand’s new, dry, Provence-style rosé. “But you don’t have a rosé,” the woman argued—which was true until last year. Again, this brand doesn’t let a good trend get away.

Tomei is all in when it comes to the vineyards she works with (both Cupcake-owned and under contract). With Monterey serving as the heart of her Chardonnays, she has relocated her family (three children and a husband, who is also in the wine business) from San Francisco’s East Bay to the coastal county, where she can walk the vineyards often and convene with the growers at every stage, from pruning to picking. It’s a post-harvest winemaker-grower reckoning, though, that produces her biggest grin: After fermentation, Cupcake invites its growers in to taste through

all of its wines, which age as separate lots. “You can imagine,” Tomei deadpans, “there’s no competition there at all.” It’s also easy to imagine that quality is no small goal throughout the ranks.

In addition to the Monterey vineyards the company owns—in the north for vivid acids; in the south for riper fruit flavors—Cupcake is adding to its holdings as far south as Santa Barbara County and east as San Benito. Tomei interprets the investment in land as a commitment to quality control while creating even more diversity in the portfolio.

Of course, when you’re talking about such a large overall production, there will be quality skeptics—and with a name like Cupcake, people can’t be blamed for thinking all the wines are sweet. (To clarify, they aren’t; dryness-wise, they’re right in line with category competitors.) “I was a skeptic too,” says Tomei. She and her husband had made higher-end wines not only in California, but also in Chile. When the opportunity came up to take this role, she herself couldn’t believe it was possible to deliver such high quality for these prices. “I got a hold of a bottle of Cupcake Sauvignon Blanc,” she says of the brand’s largest production, “and I was truly impressed. The main thing is just to get people to try the wine.” S|



“A sizable proportion of Chardonnay drinkers still love a butter bomb and aren’t afraid to admit it. We want to grow with our fans.”

—Cupcake Winemaker Jessica Tomei



An old inventory log in the cellars of Pio Cesare.

COVER STORY

56 THE PATH FORWARD
Fifth-Generation Proprietor Federica Rosy Boffa Pio is the Future of Time-Honored Winery Pio Cesare

FIRST PRESS

5 ON TREND
Led by a Passionate Winemaker, the Large and Loved Wine Brand Cupcake Vineyards Launches . . . Wait For It . . . Two New Chardonnays

FEATURES

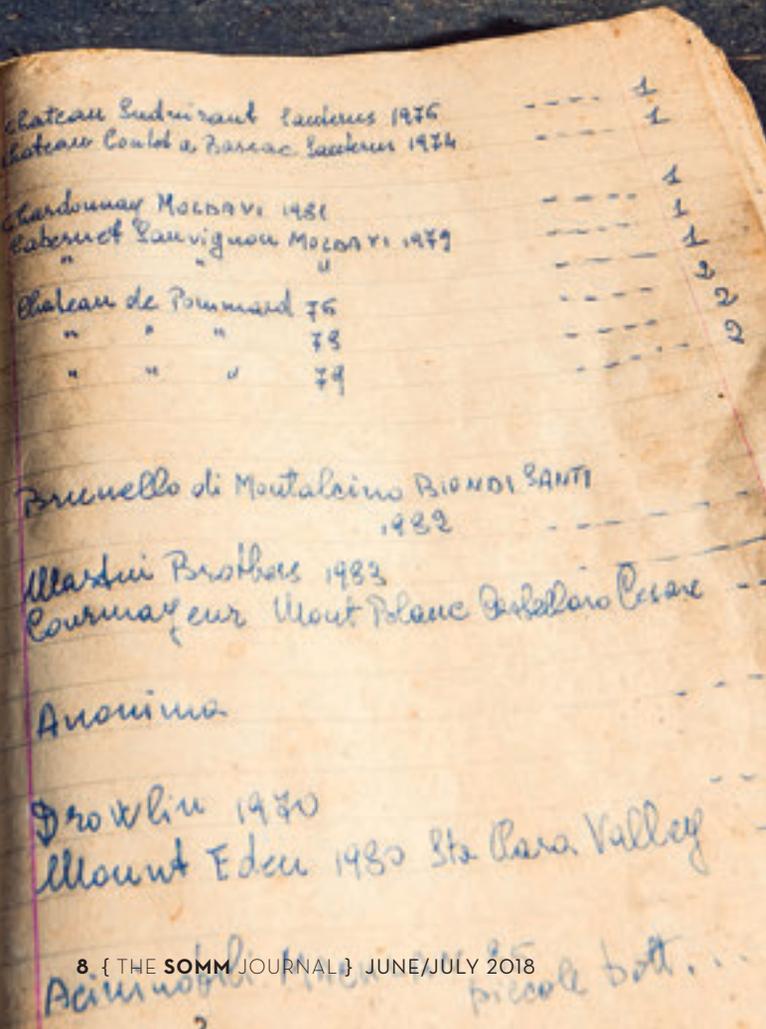
44 SYNERGY FOR SUCCESS
The GAJA Award of Excellence Brings a New Dimension to the Iconic Italian Label's Brand Ambassador Program

48 LA DOLCE VITA 2.0
Beyond Pinot Grigio with Fresh, Buzzworthy Wines from Lugana and Sardinia

62 TRUE BLENDS
An Immersive History of Murrieta's Well and Its Wine Duo The Whip and The Spur

76 CARIÑENA COMES OF AGE
The Birthplace of Garnacha Offers the World Distinctive New Wines Cultivated from Old Vines

106 PUSHING BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY
Look Who's Leading the Green Charge in Sonoma



THE SOMM JOURNAL

CAMP



SPECIAL REPORT

66 THE POWER AND PRESTIGE OF PASO

Nearly 40 Somms and Buyers Descend on the Vast California Region for CAB Camp

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Vox Populi: Who Do You Admire?
- 10 Editor's Notebook
- 12 The Ransom Report
- 14 Cellar Tour: Vervy Paris
- 16 One Woman's View
- 18 Wheying In
- 20 Bottom Line
- 22 Good Somm/Bad Somm
- 26 Diversity: Fine-Wining While Black
- 28 Beer(d) Science
- 30 Elevating the Rockies
- 32 Inside Sonoma
- 34 Somm Profile: Dave Lund
- 35 Scents & Accountability
- 36 What's New with Kim Beto: Alfred Gratien
- 40 Wine Resource: Lake County
- 52 New Wine on the Block: Gehricke
- 72 SOMM Joury
- 74 Q&A: Matthew George
- 80 Appellation Translation: Santa Lucia Highlands
- 84 Spirits Showcase: Summer Cocktails
- 90 Steven Spurrier's Letter from London
- 92 Milestone Salute: Napa Cellars
- 94 A Letter from SommFoundation
- 96 SOMM Camp Preview: Stags Leap District
- 100 WSWA: Mon Ami Gabi
- 106 Discoveries: Jonata
- 108 Enological Education: Oregon
- 110 Who's Who in Wine: Jason Woodbridge
- 112 Somm vs. Somm: Fred Dame, MS, and Peter Neptune, MS
- 114 Closing Time: Teddy Panos

THE AUCTION OF WASHINGTON WINES PRIVATE BARREL AUCTION

4TH ANNUAL

THURSDAY | AUGUST 16, 2018

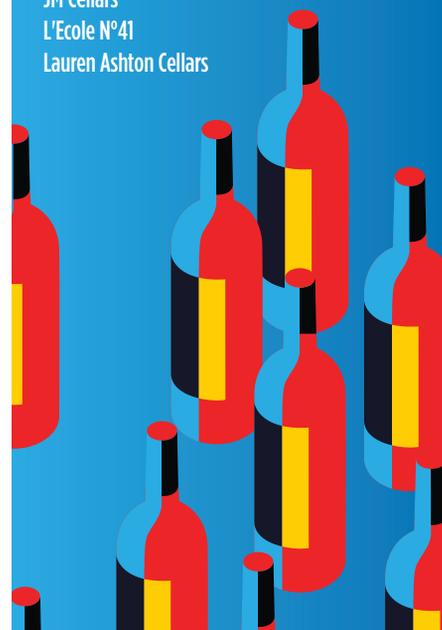
10AM - 4PM

A LIVE AUCTION OF ONE-OF-KIND
WINES FROM WASHINGTON STATE'S
ELITE WINEMAKERS.

TRADE ONLY

PARTICIPATING WINERIES:

Aquilini Red Mountain	Leonetti Cellar
Avennia	Long Shadows
Baer Winery	Vintners
Betz Family Winery	Mark Ryan
Brian Carter Cellars	Mullan Road Cellars
Cadence	Owen Roe
Canvasback Wines	Rasa Vineyards
Col Solare	Rotie Cellars
DeLille Cellars	Seven Hills Winery
Dunham Cellars	Sleight of Hand
Dusted Valley	Sparkman Cellars
Forgeron Cellars	Va Piano Vineyards
Buty Winery	van Löben Sels
Intrinsic Wine Co.	Walla Walla Vintners
Januik	Woodward Canyon
JM Cellars	
L'Ecole N°41	
Lauren Ashton Cellars	



AuctionofWaWines.org/trade



Banfi Vintners Takes a Stand Against Animal Abuse

PETA COMMENDS NORTH AMERICA'S LEADING WINE IMPORTER FOR WITHDRAWING SUPPORT FROM ELEPHANT POLO TOURNAMENT

IN TODAY'S WORLD, it's about the small victories—here's another little one that also feels pretty big. According to a press release from PETA: "In response to disturbing video footage released by PETA Asia showing handlers repeatedly beating elephants at Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort's 2018 King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament in Thailand, event sponsor Banfi Vintners has informed PETA that it will no longer support the cruel competition, which touts itself as a charity event for elephants. In thanks, PETA sent the company elephant-shaped vegan chocolates.

PETA—whose motto reads, in part, that 'animals are not ours to use for entertainment'—notes that elephants used for polo tournaments, rides, or any other type of entertainment are typically beaten into submission. Between matches, they're often shackled so tightly that they can barely take a step.

Because of this cruelty, *The Guinness Book of World Records* has struck all mention of elephant polo records from its pages. Banfi joins several other companies—including the Campari Group—that have ended or suspended their sponsorships of the King's Cup Elephant Polo Tournament following PETA Asia's investigation. PETA is calling on Anantara and its parent company Minor Hotel Group, the organizers of the event, to end the tournament altogether." sj

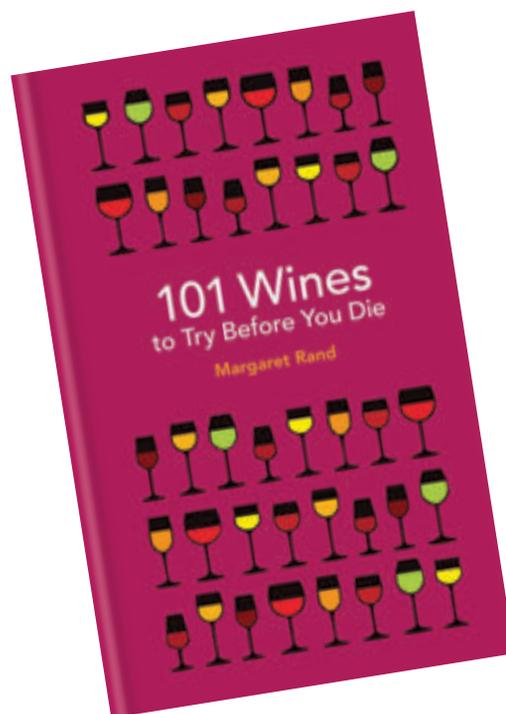
CORRECTION

In "A Diverse Range of Sparkling Wines" in our December 2017-January 2018 issue, the term *liqueur de tirage* should have been used in place of *liqueur d'expédition*. We regret the error.

101 Wines to Try Before You Die by Margaret Rand

ALTHOUGH THE BOOK is literally a list of 101 wines, it's far more entertaining than you'd expect from a simple catalog. Perhaps the best part is a suggestion regarding "what to say if you meet the winemaker" for every wine. For instance, in author Margaret Rand's review of La Romanée Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair (the tenth wine), she recommends asking, "How's the horse?" Subtle humor like this is peppered throughout—even in the practical, useful bits, like notes on each producer's trophy vintages.

Rand is an exquisite wordsmith and her experience in this industry certainly gives her the authority to compile these wines. However, after the 101th wine (the Vergelegen G.V.B. White from Stellenbosch), I was left searching for a handful of well-deserving domestic wines. Perhaps I am less of a Francophile than Rand, but when I remind myself that this isn't necessarily a ranking of all the wines in the world and more so a group of suggested "to try before I die," then I would tend to agree. Heck, there are a few in here that I have yet to try, so here's hoping I don't die soon. Meanwhile, I'm quite happy to give this a place on my bookshelf and happier still realizing I might know enough to assemble my own list one day. —*Jessie Birschbach* sj





LEGACY *meets* LUXURY

*n*th DEGREE by Wente Vineyards is a collection of handcrafted, limited production wines created by Fifth Generation Winegrower, *Karl D. Wente*. Only the best of the best, regardless of vintage or variety, achieve this distinction.

To learn more visit WENTEVINEYARDS.COM

The Ransom Report is a column by *The SOMM Journal's* East Coast Editor David Ransom. In each issue, David will discuss what's currently on his mind and in his glass gathered from conversations and experiences in the world of wine, spirits, and hospitality.

Emphasis on the “Nobile”

PAYING VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO ITS DUES

VINO NOBILE DI MONTEPULCIANO

has long been considered one of the most important wines of Tuscany, and, at one point, even its crown jewel. But despite a lofty heritage, this historic wine has also had its fair share of hardships when it comes to respectability, particularly when it's often held in comparison to its two neighboring Sangiovese-based siblings, Chianti Classico and Brunello di Montalcino. But is a comparison warranted, or even necessary?

Vino Nobile, as it's traditionally known, is made by roughly 70 producers in the gently-rolling countryside surrounding Montepulciano, one of Tuscany's most picturesque hilltop towns. The climatic influence comes from the land—not the sea as it does in Montalcino to the west—which provides more moisture to the grapes. The lower elevation also makes the soils less rocky and more clay-like than in

either Chianti or Montalcino. “Very often these blue clays make for excellent wines of great elegance and seamless tannins,” says Virginie Saverys, Owner of Avignonesi, one of the leading wineries in the region. Saverys and partner Max de Zarobe are also staunch advocates for staking Vino Nobile's claim in the upper echelon of the modern Tuscan wine industry.

One new effort that served to push Montepulciano back to the forefront was the formation of the Alliance Vinum in 2017. This group of six likeminded Vino Nobile producers has banded together to produce wines in a stricter fashion than the Consorzio Vino Nobile di Montepulciano currently demands, including bottling 100 percent Sangiovese Vino Nobile (regulation requires 70 percent).

The alliance has set another goal to change some of the laws regarding bottling. Nobile can be bottled today outside

the defined lines of the region, and while this practice is common in Tuscany—where many producers make wine in more than one region and bottle at their central bottling facility—the alliance feels that this lessens both the accountability and integrity of Vino Nobile. “We have a lot of work to do,” says Zarobe, “but we are gaining support within the region. This is a big step toward raising standards and separating out Vino Nobile from one comparative conversation with our neighbors.”

Vino Nobile tends to be softer and more approachable at an early age than either Chianti Classico or Brunello, and also has less acidity. So, delve into Tuscan Sangiovese from any region, but keep an open mind when drinking Vino Nobile, because maybe the key to understanding this historic wine is to not compare it to its neighbors at all. SJ

A vineyard in Montepulciano.

PHOTO: DAVID RANSOM

Est.  1976

NAPA

CELLARS



NAPA CELLARS. A TRUE NAPA VALLEY CLASSIC SINCE 1976.





Relics of the past grace the shelves of Verny's offices in Paris.

Liaison for Winemakers

VERNY PARIS IS AN EXCEPTIONAL WINE CELLAR AND SERVICE CONCEPT

ON MY RECENT trip to Paris, I was introduced to what may be the finest wine cellar in France. As the Proprietor of Verny, 36-year-old Olivier Madinier gave up his law studies in favor of collecting a carefully selected range of fine wines for private clients and restaurateurs.

Madinier has the opportunity to work directly with domaines, winemakers, and growers from around the world, acting as an ambassador in the vineyards for that special direct connection between client and producer. "If you don't buy from the producer, who can teach you best about the wine?" Madinier asks. "They tell you the story of their heritage and we represent their livelihood and history. That's Verny."

With a collection of more than 10,000 exclusive and rare bottles, Verny Paris aims to match its wines as accurately as possible with its cli-

ents' tastes. From rare and exceptional Grand Crus to "popular" wines from California, Madinier says Verny prides itself on the meticulous research of both old and new vintages—as well as the ability to sell at market price.

Creating "special moments," or "*moments de vin*," is a guiding concept for Verny's members. These private gatherings serve as invitation-only tastings which help attendees discover a particular wine, meet a producer face-to-face, or learn about up-and-coming winemakers. Madinier has a talent for making discoveries and generating a buzz to promote new names and labels.

Verny's services extend to the



Olivier Madinier is the Proprietor of Verny, a Parisian wine cellar.

auditing of cellars, as well as consultations on valuation, storage conditions, and aging potential. "We believe part of our support is to offer our members guidance in managing their personal or business cellars," says Madinier. Verny's services wouldn't be complete without

teaching its members—including newcomers to the sommelier community—how to preserve, decant, serve, and store wines correctly. "After all, the wines reflect the spirit of their respective owners," Madinier says. "To Verny Paris, wine represents instant gratification, but also something meaningfully passed on through generations." ❏

—Meridith May



A HIDDEN GEM AMONGST THE GIANTS



SEQUOIA GROVE

We don't need to create the illusion of quality; we let our wines speak for themselves. Discover a different expression of Napa Valley luxury; open a bottle of SEQUOIA GROVE and escape to our secluded winery on the Rutherford Bench.

WWW.SEQUOIAGROVE.COM

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY. © 2017 SEQUOIA GROVE WINERY, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Why I Hate Wine Tastings

(HINT: IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WINE)



*Karen MacNeil is the author of **The Wine Bible** and the editor of the free digital newsletter **WineSpeed**.*

HERE'S WHAT FINALLY DID IT: A short man shoved his potbelly into the small of my back as I stood in front of a table, tasting a producer's wines and writing my notes. I tried not to notice. Could it have been unintentional? It wasn't a crowded tasting. I kept writing, but a few seconds later, he came even closer. I moved to the next table.

This is probably not an experience any man in the trade encounters at a wine tasting, but I bet every woman reading this knows what I'm describing. For decades, I've gone to tastings and just ignored times when men stepped in front of me, pushed me to the side, interrupted my question, or worse. But about a month ago, at a tasting of a famous importer, I felt I could no longer remain silent.

At that tasting, I did something I've now been doing for several years: watching how much wine women are poured compared to how much men receive. In my experience, when the pourer is a man, women are often given a smaller amount than men, especially if the wine is expensive or rare.

But, in this case—as in many others—it wasn't just the pours. I approached a table where the producer, from Burgundy, was stationed. In front of him stood two large men, each with their feet four feet apart so that they effectively took up the entire front of the table.

I stood to the side, just close enough to be noticed, and waited. Hoping to signal him, I looked directly at the producer and lifted my glass a bit. It didn't matter. The three men continued to laugh loudly and jest, and the pair in front on the table, aware of me now, didn't even budge. Instead, they began to take up even more space, spreading their stances wider while holding their arms and glasses outward.

They weren't taking notes, and to me the conversation seemed long on bluster and short on brain power. I carefully took a small step forward and squeezed close to the table, asking the producer if I might taste his village wine.

A long second passed. The largest man gently pushed his thigh into me and nonchalantly elbowed me aside. The producer continued to guffaw with the two men. I stared at him, wrote several words in my notebook, turned, and walked away. "Wait," he called after me. "Don't you want to taste my wine?"

I doubt I ever will.

There's an etiquette to a wine tasting—an etiquette we all know. It's about respect. One doesn't hog a table or monopolize a producer. One doesn't shove others aside or thrust one's glass in front of everyone else's. One doesn't plant oneself in front of a table so that no one else can approach.

And one doesn't stick their belly, elbow, or thigh into the women around them. ❧

For another tasting perspective, read Melody Fuller's column on page 26.



DRINK MEZZA RESPONSIBLY

MeZZa



The Only Italian Glacial Bubbly



*The fastest growing sparkling wine from Italy! **

Wherever, whenever, with MeZZa. Before the dinner, date, party or just because, savor all your favorite moments the Italian way by celebrating with MeZZa, the first Italian Glacial Bubbly. Born in the Alpine terraced vineyards of Northern Italy, MeZZa is a cool, refreshing, glacial blend with crisp flavors, fresh aromas, and a touch of sweetness on the finish - a cheerful promise for the ultimate senZZational experience.

* by case volume, according to Nielsen week-ending 2/24/18

CAMPAGNA FINANZIATA AI SENSI DEL REG. UE N. 1308/2013
CAMPAGNA FINANZIATA ACCORDING TO EU REG. NO. 1308/2013

MEZZA

di MEZZACORONA



www.mezzacorona.it
www.worldofmezza.com

Getting Simple Right

THE BASICS FOR MAKING A GOOD **INSALATA CAPRESE** by Janet Fletcher

JUDGING FROM MY informal survey of grocery carts, Americans must eat insalata caprese during the summer months at least five nights a week. And why not? By late July, tomatoes finally start tasting like tomatoes, and no first course could be faster than this slice-and-drizzle dish. Add a bottle of Greco di Tufo or Vermentino, and a proper tomato and mozzarella salad can taste like a quick trip to the Amalfi Coast.

But can we talk? This salad, simple in concept, gets disrespected in so many ways. Whether you make it at home for your own enjoyment or in a professional setting for guests, please take a moment to review these non-negotiables. These rules may not be universal, but here's what I expect from an insalata caprese:

Mozzarella: Choose the freshest whole-milk, high-moisture mozzarella you can get. Mozzarella di bufala is classic, but it's better to use a fresh cow's-milk mozzarella from a local source than an imported bufala that's nearing the end of its short life. Fresh mozzarella should taste sweet and milky. It should hold together when sliced and release some whey, and the texture should be supple, not chewy. I love the Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co. mozzarella because, unlike most, it's cultured. Mozzarella di bufala will have more of a gamy flavor and cultured-milk tang.

Before you make your salad, I advise you bring the cheese to room temperature. Restaurant health inspectors won't like that suggestion, but cold mozzarella has no charm.

Tomatoes: While they should be ripe, they don't have to be dead-ripe—a little firmness is a good thing. Mix colors and sizes. Scatter some halved Sungold or Sweet 100 tomatoes on top. Never refrigerate tomatoes; like the cheese, they should be at room temperature.

Extra-virgin olive oil: It's unthinkable to use anything else. Some restaurant kitchens cook with extra-virgin oil cut with a cheaper oil, but insalata caprese deserves the real thing. Extra-virgin olive oil is quickly damaged by light and heat, so purchase it in a tin or dark bottle; store it in a cool, dark place (a wine cellar is perfect); and definitely keep it away from the stove.

Basil: Fresh basil should either be whole-leaf or torn just before serving, as basil oxidizes almost instantly when it's chopped or sliced with a knife (you've seen that nasty blackened basil that was julienned well ahead

of time). Mix green and purple types, if you like, but make sure the basil looks brightly colored and perky.

Salt: Yes, please—the tomatoes definitely need it and the mozzarella might. Use sea salt or Diamond Crystal Kosher Salt, which isn't too coarse. For a more eye-catching presentation, offer a salt collection with natural choices like fleur de sel, Himalayan pink salt, or Hawaiian black salt, but no flavored salts!

Vinegar: Nix. Nada. Don't even think about using red wine vinegar or especially balsamic vinegar. Sprinkle a few drops of wine vinegar on the tomatoes, if you must, but keep it off of the mozzarella.

Wine: You can serve your salad with either white or rosé, but it should preferably be dry, lean, and crisp with no apparent oak. Falanghina or Fiano di Avellino are appealing choices from Campania, insalata caprese's home base. **SJ**

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELECTROGRAPHY VIA ADOBE STOCK





DOMAINE
DE
• LA BAUME •



Les Secrets du Sud



Contact us: gcfsales@lgcf.fr

Domaine de la Baume
Route de Pezenas - 34290 Servian
Tel: +33 4 67 39 29 49

www.domaine-labaume.com

The Importance of Taming a Shrew

THE CHALLENGES AND BEAUTY OF PETITE SIRAH

story and photo by Randy Caparoso

IF THERE WAS ever a case for putting aside varietal assumptions, I found it at a recent event called the Petite Masters Panel. Held at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia in Napa, California, it was organized by the indefatigable Petite Sirah advocacy organization P.S. I Love You, founded in 2002 by Jo Diaz.

Petite Sirah is perhaps the variety you would least expect to find even a smidgen of vineyard, regional, or terroir-related qualities. And why should you, based upon all that has come before? Diaz once described Petite Sirah as more of “a winemaker’s wine . . . [they] love the challenge of taming the shrew.” For years Diaz branded the P.S. I Love You events as “Dark and Delicious”: a great way to perpetuate a varietal caricature, but not exactly the best method to expand its appeal to sommeliers in white-tablecloth restaurants, as they tend to prioritize characteristics like sense of balance or place.

At this year’s Petite Masters Panel, however, the discussion evolved to include previously unexplored topics like vineyard transparency. While talking about the importance of “place not process” in Petite Sirah production, Turley Wine Cellars Winemaker Tegan Passalacqua took a crack at winemakers’ typical ego-driven mania for pushing the grape into permutations beyond what comes naturally by quoting Mark Twain, who once said, “‘Be yourself’ is about the worse advice you can give to some people.”

Turley, fortunately, is backing these words up in its wines. You have to love the way the blueberry-

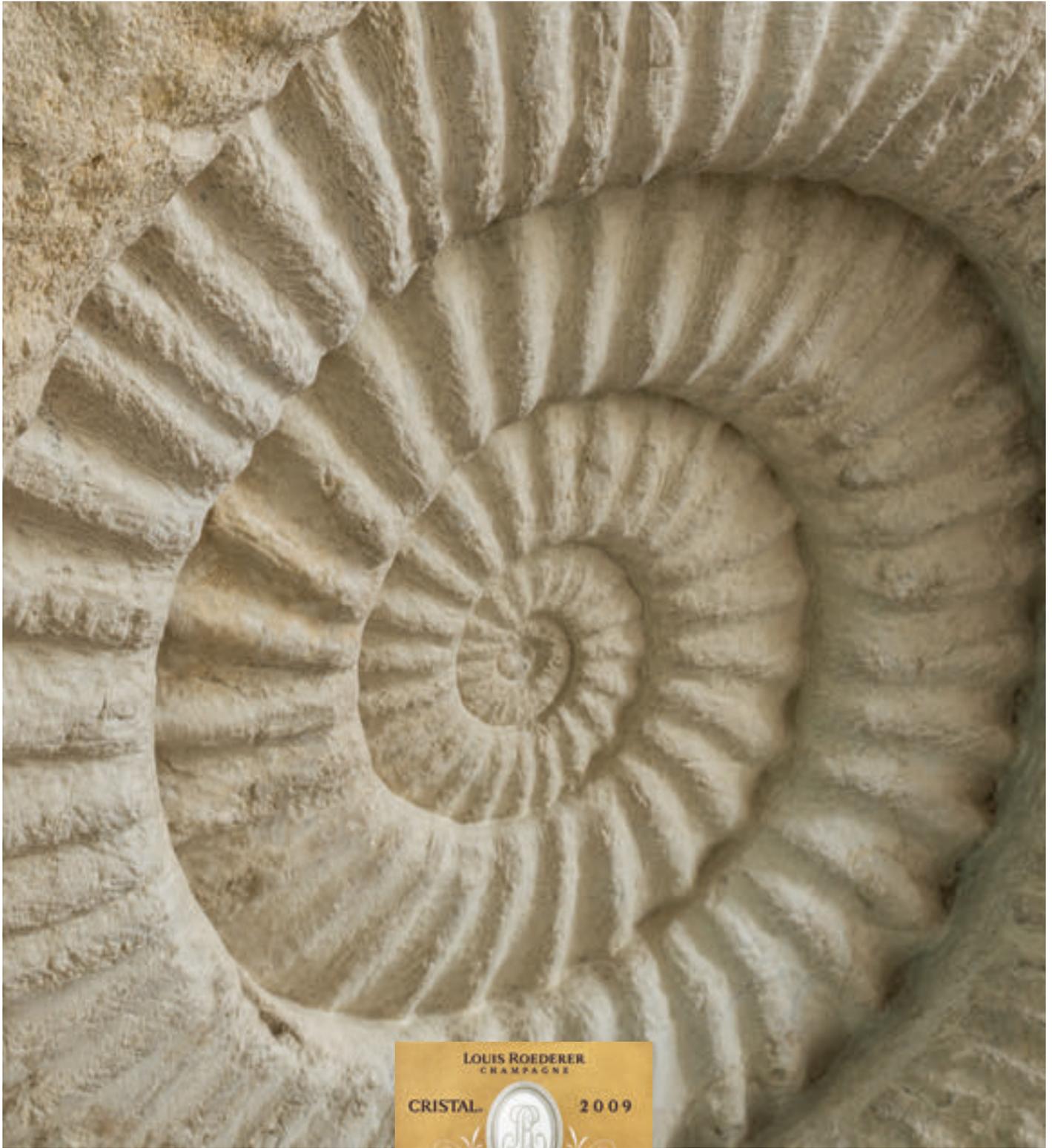
focused fruit character of the winery’s floor-grown 2014 Hayne Vineyard Petite Sirah from St. Helena contrasts with the more floral/violet/wild chaparral-like scents of its 2015 Rattlesnake Ridge, grown atop Howell Mountain. Even more distinctive is the acid-lifted minerality and spiciness of Turley’s 2015 Pesenti Vineyard, grown on rocky, calcareous slopes in the Willow Creek District of Paso Robles.

During the event, I was particularly drawn to the svelte-yet-zesty feel of an otherwise sturdy 2013 ¿Como No? (the wine hails from a winery of the same name based on a 2-acre Stags Leap District site owned by Carl Doumani, former owner of Stags’ Leap Winery). Nevertheless, the old rhetoric dies hard—as evidenced by an exchange of post-event notes with ¿Como No? Winemaker Aaron Pott, one of Napa Valley’s brainiest vigneron. Pott told me, “I was a little out of sorts to hear you say that the ¿Como No? is ‘lean, lanky, and tart,’ which are not descriptions that I associate with great wine.” Au contraire, I explained: “Lean, lanky, and tart” are precisely the qualities I associate with greatness—certainly not the opposite, which would be big, fat, and flabby.

Petite Sirahs like ¿Como No? are challenging expectations by showing that, at long last, sense of balance as well as place can also be part of this particular conversation. Then again, finding such wines has always been part of the job of sommeliers—or at least those who are cognizant, like our best chefs and winemakers, of going out of their way to find wines that go against the grain to surprise and regale their guests. **||**



A Petite Sirah cluster at Philips Farms in Lodi, CA.



IT TOOK MILLIONS OF YEARS TO FORM THE WHITE CHALKY SOILS OF THE CRISTAL VINEYARDS. A MERE TWO CENTURIES SUFFICED TO FORM A UNIQUE ESTATE PLANTED WITH OLD VINES. ALL FOR THE SAKE OF EXCELLENCE IN EVERY VINTAGE. **LA DIFFÉRENCE CRISTAL.**

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

I work at a very hip, celebrity-packed restaurant and cocktail bar with a young clientele who couldn't care less about wine! I make good money and love the people I work with, but I only sell liquor. What can I do to get these youthful fashion types more interested in drinking vino?

Yours,
 Trapped in Cocktail Land

Good Somm

Dear Trapped in Cocktail Land,

I'm surprised you find your young clientele to be less open to the wonders of wine, considering the Wine Market Council states Millennials drank 42 percent of all wine in the United States just three years ago. Perhaps they're like me and enjoy *starting* with a cocktail—or perhaps they can sense your judgement, so they're more inclined to just order another round rather than being open your suggestions. Once they've primed their palate, try to use that as an opportunity to propose a wine or two based on their cocktail choice. Your job is to make them happy, but guests—and particularly, in my experience, youthful guests—are also happy to try new things as long as they feel comfortable and appreciated.

Sincerely,
 Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Trapped in Cocktail Land,

If you work in a trendy spot, you may not be able to sell wine without getting a little disingenuous. Say something like, "Beyoncé was in here last week and just loved this glass of orange Pét-Nat by Massimiliano Croci! It was on!" or, "You know, guys, whenever Cardi B and her crew come through, they always party with magnums of Gran Reserva Rioja!" Try it! You'll be pulling corks in no time, homie.

Best,
 Bad Somm

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

I date a girl who only likes to smoke marijuana and drink craft beer. I opened a bottle of Barolo the other night and she vaped a hit of banana smoothie-flavored cannabis oil and fell asleep with a growler of IPA. I had to drink the Barolo alone. What should I do?

Yours,
 Netflix and Not Chill



Good Somm

Dear Netflix and Not Chill,

Your question feels a bit like the older pot calling the kettle black. These days, especially now that cannabis is legal either medically or recreationally in 29 states, both cannabis and beer are taken quite seriously. Isn't it your job as a sommelier to know the basics of beer? I wouldn't be surprised if the Court of Master Sommeliers one day also requires a general knowledge of cannabis, too, so rather than judging your lady friend, perhaps you can use this as an opportunity to get to know the various styles the incredible, complex world of beer has to offer. Maybe find out if that banana smoothie cannabis strain pairs well with Barolo: I'd bet it won't—a bubble-gummy Beaujolais might—but you tried, and trust me, the ladies appreciate when men *at least* try.

Best,
 Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Netflix and Not Chill,

Dump the beer-loving Neanderthal woman and only date somms as a rule. I myself date Advanced-level blondes exclusively. Regardless of your standards within the confines of wine expertise, just imagine the possibilities! You can conduct blind tastings in the dark while simultaneously making out! You can listen to wine podcasts on road trips and guffaw at all the jokes only a knowledgeable somm would understand! You'll name your children Comte Liger-Belair and Egon Müller-Scharzhof because you love Burgundy and she covets aged Riesling. Just don't disagree when she thinks a wine is corked . . . I've gone through several breakups over this. S!

Sincerely,
 Bad Somm

This column is a parody and does not reflect the views of The SOMM Journal. Follow the columnists at @goodsommbadsomm on social media and visit their page at goodsommbadsomm.com.



THE COWS MUST BE HAPPY. THE QUALITY OF THEIR MANURE DEPENDS ON IT. KEPT IN HORNS BURIED DEEP IN THE WINTER GROUND, THE MANURE IS DUG UP IN SPRING AND SPREAD BELOW THE VINES TO WORK ITS FERTILISING MAGIC.

LA DIFFÉRENCE CRISTAL.



Don't Miss These *SOMM Journal* and *Tasting Panel* Seminars at These Prestigious Events:

SOMMCON DC:

Westin Georgetown Hotel
sommconusa.com

Digging into the Unique Terroirs of La Bella Italy

Sunday, July 22, 3–4:30 p.m.

As an extension of Banfi Vinters' successful Cru Artisan College tour, four Italian winemakers/proprietors will review the indigenous grapes and terroir of their respective wine regions through a comprehensive enrichment tasting. Moderated by Banfi Vinters Director of Education Lars Leicht, the panel will feature Alberto Lazzarino of Banfi Piemonte leading the way through Piedmont; Gabrielle Pazzaglia of Castello Banfi covering Tuscany; Enrico Cerulli of Cerulli Spinozzi exploring the Colline Teramane DOCG in Abruzzo; and Andrea Sartori of Sartori di Verona leaving no stone, or gondola, untuned in the Veneto.



A
GAME
OF
WINES

GAME OF WINES

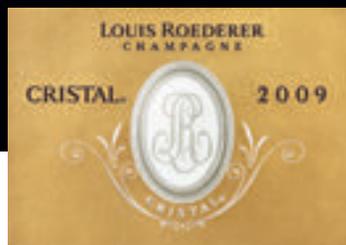
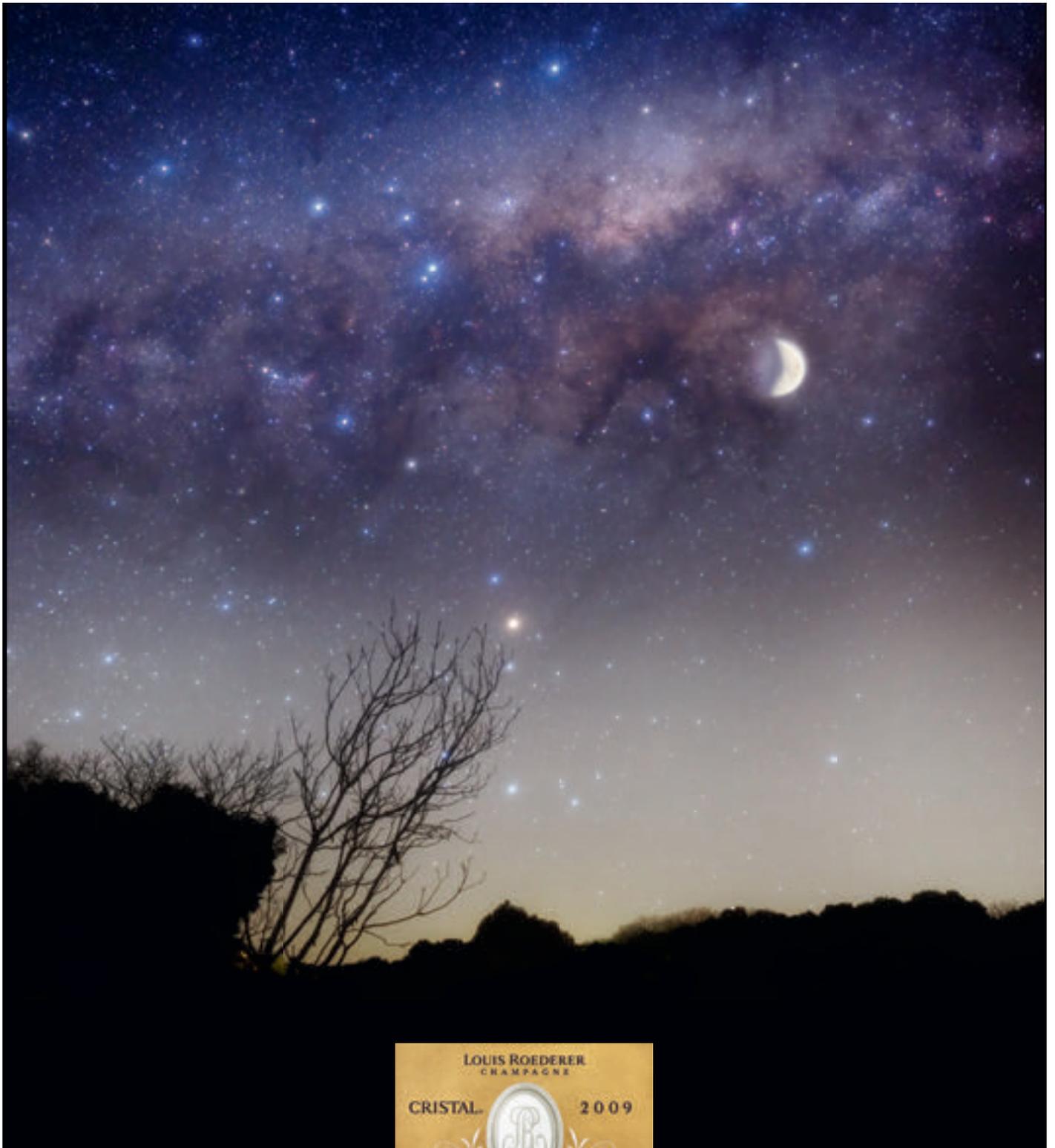
Monday, July 23, 2–3:30 p.m.

Vintner is coming! Play Game of Wines with *The SOMM Journal* and *The Tasting Panel* to have a chance to win a first-place prize of \$1,000 and a second-place prize of \$500. You'll blind-sip through eight wines before the wines are revealed one by one by their producers during a fascinating seminar on terroir and taste profiles.

GAME OF WINES Thursday, August 16, 3:45–5:30 p.m.

SOCIETY OF WINE EDUCATORS, Woodcliff Hotel, Rochester, NY

societyofwineeducators.org



THE MOON IS WAXING, TOMORROW WILL BE THE RIGHT TIME TO PRUNE THE VINES. BY WAXING MOON, THE VINES ARE STRONGER, BUT THEY LOSE THEIR VIGOR WHEN THE MOON IS WANING. TO PRUNE AT THE PERFECT TIME, KEEP AN EYE ON THE MOON. **LA DIFFÉRENCE CRISTAL.**

Fine-Wining While Black

A PERSPECTIVE FROM **MELODY FULLER**,
FOUNDER OF THE OAKLAND WINE FESTIVAL

BEING A CALIFORNIA girl, it feels natural to put my car on the road and wander up to Sonoma County or the Napa Valley to taste delicious wine. The beautiful drive from Oakland, California, where I was born, takes about an hour if you want to taste in the middle of the Napa Valley, or about two hours should you wish to visit the northernmost appellations of Sonoma County.

During a wine journey to Sonoma years ago, I wanted to try a winery I had not yet visited. Back in the 1980s, which is when this story unfolds, Sonoma County wineries did not charge a fee for wine tasting. Matter of fact, by the end of the day, you could drive home with free logo wine glasses from every winery you visited.

As I pulled into the gravelly parking lot, I exhaled. I felt excited to be there as I walked into the tasting room and read every wine bottle, framed magazine, and newspaper article, just as I study paintings and artifacts when visiting museums. As a writer, I like to get a feel for what's happening on both sides of the counter or table. Discretely eavesdropping has always been a great tool for doing this, and this day was no different.

The person pouring sounded jovial and witty as he told corny jokes, but he eyeballed me with an intensity reserved for a hawk focused on its dinner prey. The smile he instinctively gifted to the people tasting suddenly vanished into a straight line as he gathered the wine bottles previously resting on the counter into both of his fists, whisking them away onto a shelf behind him. I surmised that he must have believed I had driven all the way from Oakland to abscond with an open bottle of wine.

Uncomfortable and embarrassed, I looked at all three people who were silently glaring at me, overdid my ever-present smile, and said, "Hello." As I walked



Melody Fuller is the President and Founder of The Oakland Wine Festival and The Exceptional Vine. She is also a wine and food writer, wine educator, and wine judge.

toward the tasting counter, I did not wonder why I was smiling and being friendlier than the person who was supposed to be trying to sell me wine, pour me samples, and hook me as a lifelong customer.

I didn't wonder because this was not the first time this had happened to me—and it would not be the last time, either. You see, even today I'm sometimes still seen as a suspicious person who does not belong in the tasting room. On my wine journey, I have been questioned inappropriately, poured miniscule amounts in my glass, and treated as a threat to the winery.

While it's difficult, I smile. I keep visiting. I pretend I don't see or hear things that cut and shatter the soul into more pieces than what results from dropping an expensive

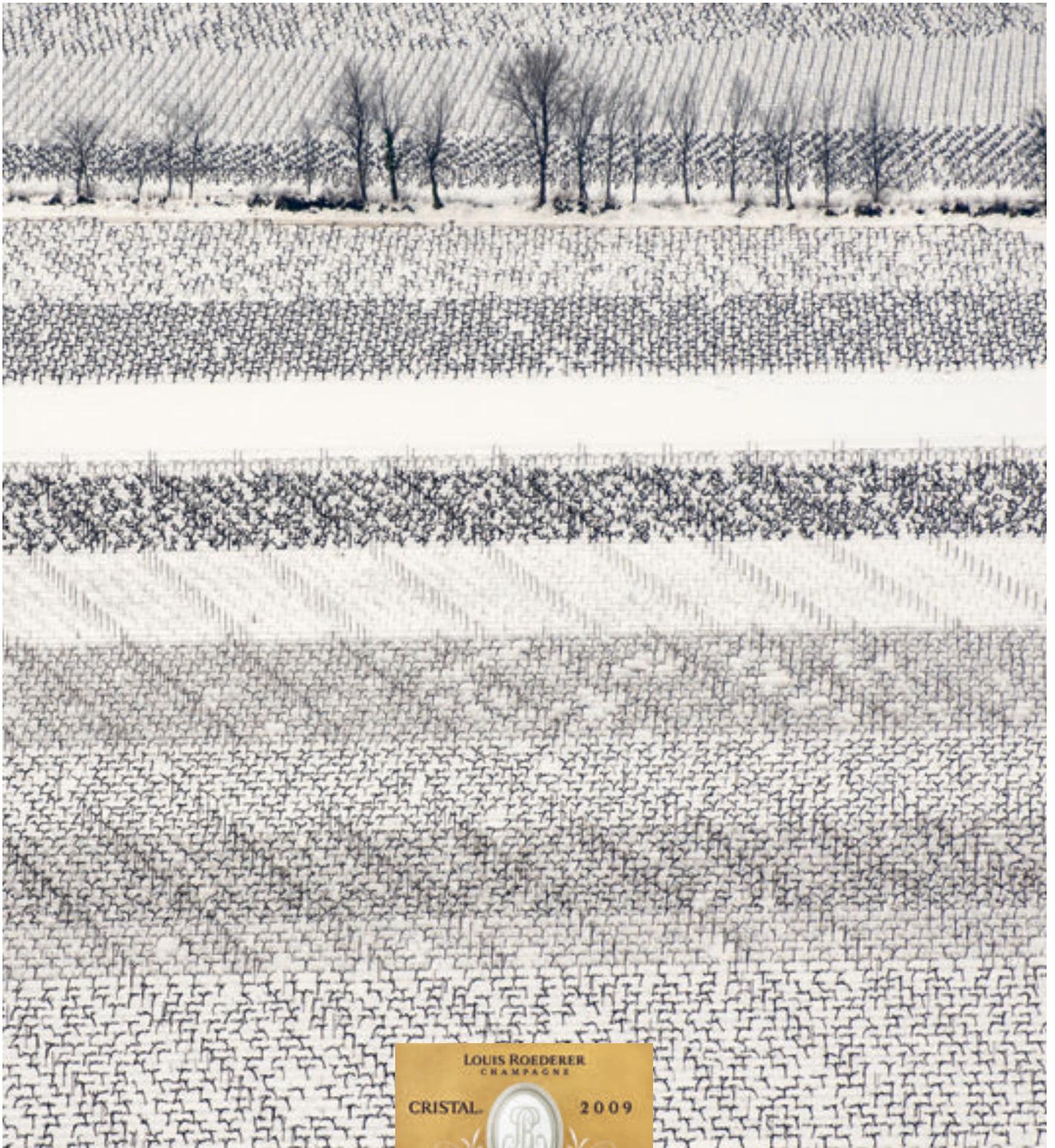
wine glass onto concrete. Have you ever been backed into a strained conversation about your background or heritage before you took a sip of wine? Do you sometimes wonder why people on both sides of the tasting table are looking at you with suspicion? Have you ever had to justify your presence in a tasting room? Well, welcome to the world of being black while fine-wining.

Don't get me wrong—this is not 100 percent of what I experience. When tasting abroad, no matter which country I am visiting, I am treated like royalty and have never experienced an inkling of being profiled.

People ask me today if wine tasting, especially fine-wine tasting for black people, has changed since the 1980s. I say, sure, to some extent, but not a whole lot. As a wine industry professional, my experiences are overwhelmingly quite positive and, in many

cases, extraordinary. I know this is in part because of evolved thinking and empirical evidence that African Americans do drink and buy a wide variety of wines, including high-end wines. Because I am in the industry, I am somewhat shielded from what I hear from a number of African American wine consumers: Wining while black is real.

On that note, here's three things wine industry professionals can do to positively impact the wine tasting experience for African Americans. Treat black visitors or appointment seekers as you would like to be treated. Be open to confronting what implicit biases you may have about black wine consumers, and, finally, seek the input, training, and consultation of African Americans who work in the wine industry. ❧



SLEEP SETTLES ALL THINGS. IN WINTER THE VINES REST. THE CELLAR MASTER AND HIS TEAM REPEATEDLY TASTE THE CLEAR WINES YIELDED BY THE PLOTS HISTORY HAS RESERVED FOR CRISTAL. THE FINEST AMONG THEM WILL EARN THEIR PLACE IN A VINTAGE. **LA DIFFÉRENCE CRISTAL.**

Brewing Scents

UNPACKING THE ESTER AROMAS AND FLAVORS CREATED BY YEAST

by Jessie Birschbach

IF YOU'VE EVER smelled a flower or enjoyed the tangy sweetness of an orange, it's because you're inhaling its ester compounds. In the world of beer, esters come into play mainly as a result of the yeast used during the brewing process. *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, the yeast used for ales, tends to produce fruity and even spicy esters. *Saccharomyces pastorianus*, used for pilsners, lagers, et cetera, tends to be "cleaner," which allows the malt and hop character in these refreshing beers to shine more brightly.

As a general rule, the hotter the fermentation temperature, the greater the ester production. Ethyl acetate, an off-flavor that produces a nail polish or solvent aroma at high concentrations, is never appropriate. Here are a few esters responsible for a nice slice of the fruitiness spectrum in beer:

- **Isoamyl acetate** produces a banana-like aroma often found in weissbiers (German wheat beers).
- **Ethyl butyrate** produces a tropical bubble gum or pineapple flavor commonly found in German wheat beers, as well as several Belgian ales.
- **Ethyl caproate** can produce the red apple, pear, and anise character tasted in an abundance of Belgian and English styles.

Weissbier/Hefeweizen

Established in 1516, the German beer purity law (or the *Reinheitsgetbot*) had a simple purpose: to mandate that beer only be made with barley hops and water. (This was before they discovered the magical powers of yeast.) There was but one exception granted to the Bavarian royal family, who held exclusive rights to brew wheat beer from the 16th century on. A man named Georg Schneider then cut a deal with the ruling monarchy to brew this style, and Schneider-Weisse Brewery still makes wheat beer in Munich today.

While weissbiers are made with 50–70 percent wheat, it's the unique character of the yeast used in these Bavarian hefeweizens that give the beer its spicy, fruity character. The yeast esters mentioned above lend the beer its banana-and-bubblegum fruitiness. It's worth noting that a yeast phenol, 4-vinyl guaiacol, is what gives weissbiers their spicy clove flavor; but that's for another edition of Beer'd Science.



Pro Beer Tip: "Krystal" or "Kristall" on the label of a weissbier (in Weihenstephaner Krystal Weisbier, for instance) indicates that the beer has been filtered for clarity. This will bring out the fruity esters and lessen the phenolic clove notes. 



**Grown in the Mountains
of California's North Coast**

LAKE COUNTY

Along the rugged slopes and valleys that flank the northern Mayacamas grow the high-elevation vineyards of Lake County.

Here, winegrapes benefit from abundant sunshine, cool nights, clean air, and volcanic soils found nowhere else.

Our growers take pride in their craft and have built a reputation for delivering high-quality Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and other premium varietals for prestigious wineries around the country.

To discover Lake County and learn what makes this wine region special, visit our new website:
www.lakecountywine.org

LAKE COUNTY
Wine Country


{ elevating the rockies }

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ADAM LARKEY PHOTOGRAPHY



▲ *Big Trouble's large-format cocktails include the We're Gonna Need a Bigger Boat with vodka, white Port, Midori, and Ruinart Champagne.*

▲ *Zeppelin Station Bar Manager Lana Gailani works her magic at Kiss + Ride.*

Around the World in a Day

DENVER FOOD HALL ZEPPELIN STATION TAKES DRINKERS ON A WHIRLWIND TOUR *by Ruth Tobias*

WHEN THE SOURCE marketplace opened to instant fanfare in 2013, it transformed the Denver landscape on two fronts. First, it put the then-sleepy River North (RiNo) district on the map: Today, RiNo ranks on many published lists of the nation's hottest "hoods. It also sparked a fervor for food halls that's still going strong, with five now open among the city's most popular venues and the construction of three more underway. (The Source itself, meanwhile, is expanding into a soon-to-open adjacent hotel.)

The lineup's latest, which launched in March, comes courtesy of Zeppelin Development, the same visionaries behind The Source. Zeppelin Station sits on the light-rail line linking RiNo to Union Station and the Denver International Airport, and it's already on track—literally and figuratively—to be a game changer in its own right as a major travel hub. Beyond the eight vendors serving up everything from Indian curry wraps and Vietnamese bánh mì to Montreal-style smoked brisket and Italian gelato, Zeppelin Station is also home to

two transit-themed watering holes: all-day downstairs meeting place Kiss + Ride and evening-only upstairs lounge Big Trouble.

Overseeing both venues are Beverage Director Michael Huebner—formerly of Celeste and Revival Food Hall, among other Chicago hot spots—and Bar Manager Lana Gailani, whose previous gigs include serving as a sommelier at Hakkasan and the Lead Bartender at Empellón Cocina in New York. As Gailani explains, the two bars are “reflections of one another”: Whereas Kiss + Ride is “bright, open, airy, and faster-paced” à la a European train station bar, Big Trouble derives inspiration from Southeast Asia's expat haunts for a “more intimate, mysterious, and transportive” effect.

The beverage programs follow suit. Because “day drinking is more of a focus” at Kiss + Ride, says Gailani, “casual, accessible cocktails and lower-proof options” dominate the list, including a quartet of pre-batched, brightly-colored concoctions—like the vodka-based Tourist Trap with melon and white Port—from what Huebner calls “our own little bottled-

cocktail line that has been way more popular than I expected.”

Big Trouble, meanwhile, evokes an exotic getaway with its emphasis on Asian and/or tropical spirits and ingredients. “For me, the biggest surprise has been people's adventurous nature,” Huebner says. “I didn't expect to sell a lot of sake here, but the response has been really cool, so now we're looking at getting weirder with it.” The same goes for large-format, tiki-style cocktails like the Caged Parrot: “Nowhere I have ever worked have they [large-format drinks] been a success, but here we sell quite a few,” Gailani says.

As for wine and beer, the pair say they've particularly enjoyed highlighting different regions and styles, from Costa Rican lager and Japanese sweet-potato ale to Austrian Grüner and rotating rosés. “We definitely leaned toward high-acid whites to be flexible with the cuisine,” notes Gailani. But for the most part, Huebner adds, the opportunity food halls provide to showcase “a little bit of everything” is “exactly what I like about it.” **SJ**



ARRIVE WITH DISTINCTION™

BottegaVinaiaWine.com

 A campaign financed according to EC regulations N. 1308/13

©2018 Palm Bay International Boca Raton, FL



A winery with a view: Hanzell Vineyards in Sonoma Valley, where the property's first two acres of Chardonnay vines were planted in 1953.

New Gold Dreams

SIGNATURE SONOMA VALLEY EXPLORES CHARDONNAY'S COME UP IN CALIFORNIA

by Chris Sawyer

IT'S FUNNY HOW times have changed with California Chardonnays. At one point it was all about sweet fruit, creamy texture, and buttery-oaky goodness, but things have started to change over the past decade. This shift can be attributed to a greater emphasis placed on working with high-quality grapes from specific sites, better row direction and spacing, and the adaptation of more eco-friendly farming practices.

The same is true in the cellar, where the use of natural yeast and sur lees stirring have increased as the reliance on new oak has lessened. The end result is an exciting movement that aims to capture crispness, freshness, and purity of fruit—as well as the special characteristics of the site—in every sip.

This was most apparent at a 50-year retrospective tasting held during the Signature Sonoma Valley (SSV) event in early April. In Sonoma County, Hanzell Vineyards serves as one of the foundations of this trend from its perch on the Mayacamas Mountains overlooking the southern end of Sonoma Valley. The first two acres of Chardonnay vines on the property were planted by winery founder and U.S. Ambassador James Zellerbach in 1953 (at the time, there were less than 100 acres planted in California) and the original cuttings of the property's old Wente clone came from Stony Hill in Napa.

To fulfill his dream of making Burgundy-style wines in the U.S., Zellerbach designed a winery that was cutting-edge for its time. In addition to developing a gravity-fed system, he installed stainless-steel, temperature-controlled tanks—an innovation adopted by Château Haut-Brion in Bordeaux nine years later. In 1957, the winery also became the first in the New World to base its estate program around the use of French oak barrels. “The winery was a quantum leap forward of anything that had been done in the past,” said Hanzell Vineyards Winemaker Michael McNeill, who co-hosted the seminar with General Manager Jason Jardine and Master Sommelier Bob Bath.

While tasting through the stellar collection of Hanzell Chardonnays from the 1996, 2000, 2002, 2010, and 2015 vintages, not only did the classic estate notes of stone fruit immediately come to life, but so did intriguing nuances of citrus, mineral, sandalwood, herbs, vanillin, and subtle spices. The same was true with the older wines. While tasting the 1977 vintage, for instance, Bath noted that as the fruit flavors subsided over time, more of the site's distinctive character started to emerge through tertiary notes of flowers, nuts, herbs, and earth.

Beyond the terraced Chardonnay vine-

yards cascading down the Mayacamas to the east and Sonoma Mountain to the west, a multitude of pristine sites can be found on the valley floor as well. Among them is the Green Acres Vineyard, located on the northern edge of the Los Carneros appellation just south of Sonoma. Owned and farmed by iconic winegrower Angelo Sanguiacomo and his family, Green Acres is the first of 11 sites the Sanguacomos developed in the southern segment of the valley.

To discuss the attributes of the vineyard's blocks at the SSV Sanguiacomo Immersion seminar, Master Sommelier David Yoshida was joined by Angelo's sons Steve and Mike of Sanguiacomo Family Vineyards, as well as a group of talented winemakers who sourced fruit from the vineyard in 2015. “When we talk about Chardonnay, the [comparison to] Burgundy can be a double-edged sword,” said Yoshida. “It's a great comparison, especially as a reference point, but California has its distinct style. For that reason, there is certainly a place on all of the wine lists I work with, as well as in my cellar, where I place California next to Burgundy.”

Yoshida isn't the only expert to position Californian Chardonnay on the higher Burgundian standard, and considering the evolution of viniculture and viticulture in the Golden State, he won't be the last. **ST**

PHOTO: JON MCPHERSON



The Rosy Side of Languedoc



LOOK TO LANGUEDOC FOR ROSÉ THIS SEASON!

Languedoc's breadth of terroir, grapes and winemaking produce a wonderful world of rosé to be discovered. Many of these are in the same style that consumers have come to expect from the South of France, but all offer a Mediterranean lifestyle experience in a glass!

Join the adventure today and explore all that Languedoc Wines have to offer

LEARN MORE AND FIND WINES AT LANGUEDOCADVENTURE.COM

Economy and Enology

DAVE LUND, WINE DIRECTOR AT AUSTIN'S
III FORKS, ALWAYS HAS HIS GUESTS IN MIND

by Rachel Burkons

Dave Lund
is the Wine
Director at
III Forks in
Austin, TX.

DAVE LUND CAUGHT the wine bug as he worked his way through restaurants in college, so when graduation rolled around, it wasn't a hard choice to trade in his economics degree for a job with a distributor. A few years later, he made his way on-premise and never looked back. "I really just wanted to expose myself to as much wine as possible," Lund says.

With that mission in mind, he's found a fitting home at III Forks, a steakhouse in Austin, Texas, that boasts 450 selections on its wine list. "In this day and age of specialization, where wine bars and restaurants have lists that are so focused, I get the opportunity to have something for everybody—and that's not easy to do," Lund explains. "I try to focus on being a jack of all trades and a master of none. Some of these guys are going to know more about Burgundy or the Left Bank than I'll ever know, and that's OK with me. I'm just trying to be as well-rounded as possible."

This effort to immerse himself in as many facets of the global wine industry as he can means reading constantly and tasting as many as 150 wines a week. Lund works with 19 distributors at III Forks to keep his options robust, and—like a true economist—trains his staff to recognize the distinction between value and *perceived* value: all with the goal of helping guests find the right wine for the right price.

"The more expensive wine is often not the better option for guests, so when someone says, 'I like this brand around this price point,' I teach my staff to talk them down 15 to 20 percent," Lund explains. "In doing this, we're gaining credibility right off the bat, and I think there's real value in that. A lot of times, you can go to a lower price point and find something more focused with all of those other spiritual qualities we look for in wine. By doing this, we're gaining perceived value of competence and repute, and real value by ameliorating the guest's quality-to-price ratio."

Lund also aims to give his guests a meaningful experience by keeping up with the trends—and looking to the next ones. He believes the natural wine movement is significantly changing the way consumers think about wine and is confident it's more than just a flash in the pan. "We have consumers asking for unfiltered and unfiltered wines, and I don't think it is a fad either from the winemaking or the consumer standpoint," Lund says. "Moving forward, less intervention is the best way to get to wines that have more points of distinction and a sense of place."

He also partially attributes the resurgence of Syrah to the natural wine movement's popularity: "Domestically, Syrah is the best way to showcase those concepts—we've already done it with Pinot! The grape picks up terroir so nicely and is planted widely, but also has that X-factor like Pinot or Riesling—it has an untamed wildness to it," he explains. "We can split hairs about tannic structure of Cab or Merlot, but when someone tastes a wine that tastes like salami and white pepper, it takes them into a whole different universe." Fortunately for Lund's guests, he's more than happy to serve as their cosmic tour guide. **SJ**

Tapping into Residual Light

DECONSTRUCTING THE COLOR GRADATION OF ROSÉ

by Deborah Parker Wong

WHILE THE LEVEL of residual sugar plays a role in the finished style of a wine, the color of all wines—and the color of everything we see, for that matter—is determined by residual light. Any systematic analysis of wine begins with a careful observation of color, as what we see is the result of light waves being reflected by compounds in the liquid.

The plant pigments associated with flower and fruit coloration are known as flavonoids, with the most commonly known being the anthocyanins—derived from the Greek words for flower and blue, *anthos* and *kyanos*. These water-soluble pigments found in leaves, stems, roots,

flowers, and fruits show us red, purple, or blue hues depending on their pH levels.

The wide variety of colors found in wine and the evolution of color over time as wine ages is captivating, but the wine style with the most variety of color is undoubtedly rosé. Some of the best examples of the differences between lighter and darker rosés can be found in southern France, where Provençal rosés made from Grenache blends range from yellow and pale pink to salmon. Its neighboring region Bandol in the Rhône Valley, meanwhile, produces deeper ruby wines from dark-hued varieties like Mourvèdre.

A rosé wine's color can provide some clues as to how it was made, but it's the winemaker's intention—and, in some cases, adjustments prior to bottling—that determine the final hue. Less pigment typically means less time in contact with the skins, while darker colors point to longer maceration times and higher levels of alcohol in the finished wine.

For example, medium-hued Tempranillo rosés from Rioja routinely clock in at 14% ABV or greater, but the pale beauties of Provence tend to hover around 12% ABV. "The color and luminous clarity of the wine captures your attention for a few seconds—just long enough to pause and appreciate its beauty," says Winemaker Anthony Beckman of Balletto Vineyards in Santa Rosa, California. Beckman produces a sparkling rosé of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with an ethereal coral tint.

Researchers have made a few important discoveries about the effects color has on moods, feelings, and behaviors, indicating that some seem to carry universal meaning. In the case of rosé, shades of pale pink are described as relaxing, while very bright, vibrant shades can be stimulating or even aggravating. According to studies from the Provence Wine Council (CIVP), consumers in the U.S., Russia, and Australia appear to have shed the gender stereotyping associated with the color pink, as equal numbers of male and female consumers are enjoying the residual light of rosé. **SI**



PHOTO COURTESY OF PLIPROD VIA ADOBE STOCK



At Saison in San Francisco: Noah Dranow, Saison's Director of Wine Programs; Olivier Dupré, CEO/President of Alfred Gratien and Gratien & Meyer; and Kim Beto, VP of Prestige Accounts for Southern Glazer's of California.

Noah Dranow, Director of Wine Programs for Saison Hospitality Group, Meets Champagne Producer Olivier Dupré of Alfred Gratien

I HAD A VERY exciting couple of days recently when I had the opportunity to talk and taste with two great people—and write about one of my favorite Champagnes from Alfred Gratien—at the three-Michelin-starred restaurant Saison in San Francisco.

Alfred Gratien is featured in most of the Michelin-rated restaurants in France, even though it is an extremely small-production house and a well-kept secret in the sommelier community ... at least, until now. Founded in 1864, Alfred Gratien sources primarily from Grand Cru and Premier Cru vineyards, and the Jaeger family has been making the wines since 1905. Nicolas Jaeger took over as fourth-generation winemaker in 2007 after working for 17 years with his father and was voted the best winemaker in Champagne last year.

All the wines are fermented in Chablis oak barrels and do not undergo malolactic fermentation, which serves to maintain the original character of the grapes while preserving aromas and retaining freshness even as the wine ages. Alfred Gratien voluntarily limits its annual production to 300,000 bottles.



Alfred Gratien Brut Rosé.

Back in San Francisco, Saison Chef/Owner Joshua Skenes creates remarkable dishes that give you goosebumps. It's no surprise that the restaurant is #37 on the 2017 *The World's 50 Best Restaurants* list, which is truly an amazing achievement! Saison is extremely unique and I have had the pleasure of eating there several times—if you can get in, it's unlike anything you will ever experience.

I have known Noah Dranow for a very long time, since his nine years at Michael Mina's restaurant group and Bourbon Steak. He is no stranger to epic wines, having worked for his mentor Raj Parr and now for Saison partner Mark Bright, who also worked for Mina Group. Dranow learned a lot from his other mentor, Peter Palmer, when he worked at Farallon.

You will hear it here first: Dranow was recently promoted to Director of Wine Programs for Saison Hospitality! The restaurant group will open Angler in San Francisco this summer, with an additional location arriving in Los Angeles in the fall. I can't wait to check them both out—hopefully you'll read about it in *The SOMM Journal*.

At Saison, Dranow conducts blind tastings every Saturday and the entire staff participates. Wine training is very important for the company, whose exceptional wine program has won a Grand Award from *Wine Spectator*. Keep in mind that between regular diners and visitors from all over the world, Saison is booked three months in advance.

When I ask why the restaurant pairs the **Alfred Gratien 2000 Brut Millésimé** with its incredibly delicious caviar, Dranow explains that the dish is wrapped in kelp and grilled; the kelp acts like an insulator protecting the caviar from the fire, but also gives it weight and richness. It needs a Champagne with maturity and



Olivier Dupré is the CEO/President of Champagne Gratien, a house that has been in production for 154 years.

extended lees contact, and this wine is aged 15 years on lees. The fact that it's fermented in oak makes it a spectacular match. The response is overwhelming and guests—some of whom are trying Alfred Gratien for the first time—love the pairing. We tried this match made in heaven during my visit and let me just say . . . wow! It needs to be on your bucket list.

While at Saison, I had the privilege of meeting Olivier Dupré, CEO/President of Alfred Gratien and Gratien & Meyer, for the first time. Having visited Alfred Gratien a couple of years ago—where I fell in love with its wines right away—I was very excited. I will take the credit for bringing the 2000 to the U.S., because when I visited and heard this wine was aged for 15 years on the lees and was the current release, I had to taste it. We also tasted the 2005, aged for 11 years on the lees: Rich and complex, it has an insanely long finish.

Tasting at Mourad

The following day, we stopped by Mourad for lunch to taste the full lineup of Alfred Gratien and Gratien & Meyer, starting off with both the **Cremant de Loire Brut** and **Cremant de Loire Brut Rosé**. I was stunned to taste such elegant wines at that price point: When I asked Dupré how that was possible, he explained that both houses work closely together, which creates synergy. These are wines you can drink (or sell) daily without feeling guilty.

We were also lucky to taste the **Alfred Gratien Brut Rosé**, the very rare **Alfred Gratien 2006 Paradis**, and the **Alfred Gratien 2006 Paradis Rosé**. Everyone was completely enamored by these wines, but the highlight of the day was when Dupré surprised the guests with the **Alfred Gratien 1996 Millésimé and Alfred Gratien 1966 Millésimé**! Still incredibly fresh and vibrant, the 1966 was one of the best Champagnes I've ever had.

I love when I find a wine that completely overdelivers yet is still a bargain compared to wines of this complexity and quality. If you visit Epernay, Alfred Gratien is a must-see. Please let me know what you think of the Champagnes.

One can dream, but I sure hope Dupré comes back every year with surprise wines—and that we can go back to Saison! ❄️

Merci,

Kim Beta, VP of Key Accounts, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

Follow Kim on Instagram @drinkswithkimbeto.



Saison Culinary Director Jonathan Dewolf pairs Alfred Gratien 2000 Brut Millésimé with the restaurant's caviar wrapped in kelp.



Master of Wine Jay Youmans

by Michelle Metter

JAY YOUMANS HAS been tasting wine professionally for nearly 30 years. Now the Educational Director and Owner of the Capital Wine School in Washington, D.C., as well as the Owner of sales and marketing consultancy Rock Creek Wine Merchants, Youmans has served as a wine judge for numerous wine competitions and has contributed to several books and magazines.

Over the years, Youmans has conducted hundreds of public, private, and corporate wine tasting events. An Advanced Sommelier and Certified Wine Educator (CWE), he's also one of just two Masters of Wine in the Washington, D.C. area. Youmans will make an appearance as a speaker at SommCon in Washington, D.C., set for July 22–24. For schedule and registration details, visit sommconusa.com.

Q: **As the Founder of Capital Wine School, you no doubt see a lot of diversity in the student body. Have you seen any recent changes or shifts within the industry that you feel may have future impact?**

There is a trend among wine professionals to gain as many high-level certifications as possible in order to build their CVs, and I believe this is elevating the caliber of the entire wine industry. Many of our students, however, are not in the wine business; they simply want to gain a deeper understanding of wine.

Q: **There are a lot of options out there for certification and continuing education. How do you help students understand and navigate which path is best for their career?**



Jay Youmans, MW, is the Educational Director and Owner of the Capital Wine School in Washington, D.C.

Name: Jay Youmans, MW

Company: Capital Wine School

Credentials: Master of Wine, Advanced Sommelier, Certified Wine Educator, Certified Specialist of Spirits, French Wine Scholar, Italian Wine Professional, Certified Bourgogne Wine Educator, and Certified Bordeaux Educator

There is no single "best path" through wine education. I often suggest that students try several education programs to build their wine knowledge and tasting skills. Whether you are looking at programs through the Court of Master Sommeliers, Wine & Spirit Education Trust, Wine Scholar Guild, or Society of Wine Educators, each program has its strengths and weaknesses, but wine credentials are not a substitute for work experience.

Q: **What influence do you think online resources such as wine apps will have on how a sommelier hones their skills?**

Online learning, webinars, and wine apps have certainly changed the way people access content. This has allowed our instructors to spend more time on tasting wines in class and has also changed how students study for theory exams. In the future, you will see more apps aimed at preparing candidates for tasting exams. For example, the WSET has a wonderful phone app for making Level III tasting notes.

Q: **You will be presenting at SommCon in Washington, D.C., in July on a number of topics, including the iconic wines of Virginia. What do you think will surprise sommeliers and beverage directors who are unfamiliar with the region?**

They will be surprised at the high quality of the wines being produced and the diversity of grapes being grown there.

Q: **You have five minutes and one glass of wine. What are you drinking and who are you with?**

I would drink a glass of 2002 Bollinger R.D. Extra Brut Champagne with my wife. 

The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal are proud to serve as the media sponsors of SommCon D.C. (July 22–24) and SommCon San Diego (November 14–16).



carbon
Zero
PAS 2000
certified
product

THINK OF THEM AS LAWNMOWERS YOU CAN PET.

WHEN SHEEP CAN REACH YOUR
GRAPES YOU HAVE A PROBLEM.
WHEN YOUR MINIATURE BABYDOLL
SHEEP ARE ONLY THE HEIGHT OF
YOUR KNEES YOU HAVE A SOLUTION.
WHAT ARE TRACTORS FOR AGAIN?



Yealands
— FAMILY WINES —
MARLBOROUGH • NEW ZEALAND

EVERY BIT EXTRAORDINARY



The World's Most Sustainable Winery
YEALANDS.CO.NZ

©2018 Palm Bay International, Boca Raton, FL



Gaining Ground

LAKE COUNTY'S NEW WEBSITE OFFERS AN EDUCATIONAL FOCUS FOR THIS SIGNIFICANT WINE REGION

by Diane Denham / photos by Nathan DeHart

PHOTO: MIGUEL VINCENTE



Master Sommelier Bob Bath, a Lake County enthusiast, has led trade tastings for the region and also helped gather information for its new website.

AS MEMBERS OF the wine industry, we're all familiar with Lake County's reputation as one of Northern California's emerging wine regions. In regards to the more than 250 million tourists visiting California every year; however, it's safe to bet most of them have never heard of Lake County.

That's a pity. While the county's wines have a reputation for value, they've garnered little widespread notoriety compared to the more celebrated wines of Napa and Sonoma. Master Sommelier Bob Bath, though, is certain that will soon change. A Lake County enthusiast, Bath knows the region intimately considering his parents owned a home near Lower Lake for 20 years. "There are so many things going for Lake County terroir-wise that it's only a matter of time before this region will be producing world-class wines in addition to great value wines," he explains.

Bath, who has worked with the region to gather important information for its new website, says that the timing is right for its launch. Found at lakecountywines.org, the site features exhaustive information on all things Lake County in one easily accessible location. It also contains many of the fascinating factoids Bath assembled for a separate, education-focused presentation for the trade. Here are just a few examples:

- The county encompasses California's largest natural lake, Clear Lake, which is also quite likely the oldest lake in North America. It's estimated to be 2.5 million years old, but its status as a top destination for bass fishermen is all but solidified.

Clear Lake covers more than half the total acreage of the overarching Clear Lake AVA. The lake's moderating climatic influence contributes to quality wine-growing throughout Lake County.

- The county has had the cleanest air in California for more than 20 years.
- More than 200 North Coast wineries use Lake County grapes.
- Most of Lake County's 9,500 vineyard acres are planted higher than 1,300 feet above sea level along the valley floors and slopes of one of the three mountain ranges that rim the region: the Mayacamas to the west; the Vaca Mountains to the southeast; and the Mendocino Range to the north.
- Due to the elevation and the clean air, Lake County fruit receives up to 10 percent more ultraviolet exposure than neighboring sea-level valleys. Increased UV produces grapes with thicker skins, which results in intense wines with phenolically-ripe tannins.
- The cold winters and dry growing conditions decrease incidents of disease, which reduces the need for chemical pesticides and fungicides. Lake County has one of the lowest rates of pesticide use in California.
- Soils in the region's seven recognized AVAs run the gamut from serpentine (not ideal for vines) to volcanic, sandstone, and alluvial.
- Clear Lake covers more than half the total acreage of the overarching Clear Lake AVA. The lake's moderating climatic influence contributes to quality winegrowing throughout the region.
- The combination of diverse soils, elevation, and climatic conditions means 50 different grape varieties thrive somewhere in the county. Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon are the most widely planted in the region.

When Bath explains further why he's such a fan of Lake County—and what wine buyers can use as key takeaways—he cites the varietal purity of the wines; their balance, exhibited by their “abundant fruit, but not at the expense of acidity”; and “great value.”

He's also impressed by the “thoughtful winemaking” of the local producers, explaining that they're “not overdoing the winemaking so that the wines speak of being from ‘somewhere’ rather than from ‘someone.’” “There's a lack of ego and open-mindedness here. Producers believe in the region, but they're not egotistical about it,” he adds. “They're also open to feedback and experimentation.” As for which of the AVAs might be the ones to watch, Bath says people should “keep an eye on the Red Hills and High Valley appellations.”

Although Lake County's first vineyards were planted in 1854, its vineyard plantings today are miniscule compared to Napa and Sonoma: Lake County's 9,500 acres to Napa's 45,000 and Sonoma's 65,000. “There's plenty of room to grow,” Bath says. He's also excited about the new website, which he sees as a superb resource for both consumers interested in wine tourism and members of the wine trade looking to expand their knowledge. “The region is getting more attention now and there's so much to talk about from a terroir standpoint,” he continues. “A great website is the perfect venue for communicating all of that and hopefully serving as an inspiration to visit this incredible region.” SJ



A barn on the property of Rooster Vineyard displays a “quilt” painting that's part of the Lake County Quilt Trail, the first of its kind in California.



Winemaker Matt Hughes pours at a recent SOMM Camp event in Lake County. The event was presented by the Lake County Winegrape Commission in collaboration with The SOMM Journal.

For more information, visit lakecountywines.org.

We've partnered with Chef's Roll and Somm's List, the global culinary and wine professional networks, to learn more about beverage experts from across the country.

Ryan Bailey

Wine Director at NoMad Los Angeles

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOMAD LA



Q: How is your wine list composed to complement Chef Daniel Humm and Executive Chef Chris Flint's menus at NoMad L.A.?

Their menus often spotlight dishes that have a backbone of acidity, so I kept that in mind as I was developing our wine list. You'll find

that a majority of our wines are bright and assertive, whether they're Champagnes, Burgundies, or German Riesling. Overall, our wine program is classically inspired with the additional presence of California producers, as we are excited about our new West Coast home.

Q: How does the wine program at NoMad L.A. differ from the New York location?

Having worked with Thomas Pastuszak, the Wine Director of NoMad N.Y.C. for almost five years, we grew to have very similar palates. The wine list reflects that through the love of Burgundy, Champagne, the Northern Rhône, and other classic regions. As Thomas' list focuses locally toward the Finger Lakes, mine here gravitates toward the rich history of California winemaking. Purchasing here also allows for more freedom than New York, so I have been able to make connections directly to the wineries and bring library releases of back vintages to our guests.

Q: What is an underrated wine region we should pay attention to?

It might sound strange to say this, but Champagne! With the burgeoning number of grower-producers just now being imported to the United States, there is still a lot of this classic region yet to be discovered. Producers such as Doyard are making wines to represent the style of the 18th century. I'm also excited about Moussé, which, on the other end of the spectrum, focuses on single-plot, single-vintage Pinot Meunier wines under its Special Club bottling.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL'S SANTA MONICA



Roni Ginach

Sommelier at Michael's Santa Monica in Santa Monica, CA

Q: You're the sommelier at Michael's Santa Monica, the 38-year-old dining institution of Chef Miles Thompson.

What's it like to be part of a property with such history?

It's an incredible honor! Working with Miles is a big trip—he's brilliant and wacky and really wants to engage in conversations in terms of the pairing between food and wine. It's never dull, to say the least. We have a responsibility to do this institution justice with our work and bring its energy to the guests, which Miles inevitably ends up doing with every plate and I hope I manage to do with each glass of wine.

Q: What's your focus when selecting wine for this particular property?

As a buyer, I work with wines that prioritize sustainability as a holistic ethos. That results more or less in a natural wine list because I'm lucky enough to have access to incredible producers from all around the world that are working within this framework. I've found that our guests are generally receptive to this—as one of the institutions that founded the farm-to-table movement in California, it's only logical that we would extend the same values to our wine program.

Q: What's your ideal wine, food/snack, music, and atmosphere mashup?

Always with friends and loved ones around a table preferably on my back porch—any time of year because Los Angeles is a gift—drinking whichever bottle of wine I was saving for a special occasion. There are tons of little snacks on the table—I'm Middle Eastern, so the more plates on the table, the more comfortable I am—many empty bottles, and lots of emphatic gesticulating. For music, I'd turn on ESG radio: my Spotify hack for parties! 🎧

If you are a mixologist or wine professional interested in being featured here or want more information on Chef's Roll and Somm's List, please email featured@chefsroll.com.

Celebrate the Art of Living: Sicilianly.



DRINK STEMMARI RESPONSIBLY



Discover the Sicilian "Art of Living" with every delicious sip of our Nero d'Avola Sicilia Doc and Grillo Sicilia Doc.

STEMMARI

SICILIA DOC

Our luscious Stemmari Grillo has been a Top 100 Best Buy in Wine Enthusiast two years in a row.

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [stemmari.it](#) [#sicilianly](#) [#siciliadoc](#)

CAMPAGNA FINANZIATA AI SENSI
DEL REG. UE N. 1380/2013
CAMPAGNA FINANZIATA ACCORDING
TO EU REG. NO. 1380/2013



SYNERGY *for* SUCCESS

THE **GAJA AWARD OF EXCELLENCE** BRINGS A NEW DIMENSION TO THE
 ICONIC ITALIAN LABEL'S BRAND AMBASSADOR PROGRAM **by David Gadd**



Nicolas Nikic, General Manager and Sommelier of GAJA Award of Excellence Grand Prize winner Da Marco in Houston, Texas, poses with the GAJA Costa Russi.

There are many moving parts—and motivated people—involved in getting wines from a European producer to a restaurant guest in Florida or Nevada. Essential to the success of any brand, even a world-famous one, is the buyer-rep relationship.

Case in point: GAJA. One might think that this icon of Piedmont could rest on its well-polished laurels, but GAJA and its U.S. importer Terlato Wine Group know that would be a huge mistake. The GAJA Brand Ambassador program was instituted in 2013 to shepherd the stunning GAJA portfolio into front-and-center position on wine lists nationwide while keeping on-premise guests drinking some of the best Barbarescos, Barolos, and other luxury bottles Italy has to offer. GAJA Brand Ambassadors are appointed from the ranks of GAJA distributors across the country and are an integral part of what keeps this cherished producer in a league of its own.

In 2017, the Brand Ambassador program built on its momentum and took another leap forward with the introduction of an Award of Excellence, bestowed upon on-premise buyers in 11 markets in recognition of their passion for GAJA. Prestige accounts with strong GAJA programs were nominated for the award by Brand Ambassadors in their respective states. Among several other requirements, nominees had to feature wines from all three GAJA estates—GAJA (Piedmont), Pieve Santa Restituta (Brunello di Montalcino), and Ca' Marcanda (Bolgheri)—and pour at least two GAJA wines by the glass.

The winners were personally selected from among the nominees by Owner Angelo and his daughter, Gaia Gaja, in coordination with Terlato. After the winners were announced in February of this year, they received an award certificate and a magnum of GAJA signed by Angelo and/or Gaia. Additionally, a consumer event featuring GAJA wines and hosted by Gaia will be scheduled at the Grand Prize-winning account.

We spoke with the wine directors at the Grand Prize winner and three other Award of Excellence recipients to get their take on what makes GAJA—both its wines and the people behind them—so special. A complete list of Award of Excellence winners can be found on page 47.

A selection of GAJA wines at Da Marco in Houston, TX.

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

DA MARCO, *Houston, Texas*

NICOLAS NIKIC, *General Manager and Sommelier*

Da Marco consistently ranks at the very pinnacle of the Houston dining scene. One factor that assures this consistency is General Manager Nicolas Nikic, who also holds the Sommelier title.

Nikic got the restaurant bug as a teenager in his native Vienna, Austria, when his architect father took him along to a restaurant he was remodeling. "From that moment," Nikic recalls, "I developed a passion for the industry and for the dynamic of wine and food." He quickly signed up for hotel and restaurant management school in Vienna, where he received the intensive European training designed to turn out a world-class hospitality professional.

Nikic moved to the U.S. in 1999 while working for the Holland America cruise ship line. That led to continuing education in food and beverage at the University of Houston, where Nikic also worked as an instructor—"a further step in my development," says the pro.

"I was working in a private club in Houston when I got the call to move to Da Marco in 2006," recounts Nikic. "I started as a GM and then took on the task of sommelier as well. As the only wine person, I run the whole program from beginning to end," a hefty responsibility in an establishment as important as Da Marco. Still, Nikic says he keeps "an open line of communication" with the restaurant's owner, Chef Marco Wiles. "We've worked together for 12 years and know each other really well. He's always included in all decisions," Nikic adds.

Growing the wine list was among Nikic's top priorities, and with Da Marco being an Italian restaurant, GAJA was essential. "Step by step, I developed the GAJA selection," explains the somm. "I expanded the paradigm and added their wines grape by grape. The wine industry is complex and expanding; the whole objective is to keep it up to date, to introduce new wines and varietals."

Nikic credits GAJA's Texas distributor, Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC), for part of his success. "Republic is a wonderful organization, passionate and dependable—you can count on them to deliver," he explains, noting that he enjoys a "two-way relationship" with his RNDC sales rep, Christopher Ainsworth. "They're doing everything right!"

"Da Marco is one of the quintessentially classic fine-dining restaurants in Houston," says Blake Cooper of RNDC, the GAJA Brand Ambassador who nominated Da Marco



The GAJA *Costa Russi*, a single-vineyard Nebbiolo at Da Marco. The wine now carries a Barbaresco DOP designation starting with the 2013 vintage.

for the Award of Excellence. "Their food and service are iconic in Houston, and their representation of GAJA on the wine list is a perfect fit with the restaurant." Cooper notes that Da Marco mirrors GAJA in that both the restaurant and the winery are focused on tradition *and* innovation. "Nicolas is a pleasure to work with and is a constant professional," Cooper adds.

According to Nikic, "there's a synergy between the food and the wine," and, to him, GAJA speaks perfectly to that relationship. Summing up the GAJA wines, Nikic says, "It takes a lot of discipline and focus to reach this level." The same can certainly be said of Nikic himself.

AMORE RISTORANTE, *Naples, Florida*
STEFANO LJIKOVIC, *Owner and Wine Director*

PHOTO: MICHELLE REED



At Amore Ristorante, Owner Stefano Ljivic enjoys a glass of *Rennina Brunello di Montalcino* from GAJA's *Pieve Santa Restituta* estate in Tuscany.

Amore Ristorante's website states that Owner Stefano Ljivic likes to lure customers by standing in front of the restaurant dressed in Albanian national costume and waving a sword. It's pure fantasy, he admits, but it captures the tall, imposing Ljivic's ready sense of humor.

Born of Albanian extraction in Montenegro (at the time part of Yugoslavia), Ljivic came to the States at 19 to work for an uncle who owned restaurants in New York City. ("You start from the bottom," the now-successful restaurateur says with a laugh.) Having picked



"The GAJA Darmagi delivers loads of varietal character with tangy aromas of wild sage and rosemary oil followed by extra dark color and saturation," says Stefano Ljikovic. "There's a deep sense of richness here that will carry this elegant wine forward throughout the years. Black cherry and chocolate fill the finish."

up Italian at home, it was easy for the enterprising Ljikovic to find work in other New York Italian establishments. Everything changed, however, when he took a vacation to Florida.

"I came to Naples and never left," quips Ljikovic. "I'm still on vacation!" He opened his first restaurant there, Panevino, in 1995, followed by a wine shop. Two years later, he opened Amore Ristorante with his wife, Suzana.

When it comes to wine, though, Ljikovic puts joking aside. "Angelo Gaja is the master of Italian wine," opines the restaurateur, who also serves as the wine buyer. "I've been a fan of GAJA since I opened my first restaurant and wine shop." Ljikovic still fondly recalls meeting Angelo Gaja several years ago: "He changed the way they make wine in Italy," he says.

The heavily Italian list of 250-plus labels includes GAJA wines as diverse as the Ca' Marcanda Vistamare (a coastal Tuscan blend of Vermentino, Viognier, and Fiano) and vertical vintages of Darmagi, the Piemontese Cabernet that broke the rules. (Darmagi, Italian for "what a pity," is what Angelo Gaja's father, Giovanni, said when Angelo told him he was planting Cabernet on sacred Nebbiolo terroir.)

The GAJA Brand Ambassador for Florida, Francesco Balzano of Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, nominated Amore because of its commitment to these wines: "Thanks to Stefano and accounts like his in Florida, we are able to deliver to the highest expectations. It is a true pleasure working with them."

Ljikovic is in turn quick to credit the Southern Glazer's team, with whom he has a longstanding working relationship. "I know their portfolio better than they do," he jokes. The restaurateur also says he knows 80 percent of his clientele by first name: "It's not a tourist destination; it's locals who hang out here." In wine as in the restaurant business, the bottom line for Ljikovic is, "You stay with one path—and you do it right."

ROSEWOOD CORDEVILLE, San Martin, California

LARS CONRAD, Food & Beverage Outlet Manager

Sometimes expertise can't be measured in years. At just 25, Lars Conrad already has an immense amount of training and experience under his belt. Born in Strasbourg, Alsace, to a German mother and French doctor father, Conrad ironically never drank wine at home. He fell into the hotel and restaurant business literally by accident when a knee injury prevented him from pursuing a career in the French military. Conrad instead opted for hospitality training, choosing a profession that (at least in Europe) runs on quasi-military discipline. "In Europe, restaurant work is a career," he notes.

The budding front-of-house pro wound up at The Brando in the tropical paradise of French Polynesia, where he says he "got [his] first professional look into wine, opening \$3,000 and \$4,000 bottles for guests." "It was the best time of my life," Conrad adds.

Moving from the South Pacific to the Rosewood CordeValle, a luxury golf resort in California's Santa Cruz Mountains south of Silicon Valley, was a change of climate—and a chance for new experience—for Conrad. The property is one of several golf destinations owned by Hasso Plattner, the German tech billionaire who co-founded software giant SAP. Plattner is a huge GAJA fan, and the hotel's cellar became a training ground for Conrad in the joys of Piedmont's most revered producer. "Coming to CordeValle was a great opportunity," he says.

PHOTO: CRAIG SHERROD



Lars Conrad calls the GAJA Sito Moresco "an excellent way to introduce people to the fantastic world of GAJA."

Since taking over the program last September, Conrad has enhanced the cellar's already extensive stock of GAJA wines, recently adding GAJA's Sito Moresco, for example. "I would say it's my favorite GAJA wine on the wine list right now," remarks Conrad. "It's an approachable bottle and therefore an excellent way to introduce people to the fantastic world of GAJA. This blend of Nebbiolo, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot is a very refined wine with a beautiful complexity. It's in line with everything GAJA is about."

The collection continues to grow. "My aim is to bring in more vintages," Conrad says. "For the annual December truffle dinner with GAJA wines"—an annual event at the resort and one of its regular Wine Experience offerings—"we'll probably do GAJA's Ca' Marcanda wines."

GAJA Brand Ambassador Joshua Mix, a Wine Manager with American Wine & Spirits (a division of Southern Glazer's), nominated Conrad for the award. "It's great to work with someone so passionate and eager to expand their wine experience," comments Julie Sundean, the Import Specialist with American Wine & Spirits who works directly with Conrad at the account. "Lars has truly improved the wine program at CordeValle, including taking what was already a good GAJA program to the next level."

CARBONE, Las Vegas, Nevada
CHRISTIAN ILIEV, Head Sommelier

During Hristian Iliev's childhood in Varna, Bulgaria, on the Black Sea coast, his grandfather and father both made wine for home consumption. This gave the future sommelier an early impression that "wine makes people happy." But his journey to a career in the industry encountered some twists in the road.

Iliev first came to Minnesota as a 16-year-old involved in Scouting and nature, and "got the idea that [he] wanted to move here." His chance came later when he was playing guitar in a hardcore band and a friend in the underground music scene invited him to Las Vegas. "I never thought I would stay here," admits Iliev. All of that changed when he was introduced to "a very charismatic" Italian Master Sommelier named Angelo Tavernaro, a luminary of the Vegas restaurant scene who had selected wines for the likes of legends like Frank Sinatra. "He brought the passion back into me," says Iliev.

After feeling more firmly set on his career path, Iliev helped open restaurant and lounge miX by Alain Ducasse in 2004. "Wine is constant education, constant learning," says Iliev, "and at miX, I got the chance to work with some great sommeliers and with a great wine program of 2,500 labels."

He stayed with Ducasse for eight years, then moved on to open Carbone in 2015. The New York-based concept by Mario Carbone and partners (with locations in



PHOTO: MONA SHIELD PAVNE

Hristian Iliev shows off a variety of GAJA wines in different bottle formats. "GAJA is all over the list at Carbone," says the sommelier.

Vegas, Manhattan, and Hong Kong) pays homage to the Italian-American restaurants of the mid-20th century, showcasing 1950s and '60s classics complete with showmanship-driven tableside service.

The wine list at Carbone Las Vegas, which is about 60 percent Italian, is entirely Iliev's creation. "I started with 550 labels; now I have 750," he notes. "It took me a year to grow to the level that I have now."

GAJA, unsurprisingly, plays a huge role. "For me, GAJA was always the most

important Italian wine producer," says the sommelier. "I remember having the 1982 GAJA Barbaresco and being amazed. GAJA is all over the list at Carbone—I have all their Italian whites. What I like about GAJA is the variety of formats available, from half bottles to 750s, from magnums to five-liter bottles."

"When you put so much energy into building a list, you feel very attached to it," continues Iliev. "I'm happy with what has been created at Carbone, and I love being part of it." ■

PHOTO: MONA SHIELD PAVNE



"I love GAJA's straight-up Barbaresco," says Hristian Iliev. "A recent bottle of the 1997 showed elegant notes of dried strawberry and raspberry, as well as the pleasant and unique presence of truffles. Aromas of tree sap, dried sage, thyme, and savory create a complex picture of an amazing wine. The tannins were well-integrated and the acid was still vibrant in this elegant expression of Nebbiolo!"

GRAND AWARD OF EXCELLENCE WINNER:

DA MARCO, TEXAS — Nominated by Blake Cooper (Republic National Distributing Company, TX)

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS:

CARBONE, NEVADA — Nominated by Stuart Roy (Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, NV)

AMORE RISTORANTE, FLORIDA — Nominated by Francesco Balzano (Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, FL)

ANGELINA'S KITCHEN, MINNESOTA — Nominated by Jari Kosola (Johnson Brothers, MN)

CORDEVALLE, CALIFORNIA — Nominated by Joshua Mix (Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, Northern California)

THE ELBOW ROOM AT FIDDLER'S ELBOW COUNTRY CLUB, NEW JERSEY — Nominated by Michele Zuckerman (Fedway Associates, NJ)

THE ITALIAN BARREL, LOUISIANA — Nominated by Karen Stone (Republic National Distributing Company, LA)

La Dolce VITA 2.0

SANTA MARGHERITA
GOES BEYOND PINOT GRIGIO
WITH FRESH, BUZZWORTHY WINES
FROM LUGANA AND SARDINIA

BY CLIFF RAMES

Italy's second-largest island, Sardinia (Sardegna in Italian), is rugged, sparse, and mountainous with an ideal Mediterranean grape-growing climate, a wealth of ancient bush vines, and several tasty and trending local grape varieties.

Great wine often celebrates its terroir, exuding characteristics that speak of soil types, climate, and a general sense of place. When you add in sustainable viticultural customs, deep-rooted winemaking traditions, and winery stewardship passed down through generations, you complete the ultimate package of authenticity: the proverbial story-behind-the-wine intrigue so many savvy sommeliers and consumers demand.

With this in mind, the venerable Italian wine group Santa Margherita recently acquired two new picture-perfect properties for its portfolio of premium and ultra-premium wine estates from Italy: Cà Maiol in the Lugana region of Lombardy and Cantina Mesa in Sardinia. With these acquisitions, more than 200 hectares

of vineyards and nine new wines will be imported as part of the family-owned company's mosaic of stellar, industry-leading assets.

of vineyards and nine new wines will be imported as part of the family-owned company's mosaic of stellar, industry-leading assets. When one thinks of Santa Margherita, the iconic, much-loved Pinot Grigio undoubtedly comes to mind, evoking images of *la dolce vita* and *al fresco* dining in Venice. But Kristina Sazama, Santa Margherita USA's Wine Educator, reminds us that the group currently represents ten diverse properties, most of which symbolize classical Italian wine regions like Alto Adige, Prosecco, Tuscany, and the Veneto. "The addition of Cà Maiol and Cantina Mesa wineries expands our depth and provides consumers with new choices of top-quality Italian wines, taking us beyond Pinot Grigio and ushering in lesser-known varieties like Trebbiano di Lugana, Gropello, Marzemino, Carignano, and Vermentino," she explains.

Sazama says Santa Margherita USA will offer selected wines from these estates that deliver styles and price points best suited for the U.S. market. "Lugana and Sardinia are so unique and beautiful. These are wine regions with a long history of winemaking, intriguing stories, and deep-rooted connections to their individual terroirs," she adds. "We are proud to offer a new generation of wine lovers something fresh and exciting; buzzworthy wines that celebrate their regions and exude the authenticity, diversity, and verve consumers seek."

LUGANA

The Lugana DOC wine region fans out across a flat basin—formed during the Ice Age by the southern push of the great Alpine glaciers—on the southern shore of Lake Garda, Italy's largest lake. Surrounded by low morainic hills and moderated by the cooling breezes of the lake, Lugana is defined by its distinctive stratifications of clay and chalk soil. It's also a sweet spot for the Trebbiano di Lugana variety (aka Turbiana or Verdicchio Bianco), a grape that produces an aromatic, refreshing white wine typically favored by thirsty tourists as they eat Lake Garda trout on cypress-shaded verandas.

To the west of Lugana lies the smaller Valtènesi DOC with its clay and gravel soils. The native, dark, and spicy Gropello and Marzemino red grape varieties thrive here, along with smaller quantities of juicy, vibrant red-fruited Barbera and Sangiovese—all typically blended for rosé and fragrant, medium-bodied rosso wines.

Italian journalist Zeffiro Bocci once wrote that Lugana is "two-faced," as it straddles both the culturally- and linguistically-disparate Veneto and Lombardy regions. However, about 90 percent of the small, diamond-shaped Lugana DOC lies within Lombardy, including approximately 1,800 hectares of Trebbiano di Lugana vineyards. The region is home to more than 125 wineries, one of the most distinguished of which is Cà Maiol.

CÀ MAIOL

Recognizing that Lugana's pleasant microclimate and stratified limestone soils create a distinct terroir for wine production, Walter Contato founded Cà Maiol winery in the heart of the region in 1967. Named after the farmhouse ("Cà") built by Sebastiano Maioli in 1710, the winery now features a state-of-the-art cellar and modern tasting room with spectacular views of the vineyards.

Fabio Contato, Walter's son, currently oversees winemaking operations, including management of 140 hectares of estate vineyards and the annual production of 1.5 million bottles. In addition to being the first Lugana winery to receive the prestigious Tre Bicchieri award from Italian food and wine magazine *Gambero Rosso*, Cà Maiol has also been experimenting with organic viticulture. One parcel in the historic Molin vineyard recently achieved formal organic certification.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ISSAC74 VIA 123RF

PHOTO BY WISLAW JAREK VIA 123RF

The Molin Lugana DOP white from Cà Maiol's premium Linea Selezione tier.

Santa Margherita USA will import four Cà Maiol wines: three from the basic Linea Classica portfolio (Lugana bianco, Charetto rosé, and Giomè rosso) and one from the premium Linea Selezione tier (Molin Lugana DOP white). "With no oak, blocked malolactic fermentation [Lugana and Charetto], and minimal lees contact [of 2–4 months], the three wines from the Classica line represent a fresh style that is transparent and true to the varietal characteristics and the Lake Garda terroir," says Sazama. Produced using Trebbiano di Lugana harvested from a 35-year-old estate vineyard, the Molin undergoes 48 hours of cold maceration before fermentation and ages for four months in stainless steel for a richer style.



di Sardegna (widely known as Garnacha or Grenache) is the island's signature grape, accounting for roughly 20 percent of total wine production with approximately 6,300 hectares scattered across the island. The highest-quality vineyards, however, cling to the centrally located, sheep-dotted hills near the city of Nuoro.

With its high levels of resveratrol and antioxidants, Cannonau has garnered positive press in recent years for its purported contribution to human longevity (*National Geographic* and author Dan Buettner last year identified the Ogliastra region of Sardinia as one of five global "Blue Zones," or areas where residents enjoy exceptionally long lifespans). Like the landscape, the wines of Sardinia can be rustic and austere, but a new generation of winemakers has shifted toward crafting more refreshing and approachable styles.

Like Cannonau, Vermentino di Sardegna DOC wines can be produced anywhere on the island, although some of the best vineyards lie in the Gallura DOCG on the island's northern tip, where 1,320 hectares are planted to vine. The vines there have adapted well to the blazing drought conditions and incessant mistral winds. A high-quality, aromatic white variety of unclear origins (some have suggested Spain, others Piedmont), Vermentino is often fermented in stainless steel to preserve freshness and produce a wine that can be slightly fizzy when young, giving way to rich tropical cit-

Cannonau di Sardegna (widely known as Garnacha or Grenache) is Sardinia's signature grape, accounting for roughly 20 percent of total wine production.



rus and pear flavors laced with a distinctive sea-salt minerality.

Sardinia's big red of the south, Carignano (also known as Mazuelo, Carinena, or Carignan) from the 310-hectare Carignano del Sulcis DOC has proven particularly alluring among savvy red wine lovers—largely because of the

many ungrafted, pre-phyloxera bush vines thriving in the region that seem barely anchored to the loose sand. "It literally looks like hydroponics in some vineyards," Sazama says with a laugh. "Carignano is a hearty, drought-resistant cultivar that requires extended heat and well-drained soils to ripen, making it a perfect match for the terroir of Sulcis."

While Carignano is typically relegated to a small blending component in other parts of the world, Carignano del Sulcis DOC bottlings must be Carignano-dominant (at least 85%). These distinctive wines are characterized by firm tannins, bright acid, and a red-berry, balsamic-savory character. With such a fascinating array of native

SARDINIA

Italy's second-largest island, Sardinia (Sardegna in Italian), is rugged, sparse, and mountainous with an ideal Mediterranean grape-growing climate, a wealth of ancient bush vines, and several tasty and trending local grape varieties. Of these, Cannonau

Editor-at-Large Cliff Rames Lends Some Illuminating Tasting Notes

CÀ MAIOL

2017 Lugana DOP (\$15) From the shores of Lake Garda, this zippy, zesty, and mineral-driven Trebbiano di Lugana tantalizes with aromas of lime zest, Asian pear, banana, white flowers, and limestone dust. Vibrant citrus cleanses the palate, depositing notes of apple, lime, and bitter almond like the glacial sediments layered in Lugana's terroir.



Molin 2017 Lugana DOP (\$21) Precise, pure, and pleasing, this old-vine, estate-grown Trebbiano di Lugana exudes

nice balanced and Alpine-clean flavors of pineapple, pear skin, and lemon curd. It finishes fresh and long with savory, lip-smacking wet stone, white pepper, and thyme notes.

Charetto 2017 Valtènesi Riviera del Garda DOP

(\$15) Coral pink and lovely, this lively *rosé d'une nuit*, or "rosé of one night" (the time allowed for skin maceration) is perfumed with peach blossom, freshly picked strawberries, and white almond notes; a quintessential quaffer with



perky flavors of juicy watermelon and iced hibiscus tea that wrap themselves as pretty as a bow around a crystalline mineral core.

Giomè Benaco Bresciano 2016 Rosso IGT (\$15)

Black cherry skins and fragrant violets give way to black pepper spice and dark plum to showcase this ensemble of native Gropello with Marzemino, Barbera, and Sangiovese. Each variety is vinified separately in stainless steel and blended to create this medium-bodied, approachable, and spicy red licked by fine tannins and lifted by bright acidity.

grape varieties and diverse styles of wine, it's no wonder that Santa Margherita decided to acquire one of the most exciting wineries on the island: Cantina Mesa.

CANTINA MESA

Nestled about a mile from the sea in an idyllic valley near Sant'Anna Arresi, Cantina Mesa's snow-white walls reflect the brilliant Sardinian sunlight. To the roving eye, they stand in stark contrast to the dark, thick *macchia mediterranea* shrubland in the hills beyond, which shelter the winery and its vineyards from the mistral winds.

Founded in 2004 by Gavino Sanna, the estate comprises 70 hectares, with the

majority of its vineyards located in the Carignano del Sulcis DOC. The winery, which produces 750,000 bottles annually, will import five of these wines into the United States: two Vermentino di Sardegna DOC whites (Primo Bianco; Giunco); one Cannonau di Sardegna DOC (Primo Scuro Rosso); and two Carignano del Sulcis DOC reds (Buio and Buio Buio). As with Cà Maiol, Cantina Mesa's winemaking is minimalist: Fermentation and maturation occur in stainless steel to spotlight the pure varietal character and terroir without oak (the exception is the Buio Buio Carignano Riserva, which ages for 12 months in a mix of used barriques and stainless steel).

Sazama assures *The SOMM Journal* that the Marzotto family, who owns the Santa Margherita wine group, shares the same passion, pride, and commitment to the quality and reputation of Lugana and Sardinian wines as the Contato and Sanna families, who will remain involved with their respective wineries to ensure continuity. "With the addition of Cà Maiol and Cantina Mesa to the Santa Margherita portfolio, we look forward to elevating the profile and popularity of the two regions while providing geeky wine lovers with authentic new choices—flavorful and characterful wines your guests will love to discover," she says. **SJ**



The Cantina Mesa estate in the hills of Sardinia.

CANTINA MESA

Primo Bianco 2017 Vermentino di Sardegna DOC (\$15) Straw yellow and snappy, this delicately aromatic, unoaked white offers up notes of white flowers, Mediterranean citrus, and freshly picked apricots. Soft acids lend elegance to the mouthfeel as vibrancy and tartness give lift to the zesty yellow-fruit flavors and savory mineral notes. A great-value island wine!

Giunco 2017 Vermentino di Sardegna DOC (\$21) If the Sardinian sun could liquify, it would be the color of this wine. Several golden hues deeper than the Primo, the nose is richer, too—complex and exotically perfumed with jasmine, mango, apricot, and chalk. Embedded in the generous, almost-oily mouthfeel are pi-

quant flavors of ripe pineapple, grapefruit pith, white peach, and a thread of sea salt minerality that persist like the warmth of a summer day at Spiaggia della Dune.

Primo Scuro 2016 Rosso Cannonau di Sardegna DOC (\$15) Despite a luminous ruby color, this supple-yet-spirited Cannonau is precocious and punchy. It packs lots of sour cherry, pomegranate, red plum, and spicy Mediterranean herb flavors that fortify the paradoxically refined and juicy mouthfeel, so soothing with its warm and persistent vinous glow and lingering, savory red-fruit notes.

Buio Buio 2015 Carignano del Sulcis DOC (\$40) Produced from ungrafted, bush-trained vines in the extreme southwest Sulcis region, this Carignano



bursts with wild-cherry and dark-berry aromas with hints of balsamic, Mediterranean scrub brush, rose hip, and warm spice. The palate is silky yet structured, the tannins refined and plush, the fruit bright and juicy, and the sandstone and sandy loam terroir manifested by dark, earthy notes on a graceful, sustained finish.

All wines are imported by Santa Margherita USA and are expected to become available in the U.S. market in June.

Message in the Bottles

ENJOYING THE NEW
PREMIUM FLAVORS OF
GEHRICKE WINES

by Chris Sawyer
photos by Alexander Rubin

AS A FOURTH-GENERATION VINTNER in Sonoma's iconic Sebastiani family, August Sebastiani has already done an admirable job of preserving his family's lofty reputation. Since establishing 3 Badge Beverage Corporation in 2014, Sebastiani has created an expressive series of successful premium spirits brands and fun, playful wines that have, until now, featured ingredients primarily sourced outside of Sonoma County.

*August Sebastiani,
fourth-generation
vintner at Gehricke
Wines, with
Winemaker Alex
Beloz in Sonoma, CA.*



That trend has started to shift with the recent development of the Gehricke brand: the company's first line of premium wines made exclusively with world-class grapes grown closer to home. According to Sebastiani, it's an evolution with purpose. "We are actively pursuing a transition of our portfolio and a pivot to our mission. I say that on a grand scale, especially when you talk about my family and where we've been with wine," he tells *The SOMM Journal*. "Over time it's been a multi-generation shift from agriculture, to branded jug wines that were specifically bottom-shelf retail, to my dad and his generation trading up to bottled wine and branding wine that was more premium in that regard as well."

After several successful years spent testing the brand in the market, Sebastiani hired gifted winemaker Alex Beloz—who has worked with high-quality grapes from Sonoma County for nearly two decades—to take the label to the next level in 2015.

The fruit for the Pinot Noir program comes from three properties located in the northwestern section of the Los Carneros AVA in southern Sonoma County. First is Martin Ranch, which is generally warm during the day but cools down rapidly in the mid-afternoon due to strong winds blowing in from the Petaluma Gap. Across the road is the Kiser Vine-



The Gehricke 2014 Pinot Noir from Los Carneros.



The Gehricke 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon from the Knights Valley AVA in Sonoma County.



The Gehricke 2016 Chardonnay from the Russian River Valley.

yard, another premium site owned and farmed by Michael and Steve Sangiacomo of Sangiacomo Family Vineyards. Newer to the fold is Rodgers Creek Vineyard, a high-elevation site that rests on the cusp of where the Petaluma Gap, Sonoma Coast, and Sonoma Mountain appellations intersect off of Highway 116 between Sonoma and Petaluma.

While each of these sites contribute fruit from special Pinot Noir clones planted in clay-based soils, the grapes are influenced by slight variations of wind currents based on their location and row orientations, as well as the age of the vines. As a result, the Gehricke team keeps a close watch on each block to maximize the flavors at harvest, especially if there are any threats of heat spikes in the forecast. "To me, it's that 'bing' moment when I feel the fruit is ready to go," Beloz explains. "For that reason, there is a very small window of opportunity because I don't want the grapes to be underripe or suddenly overripe."

Once picked, the fruit is initially tank-fermented. While Beloz likes to keep a small portion of the whole cluster intact, especially with the pristine Pommard clone fruit from the Kiser Vineyard, he also makes sure the impact isn't overly dominant in the finished blend. "While I like what it does, I still need to make sure the whole-cluster portion doesn't overpower the



August Sebastiani, a proud Sonoma native.

flavors," he explains. "It's like using a tool from a spice box, except realizing a little can go a long way."

The end result is a more sophisticated Pinot Noir style with layers of deep fruit flavors, bright acidity, and a gracious finish. "I like the fact that it has more of my thumbprint on it," says Beloz. "The finished wine is so much cleaner and has more focused extraction, complex flavors, and balance."

This focus on working with fruit from high-quality sites carries over to the other segments of the Gehricke red wine program. The Zinfandel, for instance, is made with fruit from gnarly, head-trained old vines grown in the Russian River Valley's Ponzio Vineyard, which Beloz jokingly describes as a "weed patch."

To add more depth, flavor, and color, Beloz typically blends in 8–10 percent from equally gnarly Petite Sirah grown at the vineyard. "You almost have to cover your

eyes when you look at the clusters," says Beloz. "One part is ripe and the other part is raisin-y, and that's just one cluster. But anyone who works with Zinfandel has a stomach for it. In the end, it's really good fruit, so if you have a great site and farm it right, it's bulletproof."

Getting from Grape to Bottle

By contrast, the Gehricke Cabernet Sauvignon sources fruit from the Bavarian Lion Vineyard in Knights Valley. As a sub-appellation of Sonoma County located east of Healdsburg, this area features gravelly soils; they benefit from the hot days and cool nights, allowing flavors to develop slowly.

To fill out the mid-palate, Beloz adds a small portion of Malbec from Arrowhead Mountain Vineyard in Sonoma Valley to produce an elegant wine with distinctive notes of blackberry jam, ripe blueberry, mulberry, fresh mint, and baking spices.

Finally, the fruit for the Chardonnay program comes from the Chalk Ridge Vineyard in the eastern segment of the Russian River Valley. Hand-picked, pressed cold, fermented in barrel, and kept on the lees until the finished blend is made, the end result is a sophisticated white wine with class and style. "It's classic California winemaking, but with more of a light touch and not too much new oak," Beloz says. "For these reasons, the emphasis is put on preserving the freshness of flavors and making sure there is plenty of firm acidity to keep the wine lively and not an over-oaked-style Chardonnay."

In the end, as Sebastiani tells it, 3 Badge's recent evolution in the winemaking sphere has been "about building the narrative and sending messages through [its] wines that [the brand] is committed to producing premium wines from this point forward."

"As a negociant, you do everything to get from grape to bottle. In some cases, it's about buying in bulk or buying shiners," he adds. "But thanks to the help of Alex, this brand is more about getting our fingers purple and looking three to five vintages ahead. Equally important is the fact that it's not just about the Pinot program either: It's about spreading the world-class quality across all the wines in the portfolio."

Yet, as a fourth-generation member of a family wine business, Sebastiani is well aware that his brands' legacy extends far beyond the reception to Gehricke's latest vintages.



August Sebastiani and Alex Beloz have a bit of fun between shots.

"It's also providing an opportunity for our next generation to step in and start telling stories about the brands that we started and to fill the sizable shoes from the generations before me through my dad, his dad, and his dad as well," he says. **§**

1909
SAGAMORE SPIRIT



**FOR YOUR PORCH. FOR YOUR PARTY.
FOR YOUR SPIRIT.**

WWW.SAGAMORESPIRIT.COM | [#SHAREYOURSPIRIT](https://twitter.com/SHAREYOURSPIRIT)

Share Your
—SPIRIT—

{ cover story }

the
PATHE
forward

**FIFTH-GENERATION PROPRIETOR
FEDERICA ROSY BOFFA PIO IS THE FUTURE OF
TIME-HONORED WINERY PIO CESARE**

by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

Pio Cesare's Ornato
Vineyard in the Barolo
region of Serralunga
d'Alba.

it's

May, and the steep hillsides of northern Italy's Langhe Hills are blanketed by lush grasses lined by endless rows of budding young vines. Precipitous clouds linger in a feeble attempt to mask the majestic Alps that tower over the lofty estates.

Wine is the bloodline of this region, which is home to some of the world's most revered grapes. For hundreds of years, its wines have been praised by aristocracy and world leaders alike, among them Thomas Jefferson. The central city of Alba was once home to many producers here, but today only one winery remains in the ancient historical center of the city: Pio Cesare.

Visitors can stumble upon remnants of this history in every corner of the property. The Pio Cesare house was built during medieval times on top of Roman walls dating back to 50 B.C.—reminders of the ancient city that once stood here.



The present and future of Pio Cesare from left to right: Federica Rosy Boffa Pio, Pio Boffa, and Cesare Benvenuto Pio.



The first Pio Cesare wine was bottled in 1890. The family keeps an extensive library of old bottlings, including some of their first vintages.

The cellar, meanwhile, encompasses an expansive labyrinth of rooms spanning four underground levels, the lowest of which sits beneath the Tanaro river. For more than 135 years, the distinguished wines of Pio Cesare have been made within these hallowed walls.

As this history unfolded, the family winemakers passed down their knowledge through each generation to create classical expressions that speak to the soils and traditions of this region. "When my great-grandfather, Cesare Pio, started his mission in 1881, he was one of the first to fully embrace the newly introduced practice of fermenting Nebbiolo grapes from Barbaresco and Barolo completely dry, and all his wines were completely dry," explains Pio Boffa, a fourth-generation vintner who

joined his father, Giuseppe Boffa, in managing the winery in 1973. The youngest of three siblings, Pio was the only one who chose to work for the family business.

After high school, he spent a harvest at a family friend's winery in California. This friend happened to be Robert Mondavi, and in addition to the experience he gleaned during his time there, Pio also gained a sense of admiration. Pio Cesare wines were well-known by that time, and it made him proud of the brand his father had built. "I came back with a lot of new ideas, because California, at that time, was really ahead of the Old World," he recalls.

The winery we know today was built through the steadfast leadership of Pio and his father, but now Pio is prepared to pass the reins to the next genera-

{ cover story }

tion: Federica Rosy Boffa Pio, his only daughter, and Cesare Benvenuto Pio, his sister's son. Coincidentally, Boffa Pio's path parallels her father's in many ways. Pio was 43 when his daughter was born, the same difference in age as he and his father. Although he had always hoped she would join him in leading the company, he never pressured her to do so and wasn't sure of her intentions. "A few weeks after she graduated high school, she came by my office to say hi," Pio recalls. The winery was expected at an event in the Arena di Verona and Boffa Pio had overheard her father say that no one was available to represent them. "Can I go?" she asked. "My pen literally dropped . . . It's easy to say that was the best day of my life," Pio says proudly.

Although Boffa Pio admits to being rather shy, her discerning wit and thoughtfulness is immediately apparent upon meeting her. She seems to have inherited another trait directly from her father and grandfather: "I never just do something I'm told to do. I always do what I want, otherwise, I won't do it," she explains. At the moment, her involvement in Pio Cesare is limited by her demanding schedule at the University of Turin, where she's earning her degree in business administration. Like her father, Boffa Pio believed



"This has always been in my DNA. I just had to spend some time digging inside myself to find that this was my path," Federica Rosy Boffa Pio says of her decision to lead the future of Pio Cesare.

Located in Serralunga d'Alba in the Barolo DOCG, the 16-acre Ornato Vineyard is often referred to as "the amphitheater" due to its steep, 40-degree south-facing slopes that sit at an elevation of 380 meters above sea level.



The family behind Pio Cesare: In the back row, Cesare Benvenuto Pio, fourth-generation proprietor Pio Boffa, and Boffa's cousin Augusto; in the front row, Nicoletta Boffa with her and Pio's daughter, Federica Rosy Boffa Pio. Benvenuto Pio and Boffa Pio represent the fifth generation of family leadership at the winery.



Langhe Chardonnay

Although tradition plays a critical role at Pio Cesare, Pio believes each generation should be allowed to express themselves in leading the company and carving new paths for the brand—just as he did with the Langhe Chardonnay.

After his internship with Mondavi, Pio believed his home region lacked ageworthy white wines on par with the prestigious reds of Barolo and Barbaresco. When the opportunity arose to replant a southeast-facing block at Il Bricco vineyard in Treiso, he suggested they plant Chardonnay. “At that time, it was sacrilege,” remarks Benvenuto Pio, as no one had considered planting such a variety in Barbaresco. Pio’s father agreed, and in 1985 the winery released its first commercial Chardonnay. A few years before, winemaking legend Angelo Gaja of GAJA released his own version of the variety, and the two wineries became the first to produce a Langhe Chardonnay without knowing one another’s intentions.

Pio Cesare 2017 Chardonnay L'Altro Langhe DOC (\$27) L'Altro, meaning “the other,” is the fresh, young counterpart to the traditional, single-vineyard Piodilei. Tropical aromas of passionfruit spring from the glass and are mimicked on the palate, where they're framed by chalky minerality, hints of toasted almonds, and briny acidity.



Pio Cesare 2015 Chardonnay Piodilei Langhe DOC (\$46) The 2015 marks the 30th anniversary release of this single-vineyard bottling from Pio Cesare's Il Bricco Vineyard in the Barbaresco region. The wine is barrel-fermented and aged on the lees in French oak barrels (roughly 33 percent new) for ten months. With an extremely low yield resulting in just 800 cases (10,000 bottles), this embodies the cellar-worthy white wine Pio first envisioned in the late 1970s.



Beyond the classic French oak aromas of spicy cardamom and brûlée crust, the palate reveals the unique profile of Langhe Chardonnay. Ripe, yellow peach with distinctly mineral-like architecture is laced by the vanillin-baking spice characteristics of the oak and drenched in mouthwatering acidity.

{ cover story }

it was crucial to study business from a technical standpoint as she instead learned the fundamentals of viticulture and enology through hands-on training. She finds time to represent Pio Cesare as often as possible, pouring at events all over the world during her time off from school.

The charismatic Benvenuto Pio, meanwhile, joined his uncle at Pio Cesare in 2000 and has been actively involved ever since. He's a strong advocate for both the winery's winemaking traditions and the quality of the wines they produce: "I do it for the wine; the answer is in the glass," he says.

New Heights for Estate Vineyards

In the early '70s, Pio Cesare started to acquire vineyards of its own. Prior to that, many wineries purchased their grapes in Alba's Piazza Savona. Like many other esteemed producers of the time, Pio Cesare maintained "gentlemen agreements" with the same growers each year, which ensured rigid quality standards.

In 1974, the family purchased Il Bricco; previously owned by a grower whom they'd worked with for many years, the property was their first estate vineyard in the Barbaresco DOCG. In 1979, they acquired the esteemed Ornato Vineyard, an impressive, south-facing amphitheater in the Barolo DOCG. Today, their production is nearly 100-percent estate grown with carefully-selected properties that predominantly span throughout the Barolo and Barbaresco regions. These properties sit between 300–420 meters (984–1,378 feet) above sea level, an elevation generally considered to be ideal for Nebbiolo.

The region, however, has witnessed significant climatic shifts over the past few decades. Decreasing snowpack and rainfall as well as extended heat waves spurred Pio to take action: Just



"This is Pio Cesare," Cesare Benvenuto Pio, a member of Pio Cesare's fifth generation, says of the winery's barrel room. "This is the reason why we didn't leave Alba to build a new winery."

The Pio Cesare property known as Il Bricco, which means "the peak of the hill," is located in the town of Treiso in the Barbaresco DOCG.



before our interview, he purchased 50 acres that sit at an elevation of 630 meters (2,067 feet). "We have spent all our lives as producers trying to identify the best south-facing slopes in this region and trying to acquire the grapes in these locations. Now, it's funny that at this stage in our career, we must tell our kids, 'South-facing slopes are great. They've always been the best spots, but consider something else too,'" Pio says.

Barolo and Barbaresco are dry-farmed by law, but in 2013, Italy's Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged the severity of the region's heat waves and began allowing for emergency irrigation. Yet, as Pio says he was quick to point out, how do you water more than 170 acres of vines without an irrigation system and reservoir already in place? And in conditions of drought, where do you draw your water from when crops and people come first?

Luckily, Nebbiolo's persistent roots are able to dig deep beneath the soil in search of moisture, so while Pio doesn't believe that quality has been compromised, he hasn't stopped preparing for future obstacles. "It's a period in my life that is difficult and exciting, because it's a challenge that's not easy to solve," Pio says thoughtfully. Boffa Pio, meanwhile, is optimistic: "I think with technology and innovation, we will find a way to handle these challenges," she says. SJ

The 2014 Vintage in Barolo and Barbaresco

While Pio Cesare's single-vineyard bottlings speak to a specific location, the Barolo and Barbaresco "classics" are meant to paint a picture of both the region and the vintage. These wines are produced in a similar fashion to the single-vineyard bottlings, with minimal intervention and roughly 24 months of aging in French and Slavonian oak—primarily in large casks and 35 percent in small barriques—as well as one year of aging in bottle prior to release. The family is directly involved in every stage of the winemaking and grape-growing process; they also oversee the final blending for every bottling and work closely with Paolo Fenocchio, Pio Cesare's Enologist and Head Winemaker who has been with the company since 1981.

As Benvenuto Pio explains, "2014 was a good harvest and vintage in the Barolo and Barbaresco area." "We had a wet July, but we recuperated a lot in August and September. We are very proud of the vintage as it shows a good combination of both tannins from a great vintage combined with an approachable taste due to perfect long ripening on the cluster during the growing season," he adds. Overall, yields for Barolo and Barbaresco were considerably smaller in 2014 with a 40 percent reduction in production. However, the vintage is also more accessible in its youth with lush fruit and softer tannins.



Pio Cesare 2014 Barbaresco DOCG (\$75)

The wine is composed of four estate vineyards: three in the village of Treiso, primarily Il Bricco, and one in the commune of Alba. Benvenuto Pio noted that his grandfather valued the Barbarescos from this area, as they expressed a similar masculinity found in Barolo with greater structure, aging potential, and muscle. This wine has cologne-like aromas with juicy, red fruit on the mid-palate, as well as slight undertones of amaretto, burnt sugar, and dried orange.



Pio Cesare 2014 Barolo DOCG (\$75)

Crafted from a selection of seven vineyards, including the Ornato Vineyard, located throughout four Barolo villages, this wine is the flagship of Pio Cesare. Sensual, muscular, and intensely-perfumed with notes of orange peel, graphite, rose hips, and dried red cherries, it shows a fleshiness on the mid-palate as its beautiful acidity balances grippy tannins that are tightly structured but not overbearing.

A capricious arroyo, usually a mild-mannered stream in late spring, trickles through the Murrieta's Well estate property.

true

BLENDS

The historical gravity-flow winery at Murrieta's Well in Livermore, CA.



AN IMMERSIVE HISTORY OF MURRIETA'S WELL AND ITS WINE DUO THE WHIP AND THE SPUR

by Diane Denham / photos by Orbie Pullen

~~~~~

**B**ordeaux showed us long ago that combining certain grape varieties can elevate a wine beyond the sum of its individual parts. I find it refreshing to discover well-made blended wines from a real place with an authentic story—and it's a bonus if they're affordable, as well.

I recently encountered two wines that fit that profile here in the United States: The Whip and The Spur, a pair of white and red wine blends produced by Murrieta's Well in California's Livermore Valley.

Sourced exclusively from estate fruit, these wines have an interesting history and impressive pedigree. In 1884, Founder Louis Mel brought vine cuttings from Château Margaux and Château d'Yquem to California and planted them on the enchanting Livermore Valley property he had purchased for his wife.

The Mels planted vineyards and olive trees on the estate, which they named Olea Vista. Louis sold the property and the gravity-flow winery he'd built into a hillside to his friend and neighbor Ernest Wenté—a member of what's now one of California's oldest winegrowing families—in 1933. In 1990, Philip Wenté and Sergio Traverso revitalized the estate, naming it Murrieta's Well after the outlaw Joaquin Murrieta, who is said to have watered his stolen horses at the artesian well on the property.

Murrieta's Well remains part of the Wenté family's estate to this day, and the 500-acre property has proved an ideal vineyard site. Its varied soil types and elevations, combined with a climate built for viticulture, provide hospitable growing conditions for an astounding number of varieties: 21 in total. Murrieta's Well Winemaker Robbie Meyer says it's this broad palette of estate fruit that



*Murrieta's Well Winemaker  
Robbie Meyer.*

makes his job “fun”—a word Meyer uses often. He's an energetic guy with a spring in his step, an impish grin, and a childlike enthusiasm which belie the number of vintages he has under his belt (22 or 23, by his count).

Over the years, Meyer has worked for some of the top wineries in Sonoma and Napa. During a stint at Peter Michael Winery, he befriended fifth-generation winemaker Karl D. Wenté, who was an intern there at the time. “Later, when he returned to Wenté, he would invite me over to taste with the winemaking team,” Meyer says. Eventually, the tastings he did “just for fun” led to a job offer to steer the small-production viticulture and enology program at Murrieta's Well.

## *Harnessing Earth and Air*

Meyer emphatically contends that the diversity of soils, elevations, and vineyard aspects available over the estate gives The Whip and The Spur a qualitative edge, setting the wines apart within the increasingly-popular blend category. “You see a lot of blends out there in the marketplace, but how many are 100 percent estate-

*Inside the Murrieta's Well winery, the original exposed beams and cobblestone are juxtaposed with an elegant chandelier.*



**THE DIVERSITY OF SOILS, ELEVATIONS, AND VINEYARD ASPECTS AVAILABLE OVER THE 500-ACRE ESTATE GIVES THE WHIP AND THE SPUR A QUALITATIVE EDGE, SETTING THE WINES APART WITHIN THE INCREASINGLY-POPULAR BLEND CATEGORY.**

driven fruit?" Meyer wonders. "Here, it's not like someone shows up with 20 tons of Chardonnay and we say, 'Yeah, we'll buy that and we'll throw it into our blends.' That's not what we're doing. We're farming acre by acre with intention."

At Murrieta's Well, "farming with intention" manifests in true site optimization, from variety and clonal selections to trellising and pruning decisions. The topography and corresponding soils types are just one of many factors Meyer and his team must consider: "Generally speaking, we say that we have three different soil types. We find sand and the heavier cobblestones near the arroyo [a river bed that runs through the Murrieta's Well estate], and sand and the lighter gravel deposits where the arroyo has altered its path. The tops of the hills have heavier clays."

To Meyer, however, describing the soil this way seems a bit too succinct. "I like to argue that there are a lot of gray areas out there, too, in places where the soils overlap," he says. Hillside erosion causes

some of that overlapping, but the estate vineyards' fingers of alluvial soil are the arroyo's doing. Horses lounge lazily under the shade trees on its banks when it runs dry during the summer months, but the scene isn't nearly so bucolic in winter: That's when the roiling waters from the annual rainstorms eventually force the arroyo to change course.

If you visit Murrieta's Well, you won't have to dig a hole to see the soil diversity Meyer's referring to—just take a walk around the tasting room. Formerly the long-neglected gravity-flow winery built by Louis Mel, the space still contains the exposed original walls. Constructed from cobblestones, sand, and gravel found on the property, they're a tangible reminder of the natural and human history of the estate.

Standing on the tasting room terrace, you'll also get a great visual of the Livermore Valley's climatic influences. In the distance, past the picturesque vistas of the vineyards and the valley, you can't miss the gigantic, flailing white arms of a wind farm.



**Robbie Meyer visits with a horse on the property.**

"Unlike the Napa and Sonoma valleys that run north to south, the Livermore Valley runs east to west," Meyer explains. "That positioning provides a direct opening to the cool air coming off the Pacific through the Golden Gate. It's like a big alleyway straight off the ocean."

Pointing to the windmills, he adds, "Those wind machines let you know there's quite a bit of airflow coming

through here, and that makes all the difference in growing conditions. Just imagine if that opening were cut off—it would be too hot here to make good wine because there wouldn't be enough diurnal temperature variation to grow quality grapes."

Luckily, that persistent stream of cool air permits those aforementioned 21 grape varieties to thrive in the estate vineyards. It's a little more complex than simply listing the varieties, so I ask Meyer



to go into more detail. He chooses Sauvignon Blanc as a good example of why an enumeration doesn't even begin to tell the story. "Because of all the vineyard variables, Sauvignon Blanc farmed on one part of the estate is not going to be the

same as the Sauvignon Blanc grown in another part," he explains. "That's why, when it comes time to harvest, I pick by individual lots. Those individual lots will all be made separately and will go into barrel and age separately."

### *An Aromatic Allure*

In Meyer's mission to make well-balanced, food-friendly wines, he says crafting releases "that deliver beautiful aromatics" is critical—especially with the white blend, The Whip. The specifics of the blend vary from year to year, but you can tell Meyer enjoys playing with the possible combinations.

The 2016 vintage of The Whip, for example, is an amalgam of Semillon (24%), Chardonnay (21%), Sauvignon Blanc (33%), Orange Muscat (12%), and Viognier (10%). The final combination results in an elegantly-structured wine with bright acidity that's balanced by a hint of sweetness on the finish. The floral aromas are reminiscent of spring citrus blossoms with complementary white peach and melon notes on the palate, solidifying The Whip as a multidimensional, summery wine with sophisticated allure.

Meanwhile, the 2015 vintage of the red wine blend, The Spur, could best be de-

scribed as a balanced composition of Old World varieties crafted with a California sensibility. There's boldness offered by the Cabernet Sauvignon (48%) and structure from the Petite Sirah (20%), while the other varieties—Petit Verdot (8%), Merlot (18%), and Cabernet Franc (6%)—add subtle nuances.

Another benefit of the winery's adherence to site-specific farming and attentive, small-lot winemaking is that some of the individual lots will become exclusive offerings for lucky Murrieta's Well club members. Meyer describes the complex winemaking process with breathless excitement: "I might have an Orange Muscat or Muscat Canelli to add in, or this year maybe the Viognier is very aromatic, and I can add that," he says. "Then, once I get the wine to smell beautiful with the addition of those varieties, then it's time to go for the body and mid-palate."

And that's when Meyer finds a way to insert his favorite word yet again: "Once those wines are complete, that's when the fun begins," he continues with a grin. "The property is so dynamic, it's fun to make these blends that we see as a 'survey' of all the varieties we can grow successfully on the property." ■

*The rolling vineyards of Murrieta's Well.*



# The POWER and PRESTIGE of

# pasos

NEARLY 40 SOMMS AND BUYERS DESCEND ON THE VAST CALIFORNIA REGION FOR **CAB CAMP**

by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

In just a few short decades, the rural community of Paso Robles has developed a world-renowned reputation for its Bordeaux-style beauties that can hold their own against the classics of both the famed French region and Napa Valley. Warm, arid conditions, calcium-rich soils, vast diurnal temperature variations, and an overabundance of passionate personalities account for the region's successes with these wines, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon. In fact, roughly 50 percent of the region is now planted to the "king of grapes."

In celebration of these beloved varieties, the Paso Robles CAB (Cabernet and Bordeaux) Collective hosted its fourth annual CAB Camp co-sponsored by *The SOMM Journal*. Nearly 40 sommeliers and wine buyers attended the retreat—twice what was expected, proving the wine community has indeed taken notice.



A view from DAOU Vineyards & Winery in the Adelaida District AVA.

# day 1

After checking into the beautiful Allegretto Vineyard Resort, our group of somms was shuttled to the historic Santa Margarita Ranch AVA. There, we glided across five ziplines overlooking the southernmost Paso Robles subregion. The 14,000-acre ranch was initially cultivated in 1998 by the Mondavi family, who leased the land and planted nearly 1,000 acres of vines over the course of three years. "That's tens of millions of dollars that they invested in this terroir," said Mike Sinor, Director of Winemaking for Ancient Peaks Winery. "That's how much potential the Mondavi family saw in this piece of land."



**CAB Camp participants from left to right: Tom Myers, Winemaker, Castoro Cellars; Damian Grindley, Winemaker, Brecon Estate; Daniel Daou, Winemaker, DAOU Vineyards & Winery; Cynthia Lohr, Trade and Brand Advocate/Co-Owner, J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines; Gary Eberle, Owner, Eberle Winery; and Ryan Bosc, Assistant Winemaker, Adelaida Vineyards & Winery.**



**Somms zip across the vineyards at Ancient Peaks Winery in the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA.**

After the sale of Mondavi Winery, Owners Doug Filipponi, Karl Wittstrom, and Rob Rossi bought back their lease and launched Ancient Peaks Winery in 2005. "We have 17 varieties planted here now," said Filipponi, who explained that the ranch's broad diversity in both micro-climates and soil types makes some areas better suited for cool-climate varieties like Pinot Noir. "That's why the sub-AVAs they created here all make sense, because Paso is not just Paso. It's so diverse," he added.

Once our heart rates calmed post-zipline, we made our way to an elegant luncheon at the winery's Oyster Ridge event space. There, we were greeted with glasses of the Ancient Peaks 2017 Sauvignon Blanc: an aromatherapy experience that awakened our senses with mouthwatering acidity and notes of fresh guava and golden berries.

Over lunch, we tasted through the stellar Ancient Peaks lineup of Bordeaux varietals (SRPs average around \$20) as we received an overview of Paso Robles: one of the fastest-growing appellations in California. When the AVA was established in 1983, there were only around 5,000 acres planted to vine and a handful of wineries in operation. The wine community has grown dramatically since then, and total plantings have increased to more than 40,000 acres.



*The first Cabernet Sauvignon tasting for the Paso Robles CAB Camp was held in Eberle Winery's underground caves.*

"I think everyone here is doing a fantastic job of trying to overdeliver for price," said Ancient Peaks Vice President of Operations Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins. "Because we are a newer region, we know that the only way we're going to gain market share is to be better than everyone else around us."

After lunch, we made our way to the Paso Robles Geneseo District AVA to meet up with our Cabernet Sauvignon panel at Eberle Winery, where we found its legendary winemaker Gary Eberle sitting at his usual post outside the tasting room to greet us. Our tasting and discussion was led by representatives from some of the region's most esteemed wineries, including Eberle, Tom Myers from Castoro Cellars, Damian Grindley from Brecon Estate, Ryan Bosc from Adelaida Vineyards & Winery, and Daniel Daou from DAOU Vineyards & Winery.

The tasting was designed to highlight the distinct characteristics found in Cabernet throughout Paso Robles. Eberle, one of the region's most beloved pioneers, told us, "I get a lot of accolades for planting the first Syrah in the area, but I came to Paso Robles to make Cabernet, which, in my opinion, is the finest wine that can be made from Paso Robles."

The discussion touched on differences in climate conditions and soil profiles found in each of the winemakers' respective sub-AVAs. "As you get farther from the Templeton Gap, things do get warmer and that's not bad. In fact, it can be good in many cases depending on the vintage," noted Myers, who just celebrated his 40th harvest in Paso Robles.

Climate isn't the only difference in these sub-AVAs. The fault that runs along Highway 101 accounts for variances in soil profiles, with more alluvial, sandy compositions to the east and more marine soils to the west. Daou, one of the CAB Collective's principal founders, expressed his enthusiasm for the budding region as he compared its soils to those of Bordeaux with a climate resembling Napa's. "When you have these calcareous soils combined with warm temperatures, it allows for wines that are fully ripened with texture and minerality," Daou said.

The day concluded at Treana Wines with a dinner hosted by second-generation winegrower Austin Hope. When the Hope family moved to Paso Robles, the area was filled with orchards, grain farmers, and grazing cattle; now, as the vineyards have expanded, many of those



*The lineup of Paso Robles-based Cabernet Sauvignons.*



*Hope Family Wines President and Winemaker Austin Hope (right) mingles with the somms.*

former businesses have transitioned to viticulture. "It's a sign of how great this area is, right? We wouldn't keep growing as a region if we didn't have something to offer," Hope told us.

# day 2

Snuggled in scarves and sweaters, the brisk morning air stung our faces as we embarked for a visit of two San Antonio Winery estate vineyards. First, we met with Vineyard Manager Lee Alegre, Assistant Viticulturist Nancy DeRuchie, and Assistant Winemaker Daniel Krichevsky, who gave us a tour of the newly planted properties: the Maddalena and Stefano vineyards, named for second-generation owners Maddalena and Stefano Riboli, who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary last year. The 101-year-old winery has found tremendous success in its collaborations with growers in the region since the 1980s and now boasts four Paso-based estate properties, as well as a new, state-of-the-art winery.

The Maddalena and Stefano vineyards are located in the El Pomar District east of Highway 101, falling within a corridor of the Templeton Gap's cooling, afternoon breezes. Despite their 1-mile proximity, there are distinct differences in the soil composition of the two properties. Highly calcareous Linne-Calodo soils, which hold more water and increase the acidity in the grapes, are found at Maddalena; the rocky, Arbuckle-Positas soils at Stefano, meanwhile, increase



**Overlooking Stefano Vineyard, the somms tasted barrel samples from the Maddalena Vineyard in the El Pomar District AVA among other San Antonio Winery selections.**

drainage and hold more heat.

To experience this variation, we tasted neutral barrel samples of the 2017 Malbec from the two sites. The Maddalena was noticeably juicier with higher-toned, concentrated blue fruit while the Stefano was rounder with more plush, purple fruit.

Next, we made our way toward the Templeton Gap District AVA to tour Castoro Cellars' Whale Rock Vineyard. Named for the fossilized whale bones uncovered there, the vineyard is 100 percent organic certified by California Certified Organic

Farmers (CCOF) and sits at an elevation of roughly 1,200 feet above sea level.

We bumped along in the back of a tractor and sipped on tank samples of the winery's estate Falanghina, which exuded floral/honey tones and a slight spritz that made for a delicious breakfast. Totaling around 140 acres, the estate is carefully managed to proactively fight pests and diseases: Cover crops are planted and



**A whale fossil found at Castoro Cellars' Whale Rock Vineyard.**



**The Paso Robles Bordeaux blends at J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines.**



**A raven perches on Darren English, Associate Wine Buyer for Wine.com, during the Conservation Ambassadors' Zoo to You program. The Paso Robles-based group provides a home for wild and exotic animals that have been displaced, abused, or abandoned.**



**Eric Jensen, Winemaker/Owner of Booker Wines, welcomes the somm campers to his tasting room.**

every other row is mowed to encourage the presence of beneficial insects while heightening competition among the vines to improve quality.

The CAB Campers then headed to J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines for a panel discussion and tasting. Cynthia Lohr, Trade and Brand Advocate/Co-Owner of her family's winery as well as Vice President of the CAB Collective Board of Directors, welcomed our group and described her father Jerry Lohr's storied history that led him to Paso Robles.

Jerry grew up on a farm in South Dakota, and although he came to California to pursue a Ph.D. in civil engineering—originally building homes in the Bay Area—his passion was wine. He first



*From left to right: Scott Shirley, Winemaker, JUSTIN Vineyards & Winery; Steve Peck, Red Winemaker, J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines; Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins, Vice President of Operations, Ancient Peaks Winery; Cynthia Lohr, Trade and Brand Advocate/Co-Owner, J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines; Kevin Willenborg, Winemaker, Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery; Ben Mayo, Winemaker, San Antonio Winery; and Patrick Muran, Winemaker, Niner Wine Estates.*

planted vineyards in Monterey before expanding south to Paso Robles in the early 1980s to focus on Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux varietals. "Because my father is passionate about the land and loves what he does, we've expanded over time and this year we are celebrating 44 years of family wine grape-growing and winemaking," Lohr said proudly.

After lunch, we arrived at Booker Wines to meet with Owner Eric Jensen. The energetic and candid winemaker has earned considerable accolades for his Rhône-style blends, which typically sell out through his mailing list prior to release. In 2014, he worked with a handful of dedicated growers to launch a Cab-centric brand; the labels feature stunning portraits that serve as a tribute to the men and women who farm the grapes. As we tasted through the lineup, Jensen's fastidious attention to detail shone through with high-toned, concentrated fruit abundant in both power and acidity.

We then made our way to the CABs of Distinction Grand Tasting held at Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery, where somms had an opportunity to taste and revisit many of the Bordeaux-style wines from properties throughout Paso Robles.

The wine flowed easily as buyers had the chance to connect directly with their favorite winemakers, but the day wasn't over yet. At our last stop of the evening, DAOU Vineyards & Winery, we found ourselves in awe of the sunset mountain scenery, which gave us a bird's-eye view of just how dynamic and mountainous the region truly is. Winemakers shared unforgettable,



*Hotelier Doug Ayres, Owner of the Allegretto Vineyard Resort, at the CABs of Distinction Grand Tasting.*



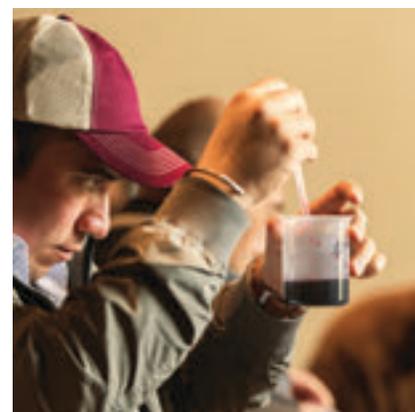
*Somms tasted the 1979 Eberle Cabernet Sauvignon alongside older vintages to further their understanding of Paso Robles' aging potential.*

large-format library bottlings as the Paso Robles-based group Conservation Ambassadors introduced the group to a few of their resident animals—including a raven, a slow loris named Mr. Lee, and a 16-year-old screech owl named Niles—as part of its Zoo to You outreach program. The energy in the room was electric: a combination of the brilliant landscape, sensational wines, and the animals that inspired the child in every sommelier there.

## day 3

On our final day of CAB Camp, we made our way to the Willow Creek District AVA to visit Doug Ayres' Allegretto Vineyard. The 18-acre mountain vineyard is entirely planted to Cabernet Sauvignon in this cooler part of Paso Robles. Vineyard Manager Mindy Allen and Winemaker Alan Kinne explained at length the various pruning techniques and Biodynamic inputs used at this low-yielding, highly calcareous property. According to Kinne, Ayres takes great care in ensuring the winery adheres to standards of good stewardship. "It's nice to work with someone who is self-reflective and considerate about the impact they're having on both the land and people," he added.

After our visit to the vineyard, we headed to Halter Ranch Vineyard for a panel discussion and informal blending competition. The event was moderated by former Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar National Director of Wine/



*Oscar Chinchilla, Beverage Manager and Wine Director for the Montage Beverly Hills hotel, composes his blend.*

*The Allegretto Vineyard in the Willow Creek District AVA of Paso Robles.*



Beverage Maeve Pesquera, who packed up her family and moved to Paso Robles after a buyers' retreat in the region. "Paso renewed my soul and my spirit," Pesquera, now the Senior Vice President for DOAU Vineyards & Winery, said with a smile. "These are real people, in real wineries, doing the *real work*."

Blending winner Tyson Torres, General Manager of Avant at the Rancho Bernardo Inn, agreed with Pesquera. "I was blown away! It was a great opportunity to get to know the winemakers out here and see the facilities and the ranches," he said. "They're all really family-oriented rather than being a big monopoly of wineries. They also all have different characteristics within each sub-AVA, which was nice to see."

The immersive experience ended with a luxurious three-course lunch at JUSTIN Winery. Before their departures, the somms exchanged contact information with new friends as they discussed the knowledge and insights they gleaned from the trip. "If I were a Cabernet Sauvignon vine, this is where I'd want to be planted," said JUSTIN Winery Winemaker Scott Shirley, who spent years working in the Napa Valley before making his way to Paso Robles. "When we need great Cabernets that we can sell to our customers at an excellent price point, Paso seems to fill those slots a lot quicker than other places would," added Oliver Kohns, Wine Department Manager for Draeger's Market in the Bay Area. He went on to encapsulate the trip in a simple yet fitting parting statement: "I kind of came to be convinced, and now, I'm convinced." ❏



*From left to right: Amanda Gorter, Assistant Winemaker, Robert Hall Winery; Christian Tietje, Winemaker, Rotta Winery; Tyson Torres, General Manager, Avant at the Rancho Bernardo Inn; Mike Sinor, Winemaker, Ancient Peaks Winery; Kevin Sass, Winemaker, Halter Ranch Vineyard; Maeve Pesquera, Senior Vice President, DOAU Vineyards & Winery; and Michael Mooney, Winemaker/Co-Owner, Chateau Margene.*



*The 2018 CAB Camp attendees on the terrace of DOAU Vineyards & Winery.*

## Introducing This Year's CAB Camp Attendees

- Karen Bennett**, Wine Director; Café Med, Bakersfield, CA
- Renata Brunetto**, Manager; Mona Lisa Italian Foods, San Diego, CA
- Oscar Chinchilla**, Beverage Manager and Wine Director; Montage Beverly Hills
- Ali Coyle**, Wine Director; Wineworks for Everyone, Mission Viejo, CA
- Kristin Culotta**, Director of Food & Beverage, The Avalon Hotel, Beverly Hills, CA
- Sarah DeRosa**, Wine Director/Beverage Manager; Paradise Valley Country Club, Phoenix, AZ
- David Goodwin**, Store Manager/Wine Buyer; The Wine Club, San Francisco, CA
- Oliver Kohns**, Wine Department Manager; Draeger's Market, San Mateo, CA
- Ivan Lucas**, General Manager; The Craftsman Tavern, Escondido, CA
- Travis Montano**, General Manager; Currant American Brasserie, San Diego, CA
- David Neil**, Director of Food & Beverage, Seven Oaks Country Club, Bakersfield, CA
- Nemanja Pejčić**, Wine Buyer/Sommelier; Il Palio Restaurant, San Diego, CA
- Rick Perrault**, Buyer; The Marine Room, La Jolla, CA
- Rich Sabatowski**, General Manager; Cohn Restaurant Group, San Diego, CA
- Frank Schneider**, General Manager; Bourbon & Bones, Scottsdale, AZ
- Katie Stephens**, General Manager/Co-Owner; Beckett's Table and Southern Rail, Phoenix, AZ
- Scott Stephens**, Managing Partner; Southern Rail, Phoenix, AZ
- Jiaqi Tang**, Director of Outlets; Hotel Casa del Mar, Santa Monica, CA
- Laurie Wray**, Sommelier; Sanctuary Resort & Spa, Paradise Valley, AZ
- Steve Ark**, Wine Buyer; Seaside Market, Cardiff, CA
- Allison Clary Alexander**, Wine Director; The Capital Grille, Phoenix, AZ
- David Derby**, Wine Buyer; JJ Buckley Fine Wines, Oakland, CA
- Darren English**, Associate Buyer—California Wines, Wine.com
- Jennifer Fulgaro-Polo**, Sommelier; City Winery, Chicago, IL
- Nate Grover**, Director of Bar and Beverage; DineEquity, Glendale, CA
- Wendy Heilmann**, Director of Wine & Spirits; Pebble Beach Resorts, Pebble Beach, CA
- Chris James**, Lonesome Dove Western Bistro, Austin, TX
- Julie Kalicki**, The Saltner; Monrovia, CA
- Hali Mayberry**, Marketing Manager/Sales; Imbibe Wine & Spirits Merchant, Bakersfield, CA
- Wednesday Nowak**, Orange Sky at Talking Stick Resort, Scottsdale, AZ
- Rafael Peterson**, Wine Director; Born & Raised Steakhouse, San Diego, CA
- Kate Seiberlich**, Co-Founder; Taste It Wines, Los Angeles, CA
- Tyson Torres**, General Manager; Avant at the Rancho Bernardo Inn, San Diego, CA
- Stacey Urbin**, Managing Partner; The Capital Grille, Costa Mesa, CA
- Aaron Wesley**, Assistant General Manager; Ocean Prime Beverly Hills



In each issue, the editorial team at *The SOMM Journal* will deliberate through wine submissions and release final judgment on select wines that garnered scores of at least 90 points. The "journey" will also feature an esteemed guest sommelier.

## Super (Tuscan) Heroes



Marchese Lodovico Antinori.

The Biserno estate is located in the Upper Maremma on the Tuscan coast. The elevation there ranges from 250–300 feet above sea level.

Calling this his last winemaking project, Lodovico Antinori reunited with his brother Piero to create their first joint venture: Tenuta di Biserno, a variety show in which Cabernet Franc plays the main role.

The temperate maritime climate in the Upper Maremma on the Tuscan coast was thought to be a perfect location for this estate, which Lodovico refers to as a "playground for expression."

**Tenuta di Biserno 2015 Il Pino di Biserno (\$75)** is dense, black-fruited, and inky: muscular and chewy with a satin soul. The plum notes go preternaturally sweet and juicy as violets bloom mid-palate. **96**

**Tenuta di Biserno 2013 Biserno (\$180)** shows depth and balance with ripe black fruit and spiced cedar. **96**

**Tenuta di Biserno 2013 Lodovico (\$425)** is only available in limited quantities, with the Cab Franc and Petit Verdot hailing from a distinct parcel with a singular expression called Vigna Lodovico. Bold, dusty tannins surround notes of graphite and textural plushness. The blackberries are ripe and marked by iron, cherry cedar, espresso bean, and lavender. The delivery of liquid is luxurious across the palate. **100**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

## Lolla-Palazzo

Grammy-nominated music producer/director Scott Palazzo has been making wines that fit into the "cult" category in Napa for just under a decade now, including his latest release of Bordeaux-inspired reds. He made his first vintage of Right Bank Proprietary Red in 2003, and ten vintages later, the **Palazzo 2013 Right Bank Reserve (\$90)** from Napa Valley is a creature of freshness and firmness. The blend of 68% Merlot, 24% Cabernet Franc, and 8% Cab Sauvignon has aromas akin to drinking that first cup of coffee on a spring morning after a night of rainfall. The earth's perfume rises out of the ground and the mocha in the beans transcends the glass as black fruit comes in mid-palate. This wine is focused with fury. Dry tannins are tempered with a sweet plum-and-cassis wrap. **95**

On the *other* side, the **Palazzo 2015 Left Bank Red Cuvée (\$50)** leads with Cabernet Sauvignon and blends in Merlot and Cab Franc. This is Palazzo's first go at this style and he didn't produce a Right Bank blend for this vintage. This wine is chewy, cheerful, and cherry-laden, casting pomegranate and rhubarb in a brilliant light amidst dark chocolate and tilled soil. **95**



Scott Palazzo.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCOTT PALAZZO

# The Stags Leap District's Point of Distinction

We tasted Shafer's 2015 vintages at last year's Premiere Napa Valley, at which time we declared it a stellar year. The **Shafer 2015 One Point Five (\$95)** from Napa Valley's Stags Leap District fits that bill from this warm, dry growing season, which produced smaller berries of intense flavor and color. Comprised of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, and 3% Malbec, this is a sumptuous, mouth-filling wine that speaks of earth, dark plum, and lavender: It's a powerhouse with balance and energy. Dark chocolate melts on the tongue through the long finish. Father-and-son team John and Doug Shafer refer to their partnership as "a generation and a half," hence the term One Point Five. **95**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHAFER VINEYARDS



John Shafer with son and collaborator Doug.

"The 2015 vintage was the last of a string of drought years," Doug explains. "It gave us a bit less fruit and smaller berries, but what it gave us in terms of size, it more than made up for in flavor. Those smaller berries became wines with excellent structure and extraction that are destined to age beautifully in the cellar."



Master Distiller Pamela Heilmann and Master of Distillation Andrea Wilson.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHTER'S

## Where Wood Science Meets Superior Distillation

Made from high-quality corn and aged ten years in fire-charred, new American white oak barrels, **Michter's 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon (\$120)** is the latest release of whiskey experts Master Distiller Pamela Heilmann and Master of Distillation Andrea Wilson. Wilson's job is to support Heilmann by managing barrel specs and procurement, heat cycling, and the monitoring of liquid temperatures during aging. "There are two very distinct phases of making Kentucky bourbon," explains Wilson, who was the first woman to serve as Chair of the Kentucky Distillers' Association. From its glowing amber hue to its nose of burnished oak and honeyed orange rind, this 94.4-proof spirit displays a well-behaved cinnamon-pepper palate that allows bountiful notes of peach and jasmine to flourish. **99**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JON ANGWIN



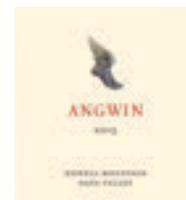
Husband-and-wife team Jon Angwin and Angela Henszel.

## The Micro-Estate

Above the fogline, Howell Mountain owes its "fame" to its scenic rolling hills, diverse micro-climates, and rocky, porous, nutrient-poor tufa volcanic soil. We love Howell Mountain fruit, but we're not generalizing here as we point out Angwin Estate Vineyards. Winemaker Jon Larson sustainably farms and tends his fruit by hand, making what he describes as a "classically-styled mountain Cabernet Sauvignon."

**Angwin Estate Vineyards 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$120)** expresses Howell Mountain with a howl. The purple-black color and aromas of dried plums, violets, and ripe blackberry are magnetic and alluring with the added gravitas of minerality. The taste profile is an intense coffee and leather savoriness with anise-licked, curvy tannins. While it starts with a roar, it finishes like a songbird that coos with ripe red berry fruit. This is aged 24 months in 57% new French and Hungarian oak. **98**

Larson's second label is **Angwin Estate Vineyards 2013 The Kissing Trees (\$70)**, a wine based solely on barrel selection. For the Estate Cab, he uses Tonnellerie Nadalié new French barrels and new Nadalié Hungarian barrels; for "Kissing Trees," there's only a touch of Hungarian barrels and less press wine than the Estate Cab, as well as slightly less new French oak. A kissing cousin to the estate, the wine is perhaps more approachable with its firm tannins and defined grace. **95**



Master Sommelier  
**Joseph  
Phillips,**

Director of Wine Education  
and Trade Development for  
Southern Glazer's Wine &  
Spirits of Nevada,

Interviews  
**Matthew  
George,**

Sommelier at Rivea in the  
Delano Las Vegas



*Joe Phillips, MS,  
and Matt George  
at Rivea in the  
Delano Las Vegas.*

**FOR NEARLY A DECADE,** Matthew George has been honing his craft in Sin City. George currently serves as the restaurant sommelier for internationally renowned chef Alain Ducasse's Rivea, which opened in 2015 at Delano Las Vegas. Master Sommelier Joseph Phillips recently spoke with George about his experiences running the program at the French- and Italian-influenced establishment.

**Q:** Joseph Phillips: You've lived in Las Vegas for most of your life. Give us a quick road map of how you ended up in your current position.

**Matthew George:** Prior to accepting

a position at Rivea, I was a sommelier for Mina Group and worked at STRIPSTEAK at Mandalay Bay and SEABLUE, formerly located at MGM Grand. Growing up in Las Vegas, I began working on the Strip straight out of high school. Over the last 20 years, I gained experience in a variety of "front-of-house" positions, which provided invaluable insight into the hospitality industry.

**Q:** The restaurant features cuisine inspired by the French and Italian Riviera. How has that influenced the wine list?

When Rivea first opened, Ducasse Corporate Wine Director Guillem Ker-

ambrun created a section called "Riviera Soul," which features grape varieties found near the French and Italian Riviera. These offerings include Vermentino (aka Pigato, Rolle, and Favorita), Mourvèdre and rosé. In Las Vegas, we cater to guests coming from all over the world, so we tried to create a worldly list that offers something for everyone.

**Q:** These grapes and regions aren't exactly mainstream in Las Vegas. Do you find the need to do a lot of training for your staff?

Yes, I regularly work with our staff to educate them on wine. We constantly



introduce them to new wines and regions. Regular tasting helps to keep places and styles at the forefront of the mind. Each quarter, we feature new offerings that represent a certain variety or winemaker and prepare a training session to help expand their knowledge. When available, I try to bring in winemakers to teach the team about their wines/wineries. Additionally, we ensure our staff is familiar with the tasting basics by reviewing the Court [of Master Sommeliers] grid and techniques.

**Q:** I notice you also offer some California wines—how do you go about selecting those?

To complement our menu and “Riviera Soul” offerings, we worked on sourcing similar grapes from the “American Riviera”: the Santa Barbara area.

**Q:** The view of the Las Vegas Valley is stunning from up here. Now that you have been working here for a while, do you still pay attention to the view, or is it just another day at work? How about your guests?

Rivea’s view looks out 64 stories above the Las Vegas Strip and is one of a kind. I always make mention of it to guests, often telling them I have the best office in town! I love being able to look out on the

city during dinner service. It’s truly amazing and something I don’t think I’ll ever take for granted.

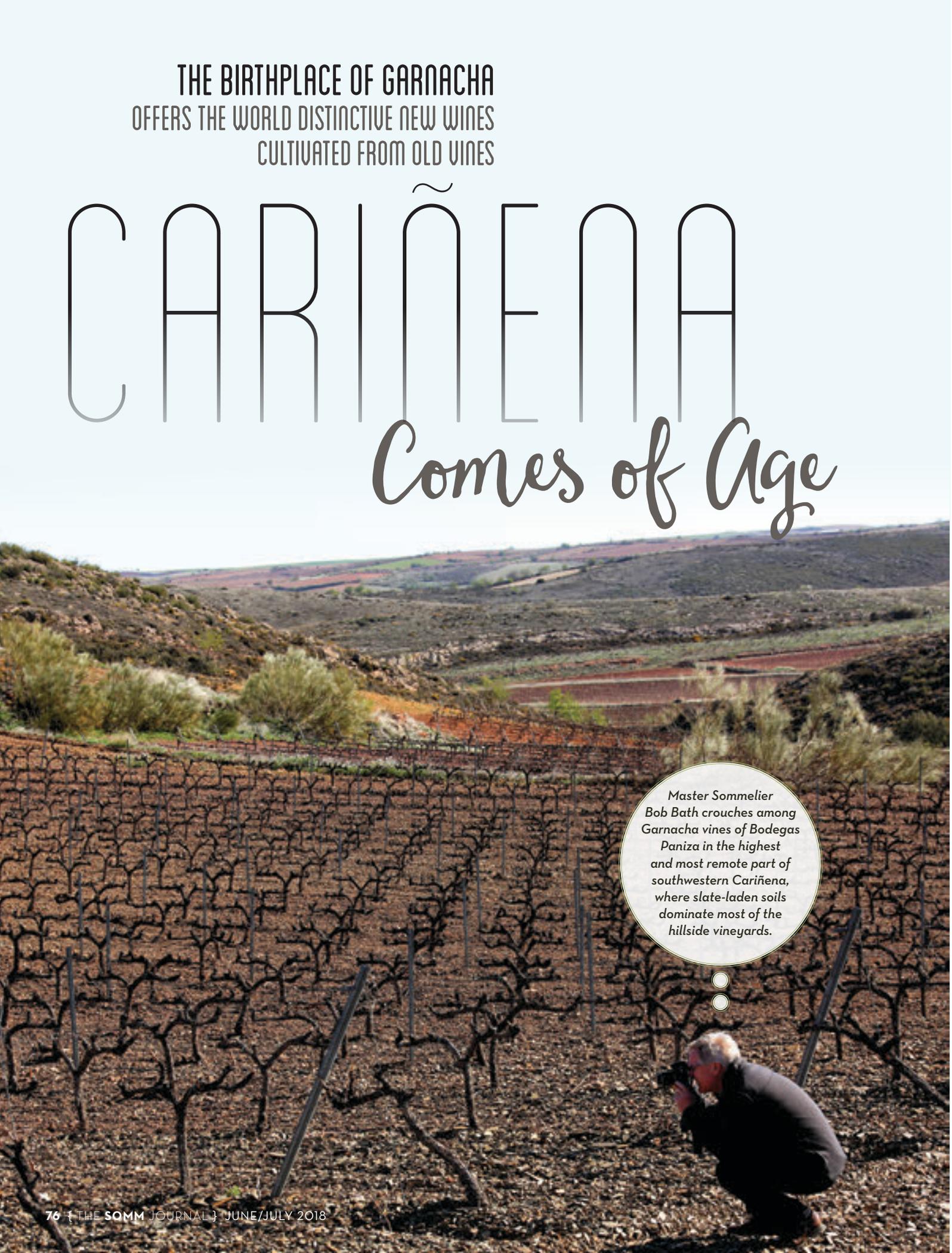
**Q:** If someone were dining at Rivea for the first time, which pairing experience would you suggest?

For first-time diners, I would recommend the John Dory a la bouillabaisse. Currently, I love pairing it with a Cassis Blanc from Provence. This pairing always seems to pique people’s interest. Also, as I mentioned earlier, the view is stunning—I highly recommend requesting a table on our patio or near a window. **SJ**

THE BIRTHPLACE OF GARNACHA  
OFFERS THE WORLD DISTINCTIVE NEW WINES  
CULTIVATED FROM OLD VINES

# CARIÑENA

## Comes of Age



Master Sommelier  
Bob Bath crouches among  
Garnacha vines of Bodegas  
Paniza in the highest  
and most remote part of  
southwestern Cariñena,  
where slate-laden soils  
dominate most of the  
hillside vineyards.

by Bob Bath, MS / photos by Miguel Vicente

There's something wonderfully unique about Spanish wine, and, in my experience, it's impossible to fall in love with a particular grape or wine: You fall in love with the entire region.

My most recent affair is with Garnacha and its home region of Cariñena, located in Aragón in northeastern Spain. Though it lacks the notoriety of regions such as Rioja or Ribera del Duero—despite being the country's second oldest DO—its connection to the Garnacha grape makes Cariñena a noteworthy experience based on its history, current winemaking, and future prospects.

Local historical references to Garnacha in Aragón, the birthplace of the grape, date back to 1513 in Gabriel Alonso de Herrera's *Agricultural General*. History, coupled with the sheer amount of clonal diversity and mutations of the grape in the region, counter any claims Sardinia has made of being its alternative place of origin. As the third most-planted variety in Spain, Garnacha has never lost its significance in the country. The region of Cariñena is renowned for having the highest density of Garnacha plantings, with the grape representing nearly a third of the entire vineyard acreage.

**Bob Bath, MS, tastes through a series of Garnacha samples at Bodegas Paneza.**



Garnacha reached Sardinia, as well as southern France, likely by way of the Aragón empire. One of Europe's most powerful regimes from the 15th through the 17th centuries, it spread as far north as southern France and as far south as Sicily. Such expansion explains the presence of Garnacha in regions such as Languedoc Roussillon and the Rhône.

Zaragoza, Aragón's historic capital, sits halfway between Madrid and Barcelona and is located on El Camino de Santiago. The globally-celebrated road leads to the legendary burial spot of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, and is known as an inspiring pilgrimage for travelers to the region. As you step out of the beautiful Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza, you immediately notice the path of seashells imprinted in the sidewalk, indicating the way.

South of Zaragoza on a large plain in the heart of the Ebro Valley is where you will find the majority of Cariñena vineyards. Rimmed by the Systema Iberico

*Local historical references to Garnacha in Aragón, the birthplace of the grape, date back to 1513 in Gabriel Alonso de Herrera's Agricultural General.*





*Zaragoza, Aragón's historic capital, sits halfway between Madrid and Barcelona and is located on El Camino de Santiago. The Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza, built between 1681 and 1754, is reputed to be the first church in history dedicated to the Virgin Mary.*

Mountains to the south and the majestic, snow-topped Moncayo Massif to the north, vines are planted at 1,000 to nearly 3,000 feet above sea level. It only takes a brief visit to the Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora, just outside Paniza, to feel the Cierzo. This chilling wind provides a cooling diurnal shift for the entire region in the summer when temperatures can soar to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Soils in Cariñena vary from orange-brown, iron-laden clays to rounded stones (known as *cascajos* or *cantos*) and the fractured schist could lead you to believe you are standing in a vineyard in Priorat. A lack of rainfall after April and the ensuing heat during the summer months means ripening is rarely a challenge; the diurnal swings, meanwhile, ensure bright acidity and a natural balance in Cariñena's wines.

Old vines dominate the landscape.

Trained *en vaso* and dry-farmed, Cariñena possesses more old vines than anywhere in Spain. Many 80 years and older; these vines have survived two World Wars and the Spanish Civil War—not to mention the temptation of many producers to plant more recognizable and ultimately more profitable grapes. Although Garnacha is the region's dominant variety, there are also significant plantings of Cariñena (Carignan), Tempranillo, and even Macabeo.

Cooperatives are the lifeblood of Cariñena, with the largest three (Bodegas Paniza, Bodegas San Valero, and Grandes Vinos) responsible for 80 percent of production. The range of wine styles is impressive: from extraordinary-valued young Garnacha to dramatic expressions from old-vine Garnacha and fascinating Garnacha-based blends.

Bodegas San Valero, established in



## ITS CONNECTION TO THE GARNACHA GRAPE MAKES CARIÑENA A NOTEWORTHY EXPERIENCE BASED ON ITS HISTORY, CURRENT WINEMAKING, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.

---

1944, is the oldest of the three major cooperatives. Situated near the town of Cariñena, it works with more than 600 growers spread across 8,600 acres. The Bodegas San Valero Particular range offers excellent value and has helped pave the way in popularizing Cariñena wine in the U.S.

Grandes Vinos, the largest of the three co-ops, manages 10,000 acres of vineyards across all of Cariñena's 14 sub-

districts. A leader in clonal research, the enologists at Grandes Vinos have identified four clones that are now mandatory for replantings in the region. Bodegas Paniza, meanwhile, resides in the most remote and highest part of southwestern Cariñena, where slate-laden soils dominate most of the hillside vineyards. Some of the vines here date as far back as 1906. Because it represents 400 different growers, one gets the sense that the entire

village of Paniza works for the co-op.

Perhaps the greatest asset of this region is its humility; the growers, winemakers, and export directors demonstrate great pride in Cariñena and its wines. They are driven by a sincere desire to bring the world exceptional wines with a regional distinction: an effort that came to fruition at the Global Garnacha Summit this past April in Napa, California, and will continue in other U.S. markets later this year. *sj*

*Old vines dominate the landscape at Bodegas San Valero in Cariñena.*



# The Crying Winds

## ACCOUNTING FOR THE TERROIR-DRIVEN CHARACTER OF **SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS PINOT NOIR**

story and photo by Randy Caparoso

*One of the higher-elevation plantings in the blustery Santa Lucia Highlands AVA.*

**“AND THE WIND,”** Jimi Hendrix famously sang, “cries Mary.” I’ve never figured out exactly what that song was about—in college during the 1970s, I got off on wine, not substances—but this I knew: You could *feel* every Hendrix song, like electricity jolting every nerve.

When *The SOMM Journal* began bringing sommeliers on field trips to the Santa Lucia Highlands, I think every participant knew all too well the almost jarring impact of the region’s Pinot Noirs. These wines can only be described as extraordinarily extravagant in both fruit character and acidity, yet they’re amazingly well-balanced despite invariably high levels of alcohol typically in the 14% range.

But to fully understand the phenomena in the glass, a sommelier must first step onto the slopes of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA itself. Once you do, you can clearly see you are on a bench looking eastward, down upon the flats of Salinas Valley and toward the jagged peaks of the Pinnacles on the opposite side. The slopes are not atypically high—starting at an elevation of 200 feet above sea level and reaching 1,200 at the highest points—but the differences in aspect and soil (rocky or sandy loams as opposed to deep clay alluviums) are stark enough to explain why the cultivation of concentrated wine grapes, as opposed to vegetables, is favorable to this part of Monterey County.

Then there is the wind—the whistling, howling, physically violent wind—that kicks up daily by mid-afternoon as it pushes down from the deep, cold waters of Monterey Bay. It then ventures northward toward the hotter pockets of Paso Robles to the south, not unlike a theater crowd racing to the exits after someone hollers, “Fire!” Everyone here cusses at the wind,” says Joe Alarid, Owner/Grower of Santa Lucia Highlands’ Tondre Grapefield, “but we wouldn’t be able to grow grapes like this without it.”

High winds and marine air account for the AVA’s cold-climate viticulture (ranking it as a Region I on the Winkler Scale), but these factors also explain a particular Pinot Noir structure. With limitations posed on active photosynthesis, growing seasons in the region are typically a good 120 days, rather than the usual 100 days experienced practically everywhere else in the world. Grape skins thickened by wind result in higher phenolics—hence, deeper flavors—and during harvest, it’s a matter of waiting for acids to drop to acceptable levels rather than waiting for sugars to rise.

In short, this explains the deliriously-rich, billowing aromas—as well as the full-scaled, acid-driven structure—of Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir: Not only that, it also accounts for the intense, distinctly-mineral, and citrus-imbued Chardonnays of the region; Chardonnay, in fact, is typically picked several weeks *after* Pinot Noir in the Santa Lucia Highlands. This longer hang-time produces deeper, European-style wines.

In the classic manner of speaking, this is *terroir* at its best and most distinctive: There is, like a “Mary,” nothing else in the world like a Santa Lucia Highlands wine. sj



# PATRICIUS TOKAJ

NATURAL UNIQUENESS



IMPORTED BY:  
classicwines.us

PROMOTED BY:  
winesofexcellence.com

[www.patricius.hu](http://www.patricius.hu)



#SOMMCON

# SOMM|CON

Broaden Your Palate. Shape Your Future.

Registration and Details at [sommconusa.com](http://sommconusa.com)

Photo Credit: Josue Castro

\*As of May 24, 2018. Schedule is subject to change.

# Schedule at a Glance

WASHINGTON D.C. JULY 22-24, 2018

## Sunday, July 22

### WSET Level 2 Certification On-Line Course & Exam\*

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

### French Wine Scholar Challenge\*

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### Certified Cicerone Exam \*

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

### Discovering Italian Wine Certificate\*

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### Digging into the Unique Terroirs of La Bella Italy presented by The SOMM Journal and The Tasting Panel

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### SommCon Opening Night Reception + Tasting

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

## Monday, July 23

### Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

### Networking Coffee & Pastries

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

### Seminars:

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

### History of Wine: Pangea to Pasteur

Wes Hagen, WSET2; Winemaker & Brand Ambassador; | Wilkes Wines

### Drinking Stars – The History and Details of Prestige Cuvee Champagne

David Cohn, Dom Perignon USA

### Expressions of Grenache presented by Rhone Valley Vineyards

Lisa M. Airey, Wine Scholar Guild

### Vibrant Vinho Verde

Sheri Morano, Nomacorc; Vinventions | MW, CWE

### Tasting Break presented by Wines of Virginia

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### Seminars:

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

### Finding the Right Wine Credential for You and Your Career

Geralyn Brostrom, Co-Founder and Educational Director of Italian Wine Central, CWE

Geoff Labitzke, Master of Wine / Director of Sales & Marketing for Kistler Vineyards

Kathy Morgan, Master Sommelier; Southern Glazer Wine & Spirits

### A Retrospective on the 40th Anniversary of Castello Banfi, Builders of Brunello

Christina Mariani-May, President & CEO, Banfi Vitners

### Wines of Medoc: A Travel Around the 8 Appellations, 8 Variations on Excellence

Mary Dardenne, Bordeaux Wine Educator

### Iconic Wines of Virginia

Jay Youmans, Master of Wine, CWE, Educational Director at Capital Wine School

### Break

12:15 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

### Seminars:

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

### Old & Rare Wines: Sourcing, Selling & Serving

Christopher Hoel, Founder, Harper's Club

Andy Myers, Master Sommelier; Beverage Director; ThinkFoodGroup

Michael Scaffidi, Advanced Sommelier; Wine Consultant, Beverage Director

### Game of Wines presented by The SOMM Journal

Meridith May, Publisher

Bill Brandel, VP Marketing The Tasting Panel & SOMM Journal

### 40th Parallels of New World Pinot Noir

Bree Boskov, Master of Wine

### Everything You Never Dared to Ask About Bourgogne's Climate

Jay Youman, Advanced Sommelier, MW, CWE

### Tasting Break presented by Gloria Ferrer

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

### Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

### Seminars:

4:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

### Madeira: The Time Traveling Machine

Michael Scaffidi, Wine Director; DaDong NYC

### Managing a Successful Restaurant Beverage Program

Gretchen Thomas, Wine & Spirits Director; Barteca Restaurant Group

Erik Segelbaum, Advanced Sommelier; Corporate Wine Director; Starr Restaurants

Andy Myers, Master Sommelier; Beverage Director; ThinkFoodGroup

### Delve into the Different Styles of Sake

Toshio Ueno, MSS, CSW, FWS | Vice President & Executive Instructor; Saké School of America

### The Path to Spirits Certification Through SWE

Ira Norof, CSE, CWE, Director of Education & Events Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits,

Past President Society of Wine Educators

## Tuesday, July 24

### Registration Desk Open

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

### Networking Coffee & Pastries

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

### Seminars:

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

### Build Your Own Personal Brand

Frans van der Lee, Co-Founder and President/COO, Somm's List

### Cab Franc

Jay Youmans, MW Capital Wine School

Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler

### Defining Local in the Mid Atlantic

Dave McIntyre, Wine Columnist, Washington Post

### Tasting Break presented by Banfi and Bravium

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### Seminars:

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

### The Nueva South America

Gretchen Thomas, Wine & Spirits Director; Barteca Restaurant Group

### The Rosé(y) Side of Languedoc

Jay Youmans, MW Capital Wine School

### The Impact of Public Policy on the American Wine Industry

Michael Kaiser, VP of Wine America

### Garnacha Unveiled: From Cariñena to the World

Bob Bath, MS, Professor of Wine and Beverage Studies at the Culinary Institute of America

### Break

12:15 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

### Seminars:

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

### Blind Taste with the Masters (MW)

Moderator: Joe Spellman, MS

Panelists: Geoff Labitzke, MW; Mary Gorman McAdams, MW; Caroline Hermann, MW;

Jay Youmans, MW

### Tasting Break

3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.

### Fireside Chat presented by the WSET

3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.

### Seminars:

4:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

### Getting High: Appellation Elevation

Joe Spellman, MS, Justin Winery

### The Secret to Creative Italian Wine Lists That Sell

Geralyn Brostrom, Co-Founder and Educational Director of Italian Wine Central

Kathy Morgan, Master Sommelier; Southern Glazer Wine & Spirits

### How Sand Helps Create The World's Best Wines

Will Costello, MS

### France: Then & Now

Lisa M. Airey, Wine Scholar Guild

### Sponsors:

THE SOMM JOURNAL

tastingpanel

BRAND



Rhone Valley Vineyards

BOURGOGNES

M



BRIVIUM



GLORIA FERRER

Kistler Vineyards

SOMM'S LIST

CHEF'S ROLL



A Place in the

# Sun

## AUSTIN-AREA BAR PROFESSIONALS USHER IN THE SUMMER SEASON WITH TEN STELLAR SPIRITS BRANDS

by Lori Moffatt  
photos by Dennis Burnett

**June ushers in prime porch-sipping season**, just as the sun's golden rays and the musical clatter of ice in a frosty Boston shaker put an added spring in our step. In a nod to our favorite time of year, *The SOMM Journal* recently invited representatives from ten spirits brands to the basement lounge of Austin's Boiler Nine restaurant, where they showcased their products in summertime cocktails before a panel of area bar professionals and restaurant owners.

It was a tough job, but somebody had to do it: Panelists including Dustin Bolf of Boiler Nine, Jessica Sanders and Stephanie Teslar of Backbeat, Arik Skot Williams of The Rotten Bunch, Brett Esler of Whisler's, and Kristine Kittrell of Weather Up gathered at marble bistro tables to sample a lineup of seasonal libations while learning about the various brands in attendance.

In a tasting that lacked a formal theme, deliciousness served as the common thread. Citrus, mint, ginger, banana, and edible flowers added tropical notes to some recipes, while other cocktails made use of Sherry and soda to create poolside libations brimming with character. Fresh, light, and imaginative, here are ten brands—and ten refreshing cocktails—to consider as the days grow long and the nights get hot.



*The panelists gather at Boiler Nine restaurant in Austin, TX, for the spirits tasting. Pictured from left to right are Thomas Ward, Assistant General Manager, Las Perlas; Dustin Bolf, Bar Lead, Boiler Nine; Stephanie Teslar, General Manager at Backbeat and Vice President of United States Bartenders' Guild Austin; Brett Esler, Bartender, Whisler's; Jessica Sanders, Owner, Backbeat; Steve White, General Manager, Seven Grand; and Arik Skot Williams, Beverage Director, The Rotten Bunch.*

## Schladerer Williams Birne Pear Brandy

Mushroom, ripe fruit, and honey characteristics define this complex spirit, made in copper stills since 1844 in a family-owned distillery in the picturesque Black Forest town of Staufen, Germany. "Most people assume that brandy is too fruity, too strange, or too old-fashioned for them," said Boiler Nine Bar Steward Daniel Armendariz while representing Schladerer. "Schladerer makes it easy to prove them wrong."

These days, tours of the distillery's mash room and aging and filtration cellars draw brandy enthusiasts from around the world. Using only pears, yeast, and water, Schladerer creates a time-honored fruit brandy that's as lovely enjoyed as a traditional digestif as it is mixed in a lower-ABV cocktail.

In Armendariz's cocktail, the Birne Sour, the brandy (34% ABV) complemented a simple mixture of lemon and lime juices, mint simple syrup, and egg white. Creamy yet light and fragrant with floral and fruity aromas, the drink comes alive with a sunburst of Angostura bitters for an unexpectedly thirst-quenching drink.



Daniel Armendariz, Bar Steward at host venue Boiler Nine, represented two brands: Schladerer and Mezan Rum.

## Mezan XO Jamaica Rum

This rich, peppery, and straw-colored Jamaican rum tastes redolent of ripe bananas and caramelized sugar with hints of candied ginger. A blend of aged rums from several Jamaican distilleries, Mezan is aged again in oak upon blending, creating a light-bodied rum with notes of nutmeg, cinnamon, lemon peel, and vanilla that play well in cocktails.

"Just a hint of ginger finishes it off, leaving your mouth a bit dry and ready for more," said Armendariz, who also reps the brand. His drink, XO Paradise, combined Mezan XO Rum with ginger beer, lime, and banana-

infused simple syrup. "The syrup goes well in cocktails and on top of ice cream, too," he added. "Bring a cup of water almost to a boil, stir in a cup of sugar, then add a sliced green banana and simmer for five minutes. Add a sliced yellow banana, stir, allow to cool, and strain out the solids."



### Birne Sour

1 ½ oz. Schladerer Williams Birne Pear Brandy  
½ oz. lemon juice  
¼ oz. lime juice  
½ oz. mint simple syrup  
1 dash Angostura bitters  
Egg white

Daniel Armendariz's cocktail, the Birne Sour.



### XO Paradise

1 ½ oz. Mezan XO Rum  
¾ oz. banana simple syrup  
¾ oz. lime juice  
1 oz. ginger beer

The XO Paradise cocktail made with Mezan XO Rum.

### The Panelists Said:

-  **Neat:** Tastes like old pears; the more I drink it, the more it grows on me.
-  **Cocktail:** Reminiscent of apple cider with a touch of bitter spice, which is nice. —Thomas Ward
-  **Neat:** Aromatic with a viscous body. Slightly chocolatey on the finish.
-  **Cocktail:** Nice, fresh pear flavor with structured tannin. —Jessica Sanders

### The Panelists Said:

-  **Neat:** Powerful nose; distinctly Jamaican. Strong funk of overripe bananas. Cinnamon spice, ginger, fresh vanilla bean.
-  **Cocktail:** I enjoy the rum and ginger together. —Steph Teslar
-  **Neat:** Nose offers banana, tropical fruits, and burnt sugar; tastes of banana bread and a little baking spice. Spicy finish is probably from the combo of bourbon casks during the aging process.
-  **Cocktail:** Fresh, bright summer cocktail with nice spice, more banana, and upfront citrus that complements the ginger. Very delicious and crisp. —Dustin Bolf

## Citadelle Gin

"Citadelle Gin is a product born of boredom," joked Greg Doxakis of Maison Ferrand, the French Cognac house that also makes this classic juniper-forward, supremely versatile spirit. "By law, you can only make Cognac in the fall and winter months, so for half the year our beautiful alembic copper pot stills were doing nothing. About 20 years ago, we sought permission from the AOC to allow experimentation during the off-season, and we came up with the formula for Citadelle."

Distilled from French wheat in a column still before marrying with 19 botanicals in copper, Citadelle achieves its delicate balance of spice and citrus through a series of gradual infusions at different levels of ABV, as well as a final distillation in Cognac stills with additional juniper. Tasted neat, Citadelle's classic juniper notes provide a piney backbone to a bouquet of orange peel, lemon peel, coriander, star anise, and angelica root—the latter contributing a slightly sweet flavor with a dry edge reminiscent of mushrooms.

Ornella Ashcraft, bartender at Austin's Midnight Cowboy, combined Citadelle with Fino Sherry, salted pepper tincture, toasted poppyseed syrup, and lemon to highlight the gin's herbaceous side. Shaken with egg white to add body, her drink reveals its subtleties as it warms up. "I recommend smelling the rosemary I've used as a garnish, just to awaken your palate," Ashcraft told attendees.

### The Panelists Said:

**Neat:** Heavy juniper nose, dry grass, melon rind, zest body soap. Mouthfeel is viscous and peppery. Flavor is crisp, clean citrus and vanillin with a grain finish.

**Cocktail:** Creamy satin with a dry, short finish. Lemon curd, vanilla cream, and muffins. —Steve White

**Neat:** Lavender, lemon peel, dry hibiscus, dry orange.

**Cocktail:** Lemon fresh at first with a peppery back. The Citadelle comes through without overpowering. —Thomas Ward



*Ornella Ashcraft, who represented Citadelle Gin, is a bartender at Austin's Midnight Cowboy.*

### Les Fines Herbes

1½ oz. Citadelle Gin  
½ oz. Lustau Fino Sherry  
¾ oz. toasted poppyseed syrup  
1 oz. lemon juice  
4 dashes salt and pepper tincture  
Egg white

## Pasote Reposado Tequila

A member of the 3 Badge Beverage Corporation portfolio, Pasote Tequila is distilled from 100 percent estate-grown blue agave in the Jalisco highland town of Jesús María. The spirit boasts flavors of roasted agave and green grass mellowed with floral and grapefruit notes, as well as subtle hints of vanilla.

Third-generation Master Tequilero Felipe Camarena makes use of native yeast, pure rainwater, and natural spring water—as well as six months of aging in American oak barrels—to create a time-honored elixir that speaks to Mexico's cultural history and topography.

Aaron Kolitz, bartender at The Townsend in Austin, named his cocktail Weber Takes a Trip, as it incorporates ingredients sourced internationally. It also served to highlight the complex nature of this highlands tequila while underscoring its citrus and nutty qualities with Amaro Montenegro, Cocchi Rosa, Pedro Ximénez Sherry, grapefruit bitters, and salt. "The one thing I think tequila needs is some salt to bring out the herbaceous flavors," said Kolitz. "Put some fresh grapefruit on top, and you have a simple, boozy cocktail perfect for warm weather."

### The Panelists Said:

**Neat:** Slightly smoky nose with sweet fruitiness and pineapple leaf. On the palate, banana, toast, ashy smoke, and white pepper.

**Cocktail:** Grapefruit heavy with rough edges smoothed by salt. A nutmeg/cinnamon mid-palate. —Arik Skot Williams

**Neat:** Orange citrus nose; pepper and bitter chocolate on the palate with slight sweetness.

**Cocktail:** Beautifully balanced cocktail that showcases the Pasote nicely. The Reposado really shines. —Brett Esler



*Aaron Kolitz, bartender at The Townsend in Austin, represented Pasote Tequila with his cocktail, Weber Took a Trip.*

### Weber Took a Trip

2 oz. Pasote Reposado Tequila  
½ oz. Amaro Montenegro  
⅓ oz. Cocchi Rosa  
¼ oz. Lustau Pedro Ximénez Sherry  
2 oz. Bittermens Hopped Grapefruit Bitters  
3 drops 20% salt solution

## Calamity Gin

Unlike juniper-forward London Dry gins, Texas-made Calamity Gin boasts a more delicate flavor profile of rose, lemon, and lavender, as well as the distinct sweet and citrusy aroma of Texas' state flower, the spring bluebonnet. "We wanted to make a gin infused with botanicals found in Texas," said Calamity Gin producer and Southwest Spirits & Wine President Mike Howard, whose full-service distillery in Dallas is one of the largest in the state. "We named it after American sharpshooter and frontierswoman Calamity Jane because she was a complex and fascinating woman who defied immediate description, just like gin."

On the nose and palate, lime zest, cardamom, and juniper are balanced with Texas grapefruit, orange, and floral notes—complementing fruit juices and playing well with an amaro-kissed Highball presented at the tasting. "It also makes an interesting take on what we call a gin press, said Howard. "In the '70s, the press started as a country-club drink with vodka. We do it with Calamity and a mixture of soda and Sprite or grapefruit sparkling water—very refreshing."

### *The Panelists Said:*

 **Neat:** Smoke, pine, and juniper on the nose; green pine and aloe on the palate.

 **Cocktail:** Lemon and sweet tea. —*Steve White*

 **Neat:** Lime zest, juniper, lavender, floral.

 **Cocktail:** Light, bright, not cloying. Well-balanced and simple, but not simple-minded. —*Arik Skot Williams*



*Calamity Gin's representing bartender Danalynn Traugott and her cocktail, Coral Calamity.*

### **Coral Calamity**

1½ oz. Calamity Gin  
½ oz. St-Germain  
½ oz. Aperol  
¾ oz. lemon juice  
2 dashes Angostura bitters  
Top with Topo Chico  
Lemon garnish

## Michter's US\*1 Kentucky Straight Rye

Michter's amber-colored straight rye, rich with hints of vanilla, caramel, pepper, citrus, and clove, picks up firm tannins and astringent swagger from aging in barrels toasted before charring. *Whiskey Distilled* author Heather Greene said "this is what a great whiskey should be," suggesting rye aficionados taste it neat for its luscious viscosity, long finish, and complex cornucopia of flavor wrought from grain, water, yeast, and wood. With roots tracing back to 1753, the Michter's brand was resurrected in Kentucky in the 1990s and now produces four distinctly American spirits.

Erin Ashford, Bar Manager at Olamaie in Austin, chose to highlight the rye's citrus and caramel notes with her boozy Golden Years cocktail, which brings a veritable garden to the glass via a garnish of lemony, edible Zinfandel oxalis. "I love Michter's on its own, but in a cocktail, it is really special," Ashford said. "It's so smooth and easy-drinking, and also very delicate with lemon and slightly-spiced vanilla and oak notes."



*Erin Ashford, Bar Manager at Olamaie in Austin, represented Michter's with her Golden Years cocktail.*

### *The Panelists Said:*

**Neat:** Caramel, bananas, clove with cinnamon oil. A bit hot—almost burnt caramel.

**Cocktail:** Violet, caramel, lemon zest; very smooth-edged flavors; almost cotton candy or Juicy Fruit gum. The heat of oxalis works really well to add some needed acid, almost like sorrel. —*Arik Skot Williams*

**Neat:** Caramel oak notes with banana and a very peppery vanilla finish.

**Cocktail:** Caramel nose, very floral, sweet molasses. Notes of clove, slight bitter molasses finish; subtle notes of island spice and cardamom. —*Dustin Bolf*

### **Golden Years**

1½ oz. Michter's US\*1 Kentucky Straight Rye  
¾ oz. Meletti Amaro  
¾ oz. Amaro Montenegro  
1 dash Scrappy's Cardamom Bitters  
Zinfandel oxalis garnish

## Woody Creek Distillers Colorado Straight Rye

With a tasting room and distillery in Basalt, Colorado, about 15 miles west of Aspen, Woody Creek makes its Colorado Straight Rye from 100 percent rye nurtured on 40 acres near Yuma, Colorado. Rich and honeyed on the nose with nuanced flavors of citrus and white pepper, Woody Creek's rye is aged in new American white oak barrels for at least three years. A medium toast adds amber color and pleasant tannin, with caramel and vanilla present on the mid-palate.

"We're proud of how Colorado-centric everything is," said Distillery Bar Manager Christian Wilhoft, who created "a real porch-pounder" he calls The Boz to celebrate the season. "It's 2 ounces of our rye, basil, ginger, raspberries, a little bit of lemon juice, and simple syrup—that's it. It's killer."

In addition to exclusively contracting for its own rye, Woody Creek grows potatoes for its vodkas and gin. "Our potato farm backs up to the [former] property of Hunter S. Thompson," said Southwestern Regional Sales Manager Mary Holliday. "When his funeral was held there, the story is that Johnny Depp shot his ashes from a cannon, so we like to say there's probably a little bit of Hunter S. Thompson in our vodka and gin."

### The Panelists Said:

 **Neat:** Banana and browned butter nose; light coconut and caramel palate; a little spicy finish. OK, not a little spicy: a *lot* spicy. Quite good.

 **Cocktail:** Does a good job of being fruit-forward but not overly sweet. Refreshing. A little booze, heat, fruit. Also quite good. —Arik Skot Williams

 **Neat:** Tobacco, cherry, peach, and chocolate nose. Flavor is dry with green peppercorn, cardamom, cocoa/baker's chocolate.

 **Cocktail:** Nose of green grass and fresh-cut leaves. Pleasantly sour. Ginger stands out nicely. —Steve White



*Christian Wilhoft, Bar Manager for Woody Creek Distillers.*

### The Boz

2 oz. Woody Creek Distillers Colorado Rye Whiskey  
½ oz. lemon juice  
½ oz. simple syrup  
Muddled fresh basil, ginger, and raspberries

## Broker's Gin

This juniper-forward gin, distilled from English wheat and blended and bottled in the U.K., draws its distinctive flavor profile from a 200-year-old recipe incorporating ten botanicals, including coriander, orris root, nutmeg, licorice, cassia, angelica root, and lemon and orange peels.

A true London Dry Gin—a quality designation whose stipulations, among many, require that all flavors are derived from natural plant materials—Broker's naturally makes a well-balanced Gin and Tonic and was the first gin to be awarded a score of 97 at the Ultimate Spirits Challenge.

Broker's also enhances the spicy earthiness of a bold ginger beer, as bartender and brand rep Karah Carmack illustrated with her festive drink, Curse of the Southpaw. Served in a highball glass and garnished with mint and lemon, this lip-puckering concoction would be the perfect pool-side refresher.



*Republic National Distributing Company Staff Mixologist Karah Carmack created the Curse of the Southpaw featuring Broker's Gin.*

### The Panelists Said:

 **Neat:** Citrus-forward with lots of white pepper.

 **Cocktail:** Starts with a strong punch of ginger followed by coconut and pineapple. The herbs from Broker's come through on the finish. —Thomas Ward

 **Neat:** Lots of botanicals, cinnamon, and orange blossom.

 **Cocktail:** Ginger-forward with a light maple finish. Gin can stand up to the flavors of the maple syrup. —Jessica Sanders

### Curse of the Southpaw

2 oz. Broker's Gin  
¾ oz. lemon juice  
½ oz. maple syrup  
2 dashes coconut essence  
3–4 oz. homemade ginger beer

## JCB Vodka

A passion project of French winemaker Jean-Charles Boisset, JCB Vodka's vintage-dated creation is one of the few spirits distilled from oak-aged Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Enjoyed neat, it's crisp with a hint of stony salinity that's suggestive of the Côte d'Or soils in France, where the grapes are sustainably grown and hand-picked.

In Backbeat Assistant General Manager Natalie Mauser-Carter's elegant Golden Slope cocktail, the vodka's elegance shines with a supporting cast of dill-infused Dolin Blanc, St-Germain liqueur, and Jamaican bitters. "I wanted to use the essence of elderflower and dill to bring out flavors of summer and the fresh notes you'll find in wine-based distillate," Mauser-Carter said.

Along with JCB Spirits' flagship pure vodka, Boisset also produces a vodka infused with French caviar; a third vodka infused with famous black truffles of Périgord, and a gin derived from 44 botanicals and inspired by the dry London style. All three vodkas and the gin are a rare treat served icy-cold with caviar in an elegant toast to summer.

### The Panelists Said:

-  **Neat:** Nice peppery bite; lovely salinity and mouthfeel.
-  **Cocktail:** Gorgeous texture! I love the dill in this drink—it really balances out the pepperiness of the vodka. Also an excellent balance for the salinity. —*Jessica Sanders*
-  **Neat:** Grape-forward with subtle notes of cocoa, powdered sugar, and vanilla. Very confectionary. Nice mouthfeel and surprisingly weighty considering multiple distillations.
-  **Cocktail:** Dill and St-Germain work really well with the salinity of the vodka. A really unique and refreshing variation on a Martini. —*Steph Teslar*



*Natalie Mauser-Carter, the Assistant General Manager at Backbeat in Austin, represented JCB Vodka.*

### The Golden Slope

- 2 oz. JCB Pure Vodka
- ¼ oz. St-Germain
- ¾ oz. dill-infused Dolin Blanc Vermouth
- 2 drops Bittercube Jamaican #1 Cocktail Bitters
- Fresh dill sprig garnish

## Kirk and Sweeney 18-Year Rum

Aged non-solera for 18 years in oak barrels, this Dominican Republic rum—another member of the 3 Badge Beverage Corp. portfolio—exudes vanilla, almond, pronounced coconut, and pleasantly astringent wood tannins. Named for a Caribbean rum-running schooner during the early years of Prohibition, Kirk and Sweeney honors the long history of rum production with a squat bottle inspired by 18th-century, hemp-netted "onion" bottles, which were hung from a beam on the ship.

In another nod to the spirit's history, Kolitz created a drink called The Caribbean Fortress, evoking adventure on the high seas with local orgeat from Austin's Liber & Company, fresh lemon and grapefruit juices, a chai-infused simple syrup, and a little salt. "I spent ten years in the kitchen before getting behind the bar, so I know that salt brings out everything," Kolitz said.

### The Panelists Said:

-  **Neat:** Crème brûlée, breadfruit nose; medium viscosity with a very short finish. Vanilla bean, cheesecake, lactose finish.
-  **Cocktail:** Cinnamon nose. Dry mouthfeel with cinnamon raisin oatmeal cookies on the palate. F'ing delicious. —*Steve White*
-  **Neat:** Oaky banana with island spice and baking spices. Nutty finish.
-  **Cocktail:** Spiced cinnamon nose, orange blossom, floral, fruit-forward. Slight green vegetal finish with the addition of Pasote Reposado. —*Dustin Bolf* 



*Bartender Aaron Kolitz created the Caribbean Fortress with Kirk and Sweeney Rum.*

### Caribbean Fortress

- 2 oz. Kirk and Sweeney 18-Year Rum
- ½ oz. Pasote Reposado Tequila
- ¾ oz. chai-infused hibiscus tea syrup
- ¾ oz. Liber & Co. Almond Orgeat Syrup
- ½ oz. fresh grapefruit juice
- ½ oz. lemon juice
- 3 drops 20% salt solution

# A 1996 Kind of Style

## EVALUATING RED BORDEAUX FROM THE 2014 VINTAGE

**FOR MORE THAN** 20 years, the major buyers of Bordeaux “en primeur” and a few wine writers have met in the little British coastal town of Southwold to taste across Bordeaux vintages as they enter their fifth year. At this point, the reds have been in bottle for roughly 30 months.

The team of 20 tasters now gathers in the offices of fine-wine traders Farr Vintners to take part in the event, called Southwold on Thames. Over two days in January, we tasted exactly 240 wines from the 2014 vintage in 20 flights, all decanted and served blind.

With very few exceptions, two bottles of each wine are provided free by the châteaux in exchange for our feedback. **Our rankings on the 20-point scale (with half-points permitted) were added and divided by the number of tasters, with the highest and lowest marks eliminated in the final results.** (The merchants tend to be a little less generous than the writers—in this case Jancis Robinson, William Kelly, Neal Martin, and myself.) Read on for the results of this year's tasting.

### THE TOP FIVE 2014 WINES IN EACH MAJOR APPELLATION:

**Saint-Émilion:** Tertre Roteboeuf, Canon, Quintus, Figeac, Troplong Mondot

**Pomerol:** L'Eglise Clinet, Gazin, Vieux Château Certan, Le Gay, La Conseillante

**Pessac-Léognan:** Domaine de Chevalier, Smith Haut Lafitte, Pape Clément, Malartic-Lagravière, Haut-Bailly

**Margaux:** Palmer, d'Issan, Rauzan-Ségla, Brane-Cantenac, Pavillon Rouge

**Saint-Estèphe:** Cos d'Estournel, Montrose, Calon-Ségur, Meyney, Capbern

**Saint-Julien:** Léoville Barton, Léoville Poyferré, Langoa Barton, Léoville Las Cases, Ducru Beaucaillou

**Paulliac:** Lynch-Bages, Pichon-

Longueville Baron, Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande, Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Les Forts de Latour

### THE TOP FIVE FIRST GROWTHS (Judged Separately):

Mouton-Rothschild, Latour, La Mission Haut-Brion, Angélu, Ausone

### THE 2014 VINTAGE OVERALL:

Stephen Browett, Chairman of Farr Vintners, observed that “2014 has the structure and style maybe of 1996,” adding that it “does seem to be at its best in Pauillac and, especially, Saint-Julien and Saint-Estèphe.” Jancis Robinson, writing in the *Financial Times*, agreed; however, he found a positive surprise in the Saint-Émilion, which “tasted less aggressively extracted, less obviously alcoholic, more harmonious, and more expressive than they used to.”

I certainly concur. The 2014s from both banks confirmed that exaggerated wines made to impress rather than express are going out of fashion. The key to a fine wine is harmony, and it was refreshing to find it present in so many of the bottles we tasted.

Following this tasting, Browett tabulated the group's scores from 2005 to 2014 to see which châteaux had performed best over the decade. Here, with our averaged scores, is the result:

**Left Bank First Growths:** Mouton-Rothschild 17.96; Latour 17.75; Margaux 17.71; Haut-Brion 17.67; La Mission Haut-Brion 17.58; Lafite-Rothschild 17.25

**Right Bank First Growths:** Le Pin 17.52; Pétrus 17.43; Ausone and Cheval-Blanc 17.17; Lafleur 17.08, Angélu 17.05

**Left Bank Super Seconds:** Pichon-Longueville Baron 16.89; Cos d'Estournel 16.85; Léoville Poyferré 16.64; Les Forts de



Latour 16.55; Lynch-Bages 16.52; Léoville Barton 16.50

**Margaux:** Palmer 16.36; d'Issan 16.04; Brane-Cantenac 15.95; Rauzan-Ségla 15.88

**Saint-Julien:** Léoville-Poyferré 16.64; Léoville Barton 16.50; Ducru-Beaucaillou 16.48; Léoville Las Cases 16.37; Langoa-Barton 16.16

**Paulliac:** Pichon-Longueville Baron 16.89; Les Forts de Latour 16.55; Lynch-Bages 16.52; Pichon-Longueville Comtesse de Lalande 16.37; Grand-Puy-Lacoste 16.27

**Saint-Estèphe:** Cos d'Estournel 16.85; Montrose 16.18; Calon-Ségur 16

**Pessac-Léognan:** Smith Haut-Lafitte 16.11; Domaine de Chevalier 16.09; Pape Clément 15.87; Haut-Bailly 15.78

**Saint-Émilion:** Tertre-Roteboeuf 16.60; Figeac 15.83; Canon 15.75; Valandraud 15.64

**Pomerol:** L'Eglise Clinet 16.90; Vieux Château Certan 16.74; L'Évangile 16.64; Le Gay 16.43

**CWE BOOT CAMP** Monday, August 13

**CWE AND CSE EXAMS** Tuesday, August 14

**PRE-CONFERENCE MASTER CLASSES**

and Finger Lakes winery tours, Tuesday August 14

**EVENING EVENTS** including tastings,  
local dining, and networking opportunities

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Eduardo Chadwick, President of Viña Errázuriz  
and Viña Seña

**OVER 50 SESSIONS**

# 42<sup>nd</sup> annual conference

SOCIETY OF WINE EDUCATORS

Finger Lakes, New York

AUGUST 15-17, 2018 WOODCLIFF HOTEL & SPA



TO REGISTER, VISIT

[www.societyofwineeducators.org](http://www.societyofwineeducators.org)

# The Half-Century MARQUE

**NAPA CELLARS**  
STAYS TRUE TO ITS  
ROOTS THROUGH  
ITS PORTFOLIO OF  
CLASSIC VARIETIES

by Fred Swan / photos by Tia Gavin



**IT'S HARD TO GET MORE** "Napa" than Napa Cellars. Founded in 1976, it was among the first Napa Valley wineries created after Prohibition (the very first opened in 1966). And while the region's worldwide success has placed most of its wines solidly in the luxury category, Napa Cellars is a welcome exception, offering authentic, varietally expressive wines that are startlingly good values.

With its signature geodesic dome, the original winery can be found right off Highway 29, the valley's main artery. Napa Cellars has changed hands a few times. But Trinchero Family Estates, its steward since 2006, ensures the wines remain true to the brand promise: 100 percent of the grapes come from Napa Valley.

Even the winemaker grew up in Napa. Joe Shirley, who's been at Napa Cellars throughout Trinchero's tenure, knows the valley as well as anyone and better than most. His expertise enables him to select just the right vineyards for complex, delicious wines epitomizing their variety. "Getting the best flavors," he says, "is about when you pick and where the fruit is from."

*A contemplative Joe Shirley, Winemaker for Napa Cellars.*

As a guiding principle, Shirley says he aims to take “a straightforward approach: as minimal intervention as you can get.” In the Sauvignon Blanc, for example, “there’s no oak, additives, or pixie dust. Napa Valley grows some of the best grapes in the world. It seems silly to use brute-force winemaking techniques or impose a wine-maker signature.”

For many wines, Shirley uses vineyards from cool areas of the valley, which results in juicy, nuanced wines ready to drink upon release—though the reds can get even better with some age. The Sauvignon Blanc, for example, is picked cold either late at night or early in the morning. The juice enjoys six to eight hours of skin contact with the best grapes, capturing more varietal character; to maintain freshness, fermentation occurs slowly at temperatures in stainless steel.

**“PINOT NOIR IS THE MOST VERSATILE FOOD-PAIRING WINE THERE IS. I DON’T SEE THE POINT OF DOING ANYTHING WITH WINEMAKING TECHNIQUE TO REDUCE THAT.”**

**—JOE SHIRLEY, NAPA CELLARS WINEMAKER**



### Exploring the Napa Cellars Portfolio

In regards to Napa Cellars’ recently-released vintages, Shirley said he “wanted to portray how different the varietals are and not put them all through the same process at the expense of varietal character.” “I’ve never thought barrel fermentation played into the strengths of Sauvignon Blanc, but our Chardonnay is barrel-fermented mostly with native yeasts,” he adds.

**The 2016 Napa Cellars Sauvignon Blanc** (13.9% ABV, SRP \$20) overflows with pure aromas of guava, green apple, and tangy stone fruit. The mouthwatering palate has medium-plus body with riper tropical and stone fruit grounded by minerality. Creamy with very fine texture and lingering juiciness, the **2016 Napa Cellars Chardonnay** (13.9% ABV, SRP \$22) features a rich palette of golden apple, pear, baking spice, crème brûlée, and a kiss of toasty oak.



Because Shirley believes “Pinot gets boring really quickly in warm vineyards,” Napa Cellars’ version, made mostly with Dijon clones, sources fruit from the southern 10 percent of Napa Valley. He maintains his light approach during the production process, saying “Pinot Noir is the most versatile food-pairing wine there is. I don’t see the point of doing anything with winemaking technique to reduce that.”

Napa Cellars’ Pinot Noir tank ferments before finishing in barrels—largely similar to the Chardonnay, but with some medium-plus toast, too. Deep ruby in color, the **2015 vintage** (13.8% ABV, SRP \$24) has a core of dark red cherry accented by dark mineral, earth, toasted spice, and caramel, while the palate is juicy and long with medium-plus body.

**The 2015 Napa Cellars Merlot** (14.5% ABV, SRP \$24) is primarily from the Oak Knoll District, with about 5 percent sourced from the slightly cooler Carneros region (a bit also comes from Atlas Peak for grip). “You want the grapes to ripen,”

says Shirley, “but just barely.” The wine macerates for 10–12 days before aging 18–24 months in barrel; dark ruby, it offers grilled black cherry, mocha, toasted oak, and mineral on the nose. Its long palate, meanwhile, features fine, structural tannins and flavors of black cherry, dark plum, caramel, medium-roast coffee, cocoa, and bay leaf.

According to Shirley, “Napa Valley Merlot used to be worth more than Cabernet.” “In 2006, we sold about an equal amount of both,” he recalls, but in the wake of the “Sideways effect” and too much Merlot coming from vineyards best used for other varieties, the grape took a big hit. Now, Shirley says, “most remaining Merlot plantings are in areas it does really well in.”

For Cabernet Sauvignon, Shirley focuses on cap management and temperature to avoid relying on additives and fining. He also focuses on maximizing skin extraction and minimizing seed extraction.

**The 2015 Napa Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon** (14.2% ABV, SRP \$32)

is deeply colored with robust aromas of cassis and mineral, which are highlighted by dark chocolate and dry herb. The gentle, mouthwatering palate shows medium-plus body and minerality with long-lasting flavors of blackberry, bay leaf, cassis, and chocolate.

Finally, Napa Cellars Zinfandel always includes 10–15 percent Petite Sirah, as Shirley says the former’s “explosion of over-the-top fruit upfront with drying tannins on the finish are fleshed out on the mid-palate by Petite Sirah.” **The 2015 Napa Cellars Zinfandel** (14.9% ABV, SRP \$26) is alive with ripe red and black berries with mint and cocoa on the nose. On the palate, the intense flavors of this fruit comes covered in creamy dark chocolate and cocoa powder tannins on the finish. **\$1**



*Tastings for small groups can be made at Napa Cellars without appointment. For more information, visit [napacellars.com](http://napacellars.com).*



Somm  
Foundation

*The three Master Sommelier Founders of the Guild of Sommeliers Education Foundation, from left to right: Jay James, Jay Fletcher, and Fred Dame.*



# A Cellar is Born

HOW **SOMMFOUNDATION'S** OLD AND RARE WINE CELLAR CAME TO BE—AND HOW YOU CAN HELP FILL IT



*A trio of incredible wines from the Rhône unearthed from SommFoundation's cellar.*

**MANY OF YOU** are aware that SommFoundation has a wine cellar consisting of collectable and rare wines from Burgundy, Bordeaux, Rhône, Piedmont, and Napa Valley. We have been using these wines around the country at educational dinners and wine forums, as well as various seminars, for more than 15 years now.

Proceeds from these events fund our scholarship and enrichment programs for the benefit of aspiring sommeliers. We provide wine for fundraising and informational events at the TEXSOM International Wine Awards, the Aspen Food & Wine Classic, the Boulder Burgundy Festival, Big Sky Resort's Vine and Dine Festival, Tarbell's, Compline, World of Pinot Noir, and the Rudd Roundtable, just to name a few.

Some of you might ask: Where does all of this wine come from?

Many years ago, during my studies for the Master Sommelier exam, I met Jeff Johnston. He became one of my regular clients in restaurants that I managed in Aspen, Colorado, in the late '80s and early '90s. Jeff loved food and wine. The owner of an impressive cellar with some of the finest collectible wines in existence, he took a genuine interest in our wine studies and became involved with our tasting group.

Jeff regularly hosted us at his home, graciously opening some of the oldest and rarest wines in the world to taste with us. We drank all the greats with him: Wines we opened often included Domaine de la Romanée-Conti La Tâche, Château Le Pin, Château Rayas, and Domaine Jean-Louis Chave Ermitage Cuvée Cathelin. All of us in the group were astounded by Jeff's generosity, and he became a great friend and mentor to me.

As I continued to study for the Master Sommelier Exam, Jeff watched my life improve dramatically. For years, I worked hard on my wine knowledge—history, geography, terroir, and viticulture—as well as my social and speaking skills. Jeff was impressed with the bonding, friendship, and overall progress in quality of life for all the members of our tasting group. As he witnessed both me and Damon Ornowski transform from mid-level restaurant managers to Master Sommeliers, he saw the beauty of the Court and how it's capable of changing people's lives in a positive way.

Because old and rare wine is expensive, it's incredibly difficult for aspiring sommeliers to taste or even touch one of these bottles. The great wines of the world have an incomparable purity of fruit and terroir; but in Jeff's opinion, access to them should not solely be given to the wealthy. Jeff and his wife, Kathy, decided to donate a portion of their world-class wine cellar to be used specifically for educating and enhancing the experience of up-and-coming sommeliers and wine advocates. In 2002, they donated approximately \$1 million of wine to SommFoundation for educational purposes.

In 2003, myself and fellow Master Sommeliers Fred Dame and Jay James formed the Guild of Sommeliers Education



**Jay Fletcher, MS, decants a 1995 Chateau L'Evangile during a SommFoundation dinner.**



**Jeff Johnston and Andrey Ivanov, the 2012 Jeff Johnston Medal winner.**

Foundation in order to use this great gift from the Johnstons to enlighten aspiring sommeliers. We worked to create a great online educational wine compendium while also raising money for scholarships and enrichment trips to help those in need.

With Jeff in mind, The Guild of Sommeliers Education Foundation also launched the Rudd Roundtable; co-sponsored by Rudd Wines, the annual event takes place in Napa Valley in January. The top-scoring candidates from each of the three Master Sommelier Advanced Exams held during the prior year are invited to participate, along with a small group of hand-selected top sommeliers preparing for the Master Exam. The candidate with the highest score on the Advanced Exam is presented with the Jeff Johnston Medal, which recognizes a level of hard work and dedication that Jeff would be proud of.

In 2015, The Guild of Sommeliers Education Foundation split into two separate nonprofit organizations to better focus on our respective goals. GuildSomm prioritizes education, web content, blogs, podcasts, training guides, and member-focused events, while SommFoundation aims to provide scholarships and other resources to sommeliers and other professionals within the wine industry. In addition to financial support, we allocate our resources to fund enrichment trips and educational

seminars to benefit all who wish to further their wine knowledge.

Over the years, we have given away more than \$1 million in scholarships and sent hundreds of students to wine regions all over the world—all expenses paid. The old and rare wines in our collection, meanwhile, have been tasted and enjoyed by thousands of students and wine consumers.

This year, after 15 years of relying on Jeff and Kathy's generous donation, we are actively engaged in acquiring more wine to sustain our mission. We have started the process of reaching out to collectors and fine wine producers to request donations of their most distinguished wines so we can continue to educate students and raise money for their benefit.

If you have an interest in donating wines from your collections or winery, we would greatly appreciate it. Your wines will be tasted and talked about with the leading wine professionals, wine students, and wine enthusiasts in the country. Because our organization is a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, your wine donation may be tax-deductible in many cases (consult your CPA). If you would like more information on donating to SommFoundation, please contact us at [info@sommfoundation.com](mailto:info@sommfoundation.com). S|

*Thank you,  
Jay Fletcher, Cellar  
Master, SommFoundation*

THE **SOMM** JOURNAL  
**CAMP**



*Preview*

# SOMM

## *Great Expectations*

GAINING INSIGHT WHILE  
PREPARING FOR THE  
**STAGS LEAP DISTRICT  
SOMM CAMP**

*by Jessie Birschbach*

Although we're calling it "stag camp" around the office, there will in fact be a lack of "stag somms" attending the Stags Leap District (SLD) SOMM Camp retreat this year. Inspired by the strong female wine-makers and principals leading the camp, *The SOMM Journal* has invited some of the best female sommeliers from around the country. Of course, a few lucky male somms will attend—five or six to be exact—but the remaining ten will be women. Hopefully the young bucks can keep up!

To prime ourselves for camp at the end of June, we reached out to a few of these women for some personal insight into the SLD and the wines that define it.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE STAGS LEAP DISTRICT WINEGROWERS



## Remi Cohen,

Vice President and General Manager of Lede Family Wines

After East Coast transplant Remi Cohen received her degree in molecular and cellular biology from U.C. Berkeley, her life took an unexpected turn. Rather than pursuing a career in the medical field, Cohen obtained her master's degree in the Viticulture and Enology program at U.C. Davis before earning her MBA at Golden Gate University in San Francisco.

These degrees propelled her into working at various levels of winemaking in California, where she went from serving as the Vineyard Manager of Bouchaine Vineyards to taking a position at Merryvale Vineyards as Vice President of Operations. Somewhere in between her time at Merryvale and her current role at Lede Family Wines, Cohen founded her own vinicultural and winemaking consulting company, Vines to Wine.

According to Cohen, both Lede and Vines to Wine prioritize sustainable farming practices, and SOMM Camp guests will have the opportunity to attend a session dedicated to sustainability efforts in the SLD led by her, Jon-Mark Chappellet of Clos du Val, and Russ Weis of Silverado Vineyards. "At Cliff Lede Vineyards,



The corridor in the Stags Leap District helps funnel the cool air from the San Pablo Bay.

Another dominant theme at camp will likely center around the appellation's major geological influences. Aside from its world-class Cabernet Sauvignon, SLD is best known for a rocky outcropping in the Vaca mountain range known as the Palisades; its dramatic image is associated, of course, with the eponymous stag escaping a hunter by leaping over the jagged rocks. "Our Poetry Vineyard is nestled into this rock outcrop and we are fortunate that this vineyard produces wines that are quintessential Stags Leap," Cohen says. "The west-facing rocky façade of the Palisades radiates warmth into the District from the abundant sunshine reflecting on it, producing wines that are ripe and voluptuous."

The dual influence of the Palisades and its close proximity to San Pablo Bay create the bulk of the SLD's geological influences. Cool air from the bay funnels through the SLD corridor's green, rolling hills, which serve as the home of Cliff Lede's Twin Peaks Vineyard. According to Cohen, "this creates a funnel against the façade of the Palisades to draw in cool marine air at night." "The cooler air lowers temperatures in the late afternoon and night so dramatically that we have a very large temperature fluctuation from the afternoon highs to the nighttime lows," she adds.

This climate is conducive to acid retention during berry development, which Cohen says creates wines "with elegance, vibrancy, structure, and longevity." "At Cliff Lede Vineyards, we like to produce wines that are opulent and reflect the abundant sunshine and warmth of the District, yet have an unmistakable sense of place with minerality from the volcanic hillsides as well as ageworthiness indicative of our cool nights," she explains.

## Stags Leap District AVA Breakdown

Roughly 3 miles long and 1 mile wide, the SLD is the smallest AVA in Napa Valley.

**Roughly 90 percent of grapes** planted in SLD are Cabernet Sauvignon or Bordeaux varieties.

Only about half of the **2,700-acre District** is under vine.

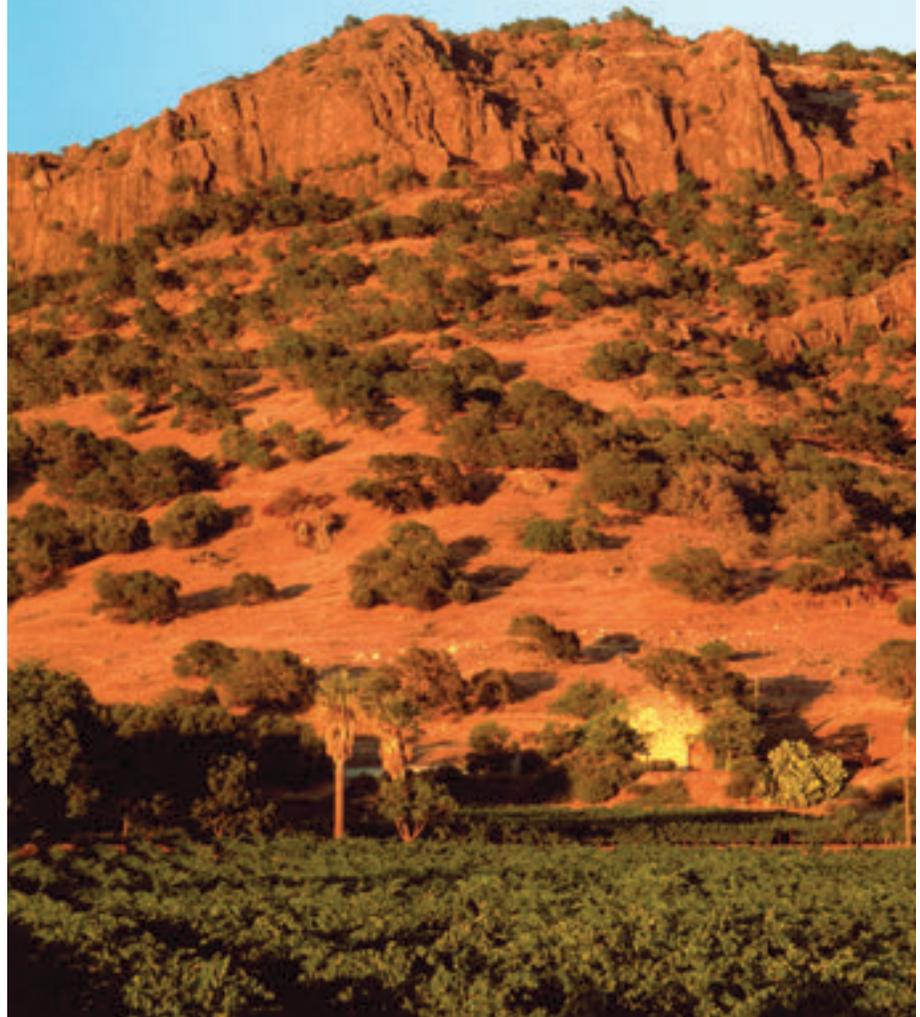
**Established in 1989**, SLD was the first AVA in the U.S. to be approved based on its soil profile.

At the famous Judgement of Paris in 1976, first place was awarded to the **Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon**.

The two dominant soil profiles of the SLD AVA are: **volcanic**, found in the eastern elevation; and **river sediment**, a blend of loams with clay substructure found in the lowland area.

SLD experiences a longer growing season due to the cool marine airflow from the **San Pablo Bay**.

*The west-facing rocky façade of the Palisades: a natural symbol of the Stags Leap District AVA.*





## Elizabeth Vianna, Winemaker at Chimney Rock

As a biology major at Vassar College, Elizabeth Vianna—much like Remi Cohen—was on the path to medical school. But after being exposed to good wine in New York, namely a glass of 1985 Château Sociando-Mallet, Vianna chose to attend U.C. Davis to pursue her master's in enology instead.

After graduating, Vianna advanced from Enologist to Assistant Winemaker at Napa Wine Company, where she learned the craft alongside incredible winemakers like Pam Starr and Heidi Barrett. After starting at Chimney Rock as the Assistant Winemaker in 2002, Vianna assumed the role of Winemaker in 2005 before being named General Manager in 2011.

In addition to serving as the Head Winemaker at the Stags Leap District estate winery, Vianna somehow manages to find time to serve as President of the Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association. Her steadfast dedication can clearly be attributed to her love of the AVA.

"I've been making wines here for over 16 years now. When I started at Chimney Rock, I remember watching [former winemaker Doug Fletcher] giving a tour and saying something like, 'The Stags Leap District makes some of the best Cabernets in the world.' I come from a New York perspective, where it's a very kind of Eurocentric wine-drinking community in a lot of ways, and remember thinking, 'Wow, that's pretty confident,'" Vianna recalls. "But I think I didn't really understand Napa Valley wines yet at that stage in my career, and then I had this kind of an 'aha moment' maybe three or four years later after realizing that the wines really are beautifully balanced and there is something here that is unique, like any great appellation." ❧

### CAMP HIGHLIGHTS

"The camp will be a deep immersion in the history, geology, and wines from the SLD, but most importantly, it will be a chance for the somms to connect with the land and the people who make the District special and unique." —Remi Cohen

"The biggest takeaway any time you visit a wine region, of course, is really tasting through its wines. But just as valuable, they'll know so much more of the story behind those wines and that's what connects us to them—the people. I think these somms will be getting a perspective on the diversity of wineries in the District from some of the newer producers to some of the long-term and multi-generational family growers." —Elizabeth Vianna

"Included also in the itinerary is a segment called 'Clearing the Air – A Barrel Crawl,' a fun play on a pub crawl. Participating winemakers will taste the sommeliers through their 2017 barrel samples. Our intended goal is to literally clear the air and mystery around the vintage due to the wildfires. The vintners look forward to sharing the appellation's high-quality 2017 Cabernets with the somms so these industry leaders can spread the word." —Nancy Bialek, Executive Director, Stags Leap District Winegrowers

Look for a full report of the Stags Leap SOMM Camp in the August-September issue of The SOMM Journal!



*Pictured in the private dining room at Mon Ami Gabi in Las Vegas' Paris hotel, a group of wine buyers flew in from all over the U.S. to judge The SOMM Journal's blind wine-tasting competition at the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) 75th Annual Convention & Exposition.*

# A Toast to Our Somms

RECAPPING THE **MON AMI GABI** WELCOME DINNER  
AT THE **75TH ANNUAL WSWA CONVENTION**

by Ruth Tobias / photos by Tony Tran



*The MÁD Tokaj 2015 Dry Furmint was paired with an endive salad with Roquefort dressing.*



When they arrived at Las Vegas' Caesars Palace for last month's Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) 75th Annual Convention & Exposition, the judges for *The SOMM Journal's* blind wine-tasting competition immediately began preparing for the lofty task ahead of them. The group, who had flown in from all over the country, were entrusted to evaluate hundreds of bottles that formed a diverse representation of the global wine industry—no small feat, indeed.

It was only fitting that, as the competition's sponsors, *The SOMM Journal* and sister publication *The Tasting Panel* would thank them for their hard work at a welcome dinner that also ran the geographical gamut: showcasing wines from Hungary, Italy, and Oregon against the charming backdrop—and cuisine—of French bistro Mon Ami Gabi in the Paris hotel.

After an introduction by Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May, Wines of Excellence Project Director Enikő Magyar took the floor to present the wine for the first course: the MÁD Tokaj 2015 Dry Furmint. For all its history as an estate run by an 18th-generation winemaker, Magyar said MÁD is helping forge a future in which Hungarian dry Furmint represents "the new taste of the world."

Its contents, she added slyly, "might be dangerous to Pinot Grigio," but for Mon Ami Gabi Executive Chef Vincent Pouessel, the crisp, lively wine was also just the thing to cut through pungent Roquefort. Because he believed the cheese alone "would've been too harsh and strong," he incorporated it into a salad with bitter endive and ripe pear "to bring the sweetness" in harmony with the fruit character of the wine.

Reflecting Magyar's assertion that Furmint is "a brilliant pairing partner with all types of cuisines," many guests kept returning to the wine throughout the meal. "I enjoyed it even with the steak course," said Master Sommelier Lindsey Geddes, Wine Director at Charlie Palmer Steak Las Vegas. As did Renée-Nicole Kubin, General Manager/Wine Director of Relais & Châteaux property Château du Sureau in Oakhurst, California, who noted that she features the wine on her own tasting menus. "It doesn't matter if it's with seafood, cheese, or whatever—it fits in somewhere all the time," she explained.

While the second wine in the lineup technically hailed from Oregon, perhaps it's more accurate to say it came from France by way of the Willamette Valley. As Kobrand Corporation's Nevada State Manager Erin Draper explained to the group, not only is the Résonance Vineyard



**Chef Vincent Pouessel of Mon Ami Gabi in Las Vegas.**

**The Résonance Vineyard Pinot Noir is the first Maison Louis Jadot release produced outside of Burgundy. Mon Ami Gabi Chef Vincent Pouessel paired it with a duo of confit duck leg and seared diver scallop accompanied by mixed mushrooms in a garlic cream sauce.**





*The Patricius Winery 2016 Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos was paired with two desserts: a tartine of Brie de Meaux with strawberry-rhubarb jam and a berry bread pudding.*



*Imported by Esprit du Vin, the Col d'Orcia 2013 Brunello di Montalcino was complemented by a petit filet with a side of creamer potatoes crowned in caramelized-onion crème fraîche.*



*Armed with two expressions from Hungary's Tokaj wine region, Wines of Excellence Project Manager Enikő Magyar and Vinum Tokaj International President Attila Balla posed with Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May.*

*"Furmint is "a brilliant pairing partner with all types of cuisines, it doesn't matter if it's with seafood, cheese, or whatever—it fits in somewhere all the time."*

Pinot Noir "the first Maison Louis Jadot product [made] outside of Burgundy," but legendary winemaker Jacques Lardière aimed to "go back to his roots" in making it. Draper said Lardière "truly did pick the property" on which the wine's grapes are grown in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA; planted in 1981, the vineyard has been "Biodynamically dry-farmed since day one."

Guests sampled the 2014 vintage alongside what Chef Pouessel called "a sort of surf and turf" to demonstrate its versatility: a duo of confit duck leg and seared diver scallop accompanied by mixed mushrooms in a "very subtle, soft, velvety" garlic cream sauce.

The pairing was a natural hit. "The

light fruit in the Pinot Noir really brings out the umami components of the dish," observed Jared Sowinski, Director of Wine at The Phoenician resort in Scottsdale, Arizona. "It makes the gaminess pop." Indeed, more than one sommelier proclaimed it their favorite match of the evening—including Nico Snyman, Head Sommelier at Aureole in New York, who appreciated its "classic elegance."

Every course had its own outspoken proponents. The third pairing saw the Col d'Orcia 2013 Brunello di Montalcino complemented by a petit filet with a side of creamer potatoes crowned in caramelized-onion crème fraîche. While

introducing the wine, *SOMM Journal/Tasting Panel* Vice President of Marketing & Sales Bill Brandel explained that due to that year's cool conditions, "a lot of people didn't think 2013 was going to be a great vintage [for Brunello], but they're beginning to appreciate it."

Among its fans was Rick Arline, Sommelier at NoMad in Los Angeles: "It's a modernist take on a Brunello—actually quite soft," he mused of the Col d'Orcia. Cassandra Sakai, Wine Director at Chicago's Girl & the Goat, concurred: "You don't expect that sweet red and black fruit" it delivered, she said, but she believed it melded beautifully with both the Bordeaux butter atop the steak and the meat itself.

For the final course, Chef Pouessel deemed the Patricius Winery 2016 Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos—representing what

Magyar called “the crown jewel of Hungarian wine”—special enough to warrant not one but two desserts. Following a tartine of Brie de Meaux with strawberry-rhubarb jam was a berry bread pudding in which Martin Beally, Wine Director of Seattle’s Wild Ginger, detected a touch of mint that “worked really well with the wine’s spearmint character.”

For Charles Riley, Regional Director of Food & Beverage at the Omni Mandalay Hotel at Las Colinas in Irving, Texas, it was that “little bit of cedar and maybe some candied pineapple” on the nose that appealed as a hallmark of “classic Tokaji [wine].” And Nikki Guard, Beverage Director of Denver’s TAG Restaurant Group, noted that the wine’s surprising affordability at \$55 “makes it a great choice for a by-the-glass offering,” as it was “perfectly sweet but also very fresh and lifted.” Speaking of surprises, added Kubin, “Hungary is one of the few regions filled with truly great wines that we can still discover.” ❧



*Master Sommelier Brandon Tebbe, Wine Manager at Rose Rabbit, Lie at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas; Master Sommelier Lindsey Geddes, Owner of Vegas Vine and Wine Director at Charlie Palmer Steak Las Vegas; and Nico Snyman, Head Sommelier at Aureole in New York.*



*Craig Ledbetter, Wine Manager at Fred Meyer in Portland; Kathleen Anne Thomas, Wine Director at Hakkasan in Las Vegas; and Jon McDaniel, Beverage Director at Gage Hospitality Group in Chicago.*



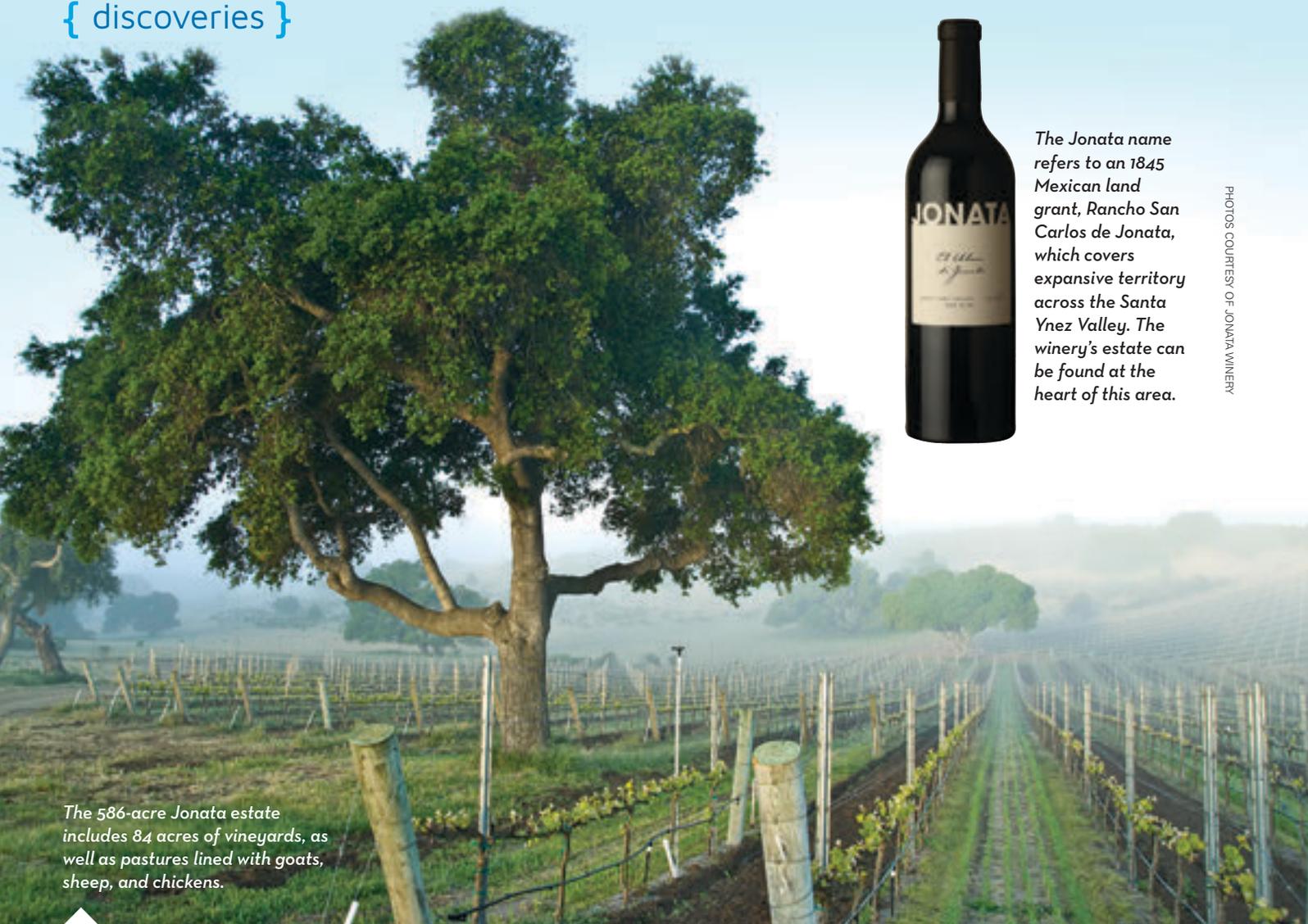
*Brandon Boghosian, Beverage Director at Juniper and Ivy in San Diego; Cassandra Sakai, Wine Director at Girl & the Goat in Chicago; and Tarik Bouslama, Beverage Manager at the Four Seasons Denver.*



*Jared Sowinski, Director of Beverage at The Phoenician resort in Scottsdale, AZ, with Jennifer Schmitt, Beverage Manager at Upland in Miami Beach, FL.*



*Martin Beally, Company Wine Director at Wild Ginger in Seattle, and Lee Spires, Wine Syndicate Director at Aqua by El Gaucho in Seattle.*



The 586-acre Jonata estate includes 84 acres of vineyards, as well as pastures lined with goats, sheep, and chickens.



The Jonata name refers to an 1845 Mexican land grant, Rancho San Carlos de Jonata, which covers expansive territory across the Santa Ynez Valley. The winery's estate can be found at the heart of this area.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JONATA WINERY

# The Plant Kid

DISCOVERING THE  
MAGIC OF **JONATA'S**  
SANDY SOILS IN  
BALLARD CANYON

by Meredith May

**THE 30-MILE CORRIDOR** of the Santa Ynez Valley offers up a diverse array of personalities for grapes and terroir. The warmer area in the eastern section—known as Happy Canyon—is producing revelation-worthy Bordeaux varieties.

Meanwhile, on the east-to-west foothills of Buellton, the Sta. Rita Hills serves as a mecca for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. But for Rhône varieties, there may be no better AVA than Ballard Canyon not only in the Valley, but perhaps anywhere in the United States.

Ballard Canyon, running north and south, gets the best of both regions, with a cooling marine influence from the west blended with the moderation of the warmer Happy Canyon. The result of this mixed climate puts this region on the map as Syrah country.

There are less than 20 Ballard Canyon wine estates: Some sit on limestone, some on clay, and some on sand (or a combination of the three). At Jonata's 586-acre estate, the farm pastures are lined with goats, sheep, and chickens. Off of the ranch, 84 vines are planted to grapes on rectangular-shaped Careaga sandstone. Winemaker Matt Dees, a former plant science major at the University of Vermont, began making wine 20 years ago and traversed from Australia to Napa to New Zealand before he began working for



### Jonata and The Hilt Winemaker Matt Dees.

Jonata Owner Stan Kroenke in 2004. "I was always a plant kid," he tells *The SOMM Journal*. "I was also fascinated by bugs."

Dees also studies soils and admires the attributes that the all-sand profile displays on the estate, including good drainage and low vigor for discernable fruit ripeness. "Without water, the vines go into survival mode, which works like a dream," he says. The blocks and sub-blocks of vine sites are each matched with differing rootstocks, clones, and planting densities.

While Syrah, Grenache, Viognier, and other Rhône varieties thrive on the Ballard Canyon estate, Dees says Jonata farms "the

Noah's Ark of grapes at the estate—I I varieties in all, with no Chardonnay or Pinot Noir." His other label, **The Hilt**, shows off the best of Sta. Rita Hills-based fruit. "What I love about Ballard Canyon is that the coolness keeps the wines aromatic with structure, making them formidable," he explains.

We sat down with Dees at the Buellton facility (a new winery is planned to open in 2019 on The Hilt's 3,600-acre property Rancho Salsipuedes, home to some of the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes grown for The Hilt label). Together, with The Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up" fittingly playing

in the background, we tasted Jonata's newly bottled 2015 vintages. "This is the first time I'm tasting these," Dees pointed out. "We just bottled them in August."

Comprised of 74% Cabernet Franc, 24% Cabernet Sauvignon, and a small amount of Petit Verdot and Merlot, **El Alma de Jonata** is kept 18–24 days on the skins followed by a seven-day cold soak. "I love Bourgueil," admitted Dees. And while he didn't compare this wine to the Loire, Dees explains that the grape grown on the Jonata estate—unlike the French expression—can be a tannic monster with ferocious concentration and intensity. Dees chose to tame the black, inky beast with very forgiving tannins, fresh violets, and a hint of Mediterranean herbs. "We pump over only two minutes a day," he explained. "It's the only grape we work with where we try to keep tannins in the skin." All four grapes undergo co-fermentations at cooler temperatures.

**La Sangre de Jonata** is 97% Syrah with 3% Viognier. Low, paltry yields produce what might be the blackest and densest color I've seen in a Syrah. It's incredibly fragrant, with notes of heather, anise, and graphite. "See? It's this sand dune we're on, plus the '14, '15 and even '16 vintages transported Syrah to a higher level," Dees said, adding that he used 25% new and 75% neutral French oak. Chewy with white pepper and plum sweetness, this is an outstanding wine. **SJ**

## Now, Let's Take It to The Hilt

The first vintages of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir were bottled under the Jonata label, but of course, not being estate fruit, both the Sta. Rita Hills grapes and the bordering Rancho Salsipuedes fruit needed a label of their own. Thus, **The Hilt**. "Stan [Kroenke] and I are Pinot and Chardonnay fanatics," Dees said. "Though we love and admire the wines of Burgundy, we don't want to make them here. While we would kill for that minerality and cut, we would be foolish to ignore or forsake the beautiful sunshine California has to offer."

Well, Matt, you've come pretty close. **The Hilt Vanguard** from Santa Barbara County is crisp and clean, yet also mouth-filling. I declared there couldn't possibly be any oak in this, and I was mistaken. "That's what we want to hear," Dees said with a laugh. "We stretch and pull to make it lean." In fact, he uses 100% new French oak and 20% malolactic fermentation. The buttercream and melon have lime interspersed.

Yet another level up of Burgundian style from the Vanguard is **The Hilt Old Guard Chardonnay**, also made with fruit from Santa Barbara County. The acidity is ultra-bright with ripe, tropical notes and a grassy nose. Lush white peach and jasmine finish with salinity—it's an edgy wine. "Chardonnay without acid is like a Beatles album without Lennon," explained Dees. "No irony, edge, or darkness."



# Pushing Beyond Sustainability

**FERRARI-CARANO**  
LEADS THE GREEN  
CHARGE IN SONOMA

by Rina Bussell



*Ferrari-Carano's Black Angus steer graze on the estate grounds.*



*A younger Don Carano and Ferrari-Carano Director of Vineyard Operations Steve Domenichelli inspect their vineyards with care.*

**ADHERING TO SUSTAINABLE** winегrowing means a producer must constantly update its production methods and operations to improve environmental health and social impact while also remaining economically viable. Research shows consumers are 92 percent more likely to buy a sustainable wine, with 63 percent of them willing to pay a higher price for it, according to the Sonoma County Winegrowers.

In response to this increased market demand, the Sonoma County Winegrowers committed to becoming the nation's first 100 percent sustainable winegrowing region by 2019. They also conceptualized a logo, finalized at the beginning of this year, to distinguish Sonoma County's Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing (CCSW) wines from their industry peers.

As a Certified California Sustainable producer since 2015, Ferrari-Carano owns 24 vineyard ranches, which total 1,900 acres across six appellations. It volunteered as the first winery to put the green "Sonoma County sustainably farmed grapes" logo on 24,000 cases, and in August 2017, the company also finished updating its Alexander Valley production facility to meet the California Green Building Standards Code.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FERRARI-CARANO

Ferrari-Carano's website features a comprehensive list of its practices, leaving no stone unturned in its aim to increase sustainability while reducing its carbon footprint. The winery saves 27 million gallons of water annually through the use of its propane-powered wind machines and targeted drip irrigation and misting systems; another 35 million gallons is saved per year thanks to upgraded in-house reclaimed water facilities and a city recycled treatment center.



**Fourth-generation farmer Steve Domenichelli has been a part of Ferrari-Carano for more than three decades.**

What's perhaps even more impressive, though, is how much Ferrari-Carano had already implemented far before it officially earned its certification. According to Director of Vineyard Operations Steve Domenichelli, the driving force behind the company's trend toward sustainability is a deep sense of hospitality that stemmed from late founder Don Carano, who he says believed in being kind and aware in all situations.

The impact Don had in his approach to winegrowing and the close relationship they had for more than three decades is clearly evident in the warmth of Domenichelli's voice. He says carrying on Don's legacy and improving sustainability go hand in hand, and from a young age, Domenichelli has shared Don's philoso-

phies about the treatment of land: "Never be greedy. Don't take more than what the land can give you," Don would admonish him during the selection of vineyard sites. Don continuously maintained that as guests of the land, they should not only improve environmental health, but also make sure to not upset ecological balance and natural productivity.

As a fourth-generation farmer, Domenichelli believes the 5,000 acres outside of the vineyards is just as important as what falls within their boundaries. In this spirit, Ferrari-Carano built an irrigation reservoir to bring wide-mouthed bass and eagles back to the land. It also stands against Clean Land Farming (the removal of all plants and trees along river embankments) to protect wildlife along the tributaries—as well as the steelhead that come to spawn in Maacama Creek—and began reintegrating plants, animals, and insects that would directly benefit the ecosystem within its properties. Finally, in 2015, 560 acres of Ferrari-Carano's land became Certified Fish Friendly Farming by the California Land Stewardship Institute.

While Domenichelli says getting everyone on board with the laborious process of sustainability was once a challenge, the visible benefits abundant in the landscape gave the team a stronger, more personal sense of responsibility for the land.

That sense of responsibility also applies to Ferrari-Carano's treatment of its employees: Twenty-five years ago, Don prompted the company to build rent- and utility-free housing for roughly 100 of its workers in addition to feeding them and their families with Ferrari-Carano's own Black Angus steers, chuckwagon, and pro-

duce from its gardens. Because the housing is onsite, the employees can walk to work most days and reduce their gas usage.

"I'm constantly auditing myself. How can I be a better person? How can I make money and be a great manager at the same time?" asks Domenichelli. It's obvious from Ferrari-Carano's practices that it serves as a leading example of not just sustainability, but of true stewardship as well. **ST**

## PASSING THE SUSTAINABILITY TEST

The Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing certification offers assurance to consumers that rigorous and continuous measures have been met regarding sustainability. Using the California Code of Sustainable Winegrowing, producers undergo an annual self-assessment test outlining 140 vineyard and 104 winery best practices. The scores fall within Categories 1-4, with 1 and 2 being considered sustainable (participants earn a passing score by achieving 85 percent of practices in Categories 1-2).

To maintain their certification, wineries must also keep extensive records of water, nitrogen, and energy usage along with greenhouse emissions. Continuous improvement needs to be documented and an action plan for the following year must also be submitted to a third-party auditor that substantiates the assessment and records.

## TASTING NOTES

**Ferrari-Carano 2017 Pinot Grigio, Russian River Valley** Stone fruits tinged with orange rind and a granule or two of white pepper finish on the up with great acid.



**Ferrari-Carano 2017 Dry Sangiovese Rosé, Sonoma County** Just-ripe strawberry and a mélange of other racy red berries play against a bit of fresh basil and tomato leaf. —*Jessie Birschbach*



*Bree Boskov, MW and Education Manager of the Oregon Wine Board, presents an Oregon wine master class in Los Angeles.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OREGON WINE BOARD

# The Pioneer Spirit

**FOR SOMMELIERS, IT'S** sometimes easy to forget about Oregon in Southern California given our proximity to Santa Barbara, where local Pinot Noir is so famous that some say "it's like bringing sand to the beach."

So when the Oregon Wine Board brought a master class and trade tasting to Los Angeles' The LINE Hotel in April, some members of the wine community were surely wondering, "What's the point?" Bree Boskov, MW and Education Manager of the Oregon Wine Board, was quick to address this unspoken question for the 50 producers in attendance: "The point is, we don't just do Pinot," she said. "Oregon is Pinot Noir and it's great Pinot Noir, but there's so many other varieties developing as well as regions."

Oregon is known for its "pioneer spirit." When the state's first family winemakers began planting in the 1960s, they did so with scarce resources, capital, and knowhow. Yet through their commitment to quality, they created the Willamette Valley, a name now synonymous with extraordinary Pinot Noir around the world. Decades later, that pioneer spirit is still alive: *New York Times* wine critic Eric Asimov recently said "nowhere else is experimentation so fierce as it is in Oregon right now."

## THE OREGON WINE BOARD BRINGS ITS MASTER CLASS TO LOS ANGELES

by Albert Letizia

Part of the area's evolution relies on an emphasis on nested AVAs within Willamette that are noted for their distinct terroir. The master class offered stunning examples of terroir-driven Pinots from Ribbon Ridge AVA by Goodfellow Family Cellars, as well as a Gamay by Brick House Vineyard. There was an excellent Riesling from Eola-Amity by Weinbau Pae-tra, as well as stunners from the Dundee Hills, Yamhill-Carlton, and Chehalem Mountains AVAs.

Stellar winemaking has spread beyond the confines of Willamette, however. Throughout southern Oregon, the AVAs of Rogue Valley, Elkton, and Red Hill Douglas County are producing excellent Pinot that's more savory and ripe than their esteemed neighbor to the north. And while Pinot Noir is still king, the Umpqua Valley, Rogue Valley, and Applegate Valley AVAs do amazing things with Rhône varieties, Grüner Veltliner, Gewürtztraminer, Malbec, and, recently, Tempranillo, as exemplified by Abacela's Fiesta Tempranillo from Umpqua.

The Columbia Gorge, a cooler-climate AVA with a high elevation that runs along

the state's northern border, is experimenting with Iberian plantings, most notably a Mencía by Analemma Wines. Meanwhile, further east along the Columbia River, The Rocks of Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla AVAs enjoy a warm, dry growing season with cool nights. The climate has made the area well-known for Cabernet and Merlot on both sides of the Oregon/Washington border, but more recently winemakers there are producing Rhône varieties like Cayuse Vineyards' God Only Knows, a full-bodied, powerful Grenache.

As attention mounts upon Oregon, some of the family-owned farms and producers fear gentrification. "It is concerning to us that 'big viticulture' might come into the area as our wines get greater scores and do well internationally," Boskov says. "Large domestic and international growers are suddenly interested in Oregon and we know how powerful some of these corporations are."

Let's hope Oregon's pioneer spirit can pivot to conservation, as they have a fragile and famously beautiful ecosystem to protect. **W**



## THE ART OF FLAVOR

I believe the finest works of art require true dedication and attention to detail. This is why we honor the same traditional methods that have been honed and crafted for five generations. Each step of the process requires mastery of a skill and a commitment to quality.

It is hard work, but the resulting flavor captures the essence of our spirit at La Altea.

*Camarena*  
Carlos C. Camarena, Master Distiller



# The Guiding Light

## AN INTERVIEW WITH HUNDRED ACRE FOUNDER JAYSON WOODBRIDGE

by Ruth Tobias

**A DESCENDANT OF** French explorer Jacques Cartier, Hundred Acre charismatic founder Jayson Woodbridge was born in Toronto in 1963 and, at age 18, was diagnosed with what he describes as “a very rare type” of cancer: “The doctors said to my mom, ‘Take him on a nice vacation, he’ll be dead in six months.’” Instead, Woodbridge received an experimental treatment that proved unsuccessful in almost all cases but his own.

He’s lived life on his terms, to the fullest, ever since. After serving as a commissioned infantry officer of Queen Elizabeth II, Woodbridge embarked on a career as an investment banker and has developed a passion for, well, almost everything. “I’m interested in history. I’m interested in genealogy. I’m interested in fast cars and planes and submarines. I’m interested in the fabric of blue jeans and tapestries,” Woodbridge says. “I’m interested in how a sewing machine works and how a satellite works. Dark matter. Gravitational ripples. You name it, I’m interested in it.”

But due to his upbringing around good cooks (his grandfather owned a pizza parlor), food and wine always held special fascination. Woodbridge says he can trace the origins of Hundred Acre to a fateful moment in 1990: “I walked into a vineyard—I don’t recall where, but it was not in France, I can tell you that—and I looked around and went, ‘OK,’” he explains. “It was an epiphany—I just knew.” Woodbridge immediately began saving so he could put “every single cent” aside for his own winery. Risks notwithstanding, he swears that he “wasn’t at all nervous.” “I felt that I was preordained,” Woodbridge adds. “I wanted to stand among the very best in the world, that’s all.”

*Jayson Woodbridge is the Founder of  
Napa estate Hundred Acre.*





## Hundred Acre Past and Present

True to form, Woodbridge has taken no prisoners en route to professional glory. His vineyard investments are the stuff of industry legend, from the purchase of Kayli Morgan at 70 percent over the market value in 2000 (“People said I was crazy,” he quips) to the acquisition of Few and

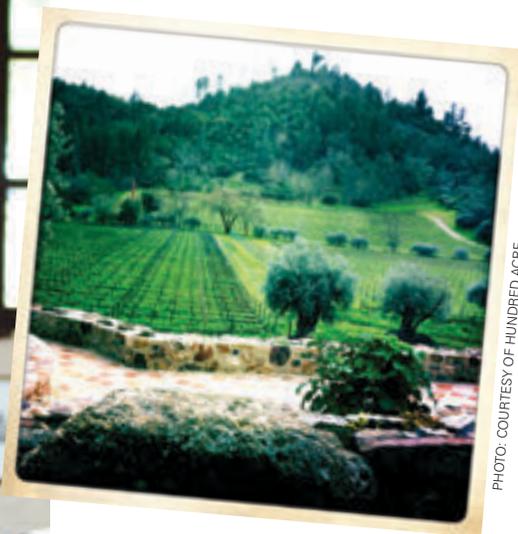


PHOTO: COURTESY OF HUNDRED ACRE

*A view of Few and Far Between, the Napa estate property Woodbridge purchased for \$1.2 million per acre.*

Far Between for \$1.2 million per acre. He says the latter acquisition was then “the highest price ever [paid] in the Western Hemisphere, but [he] had to have it.”

Woodbridge has an explanation for what Hundred Acre Wine Group CEO John Hardesty calls his “sixth sense for ground”: “First of all, I get a feeling that I can’t really describe. It’s a sense of rightness that comes over me. And second, it’s essential that the place is beautiful. The way the hills are. The way the trees

are. The way the light is. The way the soil smells. I look at the clusters, I taste the fruit, and the vines give me a feeling. They’re like young children—they can’t speak, but they’re trying to tell you something. You’ve got to be open to it.”

Then there’s the St. Helena winery: While it was built in the mid-2000s, Woodbridge describes the extensive construction process in a manner that still seems awestruck. “It’s like a fortress. It’s a giant ring underground—385 feet of solid rock,” he says. “Caves are inherently stable, but they’re particularly solid when they have an enormous amount of curved steel I-beams bolted into concrete into rock 30 feet deep. The winery’s designed to take a magnitude 10 [earthquake]. I build things to withstand time.”

Because Woodbridge’s approach to his craft is as uncompromising as it is toward everything else, this statement applies not only to his winemaking facilities, but the wines themselves. Since he lacked formal training when he launched Hundred Acre, Woodbridge hired renowned consultant Philippe Melka to assist with the first few releases. “I needed a starting point, and Philippe was very easy to work with,” Woodbridge explains. “He provided a lot of guiding light in terms of logistics and also offered his perspective on winemaking—which isn’t mine. We have totally different styles. But he respects what I do and I respect what he does.”

In one breath, Woodbridge is all too happy to chalk up kudos to his own winemaking talent. “I have a gift. It’s as simple as that,” he says. Consider Hardesty’s remarks on Woodbridge’s approach to blending:

“He does it mostly from smell and then just confirms it with tasting. When you see it, you can’t quite believe it.”

But while he’s not one to shy away from some playful self-congratulation, Woodbridge is also the first to admit that his genius—to paraphrase Edison—is 99 percent blood, sweat, and sheer guts. Take the 2009 Ancient Way Deep Time, which he aged in new French oak for five years: “Nobody in their right mind financially would do such a thing,” he concedes gaily.

The same could be said of Fortification, Hundred Acre’s Port-style wine. Woodbridge produces his own brandy to incorporate into the wine, double-distilling it in alembic pot stills before it ages in Hundred Acre barrels for a minimum of five years—and up to 15—before blending.

Doubts also surrounded the launch of his wildly-successful value brands Layer Cake, Cherry Pie, and If You See Kay, which people initially cautioned might tarnish the image of his flagship. But Woodbridge says he was determined to prove he could “make a \$15 wine taste like \$50,” giving “everybody the chance they deserve to afford a great bottle of wine.”

## Pushing the “Style Envelope”

Layer Cake, Cherry Pie, and If You See Kay were sold in late 2017 (“They were getting to a size that they could be better managed by a larger company,” Woodbridge says), but if you think this indicates Woodbridge will start sitting back and taking it easy, you haven’t been reading very carefully.

He’s already at work on his next brand, consisting of two wines he says will aim to “push the style envelope further: If Hundred Acre is like being in a Rolls Royce, this is going to be like being in a Formula One car,” he adds. “Suffice it to say Cabernet will play a big role.” Never one to shy away from hyperbole, Woodbridge previewed a separate Pinot Noir project by saying it “will be very, very high-end in a way that’s never been done before in the Western Hemisphere.”

Naturally, Woodbridge is writing a book as well, though details for now are scant. Remember, this is a man who swears that “the only things I’m not interested in are box wines and frozen food.” But you could bet that if he were, he’d make the best damn boxed wine and frozen food around. **SJ**

# The Judgement of Irvine

**FRANCE OR ITALY? TWO MASTER SOMMS HELP DECIDE WHICH COUNTRY REIGNS SUPREME**

by Rich Manning

PHOTOS: OC EVENT PHOTOS/BRIAN FEINZIMMER



*Master Sommeliers Fred Dame and Peter Neptune: frenemies for a day.*

WHEN A WINE-PAIRING dinner comes with the moniker “Battle of the Masters: Sommelier vs. Sommelier,” you can expect the evening will be filled with either pretentious sips and swirls or fun and slightly irrelevant imbibing. As I arrived for the event at TAPS Fish House & Brewery in Irvine, California, in late March, I was prepared for the former but hoping for the latter.

The duo engaging in the evening’s viticultural warfare were Master Sommeliers and legendary enophiles Fred Dame and Peter Neptune, so the event’s name wasn’t merely clever hyperbole. Dame sent five carefully chosen French wines into the breach against Neptune’s quintet of hand-picked Italian labels, and it was up to the crowd of more than 100 attendees to decide which country—and whose selections—reigned supreme.





*The TAPS Team: General Manager Masaya Yamazaki and Executive Chef Ryan Robertson.*

The collective gravitas of it all seemed poised to demand highbrow affects, but then it happened. Right before dinner commenced, I looked at the opposite end of my table and spotted a woman taking a giant gulp of Nicolas Feuillatte Brut from a red wine glass. The champagne flute in front of her sat empty, clean, and forlorn. So much for pretense—thank Bacchus.

The evening's presenters captured the spirit of my table partner's copious swig throughout the event. Dame repeatedly chided Neptune for cheating, his tongue firmly wedged in his cheek, before Neptune dropped into a *Beavis and Butthead* impression as he talked about sealing a wine's bung. Between these snippets of breezy candor, they broke down each wine in an informative yet unpretentious manner, making the selections themselves even more approachable.

This snooty-free zone is precisely the atmosphere TAPS has aimed to create through its wine dinners, which occur in its private event space every other month. "We want to show our guests that wine dinners are exciting, fun, and educational," General Manager Masaya Yamazaki says. "The response from our guests so far have been amazing. They've been spreading the word that we are the go-to place for wine dinners."

Bringing in luminaries like Dame and Neptune to talk wine—in such an accessible manner, no less—is just one of the ways the restaurant earns this reputation. Like all of the wines featured in TAPS' semi-regular wine-pairing affairs, the bottlings the Master Sommeliers highlighted were procured in conjunction with Pavilions, an upscale grocery chain that delivered an artisanal market experience to Southern California residents long before Whole Foods dominated the public consciousness.

The partnership produces consistent excellence in TAPS' wine selections, as well as a few other bonuses. To wit: Phil Markert, Pavilions' Vice President of Merchandising and Marketing, initially

hatched the idea of making Dame and Neptune's Master Somm showdown an international incident.

The wine dinners also afford Executive Chef Ryan Robertson and his crew the opportunity to stray from the restaurant's typical surf-and-turf milieu, which results in epicurean voodoo like the truffle and foie gras trangoli and the mind-bending niçoise salad served to us at the dinner. It's a diversion Robertson relishes. "We have so many talented culinarians here with diverse backgrounds and experiences that it's easy to be creative," he says. "Although these

dinners take an enormous amount of time, effort, planning, and teamwork, it's also a chance for us to show what we are capable of and do some really cool dishes."

The evening ultimately ended in a draw: Dame's French wines scored in the first two courses, with Neptune's Italians emerging victorious in courses three and five. The cause of the deadlock was Robertson's lamb neck, potato, and chive gnocchi; half the



room felt it worked best with the Château Pesquié 2013 Quintessence Dame picked out, while the other half preferred Neptune's idea of pairing the dish with the 2012 Camigliano Brunello di Montalcino. (I was part of this latter half. Sorry, Fred).

Of course, there's only one thing to do in the event of a proper stalemate—hold a re-match. According to Yamazaki, it's already green-lit. "We're working on another five-course, ten-wine pairing dinner with Fred and Peter," he says. "If legends of that magnitude are talking about doing another wine dinner with us, then I think we're doing something right." SJ



CHEF-TURNED-SOMM  
**TEDDY PANOS** IS NOW  
BEVERAGE DIRECTOR AT  
**STAKE CHOPHOUSE &  
BAR** IN CORONADO, CA



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLUE RIDGE HOSPITALITY

# Back to Front

by Jessie Birschbach

IN 1991, **TEDDY PANOS** earned his culinary arts degree from Kendall College in Chicago. From there, he worked his way up through some of the most renowned kitchens in the Windy City, including La Fontaine, Everest Restaurant, and The Ritz-Carlton; by 2004, he was running his own restaurant, Country Kitchen, and catering business, Theodore James Catering.

In 2008, Panos made two big moves: from Chicago to San Diego and from the back of the house to the front, working as a sommelier and Wine Director at Cucina Urbana and La Valencia Hotel. Seven years later, the new Certified

Sommelier and Certified Specialist in Wine joined the Blue Ridge Hospitality group as the Wine Director and Assistant General Manager of Stake Chophouse + Bar in Coronado, California.

Stake offers a fresh take on the old-school steakhouse concept. It's also the only restaurant in San Diego to serve A5 Japanese wagyu beef. Says Panos, "We source a myriad of dry-aged steaks from around the globe and also have daily selections of fresh shellfish and seafood. In addition to displaying our meat selection to each table, we offer a collection of steak knives from Germany,

France, Italy, and Japan that the guest can choose for their entrée. We also offer a Stake Experience, which is a customized five-course menu that I personally pair with wines. We want the guest to feel that every part of the evening was well worth the visit."

*The SOMM Journal* asked Panos if his background in French and Italian fare influenced his approach to wine. "I love the cuisine of France and Italy and equally the wines," he explains. "The Chef at Stake uses French and Italian influences on our menu," which in turn "is my impetus for the selections on our wine list." SJ

## Two Cents from an Industry Veteran

**On working back-of-house:** "The greatest things I've learned in the BOH are discipline, organization, and a respect for the best ingredients. I also was a chef that enjoyed walking out to the dining room and talking to the guests. I believe that is important for building relationships."

**On the evolution of the industry:** "When I started in the hospitality industry, it was simply referred to the restaurant business. My heroes were the chefs I worked with and some who even had cookbooks. There were no 'movie star' chefs, no Food Network. Sommeliers were very few and far between, practically nonexistent. I remember when I was an apprenticing chef, people would ask me what I did for a living. I would say, 'I'm a chef,' and the response would be, 'Oh... that's nice,' in an unimpressed tone. So, for anyone interested in becoming a chef or a beverage director, I would say this: If you want to be in this business, you must genuinely love what you do! If you just like it or think it's cool, look for another profession. If you love it, you will have a lifetime of happiness and personal satisfaction."



*The Man Behind the Brands*



**123**  
SPIRITS

[123spirits.com](http://123spirits.com)



# ENJOY AMERICA'S FASTEST GROWING PINOT GRIGIO

Pinot Grigio was never meant to be thin, bland or boring. Handcrafted from old vines in our hillside vineyards in Friuli Colli Orientali, Terlato Vineyards brings you a rich, aromatic and full-bodied wine with exceptional flavor and complexity. Pinot Grigio – as it was meant to be.

*Taste is the difference*



Terlato Wines, Lake Bluff, IL 60044

92 *pts*  
THE TASTING PANEL

90 *pts*  
JEBDUNNUCK.COM

90 *pts*  
WINE ENTHUSIAST

TERLATO  WINES  
ALWAYS EXCEPTIONAL

TERLATOVINEYARDS.COM

