

THE SOMMELIER JOURNAL

FEBRUARY/MARCH • 2019  
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# THE SOMM JOURNAL

## A TALE OF *Two* NAPA CLASSICS

Winemakers Christophe  
Paubert of Stags' Leap  
Winery and Trevor Durling of  
Beaulieu Vineyard.



PHOTO: TED THOMAS

PHOTO: DAWN HELMANN PHOTOGRAPHY





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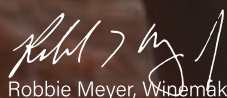
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ESTATE VINEYARD



Robbie Meyer, Winemaker for Murrieta's Well

# THE SOMM JOURNAL

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## CORRECTION

In our story on Wines of Portugal in the December/January 2019 issue, we incorrectly identified Beth Hickey as the Beverage Director at Ascend Prime Steak & Sushi. She is actually the Sommelier at Heartwood Provisions in Seattle. We regret the error.

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COMPARING THE AMARONE  
WINES OF **BOLLA** AND  
**SARTORI DI VERONA**

# *Divergent*

by Jessie Birschbach

In 1883, humble restaurant owner Abele Bolla started making a Soave to serve his guests. The golden expression did so well he and his colleagues began to make a red Valpolicella, and the success of these wines (and others) eventually outpaced the restaurant business. Today, Bolla remains a staple in Valpolicella.

Likewise, in 1898, Pietro Sartori purchased a small vineyard to produce wine to serve at his hotel restaurant. When the results were met with great acclaim, Pietro's son Regolo bet on the wine business and sold their existing establishments to further invest in the winery. It paid off, as Sartori is now one of the most respected names in Amarone.

Although it seems like winemaking was an afterthought for both of these founders, their entry into the industry marked a fulfillment of their mutual destinies. Their circumstances also formed an interesting parallel with the origins of Amarone: During the Roman era, farmers who had dried their grapes at higher alcohol levels for transportation/storage purposes would make Recioto. Legend has it that a forgotten barrel of fermenting wine inadvertently allowed the fermentation process to continue mopping up residual sugar. Thus, the stronger, dryer Amarone was born, and this accidental successor to the sweeter Recioto is today considered one of the most luxurious wines in the world. Perhaps Amarone, like Bolla and Sartori, was Recioto's divine decree.

Read on for a brief exploration of Amarone through the lens of these separate yet similar houses:

# DESTINIES

*Bolla Lead  
Winemaker  
Christian Zulan  
bets big on  
Amarone.*



PHOTO: MONA-SHEILD PAVINE





**Certified Sommelier Ervin Machado serves as the Beverage Director for Louie Bossi restaurants in Florida.**

## BOLLA: *Atypical Freshness*

Since his 2015 appointment, Bolla Lead Winemaker Christian Zulian has worked closely with the winery's viticulturalist, GianAntonio Marconi. Together they've implemented a greener approach to farming their 692 acres in the Valpolicella region by emphasizing research, quality control, educational awareness, and intimate partnerships with their growers.

Zulian came to Bolla after earning his master's degree in viticulture and winemaking from the Agricultural Institute of San Michele all'Adige, one of the most renowned winemaking schools in Italy. Before assuming his current role, Zulian also managed the

estates of several Tuscan wineries and penned numerous scientific reports on viticulture and winemaking. He currently serves on the board for the European Union's VineScout project, and although he hails from the Trento region, Zulian holds a great deal of pride in Veronese grapes.

"These varieties were born in Verona and that's where they should stay," Zulian said during a recent visit to the U.S. "They lend themselves extremely well to the *appassimento* process, more so than any other variety. A lot of people think that *appassimento* is strictly a dehydration process, but that's not the way it is. It's a system in which the maturity and ripening continues in a grape that is still alive, as if it's still attached to its umbilical cord [while] in the *fruttaio* [a drying room or loft for grapes]. It's a very unique drying process—100 days is very long. You can't do that with Cabernet Sauvignon. We tried, but you can only get to about three weeks. Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella, and Molinara have very thick skins and a DNA that allows them to undergo the longer *appassimento* process."

Certified Sommelier Ervin Machado, Beverage Director for the beloved Louie Bossi restaurants in Fort Lauderdale and Boca Raton, works closely with chef/partner Louie Bossi to create, in his words, a "traditional and yet unforgettable dining experience."

The Bolla Le Origini Amarone Riserva is part of this great undertaking. "Bolla is one of those wineries which doesn't just fit in our wine program but is intertwined with who we are at Louie's," Machado says. "Sharing the history of Amarone with our guests—especially when speaking of wineries like Bolla—to understand the effort that goes into making Amarone and the process is very important to understanding the worth of these wines."

At Louie Bossi, Machado prefers to pair the Le Origini with a cheese and charcuterie plate featuring prosciutto, finocchiona, and soppressata. "What always surprises me about Bolla is the freshness on the nose," he explains. "It is a very bright black-fruit aroma—not as desiccated as you would expect from an Amarone, a wine with partially dried grapes. The Le Origini in particular marks every box you would want for a perfectly round and balanced wine. It is a remarkable congruency between winemaking techniques and vineyard site. Bolla's devotion to Old World techniques by letting the environment do the drying instead of helping to speed it up is something that really impresses me."



### Bolla Le Origini Amarone della Valpolicella Riserva

Bolla Lead Winemaker Christian Zulian considers the winery's Le Origini expression to be a "drier style of Amarone" with a blend of 75% Corvina and Corvinone and 25% Rondinella. The 1950 vintage was bottled in honor of the 80th birthday of the winery's patriarch, Alberto Bolla, in 1953. It's served with charcuterie and cheese (pictured) at Louie Bossi in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

*Also available in the Bolla lineup:* Bolla Amarone Della Valpolicella Classico, Bolla Valpolicella, Bolla Creso (a "Super Veneto" blend of 65% Corvina and 35% Cabernet Sauvignon), and Bolla Valpolicella Ripasso Classico Superiore



PHOTO: JAMIE HOPPER

*Andrea Sartori is the family proprietor of Sartori di Verona.*

## **SARTORI DI VERONA:** *“Just Modern Enough”*

Ask Andrea Sartori, the great-grandson of Pietro Sartori and the fourth-generation family proprietor of Sartori di Verona, when the best time is to drink one of his wines and the answer you'll receive is “Tuesday.” You may not know from this lighthearted response that Sartori di Verona is one of the foremost wine producers in Valpolicella—a big deal considering that the wine industry represents one of the largest economies in Verona, producing more than 60 million bottles annually while exporting to roughly 100 countries.

Sartori practically runs Verona (he at one point served as President of the Unione Italiana Vini consorzio and is now President of the Valpolicella Consorzio, which covers Amarone), but his kindness and sense of humor supersede his weighty reputation in terms of first impression. Those who have a chance to share a Toscano—a stubby Tuscan cigar—with Sartori will hear some opinions about Amarone in the process . . . OK, lots of opinions, but deservedly so,

as his family has been making the stuff for more than 120 years.

While on the same recent U.S. tour with Zulian, his fellow Veronese winemaker, Sartori adjusted his round, rimmed glasses and walked about the room of trade members with a sagacious smile as he discussed his family's wines. “Making Amarone is kind of a unique system in both winemaking and harvesting,” he explained. “Amarone grapes are the first grapes we harvest—we don't want to have any botrytis—and it's all picked by hand. Corvina is the best grape for the wine, and then Corvinone and Rondinella, which are used less.”

While Sartori says Oseleta “brings a lot of acidity, color, and structure,” he prefers that both it and Croatina only comprise about 5 percent of a blend either separately or combined. “Oseleta and Croatina are native grapes, so we're trying to bring these back to life,” he adds. “In a hectare worth of production, we can only use 40 percent [to make] Amarone. Then, when we dry the grapes,



we're only going to get about 30–40 percent [of the juice] out of each grape. This is why Amarone tends to be expensive."

Sartori also likes to joke about the "madness" that runs in his family, claiming that it skips a generation after starting with his great-grandfather Pietro. Whether his relatives are crazy or not, tasting through the lineup of Sartori wines is like getting to know each of them firsthand. For example, the Sartori di Verona Ferdi Bianco—an ambitious white Amarone—is made in honor of his grandmother, Fernanda. Try this round and rich wine next to a red Amarone and you'll find that it is, in Sartori's words, "not intimidated" by the other wines—not unlike Fernanda's own relationships with the men in her life.

Certified Sommelier Clarke Anderson, the Beverage Manager for all Ford Fry restaurants in Atlanta, Georgia, was lucky enough to visit Sartori on a recent trip to Italy. "I realized afterward just how important the city [Verona] was to the region," he says. "I see where the attitude and confidence Andrea has is rooted. His ancestors made the region and the wines what they are today, and his spot in the consortium is just another step in preserving that history. The palatial estate and immaculate cellars are worth the trip, as is dinner with Andrea, if you can get him to slow down!"

Anderson adds that he likes to think of the "multi-generational tradition of Sartori" as "just modern enough." "They have cleaned up all the rough edges with winemaking techniques but still maintain a solid core of terroir," he explains.

At No. 246, a bustling Ford Fry restaurant in the Atlanta suburb of Decatur with a focus on farm-to-table Italian cuisine, Anderson features the Sartori di Verona Corte Brà in his wine program. "We focus on sourcing, and the most important part of that for us is farming. We believe that balance must be achieved in the vineyard," he says. "Great wine is pleasurable and not preten-



PHOTO: BONNIE J. HEATH

## Sartori di Verona Corte Brà Amarone della Valpolicella Classico

The Sartori di Verona Corte Brà Amarone della Valpolicella Classico comes from the small estate vineyard surrounding Villa Maria, the Sartori family's original facility established in 1898. It's a small-production release at roughly 30,000 bottles a year, with a vintage skipped when necessary. A blend of 50% Corvina, 30% Corvinone, 15% Rondinella, and 5% Os-eleta, it's pictured above with spaghetti and meatballs at No. 246 in Decatur, Georgia.

*Also available in the Sartori di Verona portfolio:* Sartori di Verona Amarone della Valpolicella, Sartori di Verona Valpolicella Classico Superiore, Sartori di Verona Regolo (100% Corvina Ripasso), Sartori di Verona L'Appassione (a blend of 50% Corvina, 25% Corvinone, 20% Merlot, and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon), Sartori di Verona I Saltari Amarone Della Valpolicella, and Sartori di Verona I Saltari Valpolicella Superiore (I Saltari's fruit is sourced from older vineyards and hung in drying lofts known as *fruttaio* as part of a traditional winemaking method)

PHOTO: BONNIE J. HEATH



Clarke Anderson is the Beverage Manager for Ford Fry's restaurants in the Atlanta area.

tious. The Sartori di Verona Corte Brà fits perfectly because it offers the best value and balance of elegance in a wine that can be the opposite of those things. Amarone isn't always this good."

In terms of food pairings, Anderson likes to match up the Corte Brà with No. 246's "rustic and comforting" spaghetti with San Marzano tomatoes, veal meatballs, and Grana Padano cheese. "The Corte Brà Amarone 2010 is showing a lovely amount of development. That little extra time in the cellar has allowed the fruit and [secondary notes] to really sing together in an elegant fashion. Dark berries that seem dried and fresh, espresso, savory spices, bitter cocoa, and dark floral notes make this a complex wine," he explains. "The acid and fat in the dish give it something to play with. The wine becomes a wonderful condiment to the pasta each time you take a sip." ❧



# THE **SOMM** JOURNAL

Carla Rivera, Director of Cocktail Development for Southern Glazer's, adds a dollop of passion fruit to her cocktail while highlighting the agave category.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF B2 CHEFS





Certified Sommelier Ervin Machado, who serves as the Beverage Director for Louie Bossi restaurants in Florida, plays bocce ball at the Fort Lauderdale location.

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## Getting On Board with Cannabis

You might have noticed some cannabis content peppered throughout the last few issues of *The SOMM Journal*. Now that our sister publication *The Clever Root* has gone exclusively digital, we've taken the lead on covering various facets of the cannabis industry.

Just as we do with wine, we'll be exploring trends, clones, terroir, and other topics tied to cannabis through an educational lens. Let us know if there's an aspect of the industry you believe is worth exploring on our pages!

—Meridith May, Publisher/Editorial Director

## Oakville Grocery: Take a Stand for the Future of Food!

Oakville Grocery is a landmark destination at the intersection of past and present in the heart of Napa Valley. It has served our community for nearly 140 years, providing locals and visitors alike with a mercantile, farm stand, and gathering space. We at Boisset Collection are honored



to have taken over this iconic piece of history as we chart its future path.

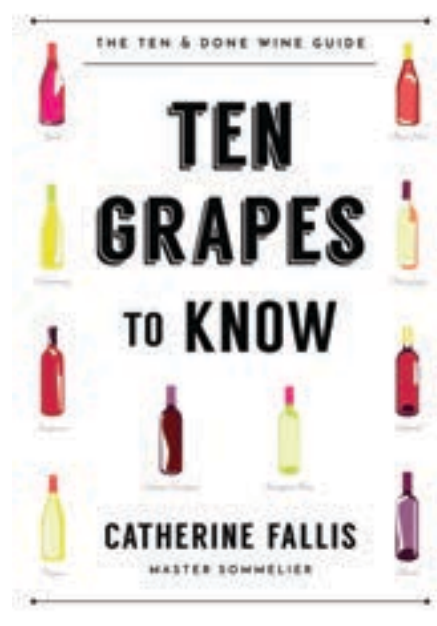
Our mission is to stay true to Oakville Grocery's roots while emphasizing healthy, fresh, local, and sustainably grown food. As part of our vision, we aim to compel our communities to take a stand and make a commitment to locally sourced

and ethically made items that reflect the importance of both the people who produce them as well as the environment around us.

We call on you, our local farmers, artisans, vintners, growers, and purveyors, to help us deliver on our mission by presenting your organic, Biodynamic, and artisanal products for our consideration. This is our call to elevate and enhance our local food and wine community: Join us!

—Jean-Charles Boisset


For more information, contact Barry Dinsmore, General Manager of Oakville Grocery, at [artisans@oakvillegrocery.com](mailto:artisans@oakvillegrocery.com).



## Ten Grapes to Know: The Ten & Done Wine Guide (\$25)

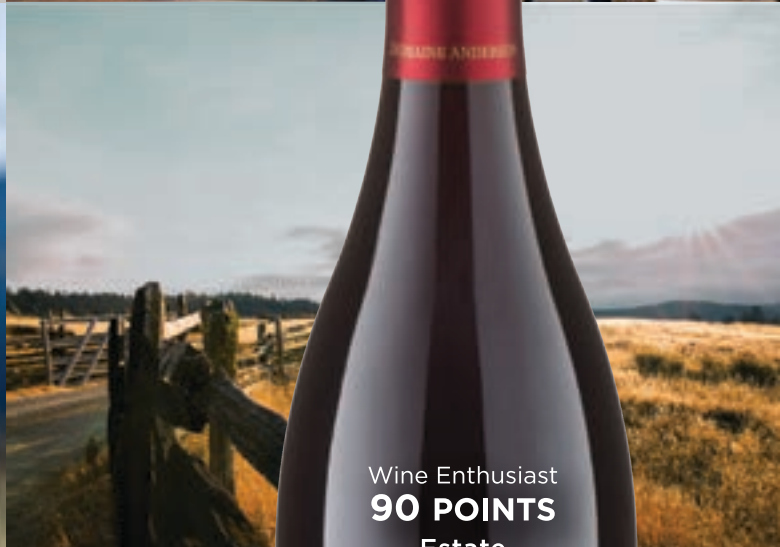
Master Sommelier Catherine Fallis has penned an incredibly efficient guide to help amateur enophiles get started on the right foot, and they'll do so simply by getting to know ten grapes. For example, in the Shiraz-focused chapter, you'll review the grape's history, geography, taste profile, and styles alongside pairings and producer suggestions (categorized by price) for both on- and off-premise selections.

This vast coverage goes far more in depth than you'd anticipate from content geared toward novices. Its ability to entertain also defies expectation, with Fallis sharing "sense exercises" and kitschy bits like the dating profile of each variety: "While I [Shiraz] am not as well loved as my rival Pinot Noir, I am less moody, more loyal, and very consistent. Date Pinot Noir. Then marry me."

I only wonder why Riesling is missing ... but perhaps I am a biased Riesling lover. 

—Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor





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**KAREN MACNEIL  
SHARES RESPONSES  
TO HER TIME OF  
RECKONING PIECE**



# What Women Wrote Back

**MY SECOND ANNUAL REPORT** on the status of women in the wine industry, titled "Time of Reckoning" and published in the December/January issue of *The SOMM Journal*, generated a lot of commentary. Much of it echoed these words from winemaker Ashley Trout, who wrote:

- 1) Wow
- 2) I might be quoting this piece daily for years and
- 3) It'll take me a few rereads to get it all.

But the letter below in particular captured the sentiments of many:

Hello Karen,  
I was sent your *Time of Reckoning* article for *The SOMM Journal* yesterday morning. My head has been reeling. I've read it a few times now.

First, thank you. I have been waiting for someone, anyone, to say what you have said. Your opening line about feminism and misogyny has been a mantra of mine for many years, met with rolled eyes and crossed arms. Often I feel like I am shouting into the void. I deeply appreciate that you include the misogyny of behavior in this industry [in the same category] as harassment and that you recognize that it can be devastating to a

woman's career. As a winemaker I can attest that sexism has played an integral role in the professional assessment of my wine, in my reputation as a winemaker, in the disparaging of my business practices and [in] the sabotage of my success. (Nevertheless, she persists...)

Second, thank you. You have courage, and I am so inspired by it. I'm not one to shy from a discussion about women in this industry, but I know that I can do more. Your article will help me in my crusade!

I ask almost all women who I run across in my industry a simple question: What can we do to make it better?

Of course, shining light on the issue is the first step. But how can we plan for a better industry for women?

Thanks so much for the work that you do.

Rachael Horn,  
Winemaker/owner of AniChe Cellars

I was very moved by Rachael's letter, and her question cuts right to the heart of the matter. So, what more can we do?

First, realize that doing every small thing we can—and doing those things every single day—will add up. I've always felt that professionalism, intelligence, courage, and

grace are inclined to win out in the long run. "When they go low, we go high," said Michelle Obama, and she was right.

This is also equally important: As women, we must examine the way we treat and interact with other women. We must respect one another professionally, advise and elevate each other, and help give one another advantages whenever we can.

The old boys' club no longer bothers me. What I worry about is the lack of an old girls' club. That has to change. **SM**

To read Karen MacNeil's *Time of Reckoning* piece, refer to the December/January 2019 edition of *The SOMM Journal* either in print or online at [sommjournal.com](http://sommjournal.com).



**Karen MacNeil is the author of *The Wine Bible* and editor of *WineSpeed*. You can reach her at [karen@karenmacneil.com](mailto:karen@karenmacneil.com).**





# LIGNUM

LATIN FOR WOOD  
ITALIAN FOR QUALITY

Lignum, the ancient Latin word for wood, is the inspiration behind this premium blend of Merlot, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon from Sicily.



# Stone-Age Values Go High-Tech

TWO EXPERTS SHARE TIPS ON RUNNING MULTI-UNITS  
WITH EXPERIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

by Randy Caparoso

**IT IS ONE THING** to put together a well-crafted wine list for your restaurant—or restaurants, if you're heading a multi-unit company—but it's another thing entirely to build a program that truly competes in your market while meeting your bottom-line objectives.

At SommCon San Diego last November, I invited two “old hands” to share their tricks of the trade in a workshop called “How the Country's Best Directors Run Their Wine Programs”: Haley Guild Moore, the Wine & Spirits Director of Stock & Bones Company in San Francisco, and Master Sommelier Chuck Furuya, partner with chef D.K. Kodama in Hawaii's DK Restaurants.

Moore has directed wine programs since 2007, starting at the groundbreaking Bacar, and since 2012 has overseen four restaurants while balancing her family life with two children. And Furuya, a Master Sommelier since 1989, is practically a relic of the Stone Age: A grandpa who's run wine programs since the late 1970s, he's now involved in multiple locations of four concepts spread across three Hawaiian islands.

“There is no one way to run a viable beverage program,” Furuya told workshop attendees. “Each concept, each location is different. At VINO in Honolulu, for instance, we've had to morph how we manage the financial side of wine over the past 15 years, although our goal has remained the same—to get more people to enjoy wine with food.”

Furuya said this objective has prompted him and his teams to “[work] hardest on finding wines that overdeliver for the dollar,” as “value will always be in.” “We look for wines from lesser-known regions like Lodi, Mendocino, Paso Robles, Greece, Portugal, Sardinia, Corsica, and pockets of



PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDY CAPAROSO

**Master Sommelier Chuck Furuya and SOMM Journal Editor-at-Large Randy Caparoso are longtime friends.**

southern France and Italy,” he continued. “By looking specifically for multi-generation families that can grow top-quality wines at lower costs, we can offer the best wines at the most reasonable prices.”

Furuya also advocates including descriptions for every wine on a list to make unconventional selections less daunting to guests. The ultimate goal, he says, is “marketing wine *with* food.” “The restaurant industry in Hawaii is more about foodies, and the more we can get them to try wines that are ideal with our cuisines, the better chance we have of selling wine,” he explained.

Moore, on the other hand, says she “really [tries] to think about [her] guests and what they are looking for.” “I’ll pepper the

lists with fun, esoteric options,” she added, “but from a hospitality perspective, I think it is easy to sabotage yourself from a sales perspective if lists lean *too* esoteric.”

One of the most interesting pieces of advice from Moore was to take advantage of Google Drive's multi-device file storage and synchronization service, which she uses to effectively manage the programs of all four restaurants she's involved with. “We use several Google Drive documents—first, our order sheet, which becomes the inventory sheet every month where we can make changes and set pars for weekly ordering,” she explained. “This lets the manager or sommeliers in each location know where we're heading at all times.” ■



# Discover **CARIÑENA**

THE BIRTHPLACE OF GARNACHA



## THE REGION OF CARIÑENA

Located in the heart of the Ebro Valley in the northeast region of Aragón, Cariñena is Spain's second-oldest DO and has been producing wine since the Roman era. Nestled between the Pyrenees and Iberian Mountains, Cariñena's vineyards are planted between 1300 and 2800 feet above sea level. Extreme day-to-night temperature variations are ideal for producing rich, expressive wines crafted from layers of rock, mineral, and earth.

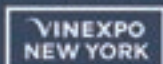
## OLD VINE GARNACHA

Cariñena boasts the most plantings of old vine Garnacha in Spain. The variety thrives in the region's complex stone soils where 100+ year-old vines produce wines with great depth and character. Vines between 30 and 40 years old are common. Approximately 50% of the vineyards are planted with Garnacha; the remaining vines are devoted to the namesake varietal, Cariñena, and other noble and indigenous grapes, including Tempranillo, Syrah, and Chardonnay.

## MEET THE WINERIES

Cariñena's leading producers—Bodegas Paniza, Bodegas San Valero, and Grandes Vinos—produce a popular range of wines, including red, rosé, and white styles that deliver high quality-to-value. The wineries hosted the Global Garnacha Summit at CIA at Copia in April 2018, where feedback from media and trade on their signature Garnacha wines was overwhelmingly positive. Meet the wineries from Cariñena and taste new releases at Vin-Expo New York on March 4 and 5, 2019.

Visit us: March 4-5



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# The Road Less Traveled

## UP-AND-COMING ITALIAN REGIONS OFFER FORMIDABLE **SANGIOVESE**

story and photos by David Ransom



*Donatella Cinelli Colombini is  
President of the Val d'Orcia DOC.*

*The Hillside Vineyard at Castello di  
Poppiano in Colli Fiorentini.*

**THERE WAS A** time when a wine trip to Tuscany to find good Sangiovese involved heading to Montalcino for Brunello and the hills between Florence and Siena for Chianti Classico. But Sangiovese, Tuscany's signature red grape, can be found all over, and a number of up-and-coming DOCs and DOCGs have recently thrown their hat in the ring to gain our attention—and, hopefully, a foothold in our wine lists and by-the-glass programs. After doing a bit of research this past fall, I found a couple regions making very good Sangiovese that are well worth getting to know.

One such region is Chianti Colli Fiorentini: Situated in the hills surrounding Florence, it's the only viticultural region in Tuscany that's permitted to put "Firenze" (Italian for Florence) on the labels of its wines. Established in 1932, Colli Fiorentini gained DOC status in 1967 and DOCG status in 1984; today, it comprises 29 member-producers representing roughly 3 percent of Chianti's total production. While the wines must be at least 70 percent Sangiovese to carry the DOCG label, other featured varieties, including up to 10 percent white grapes, can run the gamut.

One of the hallmarks of Colli Fiorentini wines is their approachability, making them well suited for drinking upon release. That said, there are also excellent (and ageworthy) Riservas to be tasted, as well as a smattering of Super Tuscans. Imported labels to look for include La Querce, Malenchini, Volognano, Tenuta San Vito, Castelvechio, Le Torre, and Castello di Poppiano, which is the largest estate in Chianti Colli Fiorentini (it's owned by Conte Ferdinando Guicciardini, who was instrumental in helping the region acquire DOCG status).

Another region ascending in prominence is the Val d'Orcia DOC in southern Tuscany. Situated in the beautiful yet rugged hills between Montalcino and Montepulciano, Val d'Orcia also makes approachable and affordable Sangiovese wines. The consorzio, which currently counts 40 producers as members, has a total production of just under 300,000 bottles, as most producers are fairly small. A growing number, however, are being imported to the U.S.

Probably most well-known are two producers that also make Brunello di Montalcino: the estates of Donatella Cinelli Colombini (who helped create the DOC and serves as its president) and SassodiSole, one of the region's rising stars. Other imported labels to look for include Roberto Mascelloni, Val d'Orcia Terre Senesi, Poggio Grande, and Campotondo. (Orcia DOC wines must contain 90 percent Sangiovese.)

In short, these two Tuscan regions on the rise are worth a look for both their quality and budget-friendly accessibility. **SJ**





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{ wheying in }

TAKING STOCK OF  
WHICH CHEESES GO  
BEST WITH **CABERNET  
SAUVIGNON**

# Propping Up the King of Red

by Janet Fletcher

**IN NAPA VALLEY**, where I live, Cabernet Sauvignon is king. It's the go-to for almost any main course at my house, from beans to beef. If there's some Cab left in the bottle when it's time for the cheese platter, I'm happy, and if there's not, I know where to find more.

You might think I keep a list of cheeses that pair well with Cabernet Sauvignon, but I don't need to—my husband does it. He's a winemaker and cheese lover; but I only realized a couple of years ago that he was recording tasting notes every time we tasted a cheese he particularly liked with Cabernet Sauvignon. After a couple decades of eating cheese almost nightly with me, his "goes with Cabernet" roster is extensive. While our opinions sometimes differ on the topic, here are a few cheeses we both enjoy with the King of Red:

**Ossau-Iraty and Secret de Compostelle (France/sheep's milk):** These traditionally styled Basque mountain cheeses have a natural rind, a nutty aroma that hints at sour cream, and a firm, silky interior. While Ossau-Iraty is the PDO sheep cheese of the region, Secret de Compostelle is its creamy, non-PDO twin (it's made outside the permitted zone but with a similar

recipe). It's a worthy replacement for the much-missed Abbaye de Belloc, which is no longer exported to the U.S.

**Manchego, Roncal, and Zamorano**

**(Spain/sheep's milk):** Spain's intense, aged sheep cheeses love big red wines. These cheeses are a little gamier than their French counterparts, as well as typically drier and not as nutty. Aromatically, they often remind me of the fat on a lamb chop, and nothing goes better with a lamb chop than Cabernet Sauvignon.

**Cheddar (U.S. and England/cow's milk):**

For compatibility with Cab, it doesn't seem to matter whether a particular Cheddar is a traditional "bandaged" (cheesecloth-wrapped) style aged aerobically or a block Cheddar (such as Grafton) aged anaerobically in a sealed bag. If the flavor and scent are complex and layered—tangy but not sharp with aromas of pineapple, nuts, grass, and candle wax—they'll do the job. My domestic favorites include Cabot Clothbound, Fiscalini, Bleu Mont, and 5- to 10-year-old Hook's; from England, try Montgomery's, Keen's, or Westcombe.

**Piave (Italy/cow's milk):** From Italy's

Veneto region, this firm, 10- to 12-month old wheel has the sweetness of aged Gouda and the toasted-walnut scent of Comté. Some wheels also have the crunchy protein crystals commonplace in Parmigiano-Reggiano.

**Vella Dry Jack (California/cow's milk):**

This Sonoma County icon never met a red wine it didn't like, but it soars with Cabernet Sauvignon. Rubbed with cocoa and black pepper and matured for a minimum of eight months, the wheels benefit from extended aging. (Look for Special Select, which is aged at least one year.) It's nutty, mellow, and consistently well balanced between sweet, acidic, and salty.

**Parmigiano-Reggiano (Italy/cow's milk):**


While Parmigiano-Reggiano can be easy to overlook as a table cheese, it deserves better. Aged for a minimum of one year by law and better at 24–30 months, Parmigiano-Reggiano is my reference point when I talk to consumers about umami. Intensely savory and concentrated, it delivers mouth-filling flavor, depth, and length—not unlike the best red wines. Nibble it slowly and note the nuttiness, the brothy flavor, and the hint of orange peel. 

PHOTO: KIKISORA VIA ADOBE STOCK IMAGES





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2014 · 2015 · 2017 · 2018

TIM ATKIN  
**90**  
POINTS  
2016

JAMES SUCKLING  
**92**  
POINTS  
2014

TIM ATKIN  
**90**  
POINTS  
2015

**Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,**

I recently went to a “natural wine” bar, and when I asked the bartender if what I ordered was organically or conventionally farmed, he wasn’t certain. Just to be clear, if a wine is considered natural, isn’t it made from organic grapes?

*Sincerely,  
 Naturally Confused*

**Good Somm**

**Dear Naturally Confused,**

I understand being perplexed by this, as the natural wine category is not officially regulated. By its general definition, natural wine is supposed to be made with minimal chemical and technological intervention. The term is used to distinguish such wine from the organic and/or Biodynamic categories due to differences in cellar practices.

It’s a shame that the bartender you interacted with couldn’t give you an explanation. Natural wine may be a trend, but if you can’t properly describe what you’re serving, you probably shouldn’t be serving it at all.

*Best,  
 Good Somm*

**BAD SOMM**

**Dear Naturally Confused,**

To be honest, I think some of these “natural wines” are naturally faulty, flawed, stinky, and full of Brettanomyces. Meanwhile, there are excellent producers making clean, site-specific, Biodynamic wines that are excluded from this cool-kid trend because the wines aren’t sold by certain distributors, the label art isn’t avant-garde enough, or there’s no quirky story associated with the brand.

I wouldn’t expect too much from this nebulous fad—it’s a lot of smoke and mirrors, frankly, and the wines aren’t cheap. Just because it was made by a dude with a furry beard and sailor tattoos in a garage in Portland doesn’t mean it’s a good wine. Trust your palate and drink accordingly.

*Sincerely,  
 Bad Somm*

**Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,**

I recently read a report in which 90 percent of all wine drinkers surveyed said they consumed their wines within two weeks of purchase—almost 33 percent within the first 48 hours. Only 6



percent of drinkers said they buy their wines to age, so why are so many wines still using corks instead of screwcaps?

*Cordially,  
 Getting Screwy*

**Good Somm**

**Dear Getting Screwy,**

Corks are anchored in tradition for many wineries, as these malleable closures allow oxygen to circulate throughout the wine. In addition, hearing a cork “pop” has always been a ceremonial aspect of opening a bottle of wine.

That being said, many producers are opting for alternative closures such as screwcaps for wines meant to be consumed young. It’s a matter of taste whether you prefer to drink a wine in its youth or with some age, but screwcaps are certainly on the rise. Fortunately, the technology behind them is also becoming more advanced to help wines age as they would under a cork!

*Regards,  
 Good Somm*

**BAD SOMM**

**Dear Getting Screwy,**

I agree screwcaps should be ubiquitous. Their most positive attribute is that they eliminate a scourge felt across the entire wine industry: corked bottles tainted with trichloroanisole (TCA) or tribromoanisole (TBA). Just ask any buyer, somm, or collector how much they hate tracking down credits for bad bottles.

The truth is, though, that there’s nothing romantic or luxurious about walking up to a table of diners, presenting a bottle, and twisting open a screwcap with a “crack.” It’s so anticlimactic that it’s almost embarrassing. If screwcap makers want to promote their products more aggressively, they should work on finding a way to make them sexy. I’m not sure if that’s even possible, but hey, if there’s a will, there’s a way. \$||

*Yours truly,  
 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.*



NAPA VALLEY  
Raymond

*Raymond*

THE DRESS CODE *is velvet*



**91** POINTS | 2016 RESERVE SELECTION  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**91** POINTS | 2015 RESERVE SELECTION  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**93** POINTS | 2014 RESERVE SELECTION  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**92** POINTS | 2013 RESERVE SELECTION  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

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# Celebratory Flavors

SAN FRANCISCO'S **PINOTFEST** TURNS 20  
WHILE HONORING THE NOBLE GRAPE'S  
CALIFORNIA HISTORY *by Chris Sawyer*

**IN THE 1980s**, the popularity of a new wave of elegant, earthy, and complex domestic wines featuring Pinot Noir—Burgundy's noble grape—made the variety an incredibly lucrative option for growers in the cool-climate regions of the West Coast.

Two of the early pioneers to work with this revered grape stateside were David Graves and the late Dick Ward, who met while studying viticulture at the University of California, Davis, before establishing Saintsbury Winery in the Carneros district near Napa in 1979.

"In the early days, we were young, ambitious, and focused on making world-class wines with the best grapes we could get our hands on. For us, it was clear that a large part of our focus has been on Pinot Noir," said Graves, one of the 50-plus winemakers and proprietors featured at the 20th-anniversary edition of PinotFest, the two-day wine-tasting extravaganza held last November at the San Francisco restaurant Farallon.

Around the same time of Pinot Noir's rise in Carneros, a similar thing was happening in the nearby winegrowing regions of Russian River Valley, Green Valley, Sonoma Coast, and Sonoma Valley, which were among the early AVAs granted in the '80s. Thanks to the success of emerging Pinot-savvy winegrowers and brands like Williams Selyem, Littorai, Hartford Court, Marimar Estate, Siduri, Talisman, and Etude, which made vineyard-designate wines from these areas, the amount of Pinot Noir vines planted in the county increased from 4,000 to 12,000 acres by 2003.

This growth was also helped along by new access to plant material, including a diverse selection of Pinot Noir clones and rootstock. This ultimately enabled wine-makers to create expressions with height-



PHOTO: ANDREW WHITMORE

*Jeremy Vassalo pours the latest offering of Pinot Noir from EnRoute Winery, the Russian River Valley-based sister brand of Far Niente, at PinotFest in San Francisco.*

ened depth, flavor, and balance that have appealed to a broader range of consumers over the past 20 years. According to last year's California Grape Acreage Report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, shared confidence in the variety hit a significant milestone in 2017, when Pinot Noir surpassed Zinfandel to become the second most popular red grape grown in the state: Its 42,967 acres of vines ranked only behind Cabernet Sauvignon at 85,191 acres that year.

In the Bay Area, one of the champions of this movement is Peter Palmer, who became Farallon's first Wine Director in 1997. He's also the brainchild behind both PinotFest and San Francisco's original large-scale Pinot Noir tasting, The Great Big Bacchanalia, which debuted in 1998. "To me, the distinction of a fine Pinot Noir starts with a true sense of place and a balance of complex flavor; bright acidity,

and nuances that match up with a wide range of seafood dishes and the newer styles of cuisine that we enjoy today," Palmer explained.

Regarding Pinot Noir trends, Palmer said he's been pleased to witness the incredible transition from the more power-driven, voluptuous styles popular in the early 2000s to the recent push toward wines increasingly focused on elegance and freshness.

While pouring the Freeman 2016 Gloria Estate Pinot Noir—made with fruit from the Freeman family's estate property in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley—proprietor Ken Freeman concurred: "When we started making Pinot in 2002, the bigger the wine you made, the bigger the score tended to be. But as consumers started to eat lighter and healthier, it's been nice to see that the pendulum has started to swing toward the style we have always made, which is elegant and balanced." ■



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## Antoinette

Created by Abel Santillan,  
General Manager at Ago  
in Los Angeles

- ◆ 2½ oz. Guillotine Heritage Vodka
  - ◆ 1½ oz. fresh blood orange juice
  - ◆ 1½ oz. Triple Sec
  - ◆ Splash of sweet and sour mix
- Combine ingredients, shake hard, and garnish with fresh blood orange slices.

The Antoinette cocktail is paired with polipo e patate at Ago in Los Angeles.

# A Cut Above

## GUILLOTINE VODKA BRINGS MIXOLOGY TO FINE DINING

by Jesse Hom-Dawson  
photos by Cal Bingham

A WELL-SELECTED WINE pairing can elevate a wonderful meal into something sublime, but attempting the same feat with cocktails can often fail to produce a perfect match. A new spirit on the market promises to change that, however, and the fact that it's a vodka expression makes the idea all the more surprising. Vodka that's odorless and "tasteless" is often thought to be a superior product, but Guillotine Heritage Vodka transcends the norm by offering a golden liquid that dramatically innovates upon the category.

Based in France and released just last year in the U.S., Guillotine crafts its vodka with Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay grapes sourced from a village in the Champagne region. The spirit ages in Cognac *foudres* (barrels) of Limousin oak, giving the finished product its eye-catching amber color. Opting to use Champagne grapes was a very deliberate choice, according to Guillotine founder and CEO Paul Berkmann: "We're not using Champagne grapes because of marketing—it's really because of what



[they give] to our vodka," he says. "It's some of the most expensive raw material in the world, but it's worth it."


It's fitting that a vodka with such an exceptional pedigree would be showcased at Ago, which is located on a fashionable strip of Melrose Boulevard in Los Angeles. At the restaurant, which serves wood-fired pizzas and classic Italian food to a well-heeled clientele, chef/partner Agostino Sciandri and General Manager Abel Santillan have collaborated to create an unexpected yet harmonious pairing with Guillotine Heritage.

The brand's distinctive name is derived, of course, from the execution machine infamously used during the French revolution. A landmark symbol of this historical period, the guillotine was seen by the revolutionaries as an equalizer that could propel France into a new era of prosperity and promise. This origin story inspired Santillan's Antoinette cocktail, which is named after none other than Queen Marie Antoinette. "She was known for her luxurious taste in fashion along with her lavish lifestyle. She was later convicted of high treason and executed by guillotine," Santillan explains. "The Antoinette cocktail can only be created with the Guillotine aged vodka, which seems fitting considering the story behind the drink."



**Ago General Manager Abel Santillan created a cocktail with Guillotine Heritage in honor of Marie Antoinette.**

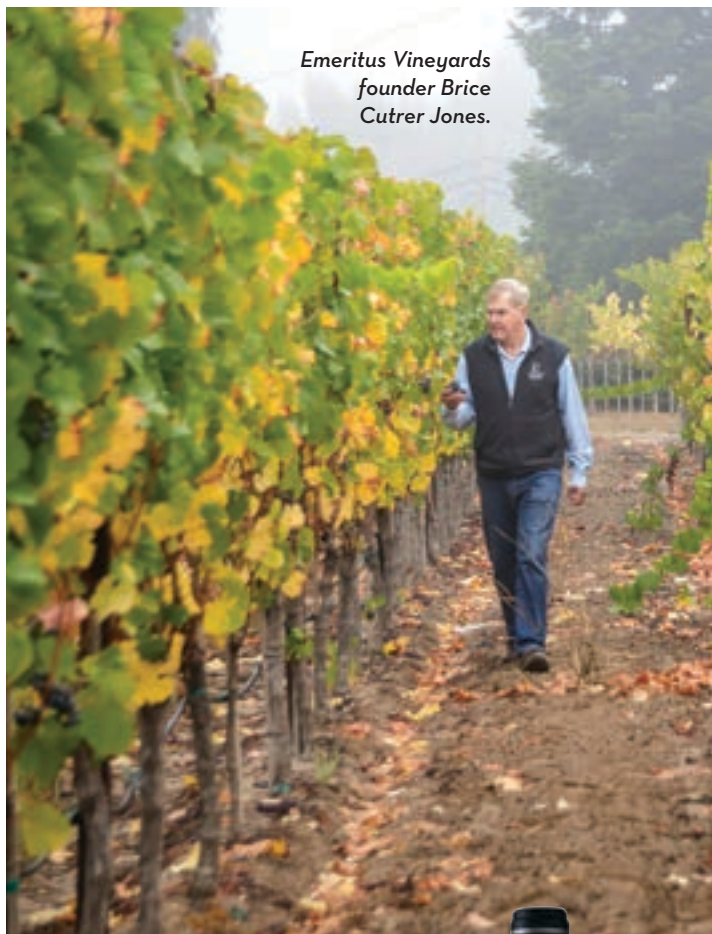
Pairing a French-inspired cocktail with a classic Italian dish, Sciandri prefers serving the drink with *polipo e patate*: grilled octopus and potatoes with cherry tomatoes tossed in a lemon dressing. "This dish melts in your mouth! The octopus is tender with just enough bite and the potatoes are perfectly grilled," Santillan says of his colleague's choice. "The soft touches of sweetness from the blood

orange juices and the smoothness of the Guillotine vodka in the Antoinette create a contrast of taste when paired with the savory flavors of the polipo e patate. It's always a challenge to carry a new vodka, but the smooth, clean taste of Guillotine is unlike any other. We love a challenge, but we also love presenting our customers with new high-quality products that pair so well with our menu items." 



# THE SOMM Jury

In each issue, the editorial team at *The SOMM Journal* will deliberate on wine submissions before releasing final judgment on select wines that garnered scores of at least 90 points.



*Emeritus Vineyards  
founder Brice  
Cutrer Jones.*

## Emeritus Honors Dry-Farmed Pinot Noir in California

**WHILE DRY-FARMED** Pinot Noir is common in Burgundy, it's rather rare in California. Thanks to Goldridge soil with underlying clay loam, the vines of Hallberg Ranch in Russian River Valley—which Pinot Noir-only winery Emeritus Vineyards owns—produce multiple tendrils that dig down more than 20 feet in search of water (most California Pinot vines can only reach down about 4 feet). As a result, Hallberg produces wines with complexity and mature flavors at lower Brix, achieving ideal physiological ripeness.



*The Goldridge soil with  
underlying clay loam at  
Hallberg Ranch in Russian  
River Valley is ideal for  
dry-farmed Pinot Noir.*

Vineyard Manager Kirk Lokka, who helped establish the Russian River Valley Winegrowers Association and was honored by the Sonoma County Winegrowers as the “2017 Sonoma County Grower of the Year,” oversees the dry farming for Emeritus (the winery was founded by vintner Brice Cutrer Jones, who established Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards).

“Most growers pick at higher sugar levels because modern irrigation practices dilute the grapes with an excess of water,” Lokka explains. “This is not the case for dry farming.” Lokka also notes dry-farmed Pinot Noir’s ability to adapt to adverse weather conditions, including drought and extreme heat.

See our story on Gary Farrell Winery’s connection to Hallberg Ranch on page 88.

**Emeritus Vineyards 2015  
Hallberg Ranch Pinot Noir  
(\$44)** This expression offers up a nose of cinnamon and cranberry with a hint of oregano and orange. The palate is rich and generously textured with a powerful voice that unleashes graphite and spiced herbs like paprika and sage. Alongside perpetually bright acidity, splashes of oak and cherry layer with licorice on the finish. **95**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EMERITUS VINEYARDS



# Reaching the Half-Century Mark at ZD



**MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES** usually warrant a deep dive into a winery's chronology to see how far the people behind the labels have come and how the wines have developed over the years. This is particularly true of ZD Wines and its 50-year

impact on California's vinous history.

When the deLeuze family founded ZD in 1969, Norman deLeuze's philosophy of producing great wines from healthy vines in rich soils proved praiseworthy, especially when applied to the coveted Rutherford sub-AVA of Napa Valley. The winery continues to take advantage of sustainable technologies and practices, including solar energy, biofuels, composting, cover cropping, water conservation, and electric vehicles. To show their pride in this eco-friendly approach, the winery team offers tours through their certified-organic vineyards.

A former aeronautical engineer, Norman and winery partner Gino Zepponi came up with the name ZD as a nod to the initials of their last names, but it coincidentally also references a quality-control term used

in engineering: "Zero Defects."

Norman's son Robert started making wines alongside his father full-time in 1979 before eventually accepting the position of CEO/Winemaker in 2001. (Norman spent the last years of his life working to find a non-toxic cure for lymphoma before dying of the disease in 2007.) The family tradition now includes Brett deLeuze as the winery's President and Brandon deLeuze as third-generation Winemaker. Senior Winemaker Chris Pisani, meanwhile, joined the business in 1996.

Completion of ZD's Vineyard View Tasting Room renovation project is slated for this spring. Strengthening the family's roots in Rutherford, the visitor center will have a dramatic view of the Mayacamas Mountains. **ISJ**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ZD WINES



**Robert deLeuze is the CEO/Director of Winemaking at ZD Wines. His father, Norman, founded the winery in 1969.**

## **ZD Wines 2017 Chardonnay, California (\$42)**

Made with grapes sourced from the coastal growing regions of Napa, Carneros, Sonoma, Monterey, and Santa Barbara, this wine is intensely aromatic with pineapple and coconut-oil aromas. The full-bodied palate has an oakiness that gently envelops delicacies like pear tart and bananas foster. Cucumber adds a savory thread throughout. **93**



## **ZD Wines 2015 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$230)**

Comprising 100% organic grapes, this expression possesses concentrated aromas of iron, cassis, and grilled meat. Leather and spiced black-cherry liqueur lead to tobacco and uplifting notes of mountain brush. It's silky and juicy with a depth of power and grace. **96**

# Honoring Their History

LONGTIME CENTRAL COAST WINEGROWERS CONSOLIDATE  
TO FORM THE **MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY**

by Izzy Watson

**LONG RECOGNIZED AS** one of California's most respected winegrowing families, the Millers have roots in California's Central Coast that trace back five generations to 1871. That year, their ancestor William Richard Broome acquired the Rancho Guadalupe land grant, which included an area near Malibu now known as Point Mugu State Park. Upon his death, the farmland was inherited by William Broome's son Thornhill, and for more than 100 years the Broome/Miller family has continued its agricultural tradition on the Central Coast. Thornhill Companies' current CEO, Stephen Thornhill Broome Miller, is Thornhill Broome's grandson.

In conjunction with Thornhill Companies' 50th anniversary, the Millers recently announced the creation of the Miller Family Wine Company, which will consolidate many of their businesses across the wine in-

dustry under the same roof. The new entity includes the management of French Camp Vineyard in Paso Robles; acclaimed national wine brands such as J. Wilkes, Ballard Lane, Barrel Burner, and Smashberry; control-label brands with prominent retailers across the U.S.; and the leading regional winery facilities of Central Coast Wine Services and Paso Robles Wine Services.

Probably best known for his visionary planting and development of the Bien Nacido Vineyard in Santa Maria Valley, Stephen Thornhill Broome Miller played an instrumental role in realizing the potential of this revered site, which has now been nurtured by his family for more than 45 years. Stephen's sons, Nicholas and Marshall Miller, are also at the helm of both businesses and represent the fifth generation of family leadership.

"As a family-owned and -operated business involved in agriculture and the wine

industry for multiple generations, we value the importance of change and continually seek to evolve as a company," says Nicholas, who serves as Vice President of Sales and Marketing. "The addition of Miller Family Wine Company is a significant step in our overarching plans to grow as a company while representing our family's ties to the Central Coast."

In the role of Vice President of Operations, Marshall says that as his family celebrates 50 years of business, their goal "remains the same as it did when the Thornhill Companies was established in 1968: to honor [their] family's history, grow the world's best grapes, and produce the highest-quality wines that continually show the strength and excellence of the Central Coast." For more information, visit [millerfamilywinecompany.com](http://millerfamilywinecompany.com). SJ

*Nicholas, Stephen, and Marshall Miller in their celebrated Bien Nacido Vineyard.*





# CALAMITY GIN

Our combination of Old World and New World styles produces a unique taste, we call "Texas Dry".  
Calamity Gin is a premium craft gin infused with wildflowers including Texas Bluebonnets.  
The taste profile is well balanced with juniper, floral notes and a fresh complex citrus finish.

## Botanical Blend

Grapefruit  
Lemon  
Orange  
Lime Zest  
Sicilian Bergamot  
Bluebonnets  
Rose  
Lavender  
Cardamom  
Coriander  
Juniper



## Gin Pollinator

2 parts honeycomb and wildflower  
infused Calamity Gin\*  
1 part fresh lemon juice  
1/2 part basil simple syrup  
1/4 part St. Elder elderflower liqueur

Combine all ingredients in a  
cocktail shaker. Shake and double  
strain in a coupe. Add a pinch of  
chopped flower as a garnish.

\*Infuse two 1.75 liter bottles  
of Calamity Gin with one  
honeycomb and a handful of  
wildflower petals.

Recipe credit to Harvest in McKinney, TX

Award Winning



Please Drink Responsibly

# Time to Mature

## A LONDON TASTING REVISITS A COLLECTION OF RED BURGUNDY FROM THE 2002 VINTAGE

**EVERY FEW YEARS** from her base in the Côte d'Or, Master of Wine Sarah Marsh gathers together a hand-picked selection of bottles from a mature vintage—often the last examples lingering in the cellars of top producers. Last November in London, she presented 32 Burgundy wines from the 2002 vintage in the tasting room of Goedhuis & Co.

To quote Marsh: "2002 was heralded as a very good vintage from the start: not at the level of the 1999s nor the 2005s to come, but very good nonetheless. The wines came out of the blocks with plenty of energy, refreshing acidity, plumpish body, and a good quality of ripe and silky tannin. ... With age, the 2002s are no less lovely and certainly more complex. They have retained their freshness, purity, and precision. The colder aspect of the wine is more to the fore as the fruit has receded, the acidity is more apparent, and the style can be both mellow and brisk. If there is a touch of austerity, it is in a good way."

Her comments were confirmed by the wines themselves, almost all of which still show a careful balance of youthfulness and maturity. The review of nine selections from the Côte de Beaune opened with Tollot-Beaut's fruity Savigny-les-Beaune before moving to the Chandon de Briailles Pernand-Vergelesses Ile de Vergelesses, which combined richness with grip. While the domaine's Corton-Bressandes was superb in a feminine style, with Tollot-Beaut's

Corton-Bressandes distinguishing itself as richer and Rapet Père & Fils' Corton as more grippy, all three were surpassed by Meo-Camuzet's Corton Clos Rognet (its velvety richness was derived from very old vines). The Lafarge Volnay Clos des Chênes and Chanson Beaune Clos des Fèves were expectedly classic; Maison Champy's Beaune Les Grèves, meanwhile, was more mature.

Moving north from Nuits-Saint-Georges, Méo-Camuzet once again earned my vote with a stunning Aux Murgers, but the Jean Tardy et Fils Les Boudots and the Henri Gouges Clos des Porrets both showed well. Four excellent Vosne-Romanées followed, with Grivot's Les Suchots and the Aux Brûlées from Michel Gros pulling just ahead of Gros' Clos des Réas and Champy's Les Beaux Monts. The two Chambolle-Musignys were both exceptional and quite different: The Les Fuées from Jacques- Frédéric Mugnier showed a lissom elegance that contrasted with the earthy robustness of Georges Roumier's Les Amoureuses. And the single Morey-Saint-Denis, a Premier Cru Vieilles Vignes from Hubert Lignier, had both vigor and signs of a good future.

Then came the Grands Crus. In order of serving, Méo-Camuzet again shone with the Échezeaux Les Rouges du Bas, but the Mazoyères-Chambertin from Perrot-Minot had passed its peak. The Drouhin-Laroze Latricières-Chambertin from my cellar showed beautifully by expressing precision



and class; the Pierre Damoy Chapelle-Chambertin was the most open of the bunch; Champy's Mazis-Chambertin was warmly mature; and Mugneret-Gibourg's Ruchottes-Chambertin was lithe, pure, and very fine.

Of the two fantastic Clos de la Roches, Dujac's energy and richness matched Rousseau's purity and depth, while Grivot's Clos de Vougeot was marvellously young and meaty. We ended at Chambertin: The Faiveley Chambertin Clos de Bèze was still closed, but Pierre Damoy's was smoother and more open (his Clos de Bèze was even better). All were outclassed, however, by the Latricières and the Ruchottes.

After this great tasting, I look forward to the next, which will focus on the 2005 vintage. SJ



GREAT BURGUNDY WINES

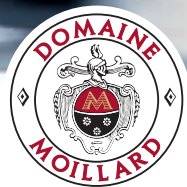
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"DRINK RESPONSIBLY"

# Where We're Dining and Drinking in 2019

by Ruth Tobias

PART ONE OF A  
TWO-PART LOOK  
AT THE MILE HIGH  
CITY'S LATEST  
AND GREATEST

**EVEN BY OUR** boomtown standards, 2018 was a banner year for dining in Denver. The biggest openings, which would have made headlines in any city, were conceived by hospitality heavyweights seeking to redefine haute cuisine for a new generation while radically reinterpreting global foodways.

I'll cover the latter development in my next column in favor of focusing here on three of the toniest arrivals in recent memory. Transforming a decades-old LoDo pizzeria into a splashy, split-level destination, Morin has upped the artistic ante with its unabashedly luxurious, intricately plated, and contemporary French creations, among them crispy sweetbreads on pain au lait smeared with vadouvan aioli and tendon-topped, onion caramel-drizzled marrow custard. Chef Max MacKissock even em-

plays a dedicated chocolatier, who turns out marbled truffles, pâtes de fruits, and other glittering bonbons like they were going out of style (rather than coming back in).

Two of the city's savviest pros, McLain Hedges and Mary Allison Wright of The Proper Pour and RiNo Yacht Club, run Morin's bar. Wright's daring wine list, which celebrates natural producers, spans from the darlings of Beaujolais, the Jura, and the Loire Valley to such mavericks as Oregon's Smockshop Band and Baja's Bichi. Hedges' low-waste, low-ABV cocktails, meanwhile, skew similarly oxidative, savory, and funky.

Also in LoDo, Lon Symensma—best known for his edgy forays into Southeast Asian cooking—returned to his European roots with LeRoux. A rhapsody in royal blue where chandeliers shimmer and a cheese cart stands at attention, it too revels in reimagined classics: bouillabaisse with uni- rather than rouille-topped toast, mille-feuille made of king trumpet mushrooms instead of pastry, and wagyu tartare that emerges from under a glass dome in a plume of hickory smoke. Beverage Director Mat Howerton likewise balances tradition and innovation, setting an exclusively Old World wine list against a cocktail menu that incorporates Colorado spirits and lavish twists (absinthe foam, chai tonic, and candied black olives, to name a few).

And then there's Beckon. Requiring pre-paid reservations, this 18-seat chef's counter in an old RiNo bungalow showcases the mighty talents of two Frasca Food and Wine alums, chef Duncan Holmes and hospitality director Allison Anderson—who, with partner Craig Lieberman, kicked off the year by generating national buzz for Call, the new-wave café/bakery they run next door.

In both kitchens, Holmes draws inspira-



PHOTO: SAANNA RONCO

*Wagyu tartare is served under glass in a cloud of smoke at LeRoux.*

tion from the rugged terrain of Scandinavia as well as Colorado, though the results are anything but rustic. Highlights of Beckon's inaugural eight-course menu included lardo-draped aebleskivers in porcini cream; caviar-topped, rye-breaded oysters in dill emulsion with three types of seaweed; and a dukkah-spiced goat crépinette over carrot puree. (I'd be remiss not to mention bread service, which starred mini-loaves made from aspen-bark flour.)

In such a small dining room, sommelier Zachary Byers has the luxury of personally recommending bottles or optional wine and beer pairings to each guest. I was particularly enamored by the 2007 Charles Joguet Chinon Les Varennes du Grand Clos he poured with the goat—though parting shots of aquavit in glasses painted by Holmes' mama were a testament to how Denverites are making fine dining fun again. 



PHOTO: CASEY GLITNER

*Morin's candied apple-inspired foie gras with apple gelée, whey caramel, and walnut streusel.*



PHOTO: JONNIE SIROTEK

*Rye-breaded oysters are garnished with caviar at Beckon.*





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# The Purest Fruit Possible

A Q&A WITH **DARRIN LOW** OF **DOMAINE ANDERSON**

by Albert Letizia

**DARRIN LOW IS** not a flashy person; consequently, he shuns away from making flashy wines. An advocate for organic farming and Biodynamic philosophies, the winemaker aims to create balanced, honest expressions that crackle with authenticity, purity, and sense of place.

The son of Chinese immigrants, Low is a native of California wine country: He was born and raised in the town of Healdsburg, where his parents ran a successful wine and liquor store. Over the course of his career, he had the opportunity to make wine at J Vineyards & Winery, Grgich

Hills, and Flowers before transitioning to Domaine Anderson, the Roederer family's newest estate in Mendocino. The 50-acre property is certified organic and planted solely to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

I had a chance to meet Low during his recent visit to Santa Monica. Here are some highlights from our conversation:

**Q:** **Albert Letizia: Can you tell me about your path toward Biodynamic farming? How did you first become interested in the practice?**

**Darrin Low:** I first started getting into it in the early 2000s. Around 2002, a man named Philippe Armenier came to the winery that I was working at, Grgich Hills. Philippe was a consultant, but he had come to us just cold-calling. Ivo Jeramaz, the

nephew of Mike Grgich, was very interested in his pitch and brought him on. At the time I was the Assistant Winemaker, so I was able to ride around with Philippe and look at the vines from a Biodynamic perspective and get to understand his philosophy. I started reading up about it on my own and tried to understand the influences of the moon and its position in the constellations and how they affect farming and tasting and liquid.

From there I realized I was more of a Pinot Noir guy, so I went to Flowers. They were [farming conventionally] at the time but were also in the process of selling to the Huneus family. We brought Philippe on to transition to Biodynamic, so we worked together for four or five years there.

*Domaine Anderson has been farming Biodynamically since 2013 and became Demeter certified in 2016.*

PHOTO: OLGA MIRANOVA



**Q:** So Philippe was like this traveling salesman of Biodynamic farming, pedaling his perspective around wine country?

Yeah, I guess so. Originally Philippe came to America to do a project with Kendall-Jackson, but it fell through, so that's why he was out selling his message to the Grgich family.

**Q:** Why do you think Biodynamic farming is better than conventional or organic?

Well, that's kind of a loaded question, because there's no actual *proof* that the wines end up being better, but the vineyards, to me, look healthier and more vibrant. The vines aren't struggling too much to get the fruit ripe, and there's more nuance in the vineyard than with conventional. For us at Domaine Anderson, it works because we want to make wines of great purity that are site-specific. It helps us because it makes the vines in tune with the vineyard, the vineyard in tune with the property, and the property in tune with its greater surroundings. The idea is to produce the most natural, pure fruit possible without the aid of chemicals.

**Q:** Was Roederer farming Biodynamically before you were hired at Domaine Anderson?

Roederer started farming organically right when they bought the property in 2011. They were certified organic in 2014. We started "farming Biodynamic" in 2013 and in 2016 we were certified Biodynamic through Demeter.

**Q:** Is it a big step going from organic to Biodynamic?

Not really, no. You have to start incorporating livestock to the property and integrate the property with life in the form of livestock, cover crops, compost, and prep sprays. But it's not that much of a stretch in my mind, at least.

**Q:** When did you have that epiphany where you fell in love with wine and decided to make it your life?

My folks came over from China after

*"[Biodynamic farming] helps us because it makes the vines in tune with the vineyard, the vineyard in tune with the property, and the property in tune with its greater surroundings."*

were all just coming on strong in terms of popularity in the '80s and '90s. It was a very influential time for me.

**Q:** What do you think is the hallmark of really well-made Anderson Valley wine?

Well, it's a work in progress. What myself and a group of other winemakers are trying to discover are the specific terroirs up and down the valley, but for my site in particular, I get super concentrated wines with minimal extraction. So, with six days of extraction and then pressing off after, what I'm finding is that



Domaine Anderson Winemaker Darrin Low takes in the view while visiting Santa Monica, CA.

World War II in 1948 and landed in Sacramento, where they had a grocery store and a butcher shop. But when they went up to Healdsburg, they opened a liquor and wine warehouse and retail store.

I was pretty young and it was during the time of big Zinfandels, which are easy wines to get behind when your palate is more receptive to sweeter things. I just started talking to our wine buyer back then and started tasting wine and working in wine. It fit really nicely with how my hometown was changing. Healdsburg is centrally located between all these wine regions like Russian River, Dry Creek Valley, and Alexander Valley, and at that time they

Anderson Valley fruit is super generous and very savory with a lot of dark plum and dark cherry flavors.

**Q:** In regard to Domaine Anderson, what do you want people to experience when they open a bottle of your wine?


When people open a bottle of our Pinot Noir or Chardonnay, I want them to say, "Oh, *that's* Anderson Valley!" I want them to really taste the purity of the fruit, because I think Anderson Valley is a very unique and beautifully remote place that should be shared. Really, to me, it's similar to how Napa Valley was 30 years ago. 

PHOTO: ALBERT LETIZIA

# Transparent Wizardry

A PALATE-OPENING COMPARATIVE TASTING WITH **MAXIMILIAN RIEDEL**

by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Tameka Jacobs

**I'VE BEEN LUCKY** enough to visit The Magic Castle, a private magicians' club in Los Angeles, twice. Even as a skeptic, both times I caught myself joining in on the choruses of "wows" while clapping in astounded and amazed recognition at the hard-to-believe tricks.

Recently, in the midst of a comparative tasting hosted by glassware company Riedel, it occurred to me that these experiences were very much the same in terms of audience reaction: Just as many "oohs" and "ahhs" followed each sip from the various




*Maximilian Riedel shows the benefits of using the Riedel Mamba decanter.*

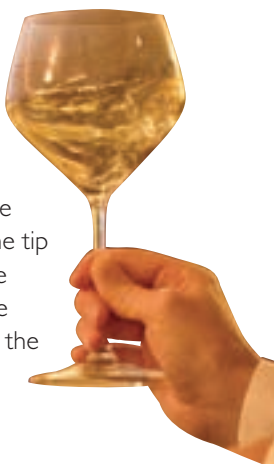
glasses, as if our minds were collectively blown by every difference.

I was admittedly far less skeptical going into the tasting than I was with my other magical experiences—as a sommelier, I've always believed that shape influences flavor. Perhaps President and CEO Maximilian Riedel, representing the 11th generation of his family

company, was also equally charming as any bewitching illusionist, but since the event I'm undoubtedly a full-fledged glass-shape devotee. Riedel truly is, as Maximilian says, "the Bose system for fine wine."

The most obvious proof of this came in the form of the Riedel Performance Oaked Chardonnay glass. In all of the other glasses, the high-end New World Chardonnay wine we tasted was unquestionably less creamy and silky, even in the Pinot Noir glass (what could also pass as a Burgundy glass).

In the Oaked Chardonnay glass, however, the texture was astoundingly different. According to Riedel, this is because "it's all about how the wine flows from the glass to where it first meets your palate." "Thanks to the shape with the wide rim, the wine goes to the center and spreads to the sidewall of the palate, where we emphasize the acidity and the minerality," he explained. "[The wine has] zero contact with the tip of the tongue and this is the place where we would boost the fruit." After all, with an oaked Chardonnay, it's not all about the fruit—it's about the balance of fruit and oak. Considering this, the tasting was perhaps less magical than it was logical. 



*Aerating wine in the diamond-shaped Riedel Performance Oaked Chardonnay glass.*



## In the Cocktail Hour

"Yes, Riedel is entering the cocktail business, but why only now?" Maximilian asked with a smile during the tasting. He went on to tell the story of how a young, respected mixologist from New York approached his father not long ago and gave him some persuasive reasons for creating cocktail glassware. As consumers' interests shift, the importance of diversifying increases: Brown spirits in particular are being consumed in cocktails like never before; distributors and spirit brands are increasingly enlisting their own resident mixologists; and consumers are often paying anywhere from \$15-\$30 for high-end drinks.

Enter Riedel's Drink Specific Glassware, a newly released line of five shapes tailored to serve roughly 7,000 different cocktails. "I'm not a cocktail drinker because after one I have to go the emergency room," Maximilian quipped. "With wine I can pace myself—I know how many gallons of wine I can take." Regardless of this personal preference, he still proudly held the elegant, old-fashioned-looking Riedel Nick and Nora glass by its stem for the audience to see for the first time. Suddenly, I felt certain that a good portion of the room full of sommeliers was craving a Dry Martini.

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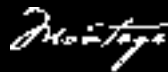


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# Thirsty Sea Creatures

HOW **CHEF RENEE ERICKSON** APPROACHES THE WINE PROGRAMS IN HER SEATTLE RESTAURANTS

by S. Irene Virbila

## SEATTLE CHEF RENEE ERICKSON

makes her own rules. By trusting her instincts and evolving, eclectic taste, she's spun her first modest restaurant into Sea Creatures, a growing group of very different concepts.

In terms of interior design, the former art student knows exactly what she wants. She's also been very involved in her restaurants' wine programs, creating quirky lists tailored to each place, whether it's an oyster bar, a steakhouse, or an establishment specializing in Italian apéritifs.

Erickson admits she was clueless about wine as a 25-year-old at the beginning of her career, adding that her education was mostly derived from one or two wine trips she'd take annually with her longtime friend and mentor Carrie Omegna, who now serves as her Beverage Director. As a result, unconventional food and wine pairings like rosé with steak are far from theoretical, as she's encountered many of them on her far-flung travels. "Up until I opened Bateau and Bar Melusine in 2016 and hired [Omegna], I did all the wine lists," Erickson says. "It's been a great shift for me, but hard, too, because I really loved that experience of thinking about wine in response to the menu."

Considering her status as a constant, exuberant traveler, it's clear that Erickson picks up inspiration everywhere she goes. Her 2014 cookbook with Jess Thomson, *A Boat, A Whale & A Walrus: Menus and Stories*, features dishes from the Pacific Northwest, Normandy, Brittany, and more.

*Chef Renee Erickson  
with her dog, Arlo.*



PHOTO: EVA KOLEMKO



*The chalkboard at Bateau in Seattle is used to update guests on which grass-fed heritage beef cuts are still available.*

After purchasing her first restaurant, Boat Street Café, Erickson says she “spent a lot of time thinking about fisherman and lobster shacks [as well as] a lot of time in Paris and Normandy popping into bars to have some oysters.” Instead of seeming labored and serious, these places were lighthearted and casual. That ambiance ended up being exactly what she envisioned for The Walrus and the Carpenter, the oyster bar she opened in 2010.

“Back then, I really wanted get people out of their comfort zone with wines like Muscadet, Chablis, [and] Riesling. Most people would just immediately order a red wine without even thinking about the menu,” she says, explaining her reasoning as to why the concept carried a ratio of 60-40 whites to reds. “The reds were lighter—Beaujolais, Gamay wines, Cabernet Franc from the Loire, plus local Oregon Pinots [and] a few quirkier bottles like Trousseau from the Jura.”

And while Omegna largely put together the list at Erickson’s aforementioned steakhouse Bateau, the chef definitely had some input in selecting options like the Clos Canarelli Corse Figari, a Corsican white, by the glass. Charmed by the island where she spent her 40th birthday, Erickson found its wines powerful yet elegant. “The whites are really briny, which I love. The reds have a salty quality, too,” she says. “They’re big but still have the great balance and acidity I think is so important in wine.”

At Bateau, where cuts of grass-fed heritage beef are listed on the chalkboard and crossed off as they’re claimed, the list favors the usual Bordeaux and full-bodied reds. Like at The Walrus and the Carpenter, however, it also takes note of Erickson’s penchant for pouring lighter reds with her steaks and includes famous old names like Clape (Cornas) mixed in with lesser-known producers and some unexpected selections.

Now that she’s opened her first Italian



PHOTO: DAVID DOSSETT



PHOTO: GEOFFREY SMITH

*White anchovy tartine, avocado, Aleppo pepper, and pickled red onion served at The Walrus and the Carpenter.*




## Reeling In Renee’s Favorites

Asked to name some of her current favorites in terms of wine selections at The Walrus and the Carpenter, Erickson names Domaine Bernard Baudry for Chinon and Cabernet Franc, the Château Thivin Côte de Brouilly Beaujolais, and Pinot Noir from Oregon’s Kelley Fox.

Her favorites at Bateau, meanwhile, include the Clos Cibonne Tibouren Rosé from Provence. It’s released a year later than most other Provence rosés of the same vintage, and “because it has more richness, it goes really well with steaks,” she says. Erickson also recommends a quirky white called Petite Arvine Vigne Rovettaz from the Grosjean family in Valle d’Aosta, and, for a lighter red, the wines from a Maurice Cellars in Walla Walla, Washington.

restaurant, Willmott’s Ghost, Erickson has fallen hard for the country’s wines. Located in Amazon’s Spheres complex, the concept features a list built around expressions from south Tuscany, the islands, and Liguria. “We were surprised how interesting and complex the wines were, and really affordable,” Erickson says, citing Verdeca Puglia Bianca from Puglia and Fiano di Avellino from Campagna. “Guido Marsella’s Fiano blew my mind—it literally smells like honeycomb. Every day we would try something new and exciting. Southern Italian wines are so different from the north’s.”

So what’s next for this incredibly productive chef? Before she starts a new book, it’s a week in Baja and a culinary workshop in Oaxaca. After that, of course, she’s planning some trips back to Italy and France—tasting wines all the way. 



# SURPRISING

# Salento

IN PUGLIA'S  
SOUTHERN PENINSULA,  
**THE WINES OF SALICE SALENTINO  
DOC AND SALENTO IGT ARE BEING  
REVITALIZED** by Laura Donadoni

When one thinks of southern Italy, they often envision endless miles of coastline, olive groves as far as the eye can see, and clusters of beautiful Baroque architecture. Salento—the southern, peninsular part of the region of Puglia (the heel of the Italian boot) that encompasses cities like Lecce, Brindisi, and Taranto—offers these attributes while also serving as a haven for exquisite regional foods and wines.

The area's lush and fertile soil produces some of the finest Italian wines, including those from the region's most distinguished appellation, Salice Salentino DOC. Salento has a storied history of winemaking that dates back to roughly the sixth century B.C., when it's estimated that Negroamaro grapes were first introduced to the region (the variety, which translates to "black and bitter," was originally called *niuru maru* in the local dialect). Much of the cultural influence in the Salento region can be traced back to the Greeks, including the distinctive architecture and regional dialect, which even today help to retain a taste of ancient Greece in Italy.

Surrounded by both the Adriatic and Ionian seas, Salento has a warm and dry climate that shortens the length of time grapes need to reach full maturation. Primitivo grapes, for example, require even less time to mature, as they ripen and reach their desired sweetness more quickly than other varieties. As a result, the wine is better enjoyed with less aging.





**Damiano Reale serves as the President of Consorzio di Tutela of Salice Salentino.**

Much of the Salento region's wine culture is still being adapted and revitalized even today, as producers had often previously aimed for quantity rather than quality. While roughly 25 wines in the overall Puglia region have met DOC standards, only about 2 percent of the wine produced in Salento earns this status. Today, however, wineries are attempting to redevelop traditional methods of production in a way that helps the wines of Salento garner a more prestigious reputation.

### Salice Salentino DOC

This full-bodied expression is the best-known DOC wine in the Salento peninsula. While it's most commonly found in the form of a red, it can also be produced as a rosé, white, dessert, or sparkling wine, though these are rare. Some wineries also produce a Riserva version aged for a minimum of 24 months.

Interest in wine from Italy's southern region, including those from the Salice Salentino DOC, increased in the 1980s and 1990s—coinciding with a rise in winemakers' attention to detail and consistency in following their respective viticultural methods.

Consorzio di Tutela of Salice Salentino, the local wine producers' association, is currently focused on promoting this new wave of Salento wine-making. "Salento's producers worked hard in the last ten to 15 years to improve their production techniques," Consorzio President Damiano Reale explains. "Many of them chose indigenous varieties over the international ones, lowered the yields per hectare, and focused on quality over quantity. Today

we can witness the results: Salento wines are more refined, elegant, and ready to gain the spotlight on the international wine scene."

Salice Salentino DOC Rosso (red) wine almost exclusively comprises Negroamaro grapes, with a minimum of 80 percent required. However, DOC regulations allow for an addition of 20 percent Malvasia Nera grapes, which enhance aromatics while lessening the tannic qualities of a given wine.

The Rosato versions of Salice Salentino wines require a minimal presence of 75 percent Negroamaro, whereas the monovarietal Salice Salentino Negroamaro and Negroamaro Rosato wines require minimums of 90 and 85 percent, respectively. Salice Salentino Bianco (white) wines, meanwhile, require 70 percent Chardonnay for the Bianco wines and 85 percent of the respective dominant grape for each of the monovarietal Chardonnay, Fiano, and Pinot Bianco wines.

### Rosé Is Synonymous with Salento

Salento is also the motherland of non-DOC Rosato, which is sold under the Salento IGT. Best known for being the first Rosato bottled in Italy and exported to the United States after World War II, Rosato from Salento is typically a rosé made from about 90 percent Negroamaro and 10 percent Malvasia Nera. The Leone de Castris Winery was the first to bottle and export Rosato to the U.S. and is recognized around the world for its Five Roses Rosato label.

Salento's Rosato wines tend to have a smooth finish, bright acidity, and a touch of minerality; as a result, they provide a refreshing way to beat the heat of southern Italy during the summer months. Salento is also one of the few regions in the country to produce rosé on a significant level, so much so that Italian rosés are typically associated with the area. ■

## MEET LAURA DONADONI

Laura Donadoni is an Italian wine journalist and blogger based in San Diego, California. She is the founder of *The Italian Wine Girl* blog and La Com Wine Agency, a licensed importing company and strategic PR/communications firm focused on the wine industry.

A Certified Sommelier with the North American Sommelier Association and the World Sommelier Association, a Certified Wine Educator, and WSET Level Three Advanced Sommelier, Donadoni is one of just a few Vinitaly International Italian Wine Ambassadors in the world. In addition, she's an Italian and Spanish Wine Specialist, a member of the Los Angeles Wine Writers Association, and the Director of the Wine Education Program at the Pacific National Food and Beverage Museum in Los Angeles.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA DONADONI

# A New Regime

## MOVE OVER, SYRAH: CABERNET SAUVIGNON IS STEALING THE SHOW IN PASO ROBLES

by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

**PASO ROBLES**, a region once dubbed the “Rhône Zone” for leading the state in overall Syrah acreage, seems to have decidedly chosen its signature grape: Cabernet Sauvignon. According to the 2017 California Grape Acreage Report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the variety makes up 39 percent of all vineyard plantings in the appellation, compared to Merlot in second place at 14 percent and Syrah at just 9 percent.

All in all, Bordeaux varieties boast roughly 57 percent of all plantings in the Paso Robles AVA. While the dynamic region continues to rapidly expand both in recognition and in vine plantings, it's safe to say Cabernet Sauvignon is king here.

Located on the northern end of San Luis Obispo County, the appellation hosts nearly 100 percent of the Cabernet grapes found within the county's borders, with plantings of the variety increasing there by a sizable 60 percent since 2010. San Luis Obispo County surpassed Sonoma in overall Cabernet Sauvignon acreage, with 14,500 acres versus 12,329, respectively, as of 2017.



*The Paso Robles CAB Collective is a grassroots organization formed to promote the recognition of Cabernet and Bordeaux varietal wines from Paso Robles through efforts like the 2018 CAB Camp sponsored by The SOMM Journal.*



*Calcareous shale, which dominates the soil profile of Paso Robles, helps promote acid retention.*



# Thriving on Paso Robles Terroir

What makes the king of grapes and other Bordeaux varieties so well-suited for success in Paso Robles? According to Eberle Winery owner/Winemaker Gary Eberle, the answer is threefold: “the weather, the soil, and now, the evolution of the winemakers themselves.” The famed vintner is often credited as a champion for Syrah, having planted the first Paso Robles vines of the variety in 1974, yet he says he arrived here explicitly to produce Cabernet. “Cabernet is, in my opinion, the finest wine that can be made from Paso Robles,” Eberle insists.

Known for its heat, Paso Robles regularly reaches triple-digit temperatures in the summer. The region’s proximity to the Pacific Ocean paired with its distinct orientation of canyons causes cool maritime breezes to settle in at night: In some spots, night-time temperatures can plummet 50 degrees. These diurnal swings are particularly advantageous for late-ripening grapes like Cabernet, as they give them more time to fully develop.

In addition to its advantageous climate, Paso Robles exhibits more than 40 soil profiles predominated by calcareous shale. “They’re high-pH soils, but they give you low-pH wines with beautiful, bright acidity,” says Brecon Estate Winemaker Damian Grindley. A former cave explorer, Grindley previously traveled the world to make wine for other producers; when he decided to launch his own estate project, however, he settled on Paso Robles specifically for its soils.

Fellow winemaker Eric Jensen, who owns the Paso Robles-based winery Booker, was similarly drawn to the region’s terroir, explaining that he tailors his methods to address its idiosyncrasies. “The ability to uptake [nutrients] is blocked in these high-calcareous soils, so we have to wait longer to harvest our Cabernet because we’re trying to balance the low pH,” he says, adding that he prefers soils with more water-holding capacity. “The better Cabernet sites, to me, are the ones that have the clay on top and you don’t hit that limestone for several feet . . . I’m looking for clay, but I can’t get away from the calcareous because that’s Paso. I just don’t want pure white.”

Known in the past for producing highly limited, cult-worthy Rhône varieties and blends, Jensen has since shifted focus toward Cabernet and Bordeaux-style wines, launching the My Favorite Neighbor label in 2014. He says he contracts with numerous growers who share his vision for the project as part of a “very close partnership.” Jensen adds, “I show them what I see in the winery, then I ask them to suggest how we can get better.”


The Paso Robles AVA encompasses a vast 613,000 acres: an area nearly three times the size of Napa Valley. Roughly 40,000 acres are planted to vines, yet that number continues to rise quickly as advancements in vineyard design give

producers access to higher-quality clones, rootstocks, and data.

These considerations certainly explain the influx of new plantings, producers, and high-quality wines coming out of the region. “Today, we have winemakers coming into Paso Robles who have their



***The 1979 Eberle Winery Cabernet Sauvignon proves the great aging potential of Paso Robles Cab.***

degree in enology; they’ve got years of experience working in wineries in Napa, Sonoma, and Santa Barbara,” Eberle notes. “They have the science, they have the art, and some of them have the love. And that’s why you’ve seen, I’d say in the last ten years, a sort of saltation and jump in quality of wine in Paso.” 

*A longer version of this piece ran in the October/November 2018 issue of The SOMM Journal. It is being republished in advance of the upcoming Cab Camp, held March 31 to April 3 in partnership with the Paso Robles CAB Collective.*

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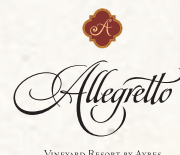


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# The Maestro of Wine

WINEMAKER **BOB CABRAL** FURTHERS HIS LEGACY  
BY PRODUCING HIS OWN LABEL *by Anthony Dias Blue*

**BOB CABRAL IS** a member of a small group of ultra-superstar winemakers in California. After stints at DeLoach Vineyards, Kunde Family Winery, Alderbrook Winery, and Hartford Court, he took over winemaking duties at Williams Selyem, where for 17 years his vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays set the standard for both varieties while achieving cult status.

In 2014, he left Williams Selyem to become Director of Winemaking at Bill Price's super-premium Three Sticks Wines. Taking this supervisory position has given Cabral—who looks more like a '70s rock star than a winemaker—the opportunity to get back to basics and do what he loves. "It was time to return to the grassroots approach that got me excited about winemaking in the first place," he explains.

PHOTO: STEVEN FREEMAN ©



*Winemaker Bob Cabral is an avid Led Zeppelin fan.*

Cabral's own label, Bob Cabral Wines, serves as a personal statement while representing his next chapter. Yes, the wines are pricey, but a large portion of their revenue goes to various charities, most of which focus on youth education. Music also plays an integral role in the experience Cabral, an avid Led Zeppelin fan, hopes his wines will deliver: Each expression is accompanied by its own playlist.

Cabral has also dabbled in distillation of late, producing an excellent rye last year in addition to his work on a multitude of other projects. **\$**

**Bob Cabral Wines 2015 Troubadour Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$125)** Bright, tangy, long, and expressive with racy acidity and a lovely background of lush minerals and spice. **95**



**Bob Cabral Wines 2016 Troubadour Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$125)** Smooth and silky with round flavors and a crisp profile; savory and rich with lively acidity and fine structure. **95**

**Bob Cabral Wines 2016 American Girl Pinot Noir Rosé, Russian River Valley (\$75)** Long and bright with deep, vivid color; flavorful, ripe, and crisp with character and racy acidity. **94**

**Bob Cabral Wines 2017 Cuvée Wildflowers Riesling, Sonoma Coast (\$65)** Steely and perfumed with minerals and peach; fresh and balanced with elegance and length. **96**

**Bob Cabral Wines 2016 Zallah Ranch Riesling, USA (\$65)** Racy and refreshing with fresh peach and tight, Mosel-like style; long and lively with silky texture. **94**

**Bob Cabral Wines 2015 Cuvée Anne Rose Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$100)** Silky and bright with vibrant acidity and smooth minerals. Elegant and stunningly Burgundian, it's one of the best California Chards I've ever tasted. **97**

**Bob Cabral Wines 2016 Cuvée Anne Rose Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$100)** Deep, rich, and juicy with citrusy acidity and racy style. Complex, fresh, and long, this wine is also remarkably Burgundian. **96**

**Whip Saw Rye Whiskey, USA (\$48)** Deep amber color with a smooth rye nose; mellow, rich, and smooth texture with toasty grains, sweet oak, and notes of dried flowers and brioche; lengthy and generous. **94**

# CHEF'S ROLL | SOMM'S LIST

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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.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JULIE LUMGAIR



## Julie Lumgair

Wine Consultant and Winemaker, Napa Valley, CA

### **Q: What was the first moment you knew you wanted to pursue a career in the wine industry?**

My college mentor was a collector of European and early Oregon/California wines who taught fine wine appreciation classes. I helped with his classes, which inspired me to start collecting a global cellar in my twenties. Multiple experiences I had while collecting spurred me to take the next step professionally in my thirties and make winemaking my second career. Years later, I helped my mentor auction his collection at Bonhams & Butterfields.

### **Q: What advice would you give to someone interested in learning more about and/or trying more wine who doesn't know where to start?**

First, comparatively taste multiple wines with a common thread, especially with a wine educator, in wine shops, at group events, or while visiting key regions. Second, read more about regions, varietals, et cetera, you enjoy. Third, learn how to taste—the real sensory science—and keep

notes. Believe in your own palate then try to understand it in context. Also, don't underestimate the importance of spitting when tasting so your palate and sensory memory are sharp.

### **Q: Over the course of your career, what's the most important lesson you've learned or piece of advice you've been given?**

Growing up in a family business in a small town, I learned reputation is everything and your handshake is your word. That and the Golden Rule never go out of style. As a young wine collector, I learned that some wineries may take your business for granted or not pay attention too well. Feeling that way as a wine buyer deeply influenced my passion for personal VIP experiences and building lasting customer relationships once I was on the other side of the conversation.

## Christopher Sawyer

SOMM Journal Wine Country Editor and Sommelier at Gravenstein Grill in Sebastopol, Sonoma County, CA

### **Q: How did you get your start in the wine industry?**

Although I grew up in Russian River Valley, my calling to the wine industry really started when I was writing articles for the college newspaper about the Viticulture & Enology Department at the University of California, Davis, in early 1990s. Inspired by the interviews I did with the gifted professors, rising-star winemakers, and other wine pros along the way, I ended up taking ten wine classes and started working at *Wine X Magazine* in 1995. Around that same time, I also started taking classes from my three Master Sommelier mentors: Fred Dame, Evan Goldstein, and Bob Bath. At that point, there was no looking back!

### **Q: Which regions or varietals been punching above their weight in recent years?**

To me, the next big grape variety is Marselan, a cross between Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache that has recently become popular in the Languedoc, China, India, and Uruguay. I love the naturally smooth, elegant, and refined flavors of wines made with this grape, which was first bred by Paul Truel near the French town of Marseillan in 1961.

### **Q: You are known for your pop culture-related wine pairings. What's your process for creating them?**


While music can create a great background for wine experiences and deep conversation, pairing great wines and films allows you plenty of time to let the flavors of the wine open up in the glass as the plot and characters develop on the screen. While some of the pairings are based on varietals or blends that match the main characters, other times I'll pick the wine based around the time period or the country where the film is set. 



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS SAWYER

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](mailto:featured@chefsroll.com).



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# Variations on a Theme

AT THE NOMAD HOTEL in Los Angeles, the Mad Scientist and the Poet hold court. Calling patrons to order, Bar Managers Adam George Fournier and Dave Purcell welcome these respective characterizations of their creative processes, with Fournier expounding obscure clarification techniques as Purcell waxes rhapsodic about the endless pursuit of the perfect cocktail.

Both veterans of the local bar scene, Fournier and Purcell are keen to distinguish this iteration of the acclaimed hotel as uniquely Angeleno. Fittingly enough, the pair recently added cocktails to their menu that incorporate two new terroir-driven vodkas equally eager to showcase the merits of their roots: Belvedere's Smogóry Forest and Lake Bartezek expressions, which are part of the Polish vodka company's Single Estate Rye Series.

TERROIR PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE **BELVEDERE SINGLE ESTATE RYE SERIES**

by Kyle Billings  
photos by Todd Westphal



*The Variations on a Theme and Oatmeal Cookie cocktails at NoMad Los Angeles feature Belvedere's Smogóry Forest Single Estate Rye Vodka.*



*NoMad Bar Managers Dave Purcell and Adam George Fournier appreciate the terroir-driven qualities of Belvedere's Single Estate Rye Series as well as the character they add to a variety of cocktails.*



"For me [the series] is more of a distillation of what Belvedere really is," Fournier says. "I've always enjoyed Belvedere because of the rye content. I'm a huge whiskey guy. That mouthfeel, the presence of the grain, and the fact that it's not overly distilled is always something that I've enjoyed about regular Belvedere. This seems like it was about concentrating that idea."

Purcell, whose Oatmeal Cookie cocktail with the Smogóry Forest expression was the result of peckish revelation, notes the ability of terroir-specific vodkas to paint a clearer picture for guests he perceives as increasingly knowledgeable. "I always feel like story enhances our ability to sell and connect with people," he says. "Some stories can't be manufactured; some stories are long-past traditions. Just having two [of the single-estate vodkas] side by side, you can actually see that there are several differences."

Both Belvedere Single Estate vodkas call Poland's wintry landscape home—a climate that couldn't differ more from the endless summer of Tinseltown. Doug DeBeech, a Mixologist Ambassador representing LVMH brands, suggests that despite the relatively recent arrival of these novel entries in the vodka marketplace, seeking

to channel the character of specific terroir is nothing new for spirits producers.

"This is kind of like the fun conversation we have in Scotland where you take a whisky from Islay and you're going to find that peat influence very significant," DeBeech explains. "If you take a whisky from Tain, it's going to be in [the] Highlands and lighter."

Poland, which is vodka's ancestral home, offers geographical contrasts that are likewise reflected in Belvedere's expressions. Smogóry Forest along the western German border is characterized by rich soils and a relatively mild winter, while Lake Bartężek in the north is surrounded by hundreds of other nearby lakes and experiences a harsh, snowy season that tends to last from fall through spring.

These topographical nuances translate to distinct dissimilarities in a category often condemned to the flavor purgatory of "neutral." "The difference between the two [expressions] is if you look at Smogóry, it's reminiscent very much of rye whisky, but it's a vodka, so it's clear, and it punctuates an Old-Fashioned cocktail," DeBeech says. "But if you play with Lake Bartężek, it's botanical-driven almost like a gin, so it plays really great in a classic Negroni."

Poland also has the distinction of being the first country to create an appellation specific to vodka production. By law, Polish vodka must exclusively utilize native ingredients—including Polish rye and/or wheat as well as locally sourced water—and shuns the use of other additives. Smogóry Forest and Lake Bartężek narrow the focus even further by using estate-sourced rye, specifically the rare, baker's-grade Dankowskie Diamond Grade.

Back in Los Angeles, the Mad Scientist toils in the lab with his newest experiment. Fournier's cocktail, Variations on a Theme, deconstructs a Cosmopolitan into his vision of a stirred cocktail with the Smogóry Forest. "Watching people shift from what they don't like to what they do like opens up so many more worlds," he says. "All of a sudden, they're on a journey with you [where] you can hopefully introduce them to something new ... which is, I think, really what the conversation about single-estate or any premium spirit is about at the end of the day."

His *raison d'être* is hardly different than that of Belvedere's Polish distillers as they oversee their own craft thousands of miles away: to tender a passport in a glass. *SJ*

# Delivert Delivers

**NEW TOLOSA WINEMAKER FRED DELIVERT DEBUTS HIS SIGNATURE IN THE 2017 VINTAGE**

by Meredith May / photos by Duane Hall



*"I don't want to make heavy Pinots," says Tolosa Winemaker Fred Delivert. "They don't have to be dark to be good."*

**THERE'S A LOT** of tension in San Luis Obispo County's Edna Valley; not in terms of anger or politics, but instead in the exceptional traits of the 2017 Tolosa Chardonnay and Pinot Noirs that result from Fred Delivert's handiwork. Thanks to Edna Valley's climate—the coolest not only in California's Central Coast region but the entire state—and its long growing season, the new Tolosa winemaker has everything he needs to uplift the prowess of these Burgundian varieties.

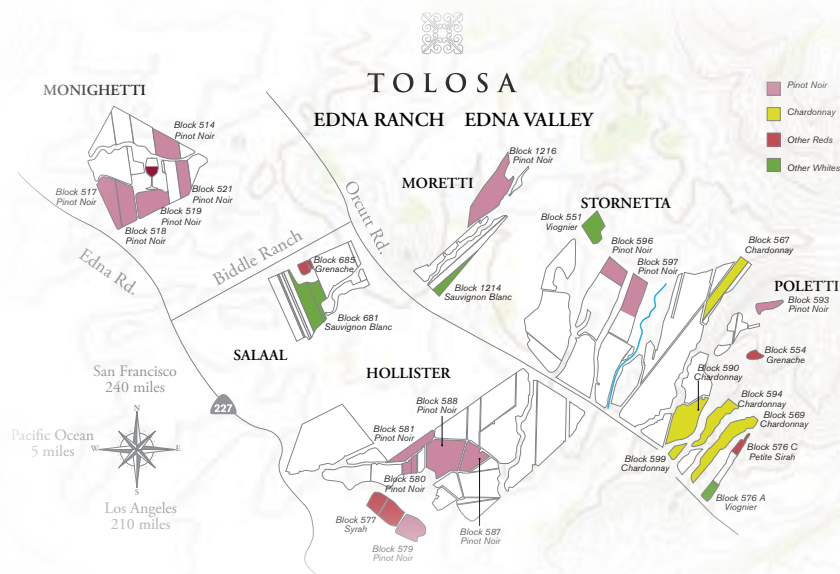
"I do take advantage of Mother Nature," says Delivert, who was born and raised in France. After earning his master's degree in agricultural sciences in 1995 from the École Supérieure d'Agriculture de Purpan (ESAP) in Toulouse, he was drawn to California, where he worked in many of

*Tolosa's Edna Ranch vineyard comprises six distinct sections, 60 soil types, and an array of microclimates. Sections such as Poletti, Moretti, Stornetta, and Monighetti are named after Italian-Swiss dairy-farming families from the 19th century.*



Napa and Sonoma's sub-appellations. It was Edna Valley and particularly Tolosa's Edna Ranch site, however; that ultimately hooked him.

"There are 50–60 different soils types in this region," he tells *The SOMM Journal*, "including sediment and seabed. My goal is to always stay true to the nature of balance and elegance naturally offered here." Cold Pacific winds whip down the coast and into this valley—a mere 5 miles from the ocean—where Tolosa owns 728 acres planted under vine. It makes its own wine, however, from only 150 choice acres.



## 2017: A Good Year for Fred Delivert and Tolosa Winery

Introduced to Tolosa by its vintner/owner Robin Baggett prior to the 2017 harvest, Delivert took the soil composition and Pacific influences under consideration when crafting his first vintage. I was honored to taste alongside him at the winery in early January.

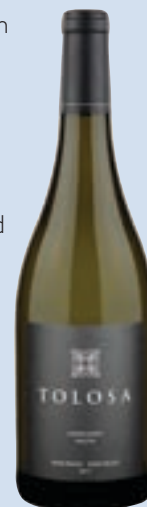
We started with the **Tolosa 2017 1772 Chardonnay (\$58)**, which aims to celebrate the terroir and heritage of Edna Valley as a selection for the winery's wine-club members. Aged nine months and with a low ABV of 13.4%, the **Tolosa 1772 Pinot Noir (\$72)** represents various clones and vineyard exposures while showing the true essence of Edna Valley. Aromas of earth, flint, and saddle sweat lead to a powder-puff lightness on

the tongue as the wine captures brightness with roses, raspberry, and a slight, back-of-the-palate hint of black pepper. "I don't like heavy Pinots," Delivert explains. "They don't have to be dark to be good." With a 1,000-case production, Tolosa's 1772 tier is geared toward direct-to-consumer sales while also being highly allocated to on-premise.

The **Tolosa 2017 Poletti Chardonnay (\$92)**, meanwhile, is a single-vineyard expression from Edna Ranch with sensuous and sweet notes of tropical pineapple and key lime on the nose. In this serious white, which exhibits that aforementioned tension so admired by Delivert, a texturally unique "shyness" on the palate glides easily across the mouth with a backdrop of apricot nectar.

Another fine single-vineyard offering is the **Tolosa 2017 Solomon Hills Pinot Noir (\$125)** from Santa Maria Valley. Dark and savory but still light on its feet, this red channels the valley's transverse sandy soil with its flavors of tobacco and black plum. Lean and acidic at first, the wine soon spreads out as it develops volume. "It has shoulders," Delivert notes.

From the western side of Edna Ranch on a sandy and rocky limestone knoll comes the winery's darkest Pinot yet: The single-vineyard **Tolosa 2017 Hollister Pinot Noir (\$125)** is a focused, deep-diving red with notes of dark chocolate, coffee, and Worcestershire. Balanced even at 14.5% and high in acid, the refined wine shows ripe strawberry with hints of orange peel. SJ



*Tolosa's flagship wine, Primera, is a cellar selection of the best barrels of estate Pinot Noir. The 2017 vintage (\$140) exudes fresh soil, mocha, and raspberry on the nose. "I want to keep elevating the quality of the wine and the region, and Primera is the most elegant Pinot Noir we can get off of our estate," Delivert says.*

# Spreading a Mediterranean Influence

**SELLA & MOSCA, SARDINIA'S  
HISTORIC WINERY, SHOWS  
OFF ITS EXEMPLARY WINES AT  
LA CICCIA IN SAN FRANCISCO**

by Fred Swan / photos by John Curley

**SELLA & MOSCA**, the largest winery in Sardinia, was founded more than a century ago. That's fitting considering wine production in Sardinia dates back to ancient times: Research conducted at the University of Cagliari shows native Sardinians cultivated grapes by 1150 B.C., centuries before the Romans or Phoenicians arrived.

Sella & Mosca has played a historic role in shaping viticulture in Sardinia and France, and the appealing wines produced there today are armed with intriguing backstories, making the drinking experience even more engaging.

I had the good fortune of meeting with Sella & Mosca Chief Winemaker Giovanni Pinna for lunch recently in San Francisco—as part of Pinna's third time visiting the United States—to learn more about the wines, history, and food of Sardinia. We dined at La Ciccia, which focuses on authentic Sardinian cuisine and provided excellent, well-paired dishes in a welcoming atmosphere.

We began by tasting the Sella & Mosca 2017 Torbato Spumante Alghero DOC. Only two Sardinian producers utilize Torbato, which Pinna told me is “not an easy grape.” Known as both Tourbat and Malvoisie du Roussillon in France, it's highly susceptible to powdery mildew and fan leaf virus; so much so, in fact, that it nearly lapsed into extinction during the 20th century.

Sella & Mosca revived the variety (also produced in the Côtes du Roussillon AOC) about 40 years ago, carefully propagating it from a few healthy vines. The winery's Charmat-method sparkler, due in the U.S. market early this year, is a charming alternative to Prosecco with

just 8 grams per liter of residual sugar; it offers flavors of green apple, underripe stone fruit, and white flowers before the mineral-tinged finish.

Next up was the Sella & Mosca 2017 Le Arenarie Alghero DOC—a fetching Sauvignon Blanc with medium body, minerality, and flavors of lemon pith and just-ripe stone fruit—followed by the Sella & Mosca

## Advancing Sardinian Wine

Encompassing about 25 percent of all vineyard land in Sardinia at 20,000 acres, Cannonau is the most-planted grape on the island. Conventional wisdom has long held that Cannonau is identical to Gamacha and came to Sardinia from Spain; however, according to Pinna, recent research shows the two varieties do differ despite having



*The lineup of Sella & Mosca whites from left to right: Torbato Spumante Alghero DOC, Le Arenarie Sauvignon Blanc Alghero DOC, and Monteoro Vermentino di Gallura Superiore DOCG.*

2016 Monteoro Vermentino di Gallura Superiore DOCG. Showcasing the main white grape in Sardinia, the long, rich, and mouth-filling wine's character is spot on for the region, expressing spicy grapefruit, orange pith, dried apricot, chervil, and floral notes with fine, silky texture and a mineral backbone. Both whites paired well with La Ciccia's marinated squid in olive oil.

the same genotype. The ancient Nuraghe civilization made wine in Sardinia from Cannonau long before the presence of any Iberian influence, and there's evidence Phoenicians brought amphorae of Cannonau wine home from the island nearly 3,000 years ago.

Pinna characterizes Cannonau as “a sugar machine, resulting in full-bodied yet soft





*Giovanni Pinna has served as Sella & Mosca's Chief Winemaker for 18 years.*

wines that are lighter in color and less tannic." He matured the Sella & Mosca 2015 Cannonau di Sardegna Riserva DOC in large, used Slavonian oak casks to ensure the variety's complex personality wouldn't be overwhelmed by the wood. The nose is savory, evoking leather, earthy minerals, garrigue, and chewy, dark-red cherries. The palate is long and intense with medium body and very fine tannins, while the flavor profile echoes the aromatics.

Sella & Mosca is the only Sardinian producer that makes a 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon. One might assume it's a recent concession to that grape's popularity, but Cabernet Sauvignon was the company's *raison d'être* 110 years ago. The Piemontese founders, neither with any background in agriculture, bought the land to grow and propagate Cabernet sourced from Bordeaux. As France began to recover from phylloxera, Sella & Mosca eventually sent cuttings back to Bordeaux to aid in its revitalization.

The Sella & Mosca 2014 Tanca Farrà Alghero DOC unites the winery's heritage with Sardinian tradition. Cabernet Sauvignon and Cannonau are vinified and aged separately for two years, then blended 50–50. The result has dark color, medium-plus body, noteworthy acidity, and fine, firm tannins. The aromas and flavors brim with ferrous minerality and grilled black currant.

We also tasted the Sella & Mosca Marchese di Villamarina Alghero DOC, a monovarietal Cabernet Sauvignon with 15 prestigious *Tre Bicchieri* awards serving as a testament to its quality. Pinna brought the 2010 and 2013 vintages to lunch: Full-bodied and masculine with fine, chalky tannins and intense flavors of dark minerals, cherry, blackberry, restrained oak, and spicy, dry leaves, the latter would make any Cabernet region proud.

The former was a warmer vintage,

which shows in the wine. It's also robust and intense, but its tannins are even more plush and its fruit riper. Notable flavors included cedar, forest floor, poached black cherry, spice, balsamic, and more dark minerals. Despite the vintage's heat, the 2010 has several years of life left.

Sella & Mosca's dedication to the heritage and advancement of Sardinian wine is admirable, and, most importantly, its diverse wines are exemplary: well-balanced, food-friendly, and broadly appealing. *—SJ*

## Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May Reviews More Wines from Sella & Mosca

**Sella & Mosca 2016 Terre Blanche Torbato, Alghero DOC** This is a high-acid white with streamlined scents of salted cashew and toffee. It's lean and focused without any fragility; instead, a sturdy rope helps balance sleek notes of pear and lime zest. **93**

**Sella & Mosca 2017 La Cala, Vermentino di Sardegna** The nose proffers clean aromas of linen on a sandy beach. Honeysuckle graces the palate with a delicate, creamy, and floral taste and texture. Further notes of oatmeal and sunflower with a hint of nuttiness keep the wine bright and shiny with a mineral base. **93**

**Sella & Mosca 2014 Terre Rare, Carignano Del Sulcis Riserva DOC** This wine has soil lined with coffee and dark cherrywood as its initial aroma. Salinity reigns on the palate with broad strokes of pomegranate, rhubarb, tobacco, and that coffee-laced soil. **95**



*The natural acidity of the Sella & Mosca Marchese di Villamarina Alghero DOC Cabernet Sauvignon pairs perfectly with the rich, umami-laden lamb ragu at Sardinian restaurant La Ciccia in San Francisco.*

# Transported to Livermore

**WENTE VINEYARDS CELEBRATES 135 YEARS AT  
THE JAMES BEARD HOUSE IN NEW YORK**

story by Courtney Schiessl

photos by Timothy Murray



*Wente Family Estates President Amy Hoopes and Chef Mike Ward of The Restaurant at Wente Vineyards represent the company at the James Beard House in New York.*

**ON A BRISK** October evening, well-dressed New Yorkers stepped off a West Village sidewalk and into California's vineyard-strewn Livermore Valley as Wente Vineyards, the country's oldest continuously operating family-owned winery, set up shop at the prestigious James Beard House to celebrate 135 years of winemaking.

Over the three-hour, five-course dinner, The Restaurant at Wente Vineyards Chef Mike Ward and Wente Family Estates President Amy Hoopes showcased dishes and wines cultivated by the Livermore estate.

Founded in 1883 by German immigrant Carl Wente, Wente Vineyards has made an indelible mark on the California wine industry during its prolific history. The winery is famous for bringing over its now-eponymous Chardonnay cuttings from Burgundy which are used today by most American Chardonnay producers ("Is this *the* Wente, of the Wente clone?" guests whispered to Hoopes as she made her way through the dining room). Wente Vineyards is also known for its sustainability-driven viticultural model; this philosophy is echoed at the winery's restaurant, which serves seasonal American dishes made with ingredients typically grown on the estate.

Guests sidled past the busy kitchen to clamor for a glass of Wente 2015 Small Lot Brut in the venue's reception area, sipping the clean bubbly alongside a selection of truffle gougères, goat cheese with strawberries, local Livermore cheeses, and





*Pictured in an old family photo are fourth-generation winegrower Phil Wente; second-generation winegrower Ernest Wente; third-generation winegrower Karl L. Wente; and fourth-generation winegrower Eric Wente.*

charcuterie from the Wente estate's beef program. Though it was Chef Ward's first time cooking at the James Beard House, his three and a half years of experience at the helm of the Restaurant at Wente Vineyards helped his estate-grown, farm-to-table cuisine translate seamlessly in the prestigious kitchen.

"The meal is a reflection of everything we do in the vineyards," Hoopes told guests, noting that many of the ingredients used for the dinner were brought to New York directly from the Wente estate (even the full-bodied, spicy olive oil, which came from the winery's organic olive grove). She added that the Wente team planned to recreate the customized menu as a special dinner back in Livermore, as well.

The first dish, roasted halibut atop black rice with tarragon aioli, packed serious flavor from the start, making the 2017 vintage of Eric's Chardonnay an ideal pairing. Soft and unoaked, the wine was created in honor of fifth-generation winemaker Karl Wente's father, as this is Eric's preferred style of Chardonnay. Subtle flavors of citrus and fresh apples layered with the strong, herbal flavors of tarragon in the dish.

A salty, savory piece of twice-cooked pork belly—adorned with baby carrots picked by the longtime manager of Wente's half-acre organic garden—contrasted nicely with the round, juicy 2017 Pinot Noir Rosé, but guests were blown away by the subsequent pairing and highlight of the meal: the 2015 The Nth Degree




***The Wente Vineyards 2017 Petite Sirah Port was paired with poached pear, chocolate mousse, and spicy gingerbread.***

Cabernet Sauvignon and imperial wagyu 10 Delmonico ribeye steak with foie gras, white truffle, potato, and kale. A bottling representing the best Wente vineyards, the wine was resplendent with rich, succulent tones of dark fruit and toasted wood. With a strong backbone of structure and flavor, it stood up to the luxurious but intense umami notes of the dish.

Not to be outdone by the savory courses, two sweet pairings highlighted very different expressions of dessert wine. The 2017 Nectar, an aromatic blend of Riesling and Gewürztraminer, saw its intense flavors of peach and orange blossom balanced by a modern interpretation of cheesecake with thick slabs of graham

cracker. The dark, concentrated 2017 Petite Sirah Port followed, adding notes of rich blackberry and sweet spice to a creative dish of poached pear with chocolate mousse and spicy gingerbread.

"It's an honor for [Chef Ward] to cook at the James Beard House," Hoopes said as Ward entered the dining room to enthusiastic applause, "and it's an opportunity for us to highlight our wines along with the food he makes every day in Livermore." As the charismatic chef spoke passionately of the Wente estate's beef, organic olive oil, sustainable garden, and, of course, phenomenal wines, guests couldn't help but feel fully transported to the sun-washed vineyards of the Livermore Valley. 

# VINO**SUMMIT**

PRESENTED BY FLORIDA WINE ACADEMY



## THE BILTMORE HOTEL, MIAMI MARCH 18, 2019

Presented by Florida Wine Academy, VinoSummit is the first conference dedicated to wine professionals in the southeastern United States. This one-day conference, which will take place in the lively city of Miami in March 2019, aims to investigate trends in the wine industry while exploring important regions and grapes.

“We are excited to launch VinoSummit and be the pioneers in organizing the first conference for wine professionals and serious enthusiasts in Florida.”



Alessandra Esteves is the Director of Wine Education at Florida Wine Academy, which she co-founded.





# VINOSUMMIT

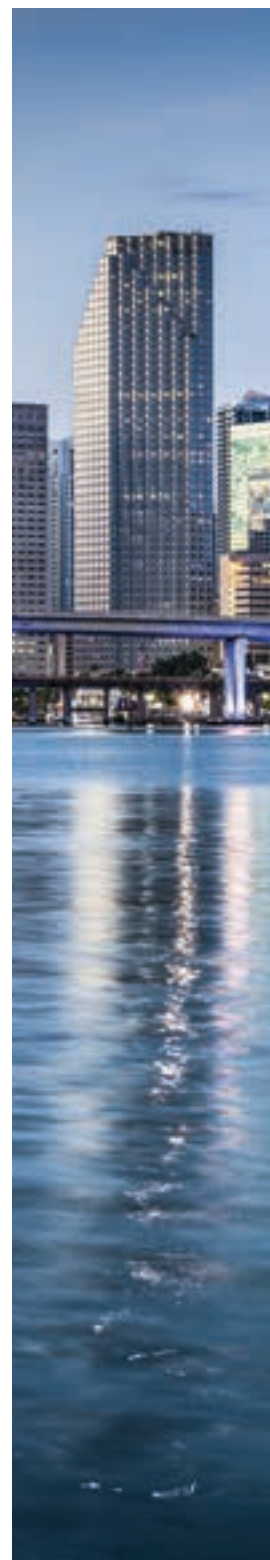
PRESENTED BY FLORIDA WINE ACADEMY

## PRESENTERS:

- **Philippe André**, U.S. Ambassador for Champagne Charles Heidsieck
- **Eric Hemer, MW, MS**, Senior Vice President/Director of Wine Education at Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits of America
- **Kristina Sazama**, DipWSET, Wine Educator at Santa Margherita USA
- **Raffaella Benassi**, Director of European Business Development for Breakthru Beverage Florida
- **Lisa Airey**, CWE, FWS, Education Director for Wine Scholar Guild
- **WSET** representative

## AGENDA (8:30 A.M. TO 6:30 P.M.)

- ◆ **Welcome & Registration**
- ◆ **Passport to Reims:** Tasting the Wines of Charles Heidsieck
- ◆ **Coffee break** sponsored by Cantina Mesa (of Sardinia) and Cà Maiol (of Lugana and Valtènesi)
- ◆ **Discovering Biodynamic Winemaking** in the Languedoc
- ◆ **Lunch** sponsored by Folio Fine Wine Partners, featuring wines from Bibi Graetz and Ricasoli
- ◆ **Panel Discussion:** "Trends in the Wine Industry"
- ◆ **Walkaround tasting** featuring more than 80 wines



The Penfolds Bar emulates the Penfolds Cellars at Magill Estate Winery in Adelaide, South Australia.

# A Telling *Reveal*

**IN UNVEILING ITS 2018 COLLECTION, PENFOLDS SHARES A BIT OF ITS HISTORY**

by Courtney Schiessl

*Tempted by the rare opportunity* to embark on an in-depth exploration of one of Australia's most iconic wine estates, an intimate group of trade and media members gathered at The Glasshouses in New York's Chelsea neighborhood on a sunny afternoon last fall. Surrounded by floor-to-ceiling views of the Hudson River, Penfolds Red Winemaker Stephanie Dutton and Brand Ambassador Jamie Sach unveiled the Penfolds 2018 Collection, which speaks to both the present and the past of this renowned winery.



*The entire 2018 Penfolds Collection.*





**Steph Dutton, Senior Red Winemaker for Penfolds, with Chief Winemaker Peter Gago.**

With 175 years of winemaking history, Penfolds has established itself as an industry standard-bearer throughout the world, and each of the wines in the 2018 Collection reflects a piece of that legacy. The winery was originally established in 1844 just outside of Adelaide at the Magill Estate, which remains the spiritual home of Penfolds.

It was here that Dr. Christopher Rawson Penfold and his wife, Mary, built their cottage, which they nicknamed “The Grange” after their original home in England. It ultimately became the inspiration for Penfolds’ flagship wine, Grange, created by Max Schubert in 1951; it was the success of the 1955, however, that brought Penfolds into the international spotlight. “There’s a little bit of that Grange DNA in each of the other wines,” Dutton said at the debut of the collection.

Before diving into the winery’s most famous cuvée, guests tasted through Penfolds’ other exceedingly expressive wines. Although it’s known for its bold and concentrated reds, Penfolds has been producing excellent white wines since the late 1800s, as indicated by a trophy displayed in Chief Winemaker Peter Gago’s office. The laser-sharp 2018 Bin 51 Eden Valley Riesling, which greeted guests upon arrival, made a significant first impression with enamel-stripping acidity and fresh lime zest.

A duo of Chardonnay wines also proved intriguing. While the 2017 Reserve Bin A Adelaide Hills Chardonnay was subtle and soft, the 2017 Bin 311 Chardonnay—a blend of fruit from

Adelaide Hills, Tumbarumba, and Tasmania—was nuanced and bright, contrasting creamy, toasty aromas on the nose with savory, mouthwatering acidity on the palate. Happily, both defied the stereotype of the fat, over-oaked Australian Chardonnay.

Penfolds’ six acting winemakers work with vineyards across South Australia and beyond to create their range of wines. While much of the winery’s foundation is built on multi-regional and multi-varietal blending, Penfolds has become well known for its tradition of highlighting single vineyards, blocks, regions, or subregions over the past 60 years. “If there is a parcel that makes us stand up and take note, we might keep it out of the blend,” Dutton said.

After employees and locals started requesting favored batches at the cellar door, the “Bin” labeling tradition was created beginning with the Kalimna Bin 28 Shiraz in 1959. While the 2016 vintage is a multi-regional blend, it remains a classic Australian Shiraz driven by blackberry fruit and heady aromas of violets and lavender. The blend of Bin 389, meanwhile, is commonly referred to as “Baby Grange,” in part because components of the wine are matured in the same barrels that held the previous vintage of Grange. The wine is always Cabernet-dominant with an almost-equal percentage of Shiraz depending on the vintage, and the combination of these two varieties brings the quintessential Penfolds winemaking style to life.

For the Penfolds team, winemaking is never a single-vintage endeavor: It’s a labor of love spanning multiple decades. “The only way to get to know these vineyards is to be there year in and year out,” Dutton said, noting that her 11-year stint is one of the shorter ones on the winemaking team. Regardless of their tenure length, however, many of the Penfolds winemakers know the wines they’re crafting will outlast their creators, as the winery’s top-tier wines are built to age for 30, 40, or even 50 years. As a result, Penfolds offers clinics to professionally assess and recork any of its red wines that are more than 15 years old.

Some of those selections are likely the predecessors of the final Shiraz-based trio poured at the 2018 Collection masterclass: the 2016 RWT Bin 798 Barossa Valley Shiraz, the 2015 St. Henri Shiraz, and the 2014 Grange, all of which express different sides of Australia’s signature grape. The RWT (which stands for “red winemaking trial”) is made exclusively with Barossa Valley fruit aged in French oak (Dutton noted that the grapes often taste like blueberries on the vine). Juicy and vibrant, it showed layers of toasted barrel, prickly herbs, and black pepper.

Think of the St. Henri as the yin to Grange’s yang: It’s a fresh, floral-accented wine aged in old oak barrels that’s all about purity of fruit. Though it has an ABV of 14.5 percent, it seems delicate compared to the thick, concentrated, dark-fruited Grange, which is aged in new American oak barrels. Big and bombastic right now, this is an unquestionably stunning wine built for long aging, as it will be at least a decade before the 2014 vintage begins to reveal its many hidden layers.

The next chapter for this historic wine estate includes a new project in Napa Valley, where Dutton spent much of her time last fall. Given the reputation Penfolds has built in its once-unknown South Australian vineyards, one can only imagine the potential of the wines it will create in California’s most celebrated wine region. **||**

{ cover story }


*Trevor Durling  
is the General  
Manager  
and Senior  
Winemaker for  
Beaulieu Vineyard.*

PHOTO: DAWN HUEMANN

# A TALE OF TWO NAPA CLASSICS

**BY JONATHAN CRISTALDI / PHOTOS BY TED THOMAS**





*Christophe Paubert  
is the General  
Manager and  
Senior Winemaker  
for Stags' Leap  
Winery.*

Two of Napa Valley's greatest assets are approaching significant milestones: Beaulieu Vineyard's Georges de Latour Cabernet Sauvignon celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, while Stags' Leap Winery is commemorating 125 years since its first vintage, which, incredibly, dates back to 1893.

For Treasury Wine Estates (TWE), which acquired Beaulieu Vineyard in 2015 and Stags' Leap Winery back in 1997, the anticipation of these anniversaries prompted far more than the usual celebratory fanfare. In just the last handful of years, both iconic estates have been infused with new life: In 2017, Trevor Durling was named the fifth winemaker in Beaulieu's 117-year history at age 35, and at Stags' Leap Winery, renovations on its Victorian-era Manor House carried on undeterred after they were derailed by a magnitude-6.0 earthquake in 2014. When the work was completed two years later, the doors were thrown open in resplendent fashion for by-appointment tasting experiences.

**WINEMAKER  
TREVOR DURLING  
FEELS HIS BIGGEST  
RESPONSIBILITY  
IS TO CARRY  
ON THE LEGACY  
OF BEAULIEU  
VINEYARD WHILE  
INNOVATING FOR  
THE FUTURE.**

According to Michelle Terry, Chief Marketing Officer at TWE, the young face behind the Beaulieu winemaking program represents just one factor of its continued success. Thanks to a focus on quality and a renewed interest in the legacy of André Tchelistcheff, who spent 35 years at Beaulieu, the winery has “been experiencing something of a renaissance among the trade,” Terry says. “We are thrilled to see the current class of somms—young and old—taking a new interest in brands like Beaulieu that really established the Napa Valley after Prohibition in the late 1930s.”

Judging by the industry’s outspoken adoration and reverence for Napa’s founding estates, that “renaissance” is just beginning. The area has been overtaken by a frenzy of activity, with a drive along Highway 29 alone revealing a bevy of ongoing construction projects and renovations. California’s great wineries are speedily being ushered into the 21st century, almost as if they’re seeking to make up for lost time.

While many have struggled to adapt to shifting buying habits, the adjustments TWE has implemented show a deft vision and direction—all but solidifying Beaulieu Vineyard’s and Stags’ Leap Winery’s reputations for at least the coming century.

Terry says that part of the path forward lies in the company’s renewed focus on “growing [its] substantial on-premise footprint and rebuilding some of the fine wine off-premise distribution.” With Stags’ Leap Winery, “the brand has a very broad appeal to both consumers and trade,” she adds. “The more classic, elegant style of the wines has always appealed to the on-premise, but we are seeing a growing number of collectors who appreciate the ageability and balance the wines offer.”

To uncover what these important milestones symbolize to both wineries, I recently sat down with Beaulieu’s and Stags’ Leap Winery’s winemakers, who also shared their thoughts on the evolution of their respective brands.



*The Beaulieu Vineyard 2015 Private Reserve Georges de Latour is available as part of the tasting experience in the winery’s Reserve Room.*

PHOTO: DAWN HEIMANN PHOTOGRAPHY

## Beaulieu Vineyard

Not long after André Tchelistcheff joined Beaulieu Vineyard in 1938, he tasted the de Latour family’s private wine—what they called “Private Reserve” at that time—from the inaugural 1936 vintage. This Cabernet Sauvignon-based expression was so distinctive that Tchelistcheff insisted it be bottled and sold as the winery’s flagship offering.

Today, the wine is a benchmark for world-class Napa Valley Cabernet as well as one of the region’s first “cult” labels. Winemaker Trevor Durling has heard more than a few stories about previous winemakers—including his own mentor, Tom Rinaldi—lining up for allocations of Beaulieu’s Georges de Latour at the winery, with some of their pals even “wearing disguises” so they could hop back in line for additional bottles, Durling says. Be it a rather hilarious myth or an even funnier truth, the point is clear: Bottles of Georges de Latour Private Reserve have defined a style of Cabernet we now associate with greatness.

### **Jonathan Cristaldi: What does the anniversary of 80 years of winemaking at Beaulieu mean to you?**

**Trevor Durling:** The 80th anniversary of Georges de Latour Private Reserve is a very big deal not just for us at Beaulieu, but for the entire American wine industry.

This iconic wine set a new standard for quality back when it was first created with the 1936 vintage, and it has continued to thrive and remain highly relevant ever since. It is not only an honor to be writing the next chapter for such an important



*Beaulieu Vineyard Winemaker Trevor Durling says André Tchelistcheff (pictured) “set the standard” for Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF BEAULIEU VINEYARD

wine but also a tremendous responsibility, particularly when I think about the amazing fraternity of winemakers who came before me.

### **What is the style of Georges de Latour today and how does it compare to older vintages?**

André Tchelistcheff set the standard for



Napa Cabernet Sauvignon. Older vintages show that aged-Cabernet character of tobacco and cigar-box spices. Historically, the acids were a bit higher and the alcohols a bit lower than today's blends, and the wine was aged in one-year-old American oak and would stay in barrel for three years. This use of American oak was initiated due to the difficulty in sourcing French oak during the World War II era and continued on through the early 1990s, but today I age Private Reserve for two years at most in French oak barrels, which is more appropriate for our modern style of winemaking. Today's Private Reserve is now synonymous with a style that expresses well-integrated notes of vanilla and toasted oak spices from the new French oak barrels, heightening the Cabernet aromas and flavors, which create a lengthy finish.

**Knowing your actions will have an impact on your successors, what do you hope will be your legacy?**

For close to 80 years, Georges de Latour has been the standard-bearer for Napa Cabernet. Although the wine has been made for decades, it continues to adapt and change with the times, so it's not a carbon copy of the first 1936 vintage. For example, in 2007 we introduced barrel fermentation on skins, which helped increase the quality and complexity of the wine. We're also innovating and using newer technologies and equipment as well as improving vineyard quality each

**Georges de Latour established Beaulieu Vineyard shortly after arriving in Napa in 1900.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEAULIEU VINEYARD

year through our significant investments in replanting, row orientation, and trellising systems. My biggest responsibility is that we maintain the history of what [Georges de Latour] represents but set up the right opportunities to keep the wine relevant and appropriate for modern times and into the future.

# Stags' Leap Winery

The 2018 harvest marked 125 years since winemaking began at the Stags' Leap Winery estate, and for the last decade General Manager and Senior Winemaker Christophe Paubert has been the steward of this ship. A Bordeaux native, Paubert is perhaps one of the humblest and most talented winemakers I've met. "You can't make a balanced wine if you don't have a balanced vine," he says. "I am here to serve the fruit—it is not the other way around. It's all about fruit selection and working in the vineyard."



The property's historic Manor House was erected in 1890, with the first cave following three years later. The first estate vines were planted in the late 1800s, but the now-iconic Petite Sirah Ne Cede Malis field-blend vineyard, which was formally established in 1929, allowed Stags' Leap to truly dig in its roots as America was uprooted by the infamous stock market crash. The storied history of Stags' Leap Winery and the guests it attracted, ultimately, is nothing short of fascinating: A fashionable country resort in the mid-20th century, it was popular among Hollywood and San Francisco high society. Today, it's making waves yet again.

**Jonathan Cristaldi: What does 125 years of winemaking at Stags' Leap Winery mean to you and what do you hope future winemakers will see as your legacy?**

**Christophe Paubert:** I believe that I am a passenger on this incredible journey. I'm here for just a brief moment in time. I only hope that I will leave behind an image of a respectful steward of the land and the brand, and that I left behind a few good wines for people to enjoy—nothing more.

**How would you define the style of wines you're making today and how did that style evolve?**

We have made significant improvements in the vineyard over my ten-year tenure here, so I would say the wines from 2009 to now have created the most marked improvement in increasing the quality of the wines. As far as my winemaking style, I would describe it as clean, terroir-driven, and balanced. If I want any oak aging, it has to be respectful of the wine, and there needs to be nice acidity and freshness. I aim to create unfatiguing quality that makes for easy food-pairing wines.

**Given the recent string of incredible vintages, what would you consider to be typical of the wines from the 2012-2018 harvests?**

Our most recent, the 2018 vintage, was the longest season I've experienced in Napa Valley and probably the best vintage I've experienced in the ten years I have been at Stags' Leap Winery. The wines are highly concentrated yet elegant and refined. I can't wait to see how this vintage expresses itself upon release in the coming years.

2017, 2016, and 2014 were "normal" vintages in my experience. The particularity of the 2017 vintage was an early heat wave around Labor Day. It was important not to overreact and patience was rewarded. I recall 2015 quite well—we were scrambling at harvest because everything ripened at the same time. We also had lower yields but highly concentrated wines. In 2013, the tannins required more thorough attention, but this vintage is now showing tremendous quality and is much better than first expected. 2012 had the most beautiful tannins and overall the longest macerations. SJ

JUDGING BY THE INDUSTRY'S  
OUTSPOKEN ADORATION  
AND REVERENCE FOR NAPA'S  
FOUNDING ESTATES,  
THEIR "RENAISSANCE"  
IS JUST BEGINNING.

## Tasting Notes



**Beaulieu Vineyard 2015 Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$150)** Next year's vintage release, the 2016, will actually be the official 80th-anniversary bottle of GDL. As for this current opaque-ruby wine, it's loaded with notes of black fruit, graphite, and red flowers. Terrific layers of black cherry and blackberry mingle with brown spices and crushed-stone minerality atop chewy, robust, and ageworthy tannins.

**Beaulieu Vineyard 2016 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$33)** A deep ruby color; this expression exudes blackberry and sweet, toasty

oak aromas. The palate reveals powerful, chalky tannins with plush layers of blueberry compote topped with fresh blackberries and graham-cracker crust.

**Beaulieu Vineyard 2015 Tapestry Red Blend (\$65)** This dark-ruby wine's aromas of crushed red rose petal are supported by a high-toned herbaceous note. Black cherry and Indian spices meet richly textured cocoa tannins with ample spice on the finish.

**Stags' Leap Winery 2015 Napa Valley Cabernet (\$60)** Black cherry and blackberry aromas are tinged with

plenty of graphite and Stags Leap AVA earthiness—almost like red, ashen volcanic dust—in this opaque-ruby wine. These aromatics and flavors mingle with a heady mix of brown spices, savory French oak, and fine-grained, woody tannins.

**Stags' Leap Winery 2015 Ne Cede Malis Petite Sirah (\$125)** This wine is a glass-staining inky purple with fabulous aromas of crushed violets, black fruit, and black peppercorn. Full-bodied and velvety on the palate, it emanates concentrated black fruit and blueberry compote before giving way to a finish of crushed purple flowers.



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Communal dog hikes through Kunde Family Winery's vast 1,850-acre estate in Sonoma Valley precede a lunch and wine tasting.

# Sniffing After New Experiences

## TAKING WINE-SENSORY TECHNIQUES BEYOND THE TASTING ROOM

by Deborah Parker Wong

**EVEN THE SIMPLEST** wine contains hundreds of aroma compounds. More are present in red wines than in white and certain compounds are more dominant in some grape varieties than others, but, taken as a whole, we recognize them as the smell of wine. Psychology tells us that when you've become familiar with a particular scent, you're apt to enjoy it even more. Vanilla is a perfect example of a familiar aroma most never tire of, but context plays an important role in the amount of pleasure we derive from our sense of smell.

The odor of wet dog isn't exactly something we want to detect in wine, but experiencing this scent after a communal hike at Kunde Family Winery in Sonoma Valley could actually prove enjoyable. This "moderately strenuous" walk traverses Kunde's 1,850-acre estate through vineyard rows, oak woodlands, native grasslands, and chaparral that stretch from the valley floor up into the Mayacamas Mountains. The morning wraps up with a much-deserved al fresco tasting and lunch, with Kunde

donating a portion of the proceeds to the Dogwood Animal Rescue Project and Humane Society of Sonoma County.

During a visit to the tasting room at Imagery Estate Winery, located just outside the hamlet of Glen Ellen in the heart of Sonoma Valley, visitors can taste an unusual flight of small-production Biodynamic wines. A few times a month, Imagery also offers outdoor yoga classes—and what better place to practice yoga than a pristine, Demeter-certified Biodynamic vineyard? After an hour-long vinyasa sequence that instructor Jes Williams says will help build confidence and leave participants present and centered for the rest of the day, visitors can savor a pour of Sauvignon Blanc on the walk back to the tasting room. With their senses heightened, they'll find the wine will very likely taste more like the grass and fresh air with a hint of saltiness, creating an invigorating experience that's somewhat uncommon in the world of wine tasting.

Meanwhile, at fellow Sonoma win-

ery Donum, large-scale sculptures have replaced the dairy cows that once dotted the gentle swales of these Carneros estate vineyards. On a warm summer day, this 200-acre property smells more like lavender than fertilizer. Strolling through the 150-year-old olive trees, gardens, and vineyards to view 40 works by a who's who of contemporary artists would certainly seem like a distraction from the estate Pinot Noir, but for Danish collector and vintner Allan Warburg, Donum's majority owner, the experience of combining wine, nature, and art is "far more powerful than if you enjoyed them separately."

The rise of this philosophy indicates that the days of confining wine tastings solely to a tasting room or terrace are long gone. Experiencing wine in a different context is something we have to become familiar with to fully enjoy, and if the approach this trio of wineries is taking is any indication, tapping into activities like hiking, al fresco yoga, and tours of a world-class sculpture garden are making this shift possible. **SJ**



# Rising to the Top

PHOTO: CAL BINGHAM



Caroline Styne is pictured at A.O.C., one of three restaurants the James Beard Award-winning restaurateur has opened in Los Angeles over the course of two decades.

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*“So much can be said through a wine list. I really appreciate when I go to a restaurant and their list is a part of the entire experience and feels in tune with the menu.”*

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## JAMES BEARD AWARD WINNER CAROLINE STYNE SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON LOS ANGELES’ RISING CULINARY STATUS

by Abby Read

**ON CAROLINE STYNE’S** dresser next to her necklaces sits her latest accomplishment: the 2018 James Beard Award for Outstanding Restaurateur. “It was really nice to bring it home for everyone,” Styne said during a chat with *The SOMM Journal* at A.O.C., her second restaurant, on Los Angeles’ west side. “Anything that sort of brings attention or praise to the staff and everybody [who] works so hard at what we do is incredibly gratifying.”

Styne is no stranger to success in L.A.: Her first restaurant, the highly acclaimed Lucques in West Hollywood, celebrated 20 years this past September. At the time of its opening, “there was not a vast group of people who were supporting the culinary arts in L.A.,” Styne quipped, but times have changed. Considering a noteworthy restaurant now opens in the city on practically a weekly basis, she said she’s interested in how the number and overall quality of restaurants has risen in conjunction with the growing population.

Yet with what Styne calls the “big boom” of dining options, new challenges have arisen. “We are in a little bit of a bubble right now,” she explained, adding that competition, geographical distance, and lifestyle factors are all variables L.A.’s restaurants must assess and navigate in order to survive. Despite these obstacles, Styne said L.A. has continued to offer diners quintessential qualities many regions do not, like stellar fresh produce and a mind-bogglingly diverse breadth of global cuisines.

Claiming a particular niche can be difficult for new establishments in an expansive city like Los Angeles, but Styne believes that wine lists can prove vital in crafting a restaurant’s identity. “So much can be said through a wine list,” Styne said. “I really appreciate when I go to a restaurant and their list is a part of the entire experience and feels in tune with the menu.”

Styne has delved more deeply into Latin countries like Spain, Mexico, and Portugal recently in her own wine exploration, as “the quality of these wines [are] at a whole new level than in the past.” She gave even more high praise to France’s Loire Valley region—“it needs more attention because its wines are so diverse”—and said she expects to see more Greek wines coming to the forefront of restaurants’ lists, as well.

The lifelong Angeleno also hinted at a new project she expects will land in April, but for now, the details remain wrapped—unlike that prestigious new prize on her dresser. **SJ**



Somm  
Foundation

# A Long-Lasting Finish



Andrew McFetridge is interviewed during his trip to Vinho Verde.

## A SOMMFOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT'S TAKE ON PORTUGAL'S VINHO VERDE REGION

by Andrew McFetridge

**PORTUGAL WAS NEVER** a country I planned to visit. It wasn't even on my radar. Instead, I had dreams of Paris, Venice, London—all the European must-dos. Croissants and Champagne on the Seine and the sound of cathedral bells in Florence were the items that filled my travel list, but there's something about a pastel de nata, a shot of Ginja liqueur, and a breath of salty Portuguese air that compels you to ask, "How did I overlook all of this before?"

Satisfying my natural curiosity was a priority for me, not unlike the way a flower needs rain. I evolved from being that overzealous kid always asking "Why?" to having an insatiable craving for passport stamps as an adult. Learning and observing how people live day-to-day, as well as watching their interactions with friends, strangers, or even themselves, has always nourished that childish hunger. *How does this Portuguese grandma with a cane and cigarette climb these steps with ease? Has she always done this? Is this part of her daily routine?*

*A vineyard at the Monverde Wine Hotel in Telões.*





Living in New York City as a thirty-something sommelier, my Champagne dreams always come with a hard dosage of reality. How do I make all of this travel possible? After I read about Portugal being full of warmth, wine, and wonder—all with an attractive price tag—I decided to step out of my comfort zone last year.

I first experienced Portugal on my own in spring 2018, getting lost in the winding corridors of the Alfama neighborhood in Lisbon while letting the echo of fado (a type of traditional Portuguese music) hold my hand. I listened, I smelt, I tasted. Salted cod, sardines, and crisp white wine accentuated one another like lovers married for a lifetime.

The main course that really satiated my wanderlust, though, was the Portuguese culture that surrounded me. I drank in the sweeping cliffs of Setubal while learning the history of the monks who sought sanctuary there centuries ago. I danced in the discotheques of Porto, sipping the most attractive Port wines you'd ever experience. I left Portugal sure that I'd return someday, but not knowing that this would happen in just six months.

In an effort to see the world in as little time as possible, I applied for as many Enrichment Trips through SommFoundation as I could. Without much expectation, knowing that thousands of wine professionals share the same ambition, I pressed on. I'm an optimist, after all.



**Fresh prawns served at 5 Oceanos Restaurant in Porto.**

Victory came in June 2018, when I was selected to be a part of the Fall 2018 Vinho Verde Enrichment Trip. The prospect of exploring Portugal again with other



**A pensive statue at the Castle of Guimarães in the town of Guimarães.**

wine professionals sent excitement rushing through my veins like a tidal wave. It was all I could talk about for weeks. Portugal wasn't finished with me yet.

### **A View of Vinho Verde**

Vinho Verde, a region nestled in rain-soaked northern Portugal, supplies visitors with unparalleled hospitality from the honest, proud, and hard-working natives. In addition, SommFoundation and the Comissão de Viticultura da Região dos Vinhos Verdes spared no expense to make this trip as memorable as possible. Every hotel, meal, tasting, and daily activity was executed at 110 percent.

When I arrived at the hotel (one of many) for the initial group meeting, I was greeted by faces that mirrored my own excitement and nervousness. Plucked from anywhere and everywhere in the United States, my new friends and I quickly developed a strong bond. We were there to learn, experience, and taste while also inspiring one another; and our varied backgrounds in wine added another layer of substance that unfolded like the complex aromas of the aged Alvarinho (yes, it's a thing!) that frequently filled our glasses.

Throughout the course of the trip, we were greeted by some of the most stoic and eclectic winemakers Vinho Verde had to offer. While they were all business-

minded during the day, these Portuguese ambassadors were ready to show this group of Americans a good time once night fell. They invited us in their homes for lavish home-cooked dinners, lining our palates with wines that showed the versatility of the region and the legacy of generations of family winemakers. They regaled us with tales of the Portuguese way of life spanning from modern day to before the dictatorship ended in 1974. Some of them could even double as stand-up comics.

The wine of Vinho Verde is much like the people of the region: approachable and fun with a crisp, refreshing edge. It doesn't try to be anything it isn't, as it's made with the materials the land gives it and the skill the winemakers bring to it. Dry aromatic whites, reds that don't see malolactic fermentation, rosés bursting with fresh fruit—even brandy, or *aguardente* as they call it. This region has it all, including experimentation and innovation. Tasting oak-aged Vinhão and Arinto felt like the surprise party I never had.

It's been my experience that Portugal is often overlooked on lists not just by guests, but by sommeliers and beverage directors alike. Don't be fooled by price: Just because a wine is inexpensive doesn't mean one ounce of quality or hard work was sacrificed. Give Portugal a try—I promise the finish will be long-lasting. **SJ**

*Pictured front row from left to right during a celebration for Ken Uhl's retirement at Groth Vineyards & Winery are Adam Book, Andy Clark, Jon Newlon, Ken Uhl, Elizabeth Uhl, David Carini, Nina Tramuta, John Samuels, Jim Oliver, and Sue Bennet. In the back row are Marc Nelson, Suzanne Groth, Dennis Groth, Steve Slater, Scott Pyles, Brian Rogers, David Gainza, Brooks Jorgensen, Bill Cascio, Heather Santillan, Judy Groth, Mike Lester, and John Rielly.*



# Giving 110 Percent

## KEN UHL RETIRES AFTER A 25-YEAR STINT AT GROTH VINEYARDS & WINERY

photos and story by John Curley



*Ken Uhl in the barrel room at Groth Vineyards & Winery in Napa, CA.*

**IT'S MORE THAN** fitting that when one of the top players at Groth Vineyards & Winery decided to retire after a 25-year tenure, the vineyard "family" gathered around to wish him well.

Ken Uhl came aboard in 1993 as the winery's first Director of Sales and Marketing. "The day I hired him," founder Dennis Groth says, "Ken said, 'Mr. Groth, I'm going to give you 100 percent . . . no, wait, make that 110 percent, every day.' And he has, for 25 years."

Established when Groth and his wife, Judy, bought the Oakcross Vineyard in 1981, Groth Vineyards & Winery prides itself on being family-oriented. "It was a life-changing moment," Groth says. "We were not grape farmers, but we were serious wine consumers who loved and had consumed our fair share of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon over the years." The winery remains family-owned and -operated today, with the Groths' daughter Suzanne at the helm as President.

Uhl was a one-man show at the outset, meaning he spent much of his time on the road. "Napa competition is fierce," Uhl says. "When you think about all the great wines in the Napa Valley, if you're not on the road knocking on doors, it's not happening."

A Yountville native, Uhl earned a degree in hotel administration at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, before returning to Napa as the Food and Beverage Director for an area hotel chain. Wanting to feel more tied to the Napa Valley community, Uhl took a position as the Property Manager for Robert Mondavi Winery, and when he still felt like he hadn't dived deep enough into the business, he went to work in the cellar at Chalone Wine Group.

After asking if he could hit the streets and sell some wine during the slow months, Uhl found the job he'd been looking for with Groth, who hired him to help grow his family operations. Uhl represented the winery in its interactions with distributors, restaurants, and retailers, selling the Groth Vineyards wines domestically and internationally. "I'd go to Boston for a week then New York the week after that, and I'd do that five times a year," he says.

Now that Uhl gets to put away his suitcase, he'll be able to spend more time with his family. But while he won't be spending weeks on the road chasing numbers, he'll still have ties to the winery: His son, Alex, now works for Groth as well. "We're always going to be connected to them, absolutely," Uhl says. ■



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THE **SOMM** JOURNAL



# French-American

# SPIRIT

**by Brandon Boghosian**

**photos by James Tran**

A

lthough the United States is a major player in the world of wine both as a consumer and producer, it's still in its infancy compared to the Old World regions that have influenced its tastes. Producing more than 80 percent of all domestic wines, California's viticultural industry has been impact-

ed by many cultures, nations, and styles over the years, but certainly none have had a more dominant or lasting influence than France.

To explore this relationship and its enduring effects on the Golden State, Robbie Meyer of

Murrieta's Well, Steve Rogstad of Cuvaion, Master Sommelier Gillian Ballance of Treasury Wine Estates, Michael Rosa of Taub Family Selections, and Nichol Cokas of J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines came together to host a Franco-American panel at SommCon San Diego late last year.



*Panel moderator Michael Ploetz presents the 2015 Pavillon Rouge du Château Margaux and the 2015 Château Pape Clément from Pessac-Léognan.*





## A REVIEW OF THE FRANCO-AMERICAN PANEL AT SOMMCON SAN DIEGO

*The panel for the Franco-American seminar at SommCon San Diego from left to right: Robbie Meyer of Murrieta's Well; Steve Rogstad of Cuvaision; Michael Rosa of Taub Family Selections; Nichol Cokas, Southern California Area Manager for J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines; and Gillian Ballance, MS, of Treasury Wine Estates.*



# LIVERMORE VALLEY: Murrieta's Well

*Winemaker Robbie Meyer  
presents the Murrieta's  
Well 2015 Small Lot  
Cabernet Sauvignon from  
the Livermore Valley.*

Like Napa Valley to the north, the Livermore Valley runs east to west. Its moderate climate is mitigated by cool breezes from the San Francisco Bay, and while the region benefits from long, warm, and sunny days, it experiences even cooler evenings than its northern neighbors. This diurnal shift allows for slower development of fruit on the vine and helps strike a balance between ripeness and acidity in the finished wines.

Founded by Louis Mel in 1884 and later sold to the Wente family, Murrieta's Well has long produced wines directly influenced by Bordeaux. Cuttings from Château d'Yquem and Château Mar-





*The lineup of wines featured during the Franco-American panel at SommCon San Diego.*



gaux were brought from Bordeaux to the Livermore Valley, and to this day the region's hillside vineyards still yield this high-quality fruit. Full-bodied with bright acidity, the Murrieta's Well 2017 Sauvignon Blanc shows its California roots with stone fruit and ripe red grapefruit; barrel-fermentation and aging on the lees, meanwhile, impart both texture and hints of toasted marshmallow, which are qualities also seen in the wine's blended Bordeaux Blanc cousin, the 2015 Château Pape Clément.

Another comparison was made to wine from the Pessac-Léognan estate;

dating back to the 13th century, it produces a white wine with Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle, and Sauvignon Gris. Fuller-bodied and barrel-aged with notes of ripe citrus, it's a benchmark example of white Bordeaux, and while Murrieta's Well is very much a California wine by contrast, its French influences are readily apparent.

Yet another wine presented, the 2015 Murrieta's Well Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, greatly benefitted from the aforementioned conditions of its home region, showing a more Old World, savory style of Cabernet in contrast to

the brooding, opulent, and rich examples of the variety found elsewhere in California. While the wine showed abundant notes of dark cherry and cocoa, hints of old Bordeaux were also present in the form of olive, herbs, and spice. It seems more akin to the 2015 Pavillon Rouge from Château Margaux, which, of course, is no coincidence considering the shared cuttings from the Margaux estate.

Pavillon is the second label of this Premier Cru château, which traces its roots to the 1400s. Younger, less-developed fruit that doesn't make its way into the Grand Vin becomes Pavillon, which is no less impressive than its counterpart. The well-structured blend, predominately Cabernet Sauvignon joined with Merlot, is full of graphite, earth, spice, coffee, and tannins, the latter of which give it long life. While the two wines have their own distinct expressions, one can easily see they're cut from a similar cloth.

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**Cuttings from Château d'Yquem and Château Margaux were brought from Bordeaux to the Livermore Valley, and to this day the region's hillside vineyards still yield this high-quality fruit.**



*Nichol Cokas, Southern California Area Manager for J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines, with the 2014 Cuvée St. E from Paso Robles.*

## PASO ROBLES:

### J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines

Jerry Lohr's first foray into California viticulture was spent cultivating Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in Monterey County back in 1972. In 1986, he shifted south to San Luis Obispo, where he planted Cabernet Sauvignon and other red varieties in what was then the little-known region of Paso Robles. Today his namesake company farms more than 2,700 acres in Paso, focusing on Cabernet as well as Bordeaux and Rhône-style wines.

The 2014 Cuvée St. E is a nod to the Cabernet Franc-driven wines of Saint-Émilion on Bordeaux's Right Bank. (Fittingly, this robust and boisterous blend ages in Sylvain oak barrels produced just a few kilometers from the French commune.) J. Lohr dry farms its vineyards and brings the grapes to peak ripeness before harvest, ultimately channeling dark, dense, and deeply concentrated flavors into the bottle. Still rather youthful, this wine showed beautifully and will continue to improve for likely another decade.

## RUTHERFORD/NAPA VALLEY:

### Taub Family Selections

The Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard in Rutherford takes its name from Georges de Latour's Beaulieu Vineyard Number 3, originally planted in 1845. The site's soil is made up of bale loam clay over gravel, a combination particularly well suited to Cabernet Sauvignon.

The Heritage winery produces classic examples of Napa Valley Cabernet, including a bottling of Georges III. The 2015 vintage carries the pedigree of the site impressively, showing deeply concentrated fruits along with cedar, spice, vanilla, and cocoa.



*Michael Rosa, Western Division Manager for Taub Family Selections, presents the Heritage 2015 Beckstoffer Georges III Cabernet Sauvignon from Rutherford and Napa Valley.*





*Winemaker Steve Rogstad of Cuvaison and Brandlin with the Brandlin 2015 Henry's Keep Proprietary Red from Mount Veeder.*

## **MOUNT VEEDER:**

### **Brandlin**

Mount Veeder sits at the southern end of Napa Valley and straddles the Mayacamas Mountains. Its boundaries are largely defined in terms of elevation: The appellation begins at 500 feet above sea level and rises to 2,600 feet. Most vineyards on Mount Veeder are above the fog line, giving them greater sun exposure, but the mountain remains cool thanks to the same breeze from San Pablo Bay that influences Carneros.

The 2015 Brandlin Henry's Keep Proprietary Red comes from two distinct blocks within the winery's Mount Veeder vineyards. Cabernet Sauvignon, which comprises two-thirds of the wine, is blended with Petit Verdot, Malbec, and Cabernet Franc. Cool, sunny days lead to late ripening and small, concentrated berries, which yield richness and great complexity in terms of character.

## **NAPA VALLEY:**

### **Beaulieu Vineyard**

After arriving in Healdsburg in the 19th century, Georges de Latour established Beaulieu Vineyard in 1900. The winery was fortunate enough to weather the storm of Prohibition by producing sacramental wine for churches nationwide. In the wake of the national repeal, de Latour hired André Tchelistcheff, and the rest, as they say, is history.

First produced in 1938, Beaulieu Vineyard's Georges de Latour wine was formally released in 1942 and is considered to be the very first Grand Cru of Napa Valley. A large portion of the juice goes directly to barrel for fermentation, and the resulting wine shows black fruit, dark mocha, and spice with incredibly fine tannins. Beaulieu pioneered many aspects of the industry, including estate bottling as opposed to shipping barrels of wine. (For more on Beaulieu Vineyard, see our cover story on page 60.) [SJ](#)



*Master Sommelier Gillian Ballance, Education Manager for Treasury Wine Estates, with the Beaulieu Vineyard 2015 Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.*

# Right Place, Right Time, Right People

NAPA VALLEY'S  
NEYERS VINEYARDS  
DEMONSTRATES OLD  
WORLD SENSIBILITY  
INSPIRED BY A LIFETIME  
OF MONUMENTAL  
ACHIEVEMENTS

*Winemaker Tadeo Borchardt with Neyers Vineyards founders Bruce and Barbara Neyers. The hinges for these barrel-room doors were late to arrive, nearly preventing the Neyerses from meeting their proof-of-occupancy date back in 1999.*



Many of us find ourselves in the wine business through pure happenstance. In the case of Bruce Neyers and his wife, Barbara, an auspicious visit with a San Francisco wine importer helped propel an impressive career spanning from Joseph Phelps and Kermit Lynch to their namesake winery in Napa Valley.

For more than two decades, the humble Neyers Vineyards founders have used their extensive knowledge of Old World techniques, as well as their many years of experience in the region, to produce layered wines that command attention while showing a deft hand in the cellar.

### Fortuitous Beginnings

After Bruce was honorably discharged from the army, the young couple contemplated whether to return to their home state of Delaware, where he planned to pursue chemistry. After being stationed in San Francisco for two years, however, they'd grown fond of the city and Bruce had also developed an interest in wine. While lamenting his options to the owner of their neighborhood wine shop, the French importer offered him a job. It was 1971 and the emergence of the Bay Area's contemporary food and wine scene was barely in its infancy.

Later that year, the owner of Mayacamas Winery, Bob Travers, dropped in for a delivery. Bruce recalls Travers was one of just three California producers that the importer carried, and after they set up the floor display, Travers invited him to help with harvest. After Bruce and Barbara spent the morning picking grapes in the mountains of Napa Valley, they broke for lunch. He reminisces, "We were sitting

*Bruce and Barbara Neyers launched Neyers Vineyards in 1992.*



WINEMAKER TADEO BORCHARDT SPENT THE FALL OF 2002 IN THE CELLAR AT COPAIN WINES, WHICH WAS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT THE TIME. HE RECALLS THE UNFINISHED ROOF AND OPEN AIR:

**"THE SUN WAS SETTING WHILE I WAS DOING PUNCH-DOWNS AND IT WAS ALL VERY POETIC."**

in the middle of the vineyards and I said, 'Wouldn't it be great to get a job working at a winery like this?'"

As luck would have it, Travers called Bruce two weeks later to offer him a job. His assistant had just quit, and with no prior experience, Bruce was hired as the "cellar master" for Mayacamas in January 1972. Just two years later, wanderlust struck and the Neyerses moved to the Nahe region in Germany, where he interned as an apprentice winemaker.

Prior to their travels, Bruce met Joe Phelps of Joseph Phelps Vineyards at a dinner party. Phelps had recently moved to Napa and encouraged Bruce to connect after their return. The following year, in 1975, Bruce accepted a position at Phelps' winery, where he helped develop the brand from the ground up during his 17-year tenure. Around the same time, Barbara left her career as a teacher to pursue her passion for cooking; she accepted a job with Alice Waters at Chez Panisse, where she remained for 20 years.

### First Plantings

By 1984, Bruce and Barbara had firmly settled in Napa Valley, purchasing a 50-acre parcel in the foothills east of St. Helena in Conn Valley. Notable deposits of gravel as deep as 40 feet were found throughout the left bank of the creek that ran through the property, prompting the couple to plant Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, whose vigor is naturally mitigated by the nutrient-poor soils.

In 1992, Bruce resigned from Joseph Phelps to found Neyers Vineyards with Barbara, but his pursuits as a full-time vintner didn't last long. Kermit Lynch, who had met Bruce back when he was working at the wine shop in 1971, was dining with Alice Waters that same day when she broke the news of Bruce's departure, and a day later Lynch called to offer Bruce a position.

The rest is history: In 2018, after 26 years working for Kermit Lynch, Bruce retired from his post. In Lynch's farewell announcement, he recalled the day he hired Bruce, saying, "I succeeded in hiring one of America's greatest wine men. What a coup! It wasn't the feather in my cap; it was a closet full of caps, all well feathered."

*Winemaker Tadeo Borchardt joined Neyers Vineyards in 2004.*



### Extended Family in Sage Canyon

In 1999, the Neyerses purchased a property called Sage Canyon; nestled between the Rutherford and Chiles Valley AVAs, the parcel's appeal stemmed from its approved winery permit, as negotiations to build on their home ranch had failed. The site came with a challenging sunset provision, however, as all unfulfilled winery-use permits were set to expire on December 31, 1999. "We had guys laying tile in the office on Christmas Day," Bruce recalls. "It was literally down to the wire."

Their first crush at the new facility was overseen by winemaker Ehren Jordan, who met Bruce during their time together at Joseph Phelps. In 2004, Tadeo Borchardt—

a former Arizona teacher and restaurant veteran—joined the team as Assistant Winemaker. Borchardt's own serendipitous entry into the wine world draws parallels to Bruce's: When winemaker Wells Guthrie was consulting on a wine project with the chef at Borchardt's workplace, the inquisitive server asked if he could work a harvest, and Guthrie agreed.

Borchardt spent the fall of 2002 in the cellar at Copain Wines, which was still under construction at the time. He recalls the unfinished roof and open air: "The sun was setting while I was doing punch-downs and it was all very poetic." Hooked by that first experience, he spent the next two years as Guthrie's assistant followed



by a harvest in New Zealand before being hired by the Neyerses. “I didn’t think it was going to turn into a full-time job and definitely not this! It was the right place, right time, right people,” Borchardt says.


### “The Golden Age of California Wine”

Borchardt, fortuitously, shares Bruce and Barbara’s appreciation and affinity for Old World wines. During Bruce’s tenure with Kermit Lynch, he visited France numerous times, with Borchardt joining him on at least one of those trips each year. “We sort of look to the Old World for guidance,” Bruce explains, adding that the ten greatest wines he’s ever had were from France. “It seems

like every year we get a little closer; the bar gets raised, and it seems like more and more people aspire to that. I think that’s what we both aspire to.”

While the wines themselves reflect this painstaking commitment to quality, the couple’s longevity and experience in the region has solidified their impeccable reputation, helping them forge long-term relationships with meticulous vineyards throughout the North Coast. Foot-treading is employed for their Pinot Noir wines and Rhône varieties, while a combination of concrete, small open-top and stainless-steel fermenters are used in the boutique winery with judicious use of new oak. In the past, they’ve even purchased their own French oak staves in

bulk—customized to their specifications—to craft their oak barrels.

Over the years, the Neyerses have seen the Napa Valley metamorphose from a sleepy town to a globally renowned wine-country destination. Winemaking and viticulture, once considered an “alternative lifestyle,” is now a coveted career. “I think this is the golden age of California wine. We are discovering something new every day,” Bruce says. “We’ve got financial resources, interested consumers, interested wine stores, restaurateurs—just think, how many restaurants had a sommelier in 1975? Look at how many there are now. It’s a completely topsy-turvy world from what it used to be.” 

## The Latest from Neyers Vineyards



### Neyers Vineyards 2017 Chardonnay 304, Sonoma County (\$26)

Named after the high-grade stainless steel used for fermentation tanks, the wine was inspired by one of the Neyerses’ many trips to Chablis. The fruit is sourced from cold, rocky vineyard sites in Sonoma County and raised without oak influence (texture is added through lees stirring). Aromas of minerals, green apple, and grapefruit peel hold greater weight than expected on the palate before revealing delicate pastry and pear flavors. A leesy, textural quality leaves your mouth tingling on the finish.



### Neyers Vineyards 2017 Vista Luna Zinfandel, Borden Ranch AVA (\$29)

The grapes for this wine are sourced from 40-year-old Zinfandel vines grown in the Vista Luna Vineyard in the Sierra Foothills. “This, in many respects, is a lot like the Zinfandels we would drink in the 1970s,” Bruce says. Pronounced, juicy aromas of raspberry lead with hints of orange peel and subtle notes of graphite. The palate is far more serious with spicy, black, brambly fruit and finely textured tannins backed by firm acidity.



### Neyers Vineyards 2017 Sage Canyon Red, California (\$29)

While this Rhône-style blend changes a bit each year, this vintage is primarily Mourvèdre and Carignan with smaller amounts of Syrah and Grenache, all sourced from unique sites throughout northern California (the Carignan, for example, is produced from own-rooted vines in Contra Costa County that date back to 1890). Exuding floral and fragrant blue fruit with alluring notes of violets and tar, it’s medium-bodied with mouthwatering flavors of pomegranate, peppercorn, and subtle notes of game with soft, clay-like tannins.



### Neyers Vineyards 2016 Left Bank Red, Napa Valley (\$35)

This wine is made entirely with fruit from the Neyers estate vineyard. The deep outcroppings of gravel on the left bank of the creek inspired Borchardt to create a terroir-driven blend. Roughly equal parts of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot aged for one year in French oak to produce this elegant Napa Valley Bordeaux-style expression. Befitting to its premise, it leads with mineral-ity first rather than the fruit. It shows red currant, hints of blood orange, and musky aromas of tobacco and hot tar with flavors of cassis, black figs, and mocha-like tannins from the subtle use of French oak.



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# Getting Its *Due*

THE **CARIÑENA** PANEL AT **SOMMCON SAN DIEGO** PROVES GARNACHA IS FAR MORE THAN JUST AN ALTERNATIVE TO PINOT NOIR

by Jessie Birschbach

**"PINOT NOIR IS** my favorite," says your guest sitting at the head of table nine, "especially when it's from the Russian River ... but I'm open to something similar." You're in the weeds with three bottles waiting to be opened—two of which need to be decanted—but you're so certain this alleged Pinot Noir buff will love the Grenache from Walla Walla that you dare to bring them a glass without offering a taste.

While this scenario may sound audacious, it'd be a solid bet for most somms. Master Sommelier Bob Bath, who presented at the Cariñena seminar during SommCon San Diego last November, said he'd likely make this same wager, as many sommeliers often recommend Garnacha as an alternative to Pinot Noir: "I like the comparison—it's nice to be compared to Pinot Noir, but I think today we're going to see how it is different," he told attendees.

Bath began his presentation by diving into Garnacha's genealogy, history, and var-

ious international aliases (Garnacha Tinta being "by far the most popular"), as well as how it behaves in the vineyard. Plants of the versatile grape "exploded as a result of phylloxera in the late 1800s," Bath said, adding that climate change should only increase its global prevalence.

Beyond Garnacha's vinicultural efficiency and the factors behind its current renaissance, the most compelling part of the seminar explored the spectrum of the variety's regional personalities. In a tasting that covered Garnacha's classic styles, SommCon attendees sampled expressions of the grape from Navarra, Cariñena, Sardinia, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Santa Barbara, Walla Walla, and Barossa before ultimately capping things off with a dessert wine from Banyuls.

In reviewing the specifications of each of these regions from climate to soil, Bath turned most of his attention toward Cariñena, and for good reason. Planted to more than 50 percent Garnacha—the

largest share of any region in Spain—Cariñena's vineyards range from 1,300 to 2,800 feet above sea level. Demarcated in 1932 as the country's second DO, it also has the most plantings of old-vine Garnacha in the country: The variety thrives in the region's complex stone soils, where vines more than a century old produce wines with great depth and character.

The region has always been a center of wine production in the area and is therefore considered Garnacha's birthplace; DNA studies have confirmed that the grape originated in Aragón.

A diehard fan of the variety regardless of where it grows, Bath ended the seminar with a final thought: "We've seen the spectrum of Garnacha from Rosado to Banyuls. All of these wines are offering great value with a grape that's finally getting its due in the marketplace."

*Old-vine Garnacha in the village of Villanueva de Huerva.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREGORY + VINE





# The SommCon Garnacha Symposium Wines

**Artazuri 2017 Rosado, Navarra (\$16)** Made with organically farmed fruit from 60-year-old vines, this 100% Garnacha bursts with raspberry and strawberry. Bright and crisp, it's made exclusively with free-run juice.



blend of 70% Grenache, 17% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah, and 3% Cinsault comes from vines averaging roughly 60 years old. Fermented and aged in concrete and wood for a total of 18 months, it's restrained in style with elegant and beautifully balanced dark red fruits and blackberries with an earthy finish.

made by one of the first wine families in South Australia. Big in structure with black cherry and red plum, it's slightly oxidized in character, likely due to the basket-pressing.

**Bodegas San Valero 2015 Particular Old Vine Garnacha, Cariñena (\$15)** Founded in 1944, Bodegas San Valero is one of the oldest co-ops in Cariñena yet also one of the most innovative. This respected collective farms more than 800 acres of 30- to 100-year-old vines overseen by roughly 700 growers. The old-vine Garnacha macerates for 30 days before spending six to 14 months in neutral oak. The result is an incredible value offering a slight sanguine character, dark red fruits, and gripping tannins.



**Clementine Carter 2016 Grenache, Santa Rita Hills (\$38)** Sourced from the Spear and Sebastiano vineyards, this 100% Grenache is one-third whole cluster and spends one year in neutral French oak. A beautiful, feminine version of Grenache, it features bright red fruit, briary character, and excellent balance in terms of tannic structure. It also has great aging potential.



**Bodegas Paniza 2016 Viñas Viejas, Cariñena (\$10)**

Made by a co-op established in 1953 that comprises 400 growers and nearly 7,000 acres, this wine benefits from the Cascajo and Royale soils found within the Paniza municipality. Garnacha sourced from 80- to 100-year-old vines is destemmed and aged six months in French and American oak; with intense and concentrated fruit peppered with clove spice and an interesting minerality, it's an incredible value.



**Olianas 2017 Cannonau di Sardegna, Sardinia (\$18)** Twelve- to 15-year-old vines are organically farmed at this winery, established in 2000. Bottled unfiltered, 95% Cannonau (Sardinia's name for Garnacha) and 5% Tintillu first spend eight months in used oak. (Of the fruit, 30% ferments in amphorae.) This shining example of Cannonau shows bright, tart red fruit at its core yet remains well balanced.



**Gramercy Cellars 2015 The Third Man Grenache, Columbia Valley (\$36)** Gramercy Cellars was established by Master Sommelier Greg Harrington in 2005. This particular Grenache-dominant blend was sourced from three vineyards in Yakima Valley, Rattlesnake Hills, and Horse Heaven Hills. A blend of 75% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 5% Mourvèdre, and 5% Carignan, this wine is 75% whole cluster and spent 18 months in neutral French oak. Full and rich, it was the most blue-fruited of the examples.



**Grandes Vinos 2015 Anayón Garnacha, Cariñena (\$35)** With holdings in all 14 municipalities, the co-op behind this wine was established in 1997. Sourced from Villanueva de Huerva at roughly 2,000 feet above sea level, this 100% Garnacha from 75-year-old vines aged 11 months in French and American oak. It features notes of juicy black cherry and a gravelly finish.



**André Brunel Les Cailoux, Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$55)** Produced by what is considered to be one of the benchmark producers of the area, this



**d'Arenberg 2014 Derelict Vines Grenache, Barossa (\$30)** From sandy loam soils, this 100% Grenache is foot-treaded, basket-pressed, and aged one year in French and American oak. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered, it's



**Domaine La Tour Vieille 2016 Banyuls Rimage (\$22)**

This vin doux naturel/fortified wine comes from 27 acres of hillside schist soil and 45-year-old vines. Made in the *Rimage* style (with about six or seven weeks of skin contact for more freshness of character), fermented with wild yeast, and farmed sustainably, it's lovely and surprisingly fresh for a dessert wine. 



Gary Farrell Winemaker  
Theresa Heredia.



# THERESA'S MELTING POT

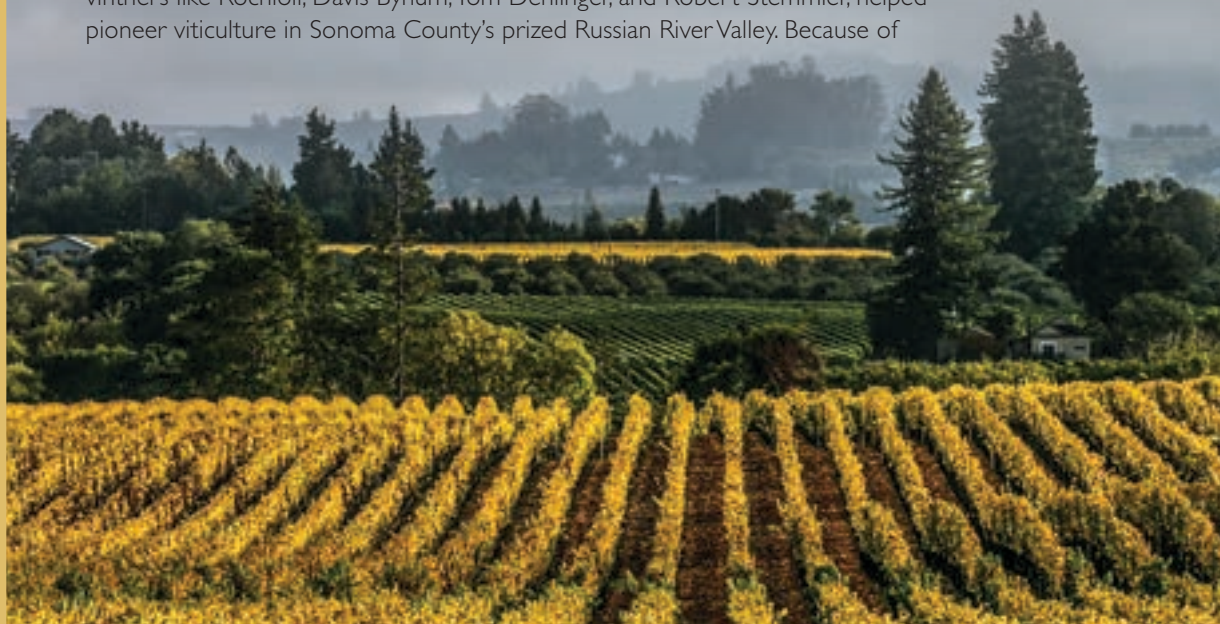
STRONG RELATIONSHIPS, SOIL DIVERSITY, AND  
A SUPERSTAR WINEMAKER CREATE THE RECIPE  
FOR SUCCESS AT **GARY FARRELL WINERY**

by Jess Lander

*MY INTERVIEW WITH* Gary Farrell Winemaker Theresa Heredia in early November met a hard stop at 4 p.m. Although harvest had wrapped up a few days prior—the latest Heredia had ever received grapes in her career—she and her team had an important night ahead.

They were preparing for their annual Grower Appreciation Dinner, an event that sheds light on just how seriously the Sonoma County–based winery treats its relationships with growers. “After the harvest is over, we like to bring them all together so that we can spend time breaking bread and drinking wine, talk about the harvest, and catch up on other things,” Heredia explained.

Some of these relationships, like the very first with Joe Rochioli of Rochioli Vineyard, go back more than 36 years and predate the winery’s first vintage. It was during those days that founder Gary Farrell, working alongside esteemed vintners like Rochioli, Davis Bynum, Tom Dehlinger, and Robert Stemmler, helped pioneer viticulture in Sonoma County’s prized Russian River Valley. Because of





*Soil samples from the dozens of vineyard sites used for Gary Farrell Winery's Pinot Noir wines.*

this, Gary Farrell Winery is often looked upon today as a leading ambassador for the cool, foggy, and red-wooded growing region, proving its talent for producing exceptional and small-lot Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

The only problem? Small lots mean limited production and availability, making it difficult for Russian River producers to get their wines in the hands of the masses. That's where Gary Farrell's Russian River Selection Pinot Noir steps in: One of just two wines the winery sells wholesale, it tells the complex yet complete story of the region in every bottle.

### **"An Expression of the Russian River Valley"**

Heredia refers to Gary Farrell's Russian River Selection wine as "the melting pot of all the neighborhoods," referencing the unofficial subregions within the 160,000-acre Russian River Valley that are defined by growers and vintners working within the AVA. "The Russian River Valley is big," she added. "There are different microclimates and different soil types, so even though we don't have many governmentally identified smaller neighborhoods within it, we still as growers and winemakers are trying to learn about the different neighborhoods and the qualities in [their] wines."

If you were looking at a map, you'd see the Middle Reach neighborhood to the north; bordering Dry Creek Valley, it's what Heredia calls "classic Russian River Valley." The warmest neighborhood, the Middle Reach, is home to the Gary Farrell Winery estate and some of the region's oldest vineyards, including Rocholi and Bacigalupi. In the middle-east section of the region is the flat Santa Rosa Plain with the hilly Laguna Ridge sandwiched between it and the foggy, coastal Green Valley, the only neighborhood that's an official sub-AVA of the Russian River Valley. To the south of Green Valley, finally, sits the cold and windy Sebastopol Hills.

As you work your way from the top to the bottom of the map

as well as from east to west, the temperatures tend to get cooler and the fog denser, which spurs both an evolution of red-to-black fruit characteristics and a strengthening of tannins. In blending these neighborhoods together, the Russian River Selection serves as a complete representation—the winery's "assemblage," Heredia said in her best French accent—of the Russian River Valley. The wine's 2016 vintage was made with the best fruit from 22 different vineyard sites, almost all located within the Russian River Valley.

"When you taste the wine, you can taste and smell and feel the expression of each of these different components," Heredia explained. "You can taste the succulence of the Middle Reach, you can taste the acidity and earthiness and austerity of Green Valley and Sebastopol Hills, and you can get the opulence of Santa Rosa Plain. They all contribute something to the blend. That's the goal, to be an expression of the Russian River Valley as a whole."

### **An Unwavering Commitment to Quality**

Of the nearly 30 wines Gary Farrell produces, the Russian River Selection gets the most attention and by far takes the most time to make. Despite this, it retails at just \$45. "It takes us about three weeks to taste through each of the individual components: all 22 Pinot vineyards, and then within them, different wines from different blocks, different clones, different barrel types, et cetera," Heredia said. "You can get into a lot of minutia. We start on the big scale, we taste all of the stuff together at once, and then we break it down by vineyard and taste them individually. In the end, a lot of our hearts and souls end up in the Russian River Selection blend."

Despite the wine's approachable price point, zero compromise occurs in terms of quality during the production process, according to Gary Farrell Winery General Manager Nancy Bailey. "Everything is made as if it's going to be a single-vineyard bottling and it's not blended until we're getting ready to bottle," she explained.



# TASTING NOTES

## **Gary Farrell Winery 2016 Russian River**

**Selection Pinot Noir (\$45)\*** Made with grapes sourced from 22 vineyards, the 2016 vintage is a quintessential Russian River Pinot: juicy with vibrant red-fruit flavors and fine, silky tannins. Aromatic notes of forest floor and rose petal emanate from the glass.

## **Gary Farrell Winery 2015 Rochioli Vineyard**

**Pinot Noir (\$80)** Rochioli produced unusually tiny berries in the 2015 vintage, resulting in a bigger, more concentrated wine than previous vintages. A 20% whole-cluster press results in notes of crushed dried herbs after Rochioli's signature rose petal dominates the nose. Exquisitely balanced, this succulent and red fruit-driven wine has an intense cherry flavor and a velvety, mouthwatering finish.

## **Gary Farrell Winery 2015 Martaella Vineyard**

**Pinot Noir (\$65)** Due to its central location in the Russian River Valley, Martaella represents somewhat of a hybrid of the region's neighborhoods. A rich blend of red and blue fruits, this wine is tangy like a crisp apple with a skillful balance of acid, tannin, and concentration. Although it's full-bodied and dense when first bottled, Martaella smooths out beautifully with age.

## **Gary Farrell Winery 2015 Hallberg Vineyard**

**Pinot Noir (\$55)\*** Hailing from the western Green Valley, Hallberg is powerful and earthy with a commanding black-tea presence and notes of violet flowers. It's juicy like a wild berry trifle with soft yet chewy tannins.

## **Gary Farrell Winery 2015 McDonald Mountain Vineyard**

**Pinot Noir (\$65)** Making a grand entrance on the palate, this wine is often referred to by Heredia as a "sexy mofo." "There's a kind of exotic fruit-and-spice expression in this wine that is hard to put my finger on," she said. Dense tannins merge with an incredible natural acidity. Heredia doesn't add a drop, as this Sebastopol Hills vineyard has fantastic retention.

\*WINE AVAILABLE FOR WHOLESAL

"If there are ever any barrels that don't fit, we don't force them. If Theresa says some fruit is not going to work and be the best quality it can be, we sell it. This is a huge commitment to quality, from the overall cost of making [the wine] as well as the freedom Theresa has to make it the best that she can."

Since joining the Gary Farrell team in 2012, Heredia has taken steps to continue improving quality across the board. She's made incremental increases in whole-cluster fermentation and extended maceration in addition to decreasing the amount of toast, all with the goal of imparting a greater sense of place in the wines. New equipment has also been brought in to support this goal, including an oak tank for whole-cluster fermentation, a new destemmer and sorting tables for efficiency and quality control, and a basket press, which Heredia says gently squeezes out the character of the terroir from the grapes.

These tools are used selectively in the making of each wine, with all 14 single-vineyard Pinot Noirs following their own personalized plan that enables them to fully represent the land they come from. This especially applies to Hallberg, Gary Farrell's only other wholesale wine: Selected among the other total single-vineyard designates to exemplify the premium quality of Gary Farrell wines, Hallberg also represents the extent of the Russian River Valley's potential for producing high-quality Pinot Noir.

Sourced from the Green Valley neighborhood, it's released only in 400 six-packs. "For certain special restaurateurs or retailers, they are looking for a more limited-production, single-vineyard offering from Gary Farrell and Hallberg is an easy choice," said Bailey. "It's hands-down one of the favorites and consistently makes a beautiful wine year in and year out, so there's never an issue of us not making a single-vineyard from it. It's nice to be able to show people the Hallberg and say it's a cornerstone of the Russian River selection." 



PHOTO: WILL BUCALON



*The crystal-like trichomes on cannabis plants contain terpenes, cannabinoids, and flavonoids.*

PHOTO: FUGGED COAST VIA ADOBE STOCK

# What's in a Name?

HOW **CANNA**CONSUMERS  
CAN AVOID BEING MISLED  
BY OVERSIMPLIFICATION

by Rachel Burkons

It wasn't too long ago that the average American consumer's understanding of wine started and ended with "white with fish, red with meat." Broad generalizations like this served to guide the uneducated without delving too far into difficult-to-pronounce grape varieties, faraway regions, and misunderstood categorization systems. Yet, as wine professionals know all too well, strictly labeling wines as "white" and "red" leaves no room for nuance, essentially erasing all of the shades of blush, salmon, orange, and oxidized that exist in between.

Thankfully, modern consumers seem to have caught the wine bug, and with this education comes the realization that broad strokes don't cut it when it comes to furthering their knowledge. In the still-developing cannabis industry, however, today's cannaconsumers are being misinformed and misled by similarly oversimplified categorizations.

Walk into any dispensary and the first question they'll likely ask is, "Are you looking for an indica or sativa?" With this inquiry, budtenders are actually asking the guest, "What kind of experience are you looking to have: relaxing and sedating, or energizing and uplifting?"



Understanding where these terms came from before we debunk their place in the modern cannabis lexicon requires a bit of history. Named by Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in the mid-18th century, Cannabis Sativa was found growing in hot, sunny equatorial climates like Central America and Thailand. The plant was recognized for its tall, thin leaves and ability to tower at heights exceeding 10 feet; when flowering, it produced light, loose buds with tinges of orange or red hairs.

Thirty years later in the harsh, rocky climate of the Middle East, French scientist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck categorized the squat, resinous plant he'd discovered as Cannabis Indica. With a darker green color, broad fan leaves, and dense, sticky, almost-purple buds, its physiology starkly contrasted with that of the lean and

in the gray area between indica and sativa, how do some strains make you want to melt into your couch and binge-watch Netflix while others inspire you to clean out your refrigerator and alphabetize your spice rack? To what can we attribute the different effects of "sativa" and "indica?"

While the low-hanging fruit involves attributing a variety's effects to its THC content, more than 100 cannabinoids have been isolated from the cannabis plant. The vast majority have gone unstudied until recently, meaning we don't yet fully understand the lever system of their effects, as cannabinoid ratios vary from genotype to genotype. Of course, any vintner will tell you the importance of considering how a plant was cultivated and how that impacts the final product, but when it comes to knowing exactly what to expect from

The dominant terpenes in cannabis, however, do fall along an indica/sativa divide. Varieties high in linalool and myrcene tend to be sedating and deeply relaxing, whereas those bursting with limonene and pinene are uplifting and invigorating. It's a study in aromatherapy: Linalool, for example, imbues cannabis with sweet floral aromas and flavors while serving as the dominant terpene in lavender; an herb used for millennia as a relaxant and sedative. It's unsurprising, then, that varieties high in linalool might make one feel sleepy and calm.

Pinene, on the other hand, is a known bronchodilator that bursts with mountain-fresh pine notes, while limonene is responsible for bright, stimulating citrus-zest aromas. These terpenes are classic invigorators in the food and beverage



lanky sativa's. And thus, the first distinction between the two was born out of plant structure derived from evolutionary factors. Natural selection at its highest: Thanks, Darwin!

But as Cannabis Sativa and Indica made their way to the New World, people increasingly sought to grow plants with specific traits. While bountifully productive specimens known for their fibrous strength and lack of psychoactive qualities became hemp, other cultivators were breeding and cross-breeding cannabis in search of potent THC-producing plants. These hybrids evolved into the cannabis we consume today, and while varieties do have indica- or sativa-leaning physiologies, these days there's truly no such thing as pure sativa or indica.


So, if modern cannabis exists somewhere

your Bubba Kush and Strawberry Cough, examining the plant's terpene profile is really the best place to start.

### The Scents Behind Your Smoke

Found in everything from lemons and rosemary to mushrooms and mangos, terpenes are the aromatic molecules present in a variety of plants and foods. These compounds are responsible for a cannabis strain's effects *and* flavor; and while terpenes and cannabinoids perform a complicated dance with each individual's endocannabinoid system, studies have shown no noticeable difference between THC percentages in classic indica- or sativa-leaning strains. In fact, most commercially produced cannabis currently hovers around a THC content of 20 percent regardless of variety.

space: Close your eyes and imagine the effect lemon zest, expressed orange peel, and charred rosemary have on the palate. With that in mind, it's easy to understand how consuming varieties high in these terpenes would have a similarly awakening quality.

So, with terpenes in the driver's seat of your cannabis experience, how does one move past the mostly meaningless indica/sativa nomenclature when selecting a strain for a specific effect? Trust what your nose already knows. Sniff out bright, fresh, citrusy varieties if you're looking for a classic "sativa" experience or give in to those deep floral aromas if you're looking to "indica and chill." Just like in the world of wine, if you let your palate be your guide, you'll find exactly what you're looking for—"indica" or "sativa" aside. 

# Starting at the Top from Grape to Grape: Alto Adige

LAURA DONADONI BEGINS HER TRAVELS IN ITALY FOR PART ONE OF A SERIES

**OUR JOURNEY THROUGH** Italy starts in the northeastern region of Alto Adige, a viticultural heaven defined in part by the Dolomites mountain range and alpine lakes. While Alto Adige's winemakers have access to just 5,300 hectares of vineyard land, they've planted them with more than 20 indigenous grape varieties, making this winegrowing region one of the most diverse in Italy for its size.

Farmer and grower cooperatives are traditional in Trentino-Alto Adige; dating as far back as the Habsburg Empire, they represent the lion's share of production. Their success stems from the need to create an effective economic system for the region's fragmented viticultural industry: The average grape grower here owns little more than a single hectare of steep-terraced vineyards, where most vines are still trained by the pergola method.

Though the preconception that cooperatives make only cheap, easy-drinking wines still persists, Alto Adige producers like Cantina Giralan actively disprove this. Founded in 1923 on a 16th-century farmstead, it's one of the best representatives of the modern cooperative in Alto Adige, producing exquisite Pinot Bianco and other white wines as well as delightful, light-bodied red wines of Schiava and minerally Pinot Noir. About 200 winegrowers farm an area of approximately 215 hectares

under the supervision of Winemaker Gerhard Kofler, who is focused on translating the distinctive terroir into the wines.


Housed in an ancient building, Cantina Giralan's cellar hides a labyrinth of under-



*The Pinot Noir Riserva Vigna Ganger 2014 is an elegant surprise with mature, refined tannins; red fruits and hints of violet; and a spicy mouthfeel. Fewer than 2,000 bottles of this top-tier Giralan wine were produced.*

ground corridors carved out of stone and crammed with old casks and barrels. I particularly recommend the Pinot Bianco Flora Riserva and the Pinot Bianco Plattenriegl: Plattenriegl is among the best areas in Alto Adige for growing Pinot Bianco, as its gravelly, limestone-rich soil contributes to the smooth, full-bodied character and fruity freshness of its wines.

You can't leave Giralan without a taste of Schiava (also known as Vernatsch), which locals consider their everyday red wine for pairing with smoked and cured meats. The Vernatsch Alte Reben Gschleier brings an explosion of wild strawberries and red currants with hints of ginger, bright acidity, and soft tannins. Made with grapes from 80- to 100-year-old vines farmed without the use of artificial irrigation or mineral-based fertilizers, this wine conveys a true sense of place.

There are other varieties worth exploring in Alto Adige, including Gewürtztraminer, Sylvaner, and the indigenous Lagrein. But we'll leave them for the next trip, because once you've visited the area for the first time, you'll plan to return again and again. 



*Grapes for the Pinot Bianco Flora Riserva are grown on gravelly, limestone-rich soil, which contributes to the wine's smooth, full-bodied character and fruity freshness.*

## Where to Stop

**Lodging:** While in the Bolzano province, drive roughly 30 kilometers from Giralan, Cornaiano, to the vibrant old town of Merano, home to one of the region's best spas. Stay at the stunning Hotel Terme Merano, conveniently located by the city center and botanical gardens.

**Dining:** At Culinaria im Farmkreuz in Tirolo, Michelin-starred chef Manfred Kofler and his brother Stephan provide a fine-dining experience on a beautiful hillside above Merano. The wine list, composed mostly of local wines, is extensive and well curated.

### Giralan Wines to Buy:

Pinot Bianco Plattenriegl (\$17)  
Pinot Bianco Flora Riserva (\$23)  
Vernatsch Alte Reben Gschleier (\$17)  
Pinot Noir Riserva Vigna Ganger (\$150)

*Founded in 1923 on a 16th-century farmstead, Cantina Giralan is one of the best representatives of the modern cooperative in Alto Adige.*







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# Turning Terroir INSIDE OUT

OUR REPORT ON THE  
**DIGGING IN PANEL AT  
SOMMCON SAN DIEGO**





by Brandon Boghosian  
photos by James Tran



*The Digging In panel at SommCon San Diego from left to right: Mark Macedonio of M Imports; Ioana Benga of Jidvei; Kristina Sazama of Santa Margherita USA; Ken Hoernlein of Boisset Collection; Rachel Macalisang of Frederick Wildman; Pedro Garcia of Félix Solís Avantis; Megan Casserly of The Wine Group; and Kevin O'Brien of Kangarilla Road.*



Any of the elements of climate, weather, and earth that affect the life of a wine seem to get lumped under the umbrella of “terroir.” Soil types, rainfall, temperature, and wind are all classic representatives of the term’s definition, but, in reality, that definition doesn’t *technically* exist.

Like “vigneron,” terroir comes with a bit of ambiguity, as there’s no direct translation from French to English—or any other language, for that matter. Although generally agreed upon, it can be an entirely subjective matter: Is a winemaking style (solera aging, for example) an element of terroir? What about Biodynamics? With vineyards planted prolifically on six of Earth’s seven continents, the topic is certainly worth digging into, which prompted SommCon to host an entire panel on terroir at its San Diego event late last year. Read on to see how the eight participating wineries channel sense of place into their respective labels:



## THE HILLS HAVE BUBBLES:

# Santa Margherita

The Rive designation for Prosecco indicates that the vineyards used are located on the steeply sloped hillsides characteristic of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG. Rive wines are typically made with fruit from a single high-quality vineyard within a single commune. There are 43 demarcated Rive within the denomination—essentially a Cru system for Prosecco—and each has its own distinctive combination of soil and microclimate. Grapes for these wines are harvested by hand and the final products are always vintage-dated.

Although Santa Margherita is widely recognized in the United States for its Pinot Grigio, the iconic expression of the grape that it's known for today wasn't released until 1961: nine years after the company bottled its first vintage of Prosecco. Produced entirely in stainless steel and aged four months on the lees before bottling, the 2016 Rive Refrontolo comprises 100% Glera from the foothills of the Italian Alps. The Refrontolo vineyard—part of Portogruaro, a multipurpose agricultural site—sits on rocky sandstone soils and has a relatively cool climate. The wine has great texture and strong, bright acid with notes of stone fruit and candied citrus. Santa Margherita's Rive wines are also vegan.



**Kristina Sazama, Wine Educator for Santa Margherita USA, with the Santa Margherita 2016 Rive di Refrontolo Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore.**



**Moderator Michael Ploetz presents to a full house at SommCon San Diego.**

## CLEAR-CUT CLIMAT:

# Maison Olivier Leflaive

Olivier Leflaive created Maison Olivier Leflaive in 1984 with his brother Patrick and uncle Vincent. Leflaive also co-managed his family's longtime company, Domaine Leflaive, from 1981 to 1994 before handing the reins over to his cousin Anne-Claude.

Over the last two decades, Leflaive has acquired parcels in Premier and Grand Cru sites, including Chassagne-Montrachet Clos Saint-Marc and Abbaye de Morgeot; Puligny-Montrachet Les Pucelles and Folatières; and Chevalier-Montrachet and Bâtard-Montrachet.

In Burgundy, terroir is defined by the interaction between fruit, nature, and human intervention. The climats within Burgundy, which number in the hundreds and range dramatically in size, represent each individual expression of terroir; Premier Cru and Grand Cru sites are often separated by no more than a path or road. For these reasons, channeling specific terroir is paramount in Burgundian winemaking, more so than arguably anywhere else in the world.

Maison Olivier Leflaive produces wines from Village level to Grand Cru, all of which adhere to a philosophy of simplicity regardless of designation. The 2015 Olivier Leflaive Puligny-Montrachet, sourced from all 21 climats within its namesake commune, ages for 12 months on the lees in 20% new French oak barrels. The wine is a classic white Burgundy: robust and rich with ripe apple and stone fruit, vibrant citrus, and pleasing acidity.



**Rachel Macalisang, Southern California Manager for Frederick Wildman, presents the Olivier Leflaive 2015 Puligny-Montrachet from the Côte de Beaune.**



## THE HEART OF TRANSYLVANIA:

### Jidvei

Surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains, Jidvei is situated in the heart of Romania's Transylvanian Plateau in eastern Europe. Elevations in the region, which has a continental climate, range from roughly 655–1,640 feet above sea level, with clay and gravel soils covering sloping vineyards with southwestern exposure.

The largest producer in Romania, Jidvei produces all of its wines within the Tarnave appellation using grapes from its 6,200-plus acres of vineyards (the estate-grown fruit is bottled at four facilities within Tarnave). Jidvei is almost exclusively a white-wine producer: White grapes such as Traminer, Muscat Ottonel, Sauvignon Blanc, and the native Fe-tească Regală make up 96 percent of its crop.

The dry Muscat Ottonel wine presented during the seminar offered up classic aromas of citrus blossoms and honey; it had a bit of weight to it as well as bright acidity and a barely perceivable 5.8 grams per liter of residual sugar (the label reads "Medium Dry"). After fermenting in stainless steel, the wine spends six months on the lees before bottling, with roughly half of the fruit seeing extended skin contact.

Those seeking to offer high praise for this wine might liken it to a classic example of a dry Muscat from Alsace, but what's most impressive about this particular expression is its price: Jidvei wholesales the Muscat Ottonel for just \$5 in the U.S. This level of quality relative to value is all but unheard of compared to stateside production, and as tastes and trends shift domestically, wines from producers like Jidvei should resonate with savvy consumers seeking to expand their palates.



***Jidvei Export Manager Ioana Benga with the Jidvei 2016 Dry Muscat Ottonel from Transylvania.***

## A SPANISH TITAN:

### Félix Solís Avantis

Ranked among the largest ten producers of still wines worldwide, Félix Solís Avantis ranks in first place in its home country of Spain. The family-owned winery was founded in 1952 in Valdepeñas, the fastest-growing Spanish winemaking region.

The 21st century has seen Félix Solís branch out into all seven key wine-producing regions in Spain: La Mancha, Valdepeñas, Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Rueda, Rías Baixas, and Toro. Now led by the third generation of its family owners, the Spanish powerhouse has evolved to become one of the most innovative wine-producing facilities in the world with a total annual production capability of 350 million liters. Despite its continuous expansion, Félix Solís remains deeply rooted in history and tradition as it evolves to satisfy global demand.

Red blends represent the third-largest segment in the U.S. wine market, with the \$12-plus range specifically leading in terms of growth. Estate-grown and -produced, the 2017 FYI Red Blend is clearly built for enjoyment by the masses, with ripe to jammy red fruit, moderate acidity, and an obvious presence of oak.

Despite its crowd-pleasing status, FYI's quality is indisputable. The wine combines Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon from Valdepeñas with Garnacha and Tinto de Toro from Toro; the Toro vines are on pre-phyloxera rootstocks, some of which are more than six decades old, and bush-trained in limestone soils. By tying together traditional Spanish winemaking and a modern blend of varieties, Félix Solís Avantis delivers an expression that's primed to excel in a high-demand segment. Built with purpose, it's an incredibly satisfying wine.



***Pedro Garcia, Managing Director for USA & Canada at Félix Solís Avantis, with the Félix Solís 2017 FYI Red Blend from Spain.***

## DEEP HISTORY:

# Casa da Passarella

One of the four founding wineries of the Dão DOC, which was established in 1904, Casa da Passarella has more than two centuries of winemaking history. Only roughly 99 acres of the 247-acre estate are vineyards, which are mainly planted to Touriga Nacional vines that are 60–100 years old. At 2,300 feet above sea level, these are some of the highest plantings in Portugal.

Striving to show the world what the Dão can do as a global winemaking region, winemaker Paolo Nunes founded O Fugitivo Vinhas Centenárias in 2011 and collaborated with four 80-year-old winemakers to revive the area's ancestral winemaking techniques. This respect for history affects every action he takes toward achieving his ultimate goals: preserving the viticultural heritage of the Dão through a minimalistic approach in the cellar while exploring the potential of modern vineyard sites. In short, he thinks reconnecting with the past plays a vital role in protecting the future of the region.

Paolo chose four very similar old-vine vineyards to harvest in the “old ways” to produce a field blend of native varieties, including Baga, Touriga Nacional, and Alvarelhão. His approach was to make a terroir-driven Casa da Passarella wine that was simply a living expression of its vineyards rather than the direct result of contemporary viticultural techniques.

As attendees of the seminar discovered, the results are beautiful. The 2014 Casa da Passarella is a youthful expression with powerful body, bright acidity, and notes of brambly red and black fruit, black pepper, and mushroom. The wine, which spends 12 months in 2,000-liter casks followed by 24 months in bottle before release, is easily compared to a Syrah from a high-quality producer in the northern Rhône. Superbly enjoyable and delicious, it also shows how philosophy can serve as a component of terroir that's equally as expressive as the vineyards themselves.



**M Imports CEO Mark Macedonio with the Casa da Passarella 2014 O Fugitivo Vinhas Centenárias Tinto from the Dão.**

## FIVE GENERATIONS OF FAMILY:

# Raymond Vineyards

Established as a 90-acre Rutherford estate in 1974, Raymond Vineyards has expanded to nearly 400 acres over five generations of family ownership and is deeply rooted in the modern era of Napa winemaking. Located on the valley floor, Rutherford straddles the Napa River and is slightly warmer than the neighboring Oakville and Stags Leap District AVAs. The sublayer of heavy clay present in parts of the area—absent from the

rest of the valley—retains water, which in turn produces vines with thicker skins and more concentrated fruit.

Napa Valley is a dichotomy of sorts, with a seemingly infinite number of disparate terroirs melding with both house styles and prevailing trends to influence a final product. The region encompasses nearly half of all the known soil types on the planet and ranges from sea level to more than 2,600 feet in elevation—all within an area roughly half the size of Bordeaux, whose style it mimics when it comes to crafting its own world-class Cabernet.

Of the single-varietal wines that make up the Raymond Vineyards District Collection, the 2014 is in almost every way a classic, showing notes of dark plum, cherry, coffee, and cocoa with pronounced minerality, firm tannins, and a balanced structure. Given its origins, it's arguably everything it should be: a high-quality, powerful Cabernet built from deep, nutrient-rich soils, long summer days, and aging in new French oak barrels.



**Ken Hoernlein, Vice President of Sales for Boisset Collection, with the Raymond Vineyards 2014 Rutherford District Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley.**



## TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN:

# Kangarilla Road

Located in South Australia's McLaren Vale region, the coastal vineyards of Kangarilla Road are just south of Adelaide on the Southern Ocean, a massive body of cold water. One of the driest wine regions on the world's driest continent, McLaren Vale is surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped ring of hills. This sunken land was long ago covered by sea, and its range of 45 identifiable soil

profiles vary dramatically in both composition and age (from as young as 10,000 years to as ancient as 500 million years).

While the two Kangarilla labels presented at the seminar were both Shiraz-based wines harvested and produced in the same fashion, the pair could not have been more different in terms of stylistic expression. The Alluvial Fans, predictably, is named for the relatively nutrient-rich soil formation it sits on: an alluvial fan of Pleistocene clays ranging from 2.6 million years old to 10,000. Though both wines age in neutral oak barrels—a bit of an anomaly for Aussie Shiraz—this one is lighter and more delicate than its counterpart.

The Blanche Formation expression, by contrast, is more classic in style with a robust, intense, and muscular body. The vineyard that provides its fruit sits on a coastal spread of calcareous silt over limestone with very thin layers of topsoil. (Low in both nutrients and nitrogen, these soils yield only half the fruit of the Alluvial Fans vineyard site.) The wines are outstanding both on their own and as cohesive expressions of Australian winemaking, exemplifying how two labels made by the same hand can differ dramatically due to their respective terroir.



**Kevin O'Brien, Winemaker/  
Director for Kangarilla Road, with  
the Kangarilla Road 2017 Alluvial  
Fans Shiraz from McLaren Vale.**

## ELEVATED PROFILES:

# Trapiche

The Andes Mountains, which stretch roughly 4,500 miles along the western edge of South America, are a defining factor in the disparate climates of Chile and Argentina: Chile to the west sees cooler temperatures and more moisture than its eastern neighbor, while the rain shadow stretching along the entire length of Argentina gives the country a desert-like conditions of warm, dry days with abundant sun.

Because the areas in this rain shadow see less than half of the average rainfall of Napa Valley, which already sees sparse precipitation to being with, the vineyards rely almost entirely on snowmelt from the Andes. Argentina's high-elevation plantings also benefit from a higher concentration of ultraviolet rays as well as a greater diurnal shift.

Founded in 1883, Trapiche is one of the oldest producers in Argentina and the leading export winery in the nation: Producing 3.5 million cases annually, it exports expressions ranging from entry-level Malbec to exceptional single-vineyard wines to more than 80 countries worldwide. Its Medalla Malbec, created to honor the winery's 100-year anniversary, was one of Argentina's first premium wines.

Made entirely with Malbec and aged 18 months in new French oak barrels, Medalla exhibits the classic characteristics of its grapes: deep color and body, chocolate and coffee aromas, and nuanced complexity that reaches heights you might expect from cult Napa or premium Barossa. While it carries a higher price tag, the wine reaches a quality far removed from the Malbec Argentina originally became known for while elevating the variety to a level of world-class quality it doesn't often see. **SJ**



**Megan Casserly, Brand  
Ambassador for The Wine Group,  
with the Trapiche Medalla 2015  
Malbec from the Valle de Uco.**

{ sustainability }

# *Tenable* **SUCCULENT**

*By Izzy Watson*

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PHOTO: JOSELUIS VIA ADOBE STOCK



**PERHAPS  
MORE SO  
THAN ANY  
OTHER SPIRIT  
BASE, AGAVE  
MUST BE  
RESPONSIBLY  
FARMED**

It takes roughly eight to ten years for the blue Weber agave to mature, but other species of the plant can take much longer to do so—sometimes even up to two decades. Multiple facets of the agave-based spirit category are determined by strictly designated rules, including which products can be considered tequila or mezcal, the latter's levels of quality, and the specific strains allowed for production that are grown only in specific Mexican states.

This selectivity compounded with the rocketing popularity of tequila and mezcal has agave aficionados worried for the plant's future. Tequila might have represented a somewhat small portion of the \$6 billion spent domestically on spirits from July 2017 to July 2018, but it was by far the fastest-growing segment: Americans spent an additional \$45 million on the category in 2017 than they did in 2016. It's also stealing more and more of the spotlight away from vodka and gin than any other spirit, claiming almost 8½ percent of the total market share, according to Nielsen data.

Mezcal's popularity can be mostly attributed to a large boost in on-premise sales. One of the darlings of the craft cocktail scene, the smoky, earthy spirit has taken a toll on Oaxacan agave, tripling the plant's price in just a few short years. Tequila and mezcal producers are already accustomed to planning for decade-long harvest cycles, but the category's growth is already challenging their ability to meet demand.

Thankfully, some mezcal and tequila brands are stepping up to temper the issue. For example, Bozal Mezcal—known for its limited-production expressions—plants two agaves for every wild agave it harvests.

*The SOMM Journal* caught up with Carla Rivera, who, as Director of Cocktail Development for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, has visited two mezcal distilleries doing their part to quell fears of an agave shortage: Del Maguey Mezcal and Sombra Mezcal. With nearly 20 years of experience in the industry, Rivera takes advantage of her degree in theater to educate and train other bartenders for Southern Glazer's. Read on for her take on this pair of sustainable Mexican producers:

## SOMBRA MEZCAL

"Sombra is trying to limit [its] harvest footprint as much as possible from beginning to end—even the waste is used. [The company] uses a solar-powered tahona and [its] stills are gas-powered instead of wood-burning, so there's no smoke emitted into the environment. All of the fiber that's left over from distillation [is mixed] with clay, water, and dirt to make adobe bricks to rebuild [nearby] communities previously lost to natural disasters. [Sombra is] still making mezcal, smoky, beautiful, traditional mezcal, but [it's] drastically reducing [its] carbon footprint."



Carla Rivera, Director of Cocktail Development for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, features Sombra in the Finca Fresh cocktail with muddled cucumber and rosemary.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SZACHERS

## DEL MAGUEY MEZCAL

"Del Maguey Vida is also implementing educational programs in Mexico because old farming techniques call for not letting the cuiotés [flowers] in both blue Weber and Espadín agave grow. When the plant is mature it will shoot up a *cuioté*, or flowering stalk, from its center, which results in seed pods that can be used for the next generation. The mother agave, however, cannot be used for the production of a distillate, as it has consumed all of its sugars through the act of reproduction.

Typically, once the farmers see the center flower grow, they cut it, because, one, they know the plant is mature, and two, it helps the sugar stay down in the piña. But what's happening is that when they cut the cuioté, they are eliminating the process of cross-pollination that will naturally occur and pollinate other agaves to create new, genetically different strains.

Another reproduction method is seen when agave produces rhizomes, or runners, that result in small offspring called *hijuelos* that are genetically equivalent to the mother plant. So, in theory, over generations of using only *hijuelos*, your fields will become a monoculture with all plants having the same genetic makeup, which increases the chance of devastation through pest and disease. The real purpose of Del Maguey's educational programs



Rivera created the Sorrel Not Sorry cocktail to showcase Del Maguey Vida Mezcal alongside mint, hibiscus, and lime.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SZACHERS

is to encourage farmers to let one plant on each row of agave flower because the cross-pollination will result in a healthy genetic diversity that can naturally repel pests and disease. Re-evaluating farming practices in ways like this will be essential in promoting beneficial farming practices while bringing the possible agave shortage to a halt."



# SOMM

## Selecciones

### HARVESTING OUR FAVORITE AGAVE-CENTRIC BRANDS FROM THE PAST YEAR

PHOTO: JKRAFTS VIA ADOBE STOCK

## BOZAL MEZCAL

Pechuga, which translates to “breast,” is “an age-old mezcalero tradition typically produced in small batches for personal consumption as a ceremonial and festive mezcal,” says August Sebastiani, President of Bozal parent company 3 Badge Beverage. While pechuga production varies between *palenques* and villages, the initial process is largely similar to that of mezcal, as the agave for both spirits is crushed, baked, fermented, and distilled in a copper or clay pot still.

That last step, however, is where pechuga deviates: Before the final distillation, a protein—usually chicken but sometimes turkey, pork, or even iguana—is marinated with a mix of local herbs, spices, chiles, and fruit and added to the still. Formerly reserved for celebrations like baptisms, weddings, or quinceañeras, pechuga is becoming increasingly easy to find at bars and restaurants with mezcal-savvy beverage directors.



Bozal makes its pechuga from wild-grown *Cupreata*, a type of agave grown on the steep slopes of Guerrero. This agave typically yields a mezcal with sweet floral notes and wet minerality—the bottled essence of an impending storm. However, after the addition of the meat, fruit, and spices, Bozal Pechuga (\$100) “expresses a delicate balance in which the smokiness is softened noticeably by the protein and wild fruit,” Sebastiani says. —Mara Marski, *The SOMM Journal*, April/May 2018





# 123 TEQUILA

The Blanco, Reposado, and Añejo expressions of 123 (pronounced “Uno Dos Tres”) Organic Tequila all possess mouthfeels, agave character, and finesse of superior quality. As 123 Spirits’ CEO and Master Distiller, David Ravandi was motivated to create “tequila for wine drinkers” by meticulously constructing layers of flavor, texture, and world-class taste profiles in his spirits.

The double-distilled 123 Organic Tequila begins as ten-year-old blue agave slow-roasted in an old-fashioned stone oven before undergoing fermentation without added yeast or sugar. Industry gatekeepers expect 123 Spirits brands to stand out in a crowd of bottles behind bars and on shelves as agave spirits that consistently overdeliver by pushing the envelope of premiumization. Ravandi’s Diablito Extra Añejo Organic Tequila, for example, hails from a single estate and spends 40 months in white French oak; the agave sourced for the spirit grows at an altitude of 6,000 feet above sea level, further emphasizing the influence of advantageous terroir. Diablito sees a limited release of just 2,500 bottles per year.

El Luchador Organic Tequila, a distiller’s-proof blanco, also comes from a single estate. (Its name is based on Mexico’s *lucha libre* style of professional wrestling in which competitors don colorful masks.) The 110-proof liquid offers notes of peppered lemon with a salinity attached to the clean agave profile. It’s as powerful as you’d expect, but also silky-sweet, creamy, and complex with nougat, coconut, and agave building on the finish. For more information, visit [123spirits.com](http://123spirits.com).

In the current upsurge of artisanal mezcals, one of the most recent releases is Cráneo, a single-estate organic expression. Organic Espadín agaves grown in altitudes higher than 5,600 feet above sea level in Santiago Matatlán, Oaxaca, are processed at the company’s distillery under Ravandi’s supervision. The resulting spirit possesses pureness and clarity with a lime and agave nose, herbal palate, lightweight mouthfeel, and subtle echo of smoke. While this joven mezcals is a fine sipping spirit, it excels as a base ingredient in cocktails by enhancing complexity. —*The SOMM Journal*, August/September 2018







## PASOTE TEQUILA

A member of the 3 Badge Beverage Corporation portfolio, Pasote Tequila is distilled from 100 percent estate-grown blue agave in the highland town of Jesús María, Jalisco. 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, natural spring water, and six months of aging in American oak barrels to create a time-honored elixir that speaks to Mexico's cultural history and topography. —Lori Moffat, *The SOMM Journal*, June/July 2018

## AVILA: A NEW AGAVE SPIRIT CATEGORY FROM REVEL

The Mexican state of Morelos, located northwest of Oaxaca, has a warm climate and distinctive terroir of pristine, alkaline-rich volcanic soil; together, they contribute an unmistakable character to the agave grown there.

Music entrepreneurs and Revel Spirits founders Jacqui Thompson and Micah McFarlane were introduced to Morelos by Minneapolis chef and restaurateur Héctor Ruiz, a native to the region. (Ruiz's family owns and operates the farm and distillery where Revel is now produced.) With their business partner Susan Clausen, Thompson and McFarlane set out to market a high-end tequila but instead ended up creating the world's first Avila.

This new agave-based spirits category combines the piña-roasting methods of traditional mezcal production with the modernized steaming techniques of tequila. "There's a huge learning curve when it comes to agave-based spirits," says McFarlane, who also serves as the CEO of Revel Spirits. Made from 100 percent blue Weber agave, the 80-proof finished product is triple-distilled. Under the Revel name, there are currently three expressions available: Blanco, Reposado, and Añejo Avila. **81**

**Revel Avila Blanco (\$55)** Revel Spirits' piñas are thrown into a pit filled with volcanic rock from a volcano in Morelos. After they're covered with sand and leaves, the piña bulbs are roasted for 48 hours and uncovered for another 24 as a pipe inserted into the middle helps release smoke. With aromas of vanilla bean, key lime, and white chocolate, the spirit offers a clean, creamy mouthfeel with flavors of orange rind and white pepper that lead to a finish of fresh green agave. **98**

**Revel Avila Reposado (\$75)** Triple-distilled and aged 12 months in American white oak barrels, this expression offers scents of saddle leather, fresh agave, butterscotch, and oatmeal with just a whisper of refined smoke. The palate is incredibly complex with a range of flavors, including patchouli, bergamot, spicy sandalwood, lime, orange peel, and black-peppered toffee. The lingering finish and finely grained tannins caress the tongue with a rich texture. **98** —Meridith May, *The SOMM Journal*, August/September 2018



# An Uphill Journey

## HOW SANTA BARBARA'S **CAMP 4 VINEYARD** BECAME A GRAPE-SELLING JUGGERNAUT

story by Michael Cervin

**SECOND ONLY TO** the iconic Bien Nacido Vineyards, Camp 4 is one of the top properties in Santa Barbara County that no one has ever heard of. Located on the outskirts of Santa Ynez, its hundreds of acres comprise 19 diverse grape varieties and provide fruit to roughly 70 different producers.

I visited Camp 4 Vineyard with Kitá Wines Winemaker Tara Gomez on what happened to be the winter solstice, the shortest day of sunlight in the year. The date proved rather serendipitous: Gomez, a member of the region's Chumash tribe and the first American-Indian female winemaker in the United States, told me that on this particular day her people ascend to a nearby mountain to let go of the past and plan for the future.

Camp 4, fittingly, is also doing just that. The site earned its name in the late 1800s, when it served as the fourth stagecoach stop between San Francisco and Yuma, Arizona. These days, the 1,390-acre parcel is located within the Los Olivos District AVA in the Santa Ynez Valley—a scant 4 miles from Santa Barbara County's premier Happy Canyon AVA—and surrounded by private farms and ranches.

The Chumash tribe currently owns the land after purchasing it in 2010 from Fess

Parker Winery, which originally planted the majority of it. Because Gomez was an enologist at Fess Parker before joining Kitá, she understands this land better than anyone.

### “Never One-Dimensional”

Oak trees dot the massive Camp 4 property (the name Kitá means “our valley oak” in the Chumash language), which has its own reservoir; it experiences temperatures that average 85–90 degrees in the summer, classifying it as Region III. To maintain overall vineyard health, cover crops—barley and legumes this year—are turned back into the soil.

Less than 10 percent of the acreage is machine-harvested, with the rest performed by hand. After a mere 2 percent of the fruit is used by Kitá Wines, the remainder is sold to roughly 70 producers, big and small, as far north as Napa and Sonoma. Camp 4 contracts extend to both tonnage (as little as a half-ton) and acreage.

Advanced Sommelier Cameron Porter has sourced Carignane and Counoise from Camp 4 for his own label, Amplify, since 2013. He also acquires grapes there for Presqu'île Winery in Santa Maria, where he serves as the Estate Manager. “The soil

profile at Camp 4 is a sandy and gravelly loam [Pleasanton series], though there is also a good amount of serpentine that has washed down from Figueroa Mountain,” he explains. “The soils are fairly high in magnesium, similar to Happy Canyon, which gives it a character that makes it distinctive within the Los Olivos District.”

Larry Schaffer, Winemaker at Tercero Wines in Los Olivos, has been working with Camp 4 fruit, including Carignane, Cinsault, Marsanne, and Mourvèdre, for more than a decade—first as part of the Fess Parker winemaking team and then with his own label. “Camp 4 is an ideal site for warmer-climate Rhône varieties that require lots of sunlight but also huge diurnal temperature shifts,” he explains. “The sandy-loam soil



PHOTO: MICHAEL CERVIN

*Nineteen grape varieties, including Block 8's Mourvèdre, call the Camp 4 Vineyard home.*





***Kitá Wines Winemaker Tara Gomez is the first American-Indian female winemaker in the U.S.***

produces a solid crop level year after year without overcropping, and the canopies remain healthy throughout harvest."

Though temperatures do not venture as high as they do just a few miles east in Happy Canyon, the boost in sunlight hours "allows for an increased possibility of physiological ripeness in the grapes and clusters," Schaffer says. "Mediterranean varieties really excel there," Porter adds. "Places like north-eastern Spain, the southern Rhône, Roussillon, Sicily, and Corsica would be appropriate Old World reference points in terms of the site's character."

The winemakers know that even though

there is Cabernet Sauvignon and even Riesling here, it's Rhône that shines. "For me," says Porter, "wines from Camp 4, particularly the Mediterranean varieties, share a liveliness on the palate and a dusty, savory presence in the mouth. There is an abundance of fruit supported by herbal, floral, and spiced nuances, so they are never one-dimensional, and it's a site where pH is well preserved. We always ferment [with] native [yeast], and they are without fail our most vigorous ferments."

Few wineries currently use a Camp 4 Vineyard designation, with Gomez noting that she'd "like to see a lot more."

(She also wants to expand the vineyard's under-the-radar philosophy and plant Albariño and Petit Verdot, but that's a goal for down the road.) Ideally, the winemaker would also like to see Camp 4 used as an educational property, inviting tribal youth to the site to work the land and reconnect with their heritage. For now, with a heightened focus on farming and healthy property management, Camp 4 is making its own proverbial trek up the mountain to redefine itself. **SI**

***The Camp 4 Vineyard is located within the Los Olivos District AVA in Santa Barbara County.***





Not a Weak One

# IN THE LOT

BY RINA BUSSELL / PHOTOS BY JESSIE BIRSCHBACH



*Pictured at SOMM Journal Editor-in-Chief Anthony Dias Blue's home in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles are Certified Sommelier Dan Bailey of Mastro's in Beverly Hills, CA; Advanced Sommelier Rina Bussell; Blue; Advanced Sommelier Paul Sherman; Certified Sommelier Jared Hooper, Wine Director at Faith and Flower in L.A.; and Certified Sommelier Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor for The SOMM Journal.*



Washington State made its wine debut in a big way with the consulting help of André Tchelistcheff—perhaps the most famous name in American viticulture, if not the most mispronounced. But when he encouraged his nephew, Alex Golitzin, to open up Quilceda Creek Vintners in Snohomish County, little did he know it would soon produce one of the greatest Cabernet Sauvignons to play on an international scale.

Today, Alex's son Paul serves as both the President and Director of Winemaking at Quilceda Creek. Taking his mentorship from his father and Tchelistcheff to new heights, he oversaw a stream of highly awarded vintages across a span of 13 years.

In the middle of December, a small group of Southern California somms gathered at *SOMM Journal* Editor-in-Chief Anthony Dias Blue's house in the Pacific Palisades to sample a 12-year Quilceda Creek vertical. Daniel Bailey, sommelier for Mastro's in Beverly Hills, arrived with a bag of lemons to give old friend and former Mastro's sommelier Jessie Birschbach, who is now the Managing Editor of *The SOMM Journal*. Advanced Sommelier Paul Sherman, the former Wine Director for Valentino Ristorante—an Angeleno staple that very recently shuttered its doors after a 46-year run—was there, too, along with Jared Hooper, Wine Director for Faith and Flower in downtown Los Angeles.



*Rina Bussell and Paul Sherman review their notes during the vertical tasting.*

## Sampling a Dozen Consecutive Vintages of QUILCEDA CREEK'S COLUMBIA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON



*The group converses while tasting through the wines of Quilceda Creek.*

The Quilceda Creek Cabernet Sauvignon, of which the group tasted vintages 2004–2015, was mainly sourced from the Champoux vineyard. Palengat Vineyard was introduced to the blend in 2008, with Wallula Vineyard following in 2011 (the same year that brought about the shift toward using 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon). Located in the Horse Heaven Hills AVA just north of the Columbia River, Champoux is one of the oldest vineyard sites in Washington as well as one of the most revered. As the dominant vineyard for names like Andrew Will and Woodward Canyon, it yields fruit that consistently draws high marks and praise.

Palengat—the maiden name of Jeannette Golitzin, Paul's mother—is a family-owned property located adjacent to Champoux Vineyard; its microclimate, as a result, is similar to that which gives Champoux its notable attributes. Wallula sits next to the Columbia River, which acts as a moderating influence as

**THE WINES' LONGEVITY IN THE BOTTLE AND IN THE GLASS WAS WHOLLY EXEMPLIFIED BY THIS VERTICAL TASTING, AND CHOOSING WHICH VINTAGES TO HIGHLIGHT WAS LIKE TRYING TO PICK FROM AMONG A LINEUP OF A-LIST STARS WHICH ACTORS SHOULD CLAIM A MAJOR ROLE IN A PLAY.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF QUILCEDA CREEK



*The view of the Columbia River from Wallula Vineyard.*

it eliminates the risk of frost while extending hang-time in the fall.

Although eastern Washington provides consistently ideal conditions for ripe fruit, the juxtaposition between the 2004 and 2005 wines most strikingly demonstrated the incredible range of weight and vintage variation that Quilceda Creek achieves. The 2004 started out savory and assertive with charred ribeye, grilled bell pepper, and espresso grounds. With a powerful yet lithe muscularity that kept the ripeness of the fruit in check, it finished with an herbal finish akin to a Côte-Rôtie.

The 2005, by contrast, was incredibly dense and viscous; more reminiscent of Napa Valley mountain fruit, it was crystalline and perfumed with notes of elderflower and cassis liqueur. There was an undercurrent to this wine—descriptors that couldn't be fully realized and sensory observations that remained on the tip of the tongue—that hinted at the enormous amount of complexity and longevity the 2005 vintage possesses.


Another vintage for the books, 2007, turned out yet another distinctive and charismatic Cabernet. Its weightiness was similar to the 2005, but it had more spice and tart red fruit—bringing more movement to the palate—than all of the other vintages. With its notes of torched sage and powdery tannins, this wine behaved much like a Right Bank Bordeaux.

The 2014, meanwhile, was well balanced in the sum of all its parts despite its young age: Extremely expressive, it revealed layers of ancho chile, espresso, licorice, cardamom, and coriander. That flavor profile in conjunction with a fine spine of acidity provided a foundation for the rocky yet voluminous black fruit. Despite the presence of a gravelly minerality, the purity and breadth of dark fruit remains.

The wines' longevity in the bottle and in the glass was wholly exemplified by this vertical tasting, and choosing which vintages to highlight was like trying to pick from among a lineup of A-list stars which actors should claim a major role in a play. Altogether, it was impressive how each vintage yielded a markedly different wine while simultaneously inviting an appreciation for each expression's own distinct characteristics.

Belying their age, the older vintages drank much more like wines in their infancy rather than their teen years, and they all possessed high amounts of potential energy. Despite spending a long time exposed to oxygen in the glass, every swirl and sip heightened the cascade of new aromas rather than dulling them. Blue agreed: "A dozen consecutive vintages and not a weak one in the lot. Overall, these are complex, elegant, and refined wines. They are beautifully made and demonstrate remarkable finesse." **SJ**





## The Tasting Notes and Scores from the Quilceda Creek Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Vertical

*The following scores were determined collectively by the tasting group.*

**2004:** One hell of a start! Makes me think the term “balance.” Beautiful core of fruit with elegant tannins and bright, lively acidity. An absolute stunner. I’m a little scared to try any others. **100** —Jared Hooper

**2005:** Bright, structured, and youthful with lovely chocolate and spice. Years to go. **96** —Anthony Dias Blue

**2006:** Slightly chewy texture. Was this a cooler vintage? The fruit is a bit muted, yet I’m salivating as I write. Pencil shavings, red dirt, and blackberry prevail. **93** —Jessie Birschbach

**2007:** OMG. Silky, velvety-smooth, and deep flavor with so many layers. Complex with a long-lasting finish. This should be good for another 30 years. **99** —A.D.B.

**2008:** Great aroma! Fruit and light oak with more extracted color than the 2004–2007. Great balance of acid to tannin; the body is lush but not sweet and lingers throughout the finish. Still needs five more years, in my opinion, but well worth the price. **96** —Dan Bailey

**2009:** Dark ruby with moderate tannin, high viscosity, and notes of roasted blackberry. Seductive, hidden, and enticing. **96** —Paul Sherman

**2010:** Extracted dark color with oak usage obvious on the nose. More obvious effects from winemakers are present. Oak mutes the fruits and dryness and becomes a focal point. A great wine, but very different comparatively to 2004–2009. **93** —D.B.

**2011:** Much more oak tannin and grip with notes of marshmallow. Sweet, ripe fruit; brown sugar; and sundried tomato with a cherry finish. Would love to revisit this in five years. **94** —Rina Bussell

**2012:** Red and blue fruits plus cedar and brown spice. Bigger but still beautifully balanced. Both pretty *and* muscular. **97** —J.B.

**2013:** Deep black raspberry and violets. Dense, lush, intense, and buttoned up. **95** —A.D.B.

**2014:** A splash of Brett with raspberry, ancho chile, espresso, and blackberry. A firm spine of acidity provides backbone to the rocky, voluminous fruit. Licorice, cardamom, and coriander. **100** —R.B.

**2015:** A beauty, it’s the best of the youngest with immediate pleasure. I’d love to know if this develops as well as the 2004. **97** —J.H.



# A World-Class Collection

**PAUL EINBUND** HAS AMASSED A BUZZWORTHY WINE LIST AND CHARTREUSE SELECTION AT **THE MORRIS** IN SAN FRANCISCO

by Jonathan Cristaldi

**PAUL EINBUND'S DESIRE** to craft a beverage program around what he loves to drink has inadvertently inspired one of the finest wine lists in the Bay Area, as well as an utterly mind-boggling collection of Chartreuse.

After a nine-year wait, Einbund finally opened the doors of his restaurant The Morris in 2016. "I was waiting for the right space and the right landlords and the right deal to come along," he says. "I think we've done a pretty good job of getting what we needed to be successful."

The critics would certainly agree. In just a short time, The Morris has amassed a proverbial trophy case of accolades, including the No. 6 slot on *Esquire's* "Best New Restaurants in America 2017" list and an appearance in the *San Francisco Chronicle's* "100 Best Restaurants of 2018."

"We wanted to create a neighborhood restaurant with a Michelin-three-star beverage program," says Einbund, who has accomplished just that: The Morris, named after his dad, is the kind of place where customers are equally comfortable ordering a house wine on tap or a \$1,000 bottle of Burgundy. The list is deep and impressive, with both current releases and back-vintage offerings from a wide range of producers and regions. "The wine list is 100 percent my wines—bottles that I want to drink," he adds.

Einbund revels in conversing with guests as he works to uncover their preferences; after a brief tête-à-tête, he says he can "complete [their] sentence" to present a wine to their liking. And with many offerings drawn from his own collection, including many European discoveries, Einbund notes "there are tons of wines you won't see very often, [including] tons of house or exclusive bottlings." "For me, this is part of what makes dining at The Morris so exciting," he adds. ■

*For more information, visit [themorris-sf.com](http://themorris-sf.com).*



PHOTO: VANESSA VAPENBUND

## What Makes a Great Chartreuse Collection?

When you walk into The Morris, the top shelf of the wine cellar on your left reveals a bottle of Chartreuse from each decade dating back to 1912. "The story of Chartreuse is amazing, and more importantly, the flavor and aromas are totally unique and hypnotic," Einbund says. "Two monks know the recipe consisting of 130 herbs and plants. There are only four kinds of Chartreuse imported into the U.S., so I bring in all of the other bottlings."

After collecting Chartreuse for roughly 20 years, Einbund has stockpiled a sizable collection. His advice to anyone thinking of housing and offering an impressive lineup of the category is simple: Start now and hope that you've gathered the bottles you need for a compelling list in a decade or more. While that might not be the advice most want to hear, they can stop by The Morris to see the potential of such an investment firsthand.





*The Man Behind the Brands*



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