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CORRECTION

The Beer(d) Science column in the April/May 2019 issue erroneously stated that "a lower temperature of 154–160 degrees Fahrenheit is the preferred environment of beta amylase." The range is actually 145–150 degrees Fahrenheit. Thanks to Joel Stewart of The Jolly Fox Brewery for finding this error!

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{ reader's corner }



In Memory of Wine-Industry Icon Stefano Riboli

STEFANO RIBOLI, HUSBAND, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and patriarch of San Antonio Winery, died peacefully at his home surrounded by family on July 3 at the age of 97, the winery said in a statement.

Riboli was born in Los Angeles on September 8, 1921, and lived there until his parents returned to Italy when he was 3 years old. As a young boy growing up in the small mountain village of Berzo San Fermo, Riboli herded cows in Alpine mountain pastures during the spring and summer months. At the age of 16, he was sponsored by his uncle Santo Cambianica to come work at San Antonio Winery, which Cambianica founded in 1917 in L.A.'s Lincoln Heights neighborhood.

After World War II ended, Riboli met his wife, Maddalena, on her family's farm in Chino, California. They married in 1946 and settled down to raise a family a few blocks away from the winery, spending the next 73 years together. For decades, longtime patrons would visit the winery just to see Riboli, who was fondly referred to as Papa Steve.

A dedicated family man, Riboli is survived by his three children: Santo (Joan), Cathy (Nino), and Steve (Sindee), who run the winery today. He leaves behind many grandchildren—Anthony, Steve, Lisa, Michael, Jennifer, David, Dante, Blake, Christopher, and Alex and is also survived by seven great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Saint Peter's Italian Catholic Church in memory of Stefano Riboli at stpeteritalianchurchla.org.

Wines from Spain **Endorses the Spanish** Wine Scholar Program

IN ADVANCE OF the October launch of Spanish Wine Scholar the Wine Scholar Guild is excited to announce that the program has been endorsed by Wines from Spain, the public face of the governmental agency ICEX Spain Trade and Investment.

Spanish Wine Scholar will join its acclaimed sister programs, French Wine Scholar and Italian Wine Scholar, in providing an advanced and comprehensive curriculum for certification. Home to one of the oldest wine styles, Sherry, Spain is also the birthplace of many of the world's finest red grapes, including Tempranillo, Garnacha (Grenache), and Monastrell (Mourvèdre). Despite this rich history, however, the country remains relatively unfamiliar to many students of wine. Spanish Wine Scholar will give participants an appreciation for how tradition and modernity coexist in the Spanish wine industry, making Spain one of the most exciting and enviable representatives on the world wine stage.



Julien Camus, President of the Wine Scholar Guild, and Alfonso Diez, head of Wines from Spain, at ProWein 2019.

During this pre-launch phase, over 120 international instructors have had full access to the study manual, the Wine Scholar Guild's in-depth online materials, and a series of live review webinars led by the program's Education Director, Rick Fisher. The first online instructor-led session for Spanish Wine Scholar will begin October 14. Classroom dates will soon be available on the Wine Scholar Guild's website at winescholarguild.org. §



TOCHO CONDAND BEYOND

An Exceptional Release Honors the Man Who Put Pinot Grigio on the American Table

> This vineyard in Bleggio Superiore, a commune in Trentino, provides grapes for the Infiné 1939 label.

When David Taub founded Palm Bay Imports in 1977, most Americans knew virtually nothing about wine. The Judgment of Paris had put California on the global wine map just one year earlier, and the nascent American AVA system was unintelligible to the average U.S. consumer, for whom Italian wine meant a raffia-wrapped jug of Chianti on special occasions.

Ahead of his time, Taub had a notion that Americans might enjoy a crisp alternative to Soave, which was then the leading white. Commencing his lifelong dedication to Pinot Grigio, the visionary turned to the hills of the Trentino DOC, and when Palm Bay Imports (later renamed Palm Bay International) began importing expressions of the variety, an eager stateside audience became enamored with these easy-drinking wines. Over the course of the next decade, on the back of Pinot Grigio, Italy would outpace France as the leading exporter of wine in the '80s, and by 2001, Palm Bay's Pinot Grigio champion, Cavit, had hit the 5-million-case mark. Forty years later, Taub, who died in 2012, is remembered as the man who put Pinot Grigio on the American table.



story by Rachel Burkons / photos by Doug Young

"My father made it his life's work to develop the category in the United States," says Marc Taub, David's son and President and CEO of Taub Family Companies (Palm Bay International and Taub Family Selections). "He worked tirelessly to ensure it became the number-one Italian wine in the country." To honor his father's legacy, Marc teamed up with one of Italy's top winemakers, Carlo Ferrini, to produce a wine worthy of an icon: Infiné 1939 Pinot Grigio.

Meaning "at last" in English and named in honor of David's birth year, the wine is the culmination of a well-earned professional legacy. "Infiné is the realization of my father's dream to produce the ultimate Pinot Grigio, a wine that would be considered the best in its category, and express the highest quality that Trentino's terroir can achieve," Marc says. "We partnered with the Istituto Agrario di San Michele all'Adige [now the Edmund Mach Foundation] to identify old vines, 15 and 28 years old, growing at the highest possible altitudes that Pinot Grigio can be cultivated." Sourced from low-yield hilltop vineyard sites topping 1,300 feet in elevation, the grapes are hand-harvested and whole cluster-pressed, resulting in a wine with pronounced, fruity aromatics and bright acidity.

A cuvée featuring Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, and Riesling Renano, the Infiné 1939 At Last—the Pinot Grigio's sister wine—further celebrates Trentino's penchant for white wines. Grapes come from 28-year-old vines in Trentino that lie within the IGT Vigneti Delle Dolomiti, a production zone situated mainly within Trentino-Alto Adige that's known for aromatic white varieties."At Last has a complex and elegant bouquet that jumps right out of the glass with notes of citrus, golden apple, and fresh peach. It has a beautifully textured mouthfeel with an exceptional mineral backbone and intense tropical notes, leading to a finish of great length and wonderful finesse," Marc says.

Custom packaging for Infiné 1939 was



developed with an Italian designer to match the wine's superior quality. Every detail—from the bottle's unique shape and inset label to the elegant inlaid glass bottom inspired by the infinity concept—were chosen to ensure that Infiné and At Last would stand apart in an elite set of Pinot Grigios and other quality whites.

With incredible wine made from Trentino's most prized vineyards, Infiné 1939 is in a prime position to continue telling David Taub's story tableside. The full-circle aspect of celebrating Pinot Grigio with

guests is not lost on William Berkis, General Manager at quintessential New York restaurant Acme, which has catered to the NoHo neighborhood for nearly 30 years and has ridden the wave of Pinot Grigio throughout its tenure.

"I love the story of how this wine came to be," says Berkis. "I grew up in New Jersey, and Pinot Grigio was at every party. Sure, back then my parents were drinking cheaper options, but I saw them drinking Pinot Grigio all the time. I wasn't into wines back then, but now that I am, it's

amazing to see that this man, David Taub, was the reason my family was drinking Pinot Grigio." And while Infiné 1939 "is much nicer than what they're continuing to drink at the beach," he adds with a laugh, "it's kind of cool to think about in retrospect: Everybody knows Pinot Grigio and has been exposed to it because of David Taub."

At Acme, Berkis' pick for an Infiné 1939 pairing is the restaurant's modernized take on chicken Kiev, featuring roasted chicken breast stuffed with escargot butter, parsley gnocchi, and pickled ramps. "The interplay of flavors is wonderful," he says. "The chicken is lean, and you're getting structure and

fattiness from the escargot butter. The wine has nice acidity guiding it. It's rich, has some lees character, and is a little more textural because it's seen some neutral oak. The green apple and pear notes tie in with the parsley gnocchi, with the beautiful green flavor from the parsley. There's great brightness that matches the pickled ramps and ... the wine has a nice minerality—being from the foothills of the Alps in Trentino—which is matched by the escargot."

With the very best of Trentino represented in the glass, one thing's for sure: David and Marc Taub's mission to bring Pinot Grigio to America has been a resounding success. §



The Infiné 1939 Pinot Grigio pairs beautifully with Acme's roasted chicken breast stuffed with escargot butter, parsley gnocchi, and pickled ramps.



THE SOMM JOURNAL

Among the characteristics that differentiate Priorat from other wine regions is its volcanic slate soil. also known as llicorella.

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Pictured in front, Virginia SOMM camper Marcel Abisamra of the Four Seasons Hotel in Washington, D.C., captures yet another "Marselfie," this time at RdV Vineyards.

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Founded in 1886, Angove Family Winemakers is a 5th generation, family owned winery with a dedication to creating premium wines from McLaren Vale, South Australia.



A Crystal Spoonful of Tokaji Eszencia

Rare Tokaii Eszencia was recentlu served in crystal spoons at Sonoma's Buena Vista Winery.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIZTHACH

BUENA VISTA WINERY WELCOMES A HUNGARIAN DELEGATION AND "THE WINE OF ROYALTY"

by Liz Thach, MW

IMAGINE DRINKING A WINE so rare and special that it's served in a crystal spoon. For attendees of a June event at Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma, this was no hypothetical, as they were invited to taste what's been referred to as "the wine of royalty" while greeting the Hungarian delegation that brought it to California.

Also known as Tokaji Eszencia, this luxurious wine hails from the Hungarian wine region of Tokaj, but is only produced during vintages in which the conditions are ideal for yielding grapes of abundant sweetness. It's then aged in small glass

demijohns for years, fermenting to about 2-5% ABV and creating an expression with exquisite notes of honey, apricot, marmalade, and brown sugar.

According to Dr. Peter Molnar, President of the Tokaj Wine Communities Council and General Manager of Patricius Winery in Hungary, "Eszencia is thought to have been created in the early 1500s and has excellent health properties with beneficial antioxidants. In the old days, it was used as medicine and served in a small spoon." Due to this ancient tradition, coupled with the fact that the wine

is both rare and expensive, it's often still served in small crystal spoons today.

Under the leadership of Jean-Charles Boisset, Buena Vista Winery has developed a partnership with Vinum Tokaj International LLC (VTI) and its Hungarian partners, the Patricius and Dereszla Winery; together, they're importing four Tokaj wines jointly labeled for the Boisset Collection, including a dry 2017 Furmint, a 2008 Tokaji Aszú from Béres Winery, and a 2000 Tokaji Eszencia under the Buena Vista label as well as another 2000 Eszencia under the JCB label. Making their first appearance at the event, small crystal spoons were designed and engraved by VTI specifically for Buena Vista and JCB brands.

"We are honored to have this great relationship with Hungary," Boisset said. "This is important to us because Buena Vista Winery—California's oldest premium winery—was established in 1857 by the Hungarian count Ágoston Haraszthy. Today's celebration helps us to revive a special relationship and honors one of the great wines of the world."

Among the guests were Tamás Széles, Consul General of Hungary; Attila Balla, President of Vinum Tokaj International; local dignitaries; and Boisset Collection executives. Count Haraszthy, impersonated by George Webber, also made an appearance. Si

Dr. Liz Thach, MW, is a wine, food, and travel journalist as well as the

Pictured from left to right are Patrick Egan, Boisset Collection's VP of Marketing & Communications; Tamás Széles, Consul General of Hungary; Attila Balla, President of Vinum Tokaj International LLC; Márton Nobilis, Chief of the Minister's Cabinet; Zsolt Belánszky-Demkó, Deputy State Secretary from the Ministry of Agriculture; Eniko Magyar, Agricultural Attaché to the Minister of Agriculture; Buena Vista Winery/Boisset Collection proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset; Éva Voisin, Honorary Consul General of Hungary in San Francisco; Tom Blackwood, Buena Vista Winery GM/Boisset Collection Director of Retail Operations; and Dr. Péter Molnár, President of the Council of Tokaj/Director of Patricius Winery.



Distinguished Professor of Wine & Management at Sonoma State University. Contact her at liz@lizthach.com.



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{ wine regulation }

The Enigma of Design



James Sligh is the sommelier for Compagnie des Vins Surnaturels in New York.

"If a producer makes a demi-sec this year given the vintage conditions—and labels it so-he doesn't want his customer expecting a demi-sec next year, and the year after, when conditions may dictate a dry wine instead."

DESPITE AN ATTEMPTED UPDATE. VOUVRAY AOP LABELS STILL LEAVE CONSUMERS CONFUSED.

by David Rosengarten

"VOUVRAY LABELS, of all labels, pose the most serious interpretation challenges to the wine consumer," says James Sligh, award-winning sommelier at New York City wine bar Compagnie des Vins Surnaturels. He would know: With 50 Vouvrays on his extremely deep French and American list, Sligh boasts a larger Vouvray section than almost any sommelier in New York. That said, Sligh explains, "Until I step in to explain those labels, customers are frequently confused ... and the Vouvray producers today are taking only baby steps to improve the situation."

The crux of the matter, of course, concerns the dry-to-sweet continuum of the wine in the bottle. How do you discern the sweetness level of the Vouvray you're considering just by looking at the label? "About 50% of the Vouvray producers these days do try to offer some help on the label, but that leaves 50% who don't," Sligh says."A lot of would-be buyers both in restaurants and shops, unless they get advice, have no idea if they're getting a dry wine, an off-dry wine, or a sweet wine."

In 2016, the Vouvray authorities attempted to improve the situation: If producers choose to use the term "sec" on labels, the authorities would clarify what "sec" officially means. A Vouvray Sec can have no more than 8 grams per liter of residual sugar, and the total acidity must be no less than 2 grams lower than the residual sugar (e.g. if the residual sugar is 8 grams, the total acidity must be at least 6 grams).

However, common label phrases "demi-sec" (literally "half-dry") and "moelleux" (which means "marrow-like" or soft, round, and sweet) weren't altered by the authorities. These terms have no legal definitions, though it's worth noting that they are delineated by European Union regulation 753/2002.

In a world where most wine producers are clarifying labels to make matters easier for the would-be buyer, why are Vouvray producers reluctant to clean up their labels?

"Ironically," says Sligh, "it boils down to concerns about confusing the consumer. If a producer makes a demi-sec this year given the vintage conditions—and labels it so—he doesn't want his customer expecting a demi-sec next year, and the year after, when conditions may dictate a dry wine instead. This differs from most wine regions of the world, where the same style of wine is made year after year."

And what is the consumer demanding these days from Vouvray? "Consumers," notes Sligh, "are definitely taking to dry Vouvray these days. It has attained the cool factor; producers are aware of that and are producing wine accordingly. So if you're confused today when buying Vouvray, the odds are good that the label causing you trouble lies on a dry bottle of Vouvray." Sligh adds that the same is true for other areas in Touraine and Anjou that are growing Chenin Blanc. "The Savennières you buy today," he says, "is very likely to be dry."

But no matter the level of residual sugar, Sligh admits he might be biased when it comes to Vouvray: "I guess the presence of 50 Vouvrays on my list tells my story," he says. "These are wonderful wines to drink with food, as long as you solve the enigma of the label!" SI





Beer(d) Science isn't just an excuse for an '80s movie pun: Each issue of The SOMM Journal will cover a different style of beer and related terminology to help our somms expand their beer knowledge.

Sprichst du Deutsch?

AS CRAFT VERSIONS OF THE STYLE PROLIFERATE. DO WE REALLY KNOW WHAT LAGER MEANS?

by Jessie Birschbach

I'VE NOTICED A slow but steady increase of craft pilsner—type lagers entering the market over the past few years: a trend that seems to represent an inevitable pendulum swing from the likes of IPAs and other "extremes" toward the middle of the spectrum. I first raised an eyebrow in 2016, when San Diego-based Stone Brewing released a pilsner named Who You Callin'Wussie—an interesting move considering that the brewery found fame thanks to its Arrogant Bastard, a hoppy American Strong Ale with an ABV of 12%.

The other thing I've observed, though, is a lack of understanding regarding the term "lager" in all of its applications, particularly in regard to its relationship with pilsner. As craft brewers increasingly take notice of balance in beer, it's also important for professionals to display a basic knowledge of the world's most popular style.

Lager

In German, "lager" means "storage," as the term is used in reference to a technique in which beer is fermented and then aged in colder temperatures (35-45 degrees Fahrenheit) for varying lengths of time depending on the lager style. Pilsners, for example, take four to six weeks, while doppelbocks can take up to 12. A doppelbock is a lager, you say? Yes! More on that below, but in the meantime, it warrants mention that compounds like protein, sulfur, and yeast "settle out" of the beer during the longer lagering process, resulting in a smoother, cleaner, and crisper profile.

Lager is also a type of a yeast—the Saccharomyces pastorianus strain, to be exact—and unlike Saccharomyces cerevisiae, a top-fermenting ale yeast, it prefers a cooler fermentation temperature (40–55 degrees) and tends to hang out at the bottom of the fermentation tank. Most beers that are fermented with the lager yeast strain are cold stored, but not always; the California Common style (popularized by Anchor

Steam Beer), for instance, is fermented with lager yeast at a warmer temperature.

The other thing to note is that not all lagers are light in color and body. The malty, brown dunkel style and the strong, typically dark-brown doppelbock style are versions of lagers that originated in Germany; in fact, these darker beers were around long before pale lagers, which are far more popular today.

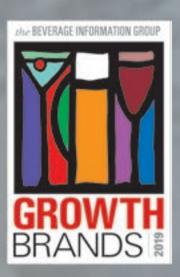
German Pils

The German pils style—a hoppier, drier interpretation of the original Czech pale lager invented by Pilsner Urquell in 1842—is a medium- to high-hopped, crisp, clean, light, and highly attenuated beer made with cracker-like pale pilsner malt. (Yes, pilsner is both a type of malt and a style of beer!) The American lager style was originally based on German pils and has literally and figuratively been watered down over time, especially in the hops department. In fact, there's an American pre-Prohibition lager style that more closely resembles German pils, as that's what German immigrants who came to America in the mid-19th century were making. I, for one, am very grateful that we're seeing more and more balanced, refreshing, well-crafted beers become available as an alternative to the mass-produced options in this style. §J

> "As craft brewers increasingly take notice of balance in beer, it's also important for professionals to display a basic knowledge of the world's most popular style."

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{ elevating the rockies }



by Ruth Tobias

Fortune Wok to Table's appetizer of stir-fried duck in cucumber shells comes with a 1-ounce pour of hei mijiu, fermented from black rice.



Excelling at All Levels

PERSONAL TOUCHES ABOUND AT FORTUNE WOK TO TABLE AND SOTTO VOCE

THE BIGGER THE Mile High City gets, the more some of its hospitality pros are thinking small—snug spaces, niche concepts, tightly curated programs. From an eight-seat chef's counter (Beckon; see my February-March column) to an allsour beer bar (Goed Zuur) and a lounge that specializes in French dips (Pony Up), it seems there's no taste so specific that it can't be satisfied in the form of increasingly bespoke dining and drinking experiences.

of them may not even realize there's also an upstairs dining room.

With all of four tables, it too presents an extremely limited menu, listing about seven or eight dishes in any given season, from hot-and-sour soup with shrimp and blue crab to pork belly braised with red beans, bok choy, and scallions in a gingery brown sauce. It's all beautifully prepared—but what rendered it exquisite on a recent visit were the detailed pairing

spice, cherries, blueberries, even a little rhubarb—and depending on how you let it decant, it's an enhancer."

Even more exciting, however, was the selection of mijiu and baijiu designed, in his words, "to show you what boutique rice wines can taste like across China—no two are the same." Take the zhu ye ging he proposed with the pork belly: Along with various herbs, he said, "Bamboo leaves give it its taste and color. There's lots of jasmine flower on the nose, but it finishes like a smooth whiskey."

Such custom service is also a focus at Sotto Voce, located in the basement of downtown hot spot Jovanina's Broken Italian. There's no bar in this new cocktail lounge from owners lake and Jennifer Linzinmeir—just cellar shelving and a cocktail cart, which bartenders use to whip up libations based on bubbly, aperitivos, and digestivos. They also present absinthe fountains tableside; though not Italian, Bar Manager Sean Keipper explains, absinthe "is inherently interesting in its presentation, history, and general mystique, so it's a perfect fit" for a place whose own history shows in the two-seat alcove that marks the former entrance to a Prohibition-era tunnel.

From the shelves, meanwhile, guests both upstairs and down will soon be able to pick out their own wines, retail-style, with the optional help of a sommelier. "The ultimate goal is to make the experience of selecting a bottle ... more communal, more intimate, and more engaging," says Keipper—"if that's what the guest wants, of course." SI



The discovery of a bricked-up tunnel in the basement of Jovanina's Broken Italian suggests that what is now Sotto Voce was used for more illicit purposes during Prohibition.

Fortune Wok to Table in Denver's Cherry Creek neighborhood provides one of the most gratifying examples. Downstairs, chef C| Shyr's cult Chinese hit offers up exactly three items—handmade dumplings, Shanghai-style noodles, and fried-rice plates—which have earned it a crowd of followers so singularly focused that most

recommendations from our server, Jeff Shi. Though small, Fortune's carefully compiled, Old World-slanted wine list presents an exception to the rule of most American Chinese restaurants. Shi knew it inside and out, confidently suggesting a single-vineyard 2014 Ribera del Duero with Shyr's elegant play on beef and broccoli: "It's got

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- Russian River Valley -



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{ the ransom report }

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

Looking Beyond the Standards



Ilaria Petitto of Campania winery Donnachiara is one producer making an effort to hold select wines for future release.



Aged Muscadet from Sèvre et Maine: Pictured from left to right are wines from the 2009, 2005, 1989, and 1976 vintages.

AGEWORTHY WHITES ABOUND IN THE LOIRE VALLEY AND CAMPANIA

story and photos by David Ransom

THERE ARE MANY options for white-wine drinkers out there, but the possibilities narrow considerably when ageability enters into the equation: Most tend to rely on Chardonnay, Riesling, and, occasionally, Sauvignon Blanc to fill that sector of the list. Earlier this year, however, I found that this niche definitely harbors room for expansion as I made a few forays to places typically known for producing whites destined for early consumption.

First, during a week spent touring the western end of the Loire Valley, I came across some wonderful examples of Muscadet Sèvre et Maine from a group of producers gaining a following for their sur lie—aged Melon de Bourgogne. (That's Muscadet's main grape, in case anyone thinks the variety is called Muscadet, as I used to during my early days in wine.) At one vertical retrospective venturing from the 2009 vintage back to a Domaine Raphaël Luneau Cuvée d'Exception from 1976, I tasted wines that still offered significant freshness, depth, and complexity. While this reinforced that the more familiar examples of crisp, easy-drinking, "pair-with-oysters" Muscadet wines are always a pleasure to drink (and profitable, to boot), these cellar-worthy expressions have an uncanny ability to last for years—making them, in my eyes, the real pleasure.

Another trip, this time to Italy's Campania region, revealed similar results when I tasted Fiano di Avellino wines that were showing well ten years down the road from vinification. We all know that Greco di Tufo can be ageworthy, thanks mostly to examples from producers like Mastroberardino and, more recently, Feudi di San Gregorio, but Fiano has historically been made to drink young. Yet, in the case of Donnachiara's 2007 Fiano di Avellino, I found structure and nuance in a wine still bright with acidity . . . and still showing surprisingly nice fruit 12 years on.

So, next time you're rebuilding your list or seeking out whites with maturity to offer your customers, why not think outside the realm of the standards? Beyond making great food-pairing wines, aged whites are thankfully becoming increasingly easy to find as more producers adjust the amounts they hold back and, in turn, work to incorporate library wines into their current sales portfolio.







Is Terroir Dead?

SEEMINGLY ENTWINED WITH ongoing debates over alcohol, ripeness, balance, and oak is another question: Does terroir exist?

It's a valid inquiry that's gained prominence in recent years. That said, of course terroir exists, because if it doesn't, entire belief systems built upon the premise that it differentiates individual wines while also accounting for quality distinctions—beginning with France's Grand Cru classification and Germany's hierarchy of Qualitätswein—would come crashing down upon us.

Also subject to dismantling would be the age-old assumption (à la the now-antiquated expression *goût de terroir*) that soil can exert both quality and taste differences. As research like Alex Maltman's paper "Minerality in Wine: A Geological Perspective" suggests, it's wrong to claim that soil impacts flavor through direct uptake via root systems.

What has made the global wine market murkier in recent years is the observation that in many parts of the New World, terroir is simply not that important when it comes to quality: Instead, winemakers—or spendthrifty winery owners—are, as they're the ones who presumably hold the power to yield a 99-point wine instead of an 89-point one. In turn, sommeliers must now decide which philosophy to reflect through their own wine lists, whether they're opting to go the terroir-driven route or instead

commit to the distinction between "natural" and manipulated wines. It seems they're now required to take a stance, whether they're prepared to or not.

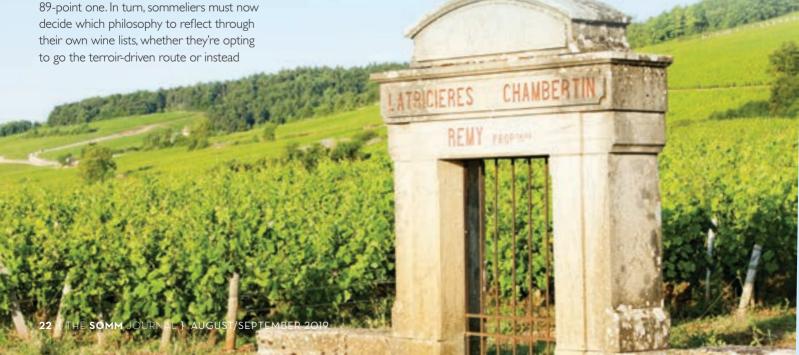
This is our reality in a day and age where guests can pull up reviews and ratings on their iPhones more quickly than a waiter or sommelier can reach a table. Instead, sommeliers have become more like modern-day priests, having to constantly explain to peers as well as guests why God (rather, terroir) is not dead.

I recently heard an old friend named Larry Brooks—who played a major part in the glory days of wineries like Acacia and Chalone in the '70s and '80s—readily admit to being part of the modern winemaker-driven movements that have, in many ways, systematically undermined terroir-based belief systems. "I am beginning to conclude that improvements in technique will be the death of terroir," he has said, citing Côte de Nuits winemakers who have taken Pinot Noir picked in Côte de Beaune and made the resulting wines taste like Côte de Nuits—thus garnering higher scores and price points.

The ramifications are everywhere. I'll

never forget a blind tasting conducted in Oregon nine years ago where we asked five experienced sommeliers if they could discern which characteristics were influenced by winemaking technique versus terroir in 25 Pinot Noirs; the wines were made by five top Oregon producers that each made wine from grapes picked at the same time from the other brands' vineyards. Only one somm could distinguish the influence of the vineyards from that of the winemaking, and for good reason: The latter had a greater impact on the wines' sensory qualities than the vineyard sources themselves.

Does this mean terroir no longer matters in Oregon? I hope not. To quote Brooks again, "Terroir is elusive, subtle, and difficult conceptually, but just because it is subtle does not mean it is not real." As I heard the French perfumer Alexandre Schmitt recently say, "Wine judging is a subjective phenomenon ... Assessment of wine sensations may be erroneous, while the sensations themselves cannot be." In other words, as cloudy as it becomes, the concept of terroir will always exist—whether it's recognizable or not.



LET'S GET RIGHT to the POINTS...

Everybody likes to win.

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the center of a celebration, savor us during an evening out
and allow us to be part of your everyday enjoyment of life.





In the Cards

CANADA'S CABERNET FRANC SHOWS WELL AT TASTE CANADA IN LONDON

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, I participated in a two-day seminar in London titled Wine Future. I was on a panel chaired by Tim Atkin, MW, joining Michel Bettane and Michel Rolland of France and Randall Grahm of California. We each were tasked with different topics, and I had to pitch a white and a red grape variety, fittingly, "for the future." For the white, I chose Vermentino. aka Rolle and Malvoisie de Corse, for personal pleasure; my red, selected with total confidence, was Cabernet Franc. While the former is seducing more and more palates with its aromatics and dry, lifted finish, Cabernet Franc seems to be the one that's taking home the prizes.

What a nice surprise, then, to learn that there would be a special table with 25 expressions of this variety—including one appassimento and one ice wine—at London's 2019 Taste Canada event, which unfolded in May. There were 15 from Ontario, nine from British Columbia, and one (a very pure 2016 Benjamin Bridge at just 10.5% ABV) from Nova Scotia.

Tasting this range, I noted three things: Cabernet Franc has charm and drinks well while young, which cannot be said for Cabernet Sauvignon; with its versatility and directness of fruit, the variety reminded me of Sangiovese; and too much oak doesn't do it any favours.

As a committed fan of this grape, I don't like to be disappointed, and fortunately I was not. The wines were a delight to taste, and there were only three or four that I scored below 90. Here are the ones that landed in the 91–93 range, listed in the order of tasting: I expect that very few actually find their way to Los Angeles and the like, but I encourage you to try them if they do.

ONTARIO

Domaine Queylus 2016 Deep colour; good, smooth texture; unfiltered, with charm and elegance. To 2024.

Cave Spring Cellars 2016 A bit fresher with more depth; a really good expression from older vines. To 2026.

Hidden Bench Estate Winery 2015 Superb colour; deep and complex. Quite rich and seems to have some Merlot; very Saint-Émilion in style. To 2026.

Icellars Estate Winery 2016 Young looking, with good florality; Chinon-style with fragrance and purity. To 2026.

Stratus Vineyards 2016 Superb colour and great clarity; very polished with classy black fruits. Could be a Tuscan Cabernet Franc from the Maremma. To 2026.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Culmina Family Estate Winery 2016 Blackish-red colour; among the deepest of the range, with crunchy black fruits and liquorice spice; lots of depth and richness. To 2026.

Mission Hill Family Estate Winery 2016 Fine depth of colour and fruit; a very Bordeaux-like expression that shows classy winemaking conducted in a hands-off manner. To 2028.

Okanagan Crush Pad Winery 2017 Described as "free form" from organic vineyards; very pure fruit jumps out of the glass. Natural and open at 13.5% ABV.To 2022.

Painted Rock Estate Winery 2016 Dense colour; more precision and structure than most. At 14.9% ABV, it's balanced by really good length; a very serious wine. To 2028.

Poplar Grove Winery 2014 Rich red colour with a mature rim; also 14.9% ABV, with natural richness. Good now with a good future. To 2026.

Seven Stones Winery 2014 Speaking Rock Aged in 100% new French oak, with smoothness and depth that shows that new oak and Cabernet Franc can work. To 2024.

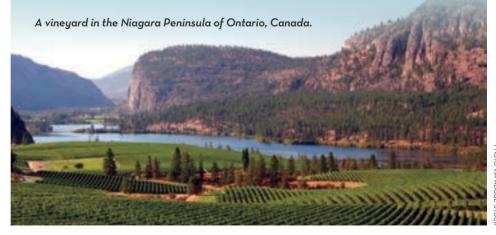


PHOTO VIA ADOBE STO





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Everything. Because at least a couple times a month, Paul Clifton, our Director of Winemaking drives from his home in the Santa Lucia Highlands to the beaches of Big Sur where he catches a few good waves on the same coastal winds that uniquely influence our vineyards. There isn't a more beautiful place or perfect appellation in the world to create award-winning Pinot Noir. And it just happens to be close to some pretty great surfing.

S.L.H 2017 PINOT NOIR



Rafael Peterson LEAD SOMMELIER AT BORN & RAISED, SAN DIEGO, CA

by Michelle Metter



AFTER APPEARING AT SommCon D.C. earlier this year, Rafael Peterson is focusing on obtaining his Advanced Sommelier certification through the Court of Master Sommeliers as he continues to serve as the lead sommelier at Born & Raised in San Diego, California. We caught up with Peterson to discuss why he maintains a "classic" wine list, the importance of tasting groups, and more.

How have you seen the wine industry evolve during your time in San Diego?

I think that there are a lot more eyes now on San Diego thanks to the development of so many new restaurants and big organizations like Michelin and Gambero Rosso making it down here. The wine-professional community is growing without a doubt, and having more great ambassadors is what drives the community as a whole. The growth of wine-centric bars like Vino Carta and The Rose are crucial.

At Born & Raised, you manage an impressive wine list. What's your approach?

The approach has been a very classic one, mean-

ing that we focus on classic wine regions and classic grapes of the world. I do this mainly so that my staff has a solid foundation to compare against when they go out and enjoy new wines.

You're part of a tasting group in San Diego. What role does this play in your studies for your advanced certification?

Having a solid tasting group is a non-negotiable aspect of studying for advanced examinations. You have to surround yourself with people who are better than you at what you are trying to accomplish, plain and simple.

You recently launched HospitaliTV. What has been your most interesting interview so far?

HospitaliTV is a channel I created so I could interview some of the top professionals in our industry, whether it be Master Sommeliers, chefs, or bar directors. The idea has always been to extract information from them on what has made them successful in order to pass it on to others. It's been a lot of fun and I've met some amazing people so far! André Mack was definitely one that stood out because of something he said to me. When asked what it was like to work at the highest levels, in reference to his time at The French Laundry and Per Se, he told me, "Greatness isn't this elusive thing. Opportunities present themselves and you either rise to the occasion or not." It really got me thinking about the pursuit of a higher standard and enjoying the process along every step of the way—the ups and downs, all of it—because it's what shapes us into the people we are trying to become.

What was your biggest takeaway from SommCon D.C.? SommCon D.C. was a blast! I think the most exciting takeaway was being able to meet so many sommeliers in a different city. We need to make a conscious effort to meet as many other professionals in our/industry as we can—it's what allows us to grow!

You have one glass of wine and only ten minutes. What are you drinking and who are you with?

I'd want to talk to the person who was in charge of the wine during the first Royal Coronation in Reims over a thousand years ago. I'm obsessed with the execution of small details around monumental accomplishments. §

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ALL VINITALY ATTENDEES seem to have one thing in common after the fourday event: They're in dire need of a vacation, or at least some serious rest on the flight back home. Held annually in Verona, the international wine competition and exposition unfolded in early April at the Fiera di Verona exhibition hall. The show didn't stop when the daily business meetings and wine tastings wrapped, however; as is the case every year, it's what happens at night that makes Vinitaly unique.

After the convention lets out, wineries and importers host events in bars and restaurants throughout the city. These gatherings are followed by what's referred to as the Champagne Nights, during which thousands of magnums and double magnums are opened and glasses are offered to passersby. It may seem odd to serve Champagne—Verona is in Italy, after all but the country's winemakers and wine importers adhere to the same unwritten rule: After a full day of tasting Italian wines for business, wine consumed for celebration has to be Champagne.

Over the course of four days, 33,000 wine buyers from 50 countries tasted as many as 17,000 labels, nearly 90% of which were Italian; the 2015–2017 vintages, sourced from all over Italy, drank

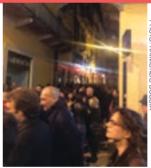
exceptionally well. Buyers tend to be most interested in the usual suspects— Piemonte and Toscana. Barolo, Brunello—but some new trends and interests were evident this year.

If I had to pick one denomination that was most surprising for affluent buyers, it was the Lugana DOC, which lies partly in Veneto and partly in Lom-

bardy. We will likely hear more about this region in the future, namely regarding the crisp, fruity expressions of the Trebbiano di Lugana grape grown on the hills overlooking Lake Garda.

Organic wines, meanwhile, are hardly new, but their popularity is growing fastespecially in Italy. They account for 6% of wine production in the world overall compared to around 9% in Europe and more than 20% in Italy, with a few regions already closing in on making 35% of their total production certified organic.

Organic or not, there were quite a few ageworthy Italian whites presented, several of which I found worth mentioning. Historically, Italian white wines have been known for being fresh and rather

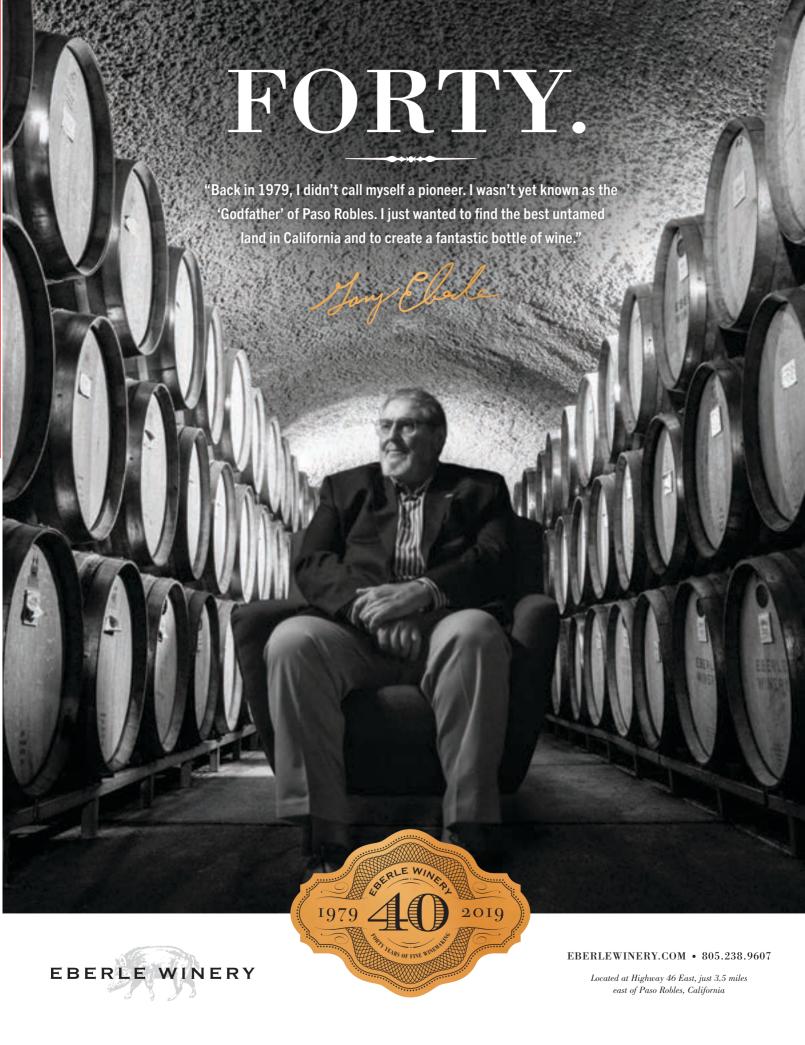


Vinitaly attendees and locals fill the streets of Verona for Champagne Nights.

₹ simple, but the La Scolca 2009 Black Label Gavi di Gavi is incredibly nuanced: Equal parts long, smooth, and crisp, with a fruity, floral, and spicy palate, it shows the potential of the Cortese grape in the Gavi area. The wine's bright acidity and abundant minerality, meanwhile, illustrate the complexity of the terroir. We know Chardonnays

can age well, but tasting the Chiarandà 2005 Donnafugata was a memorable experience, to say the least. I tried it in a blind tasting and got the sensation of a Meursault combined with the elegance of a discrete Chablis.

To conclude this exploration of ageworthy Italian whites, a winemaker from Vignaioli Specogna poured me a Pinot Grigio Ramato from the Friuli producer that mixes the 2012–2016 vintages (each sees 15 days of maceration and partial aging in small barrels). The finished product is a complex and smooth wine, with notes of berries, cherries, and stone fruits leading into a velvety finish. It was nothing you would normally expect from a Pinot Grigio, making it truly one of a kind—not unlike Vinitaly itself. Sp



Six American Cheddars to Know

by Janet Fletcher

WHILE GREAT BRITAIN is cheddar's birthplace, the number of distinguished American representatives in the category is soaring. Just as Cabernet Sauvignon can be found at every price point, from bargain bins to collector level, American cheddars run the gamut from simple, macaroniworthy types to cheese-board stars.

The seven artisan cheeses featured here are all cow's milk cheddars designed to compete in the top tier. I wouldn't dream of cooking with them any more than I would splash a cult Cab into a stew.

The best cheddars have mouthwatering acidity, a crumbly-yet-creamy texture, and a multilayered aroma of nuts, grass, candle wax, and brown butter. Some of the newer examples have a pineapple scent, the result of using non-traditional cultures that yield a fruitier, sweeter result. Consumers are loving these mellower cheddars, helping spur what may be a now-unstoppable trend.

To get up to speed quickly on American cheddar, seek out these acclaimed wheels:

Beecher's Flagship Reserve (Washing-

ton): The Seattle-based creamery avoids calling this cheese a cheddar because its recipe relies on non-traditional cultures. That said, Flagship is obviously a cheddar relative. The unusual cultures, typically used in French and Swiss mountain wheels, enhance the nutty aromas and creamy texture. Like classic English cheddars, Flagship Reserve is matured in cheesecloth and develops a natural rind. Aging time is about 13 months.

Bleu Mont Dairy Cheddar (Wiscon-

sin): Cheesemaker Willi Lehner ages his bandaged cheddars in an underground cave he dug after visiting cheesemakers in Great Britain. His 10-pound wheels spend about 15 months in the cave and emerge profoundly aromatic, with scents of bacon,



nuts, and earth, Lehner's cheddars, made with milk from pastured cows, have a robust lactic tang.

Cabot Clothbound (Vermont): Widely considered one of America's finest cheddars, Cabot Clothbound is a joint venture between Cabot Creamery, a large cooperative that supplies the milk (from a single farm) and makes the cheese, and Jasper Hill Farm, which matures it. A former Best of Show winner at the American Cheese Society competition, the 35-pound Cabot Clothbound is more mellow than English cheddars but possesses comparable aromas of mown grass, nuts, toffee, and beeswax. It's a slam-dunk pairing with fine red wine, dry cider, or dry Amontillado Sherry.

Face Rock Cheddar (Oregon): Cheesemaker Brad Sinko came from Beecher's. where he developed the recipes for its cheeses, including Flagship Reserve. Using similar recipes, he's repeating his successes in Oregon now, aiming for a mellow style

that strikes a balance between bright acidity and softened tang. Look for the Extra Aged Cheddar, a rindless block aged for two years. In addition to a creamy mouthfeel, it has the cut-grass and nut aromas typical of the category.

Fiscalini Bandaged Cheddar (Califor-

nia): A purist's cheddar made with raw milk and traditional cultures that give it a lingering tang, this clothbound wheel is nutty and grassy with a classic crumblywaxy texture.

Flory's Truckle (Missouri and Iowa): A

real beauty, this clothbound wheel is made in the tall, cylindrical shape that the British call a truckle. Made on the Flory family's Missouri farm, the cheese is shipped after two months to Iowa's Milton Creamery for further aging. Released at a year old, Flory's is pale gold with some crunchy white protein crystals and aromas of freshly mown grass, melted butter, and toasted nuts. It's on the sweet side, but it has a tang on the finish.



{ california crus }

To Kalon Vineyard: the crown jewel of Robert Modavi Winery.



A Rediscovery Tour

by Rich Manning

THE TO KALON ON THE ROAD TOUR **GOES IN-DEPTH** ON ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY'S **CELEBRATED PROPERTY**



Master of Wine Mark De Vere.

A SCENT OF sanded wood and faint earth hit me as I ascended the steps to The 1912, a stylish event space in Santa Ana, California. Metaphorically, it's an aroma of age and importance: My brain instantly connected it to the fellowship hall of the church I attended as a youth. It was an odd yet most appropriate olfactory memory for the occasion, as Robert Mondavi Winery (RMW)'s expressions of To Kalon Vineyard's sacred fruit awaited in the space's upper rooms.

Their presence supplied the heart of the To Kalon on the Road tour, a traveling riff on the To Kalon Certification program that RMW has hosted on its property for the past decade. "It's a bit of an evangelist's effort to teach wine professionals what sets these wines apart and to encourage them to share the passion of the converted with their communities," explained Master of Wine Mark De Vere, the event host.

De Vere carried out this mission with bold confidence, sprinkling selections from other revered wineries like Paul Hobbs and Penfolds amid RMW's To Kalon selections in the first two tasting sessions. This brilliant strategy provided ample evidence that the winery's crown jewel still shines brightly—a sentiment that flies in direct and necessary defiance of jaded consumers who purport to know better. This "rediscovery" of RMW's excellence represents a core tenant of the tour, according to De Vere. "We certainly hope that this program will remind people, and maybe inform a younger generation, that Robert Mondavi's legacy was his inspiration, vision, and passion to make California wines sit in the company of the great wines of the world," he said.

While pouring a Mondavi reserve vertical, De Vere shared To Kalon's rich history, touching upon details like Andy Beckstoffer's relationship with the vineyard and the circumstances of its founding by Hamilton Walker Crabb in 1868. The quintet of wines encompassed the pre-release 2016 as well as the 2010, 2006, 1996, and 1983 vintages, providing a study in the changes of viticultural expression; the decadent dark fruit of the '83, for instance, drank like a Port of Bacchanalian proportions.

Most importantly, the tasting spoke of the artistic potential contained deep within the struggling roots of To Kalon's renowned vines, making us pause to contemplate the importance of RMW's exquisite handiwork. De Vere sees this perspective as symbiotic. "My time at Robert Mondavi Winery and working with To Kalon has instilled in me an appreciation for harmony: the harmony of art and skills, the harmony of people and place," he said. One may be so bold as to call it a religious experience.

EUROPEAN GARNACHA G GRENACHE IS ARGUABLY THE MOST ECO-FRIENDLY —

GRAPE IN THE WORLD







WHEN IT COMES TO EUROPEAN GARNACHA/GRENACHE, OUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY GO HAND IN HAND.

Quality is always a priority for European wines, a factor that is ensured by the PDO and PGI designations, which tie any wine with the PDO or PGI labels to its place of origin. In the France's Roussillon and Spain's appellations of Catalayud, Campo de Borja, Cariñena, Somontano, and Terra Alta, the birthplaces of this grape, winemakers know that quality Grenache comes from sustainable winemaking. Indeed, European Garnacha may be the most eco-friendly wine in the world.

Garnacha is naturally self-sufficient, readily adapting and sustaining itself without the need for many natural resources. The grape thrives under water and nutrient stress, which is why it works so well in a hot, dry climate with poor, well-drained soils. There's mostly no need for irrigation; Grenache vines dig deep underground to access subterranean resources. This is especially true for the old Garnacha vines that abound in these European regions,

which create even more complex, terroirdriven wines.

Thanks to the strong, dry winds that circulate throughout the vineyards of northeastern Spain and France's Roussillon, many wineries are able to limit the use of chemicals in the vineyard as well. These winds act as natural disease prevention. keeping Grenache vines dry and healthy, and allowing vintners to adopt organic or biodynamic practices. Some producers are even successfully experimenting with unsulfured Garnacha wines. Any European Garnacha/Grenache winemaker working in an eco-friendly way can apply for an EU Ecolabel as well, a logo that ensures the sustainability of the wine.

While sustainable practices are producing high-quality Grenache wines now, European vintners are also using sustainability to plan for their regions' futures. As recognized at the World Climate Change and Wine Conference in 2011, Garnacha is well prepared for climate change, indicating the longevity of European Garnacha/Grenache for years to come.

















The Barolo of the South

THE LOWDOWN ON AGLIANICO story and photo by Laura Donadoni

TOUTED BY UNIVERSITY of Bordeaux enology professor Denis Dubourdieu as "probably the grape with the longest consumer history of all," Aglianico was cultivated by the Phoenicians, exported by the Greeks, and adored by the Romans before it was nearly decimated by phylloxera. Indigenous to the Campania and Basilicata regions of southern Italy, Aglianico is a dark-skinned variety that produces highly tannic, full-bodied wines with abundant acidity, though their flavor profiles vary depending on terroir and aging regimens.

Many winemakers across the world have started to grow Aglianico, experimenting with different agricultural conditions to further test the grape's adaptability. Winemakers have now planted the variety in such diverse places as California and Australia, achieving positive results in the New World.

Because Aglianico tends to excel in warm, dry settings, it favors Mediterranean climates, but it's been known to prosper in areas with volcanic soils and heavy rainfall as well. The variety is able to adjust guite seamlessly as long as it's planted at high altitudes. While it buds early, it ripens at a rather leisurely pace, with harvest often taking place as late as November; this ensures that the tannins ripen along with the sugars.

Often referred to as "the Barolo of the South," Aglianico wines are known for their elegance and possess aging potential similar to the world-class Nebbiolo wines of Piedmont. Even 20 years on and beyond, they will likely exhibit softer tannins as their overall acidity lessens. The most renowned styles of the variety hail from the Taurasi (Campania) and Vulture (Basilicata) DOCGs, but some interesting examples can also be found in the Murge area within the Castel del Monte DOC of Puglia.



Giovanna Paternoster of Quarta Generazione holds a healthy bunch of Aglianico grapes.

TAURASI DOCG, CAMPANIA

Campania's proximity to the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Apennine Mountains influences the flavor profile of these expressions, making them ripe, structured, rich, and ample in both length and depth. Taurasi wines must be produced with at least 85% Aglianico and aged for three years (one of which must occur in barrels).

Aged 12 months in French casks and barriques, the Antica Masseria del Sigillo (\$33) from Claudio Quarta's Cantino Sanpaolo winery is a single-vineyard wine produced from 45-year-old vines. The vineyard is situated at 350 meters above sea level and faces southwest.

VULTURE DOCG, BASILICATA

Aglianico is planted and cultivated on the mineral-rich slopes of the extinct Monte Vulture volcano, and because the vines are planted at a higher altitude, they can benefit from cooler conditions. The hot, dry summers, however, make this a notable region for the grapes to reach full maturity without losing acidity. Here, the

variety ripens late, spending extra time on the vines to gain complexity and depth. These wines require a lengthier aging process in order to develop their most robust flavor profiles.

For the Quarta Generazione (\$34) from Aglianico del Vulture, fermentation unfolds at controlled temperatures before the wine spends 12 months in big barrels and small new barriques. It can age an additional ten to 15 years after release, and only 1,500 cases were produced.

CASTEL DEL MONTE DOC, PUGLIA

The vineyards on the Murge plateau lie between 180-450 metres above sea level. The soil is dolomitic limestone, and the dry Mediterranean allows for full ripening. The wines are typically floral, fruity, and well structured, though they're less austere than their Vulture counterparts.

One of the DOC's standout wines is the Tormaresca Bocca di Lupo 2015 Aglianico (\$70), an organic expression that aged 20 months in barriques and one year in bottle before release. §



oakridgewinery.com

A Lightbulb Moment

HOW CHEF AMY BRANDWEIN OF D.C.'S CENTROLINA CAME TO VALUE WINE

IN HER ROLE as the chef/owner of Centrolina in Washington, D.C., Amy Brandwein has been a finalist for the James Beard Foundation's Best Chef Mid-Atlantic award for three years running. For those familiar with this formidable chef and her soulful regional-Italian cooking, her strong showing is hardly a shock: Before opening Centrolina in 2015, she was the first female chef de cuisine at Roberto Donna's revered Galileo.

Perhaps more surprising, though, is her background on the beverage side. "When I started cooking, I wasn't really a wine drinker," Brandwein says. "I hadn't really thought about it." In her years at Galileo, she'd become familiar with Italian wines, but once she had her own restaurant, she knew she had to get serious. Her first sommelier, Kristin Welch, was so passionate about their list's producers that Brandwein began paying more attention to the wines and how they worked with her food—a choice that led to some unexpected insights.

Soon after opening Centrolina, Brandwein took her two managers to visit Italian wine country, hopping from Alto Adige to Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, and Piemonte. "For me, the lightbulbs went off when I met the producers we sell in the restaurant," she recalls. "All of a sudden, things really started clicking." She also began to realize why the wines of a particular region pair so seamlessly with its food: Both come from the same land. For example, Brandwein says, "The Nebbiolos of Piemonte go really well with a classic pappardelle with veal ragú." (And by that she doesn't mean big, old Barolos—Centrolina has limited space to store wine, so the list concentrates on expressions that don't require long aging.)

In Emilia-Romagna, lunch at Cleto Chiarli—which makes a Lambrusco Grasparossa di Castelvetro Amabile that Brandwein



Pipe Dreams Dairy goat cheese is served with Delaware strawberries and ramps. Below: Tuna with bone marrow is another standout dish at the restaurant.

has always loved—was a revelation. There in the land of prosciutto, culatello, and all things fatty and delicious, she understood why the fizzy red wine with its bright fruit and refreshing acidity is perfect not only with salumi but also with the region's rich

Back in D.C., Brandwein orders dinner every night at Centrolina and tries different wines with whatever she's having. While she says that "some things you think might work just don't," she's convinced that "an exact pairing does exist" for every dish at the restaurant, like Nerello Masca-

pasta and meat dishes.

lese with the whole roasted branzino or Carricante with skate wing, scallop, charred spinach, and caper butter.

When she visited the Mount Etna region in Sicily earlier this summer, Brandwein met up with Passopisciaro founder Andrea Franchetti, who had previously presided over a wine dinner at Centrolina. "I got lost trying to find the estate, but when I saw the vineyard and where they're located, it blew my mind," she says. "Once I saw where the lava cut through their valley, I really understood why their Nerello Mascalese tastes the way it does."

In mid-July, Brandwein opened her newest venture: Piccolina, an all-day café, market, and bakery with a wood-fired oven. Conveniently located across the street from Centrolina, it will offer just four wines by the glass—a sparkling, a rosé, a white, and a red. SI

Introducing Packable Saké: Enjoy On the Rocks and Off the Grid



{ sparkling }

ASSESSING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPARKLING AND STILL AT THE J VINEYARDS & WINERY AND FROMAGES DE FRANCE CORK + RIND EVENT IN WEST HOLLYWOOD. CA

A Detour in Winemaking

by Jessie Birschbach



J Vineyards & Winery winemaker Nicole Hitchcock appeared at a pairing seminar during the Cork + Rind event, held at the Palihouse hotel in West Hollywood, CA.

LARRIVED LATE to the recent Cork + Rind event at the Palihouse hotel in West Hollywood, thereby missing the seminar on pairing wine and cheese. To make matters worse, I was so fascinated during my conversation with I Vineyards & Winery winemaker Nicole Hitchcock that I neglected to speak with Fromages de France's François Robin. So, my apologies, dear readers: Rather than a lighthearted piece on pairing New World wine and Old World cheese, this is now mostly about the differences in making sparkling and still wine—though we did touch briefly on the parallels of cheese production and the traditional sparkling winemaking process, particularly in terms of building complexity over time.

I'll also add that the earthy Epoisses de Bourgogne cheese went perfectly with the forest-floor character of the I Vineyards & Winery Pinot Noir. And come to think of it, the producer's bright Cuvée 20 cut the richness of the Brillat Savarin triple cream brie like a warm, sharp knife, but again, perhaps what's most interesting here is an insider's take on the divergence of bubbles and still.

Although the perceptive University of California, Davis, grad has been with Vineyards for five vintages, her experience with the winery represents her first foray into sparkling winemaking. It's a great place to start considering the 30-plus-year legacy that the family-owned sparkling house has built. Below is what she's learned so far, in her own words:

"I think it's one of those crafts where everyone wants to make sparkling wine. All winemakers drink sparkling, but not a lot get the opportunity to make it ... I was very fortunate to land in a spot where there were already some great mentors in place. Our cellarmaster had been at I for 20 years and still sits with us in blending sessions, and it adds this really interesting historical perspective. Our associate winemaker had been there for ten years as well, so I've been lucky.

"But it really is a labor of love: Sparkling winemaking makes still winemaking seem easy—which sounds crazy, because it's in no way easy. With sparkling winemaking, you're conducting fermentations year-round. You're trying to project out years in advance how the wine is going to evolve and develop in the bottle. I mean, you're talking about nuances at an early stage that are going to develop into bigger differences later on ... Also, with sparkling, you're revisiting each wine that you make—at the blending stage when you're bottling, and then [you're] revisiting a prior vintage of that same wine once [or] maybe multiple times throughout the year as you're deciding on the dosage.

"With those dosage trials, you're really trying to dial in that final balance. It's a lot of visiting and revisiting and vision and looking forward. What I've learned is that taking very detailed notes at every stage is beyond helpful because I can go back and read what I was thinking seven years ago, then figure out how to tweak my approach to make the next bottle better than the last."



Service from the Heart

A SAN FRANCISCO-BASED SOMM RECOUNTS HER EXPERIENCE AT **AUCTION NAPA VALLEY**

by Laura Pauli



Sommelier Laura Pauli of Domaine Rouge-Bleu and Roman Montanez of Napa Valley Vintners at this year's Auction Napa Valley.

WHEN I READ about the opportunity to volunteer at Auction Napa Valley through SommFoundation, I immediately applied. I'd been regaled with stories of this spectacular event complete with iconic wines, winemakers, and industry legends; more importantly, though, I was struck by how this auction, which has invested \$180 million in local nonprofits since 1981, so profoundly helps the local community. Because of Auction Napa Valley's fundraising, aid was immediately dispatched to those affected by the 2014 earthquake and the recent devastating fires. The group behind the event, Napa Valley Vintners, is also partnering with a variety of organizations to help increase access to healthcare for Napa County residents.

As a hospitality professional, I take seriously my responsibility to ensure through graciousness and humble expertise that my guests have a memorable experience, whether I'm working at a three-Michelin-starred restaurant or a hip pop-up in my home town of San Francisco. Things are no different at Auction Napa Valley: Thirty-five sommeliers from across the U.S. and Canada came together to provide exceptional service and make the auction as enjoyable as possible for attendees.

For me, it was a thrill to meet winemakers I'd learned about in books and industry publications and on wine labels, as well as to taste wines I never thought I'd have the chance to experience. More heartwarming, though, was the camaraderie of this team most of whom had never met—coming together for such a consequential purpose: not only to support the local community but also to personify excellence through our level of service alongside our fellow sommeliers and hospitality professionals.

SommFoundation's mission statement is to "assist wine and spirits professionals to achieve the highest level of proficiency and accreditation in the food and beverage industry." It certainly achieves that, but it does so much more. I was introduced to SommFoundation through my wine studies and learned that it hosts many enrichment trips to wine regions around the world, as well as awards scholarships for exams.

One of my chef instructors in cooking school always admonished us, "What you put in the pot is what you get out of the pot."That couldn't be truer with this SommFoundation enrichment trip. Diving in, welcoming, reaching out, offering advice to out-of-towners, and planning side trips, dinners, and tastings—it all enhanced the richness of this experience. Our networks expanded along with our hearts. It was a professional honor and personal privilege to have volunteered for this event with such an extraordinary team. SI





the peanut butter whiskey shot, was conceived by owner Steven Yeng, and despite being cumbersome to make, roughly 3,000 of them would pass over the bar counter on peak days.

Fortunately, Steven's wife, Brittany Merrill Yeng—a former pharmaceuticalpatent attorney with a master's degree in chemistry—partnered with him to take this concept to the next level. Together, the couple developed a shelf-stable, mixologist-friendly version of this nutty, creamy opus: Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey, a result that's perhaps even better than its source of inspiration.

While many might believe that peanut butter would be "an easy flavor," in Brittany's words, to capture in liquid form, the Yengs focused on highlighting the ingredient's subtle intricacies. "It's a complex flavor that's sweet and savory—it touches on every flavor profile," she adds. To create a multidimensional spirit ideal for mixology, they sourced premium flavors derived from peanuts and sugarcane as well as American whiskey. And while the recipe itself is still a closely guarded secret, Brittany assures that the goal is to always "put quality first."

(T.H.C.), which doubles as a live-music

"Tastes Like a Vacation" The Yengs have now created a new restaurant concept (which they've divested to focus fully on Skrewball) in free-spirited Ocean Beach: The Holding Company





Created by Sam Padilla, The Holding Company, San Diego

1½ oz. Skrewball Peanut **Butter Whiskey**

½ oz. Zaya Gran Reserva Rum

3/4 oz. fresh pineapple juice

½ oz. coconut cream

¼ oz. fresh orange juice

Combine ingredients in a cocktail shaker. Shake and strain over fresh ice. Garnish with nutmeg, a Luxardo cherry, and a pineapple leaf.

venue. Here, in the hands of a skilled mixologist, Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey comes to life.T.H.C. "cocktologist" Sam Padilla was inspired to create a signature drink when he realized that a tiki-inspired cocktail would complement Skrewball; with the Skrewball Painkiller, he approached the balance of ingredients more as a chef than as a bartender.

Adding the whiskey to the recipe, which features rum, pineapple juice, orange juice, and coconut cream, balances the drink's citric sweetness by adding an earthy cacao-nuttiness and hints of umami to the bright, tropical flavors. The result is pure self-indulgence on the palate: "The Skrewball Painkiller tastes like a vacation— [you're] instantly at the beach where life is good," Padilla adds.

Thanks to a partnership with Infinium Spirits, this small brand from Ocean Beach is making big waves in the spirits industry, where it will continue to be a surprisingly delicious contradiction to expectations of what a flavored whiskey should be. §



BY THEIR VERY NATURE, vintage Ports are among the most elusive of fortified wines, as they account for just 2% of total Port production and are only made during exceptional harvests. However, universally declared vintages, in which the majority of Port houses agree on a single spectacular year, are even rarer.

To put this in perspective, consider that only 25 vintages were universally declared over the course of the 20th century, and in the past 19 years, there have only been five such vintages: 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2016, thus maintaining the onceevery-four-years average.

But two years ago, something nearly unprecedented occurred: The 2017 vintage, partially defined by an unusually hot harvest that resulted in smaller but fuller-flavored, more concentrated grapes, was universally declared by the majority of Port houses. Thus, for the first time since the harvests of 1872 and 1873, back-toback universally declared vintages have been released, with the 2017 just now starting to enter the market.

The obvious question is, "How do these two vintages compare?"The answer is, they don't—at least, not exactly."When you look at the years of 2016 and 2017, they have the same qualities, but they're not the same stylistically because of the growing seasons," says Adrian Bridge, Managing Director of The Fladgate Partnership, which produces the Taylor Fladgate, Fonseca, Croft, and Krohn vintage Ports, among others. "The '16 was a long, relatively cool growing season with more rainfall, producing purity of fruit and lots of structure. Overall, it was a very traditional vintage Port."

In 2017, however, "We had a very early harvest, finishing about the same date the 2016 harvest started," Bridge continues. "Plus, 2017 had the extraordinary occurrence of the source of the River Douro drying up in early September, so it was a dry winter and a hot and dry spring, and everything accelerated. That produced a very different style of Port."

Indeed, the overall assessment of the 2017s is that they're a bit more robust

than the slightly more delicate 2016s; by virtue of the thicker skins of the grapes, they also possess more tannins, which hint at longer aging potential. It is partly for this reason that Symington Family Estates, producers of Graham's, Dow's, Warre's, and Cockburn's (all universally declared), typically holds back 20% of its vintages.

"This back-to-back declaration was extraordinary because the wines were so different," says Rupert Symington, CEO of Symington Family Estates. "But if anybody in 25 years wants to taste the 2017 vintage Port in perfect mature condition, they'll have to come to us."

Given that the 2017 was an even smaller harvest than the 2016, prudent buyers might be well advised to stock up on both vintages while they can, with an eye toward keeping the 2017s for the long term. Of course, there's also always the option of purchasing them at auction in the years to come. §

Making Austria's Modern Red

BECAUSE AUSTRIA'S REPUTATION is

based on its whites, the global wine industry has often overlooked the evolution of the country's reds in recent years. Its most prominent variety for quality, ageworthy red wine is undoubtedly Blaufränkisch, which produces medium-bodied, spicescented expressions that are distinctively blue-fruited and incredibly food-friendly.

The Austrian regulatory system has designated three DACs for Blaufränkisch in Burgenland, the easternmost portion of the country that lies along the Hungarian border. Of these, the northernmost is the Leithaberg DAC, which is located along the western shore of Lake Neusiedl; the others, Mittelburgenland DAC and Eisenberg DAC, lie south of the lake. The DAC system is not universally applied, so many of the top wines carry the more generic Burgenland designation, but these labels still prove useful in deciphering regional differences.

Leithaberg

Situated west of the lake at the northeastern tip of the Alps, the Leitha Mountains gave this DAC its name. The underlying bedrock here is mostly composed of schist, with patches of fossil-rich limestone on the lower slopes; this underpinning joins forces with the warm Pannonian winds moving across the lake to give Leithaberg wines their distinctive character.

In 1986, Ernst Triebaumer became the first to bottle a 100% Blaufränkisch in the post-World War II era. The wine, made with fruit grown in the limestone-based soils of the Mariental vineyard, quickly earned a cult following and is widely credited with kickstarting the modern red-wine movement in Austria. Another Leithaberg star is Georg Prieler, known for expressions from the renowned Goldberg vineyard, where the schist-based soils retain more heat: an essential asset for the cooler, northwest-facing site. Limestonebased sites like Marienthal are usually situ-

EXPLORING THE THREE REGIONS BEHIND THE BLAUFRÄNKISCH GRAPE by Michael Dolinski



Near Lake Neusiedl, a bicycle path is surrounded by vineyards in Austria's Leithaberg DAC.

ated on lower, east-facing slopes and have more Panonnian influence, but the warmth is balanced by the cooler soils.

Mittelburgenland

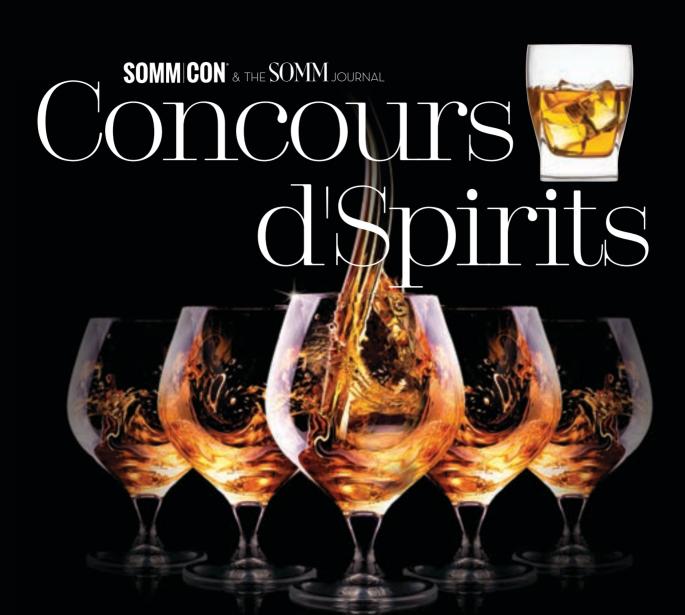
The rolling hills of Mittelburgenland are a mixture of schist, limestone, clay, and sand, and as a result, they produce a broader and richer style than Leithaberg. Historically, this area sent most of its harvest to the Hungarian village of Sopron to be vinified and sent to markets abroad. After WWII, with Sopron sequestered behind the Iron Curtain, most growers shifted to producing bulk wine; then, in the 1990s, the international trend toward oakiness reached Austria, and Blaufränkisch growers fell in line. Only in the last 20 years have top producers returned to making terroirdriven wines.

Roland Velich of Moric (which produces wines from Lutzmannsburg and Neckenmarkt) and Franz Weninger of Weingut Weninger (based in Horitschon) are among the leaders when it comes to celebrating the character of specific villages and sites. Regarding his most famous vineyard, Dürrau, Weninger says that the cool, clay-rich soil proves key to retaining acidity; because it allows for a later harvest, it imparts additional richness without overpowering Blaufränkisch's trademark freshness.

Eisenberg (Südburgenland)

The southern part of Burgenland is defined by a south-facing slope of ironrich, crystalline schist. Because Eisenberg is further removed from the Pannonian influence, harvests occur even later than Mittelburgenland. The region is home to only a few top producers, but the distinctive, zesty character of the wines makes them worth seeking.

The established star in Eisenberg is Reinhold Krutzler, but young Christoph Wachter's expressions are quickly becoming some of the most highly sought in the area. His wines possess a beautiful focus and balance that allow the region's trademark purple flowers and peppery spice to shine.



Spirits Competition at SommCon San Diego

NOVEMBER 2019

Presented by The SOMM Journal, SommCon's Concours d'Spirits is an impartial competition for domestic and international spirit brands during SommCon's San Diego conference, set for November 13-15. Entries are judged blindly by a jury of 12 world-renowned leaders within the wine and spirits industry, ensuring that all competition submissions are treated uniformly and fairly.

SommCon is a three-day educational event for sommeliers and beverage professionals, drawing 600-plus industry leaders to Southern California. All medal winners will be featured in a tasting for conference attendees on November 14.

In addition to providing exposure throughout the event, SommCon's partnership with *The SOMM Journal* will amplify news of your medal award to a national trade audience through coverage within the magazine, online, and on social-media channels.

The Judging

The **Concours d'Spirits** judging panel comprises Master Sommeliers, Masters of Wine, and professional somms embedded in the wine and spirits industry; their evaluation will recognize the highest-quality craftsmanship of craft distillers and global brands alike. Judging will be held on November 13.

The Accolades

Medal award winners
receive more than bragging
rights: Earning a Concours
d'Spirits medal means
your product was chosen
as a representative of its
category by sommeliers
whose palates are among
the most renowned in their
field. Medals are awarded in
categories of Silver, Gold, Double
Gold, and the SOMM Journal
Award of Excellence



The Tasting

Held November 14 during the second day of the SommCon conference, the Concours d'Spirits tasting puts your brand on display for the 600-plus members of the industry in attendance. The tasting will unfold at the InterContinental Hotel on the shore of the San Diego Bay and is made available to conference attendees during the SommCon registration process.





The Buzz -

Medal winners receive immediate exposure to a buying audience; digital and print recognition; and promotional, license-free marketing assets with which to promote their award. Winners will receive:

A display at the Concours d'Spirits tasting

A listing in a special Results Report in the February/ March 2020 issue of *The SOMM Journal*

A winner announcement in the December issue of SommConfidential

Inclusion in social media announcements on the SommCon Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn platforms that will be distributed to SommCon's beverage director and sommelier database

Winners Circle placement on the SommCon website

Prestigious medals for marketing and display

A digital medallion for use on websites and in newsletters as well as print and digital advertisements

A press release template to publicize their win

The ability to order royalty free point-of-sale materials such as bottle stickers and shelf talkers

Discounted pricing (\$595) for the 2019 Concours d'Spirits judging expires August 15; entries accepted after that date will cost \$695. No entries will be accepted after September 15. Payment is due at the time of entry. Ready to submit?

Go to sommconusa.com/competitions.html





Straight from the

Iconic Vineyards Define GUARACHI FAMILY WINES

story by Deborah Parker Wong / photos by Jeremy Ball

only way to secure your destiny is to own the vineyard," says Alex Guarachi, who founded Guarachi Family Wines more than a decade ago and is now the owner of two estate vineyards in Sonoma and Napa Valley. Until recently, Guarachi has offered his wines exclusively to the trade and consumers at events like the Sonoma County Barrel Auction and Aspen Food & Wine in addition to selling allocations to a handful of key markets around the U.S.To appease growing demand, he established a wine club in 2017, and with the recent completion of a winery at his Meadowrock estate in Atlas Peak, Guarachi and Chief Winemaker Iulian Gonzalez can now exercise far more control over the destiny of their coveted estate fruit.

Under Gonzalez's astute supervision, the production of Guarachi's wines begin in his Sonoma and Napa properties, which—with the exception of elevation—are in many respects as different as night and day. The quest for sourcing autonomy began in earnest when Guarachi acquired the 42-planted-acre Sun Chase Vineyard in 2013; originally established as the sister site to Gap's Crown Vineyard, Sun Chase is the highest-altitude vineyard in the Petaluma Gap AVA.

"Guarachi Family Wines really displays the varying terroirs, from the top of Sun Chase to the volcanic soils of Atlas Peak, in an almost showmanship style of winemaking. These wines are as complex and unique as Alex Guarachi himself."

-Scott Taylor, Wine Director, Harris' The San Francisco Steakhouse

Guarachi in Sonoma

Sited on a southwest-facing hillside on Sonoma Mountain, Sun Chase receives the full brunt of the Pacific Ocean winds that flow through the Petaluma Gap, which was designated as an AVA in December 2017. Like so many iconic California vineyards, Sun Chase has earned its well-deserved reputation from the esteemed producers that make vineyard-designate wines from the site.

According to Gonzalez, at least half a dozen wineries and proprietors—including Dan Kosta, Kosta Brown, La Follette,

Château Boswell, and Pride—produce single-vineyard-designate wines from Sun Chase. "There's a demand for a vineyarddesignate Pinot Noir as well," he says. "While it's planted primarily to Dijon Pinot Noir clones, there are blocks of both Swan and Calera—the massal selection clones so readily adapted to this cooler site—that are now coming online."

After tasting new releases and some older vintages from the portfolio at Piperade in San Francisco, Sarah Trubnik, owner of The Barrel Room, says, "I'm most impressed with their representation of the Sun Chase Vineyard. In my opinion, this



iconic Petaluma Gap vineyard offers a taste of what California can properly do with cooler-climate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The 2017 Sun Chase Chardonnay has the richness and body of a barrel-fermented Chardonnay with full malo, while maintain-

Tasting Notes

Guarachi Family Wines 2016 Sun Chase Chardonnay, Petaluma Gap (\$50)

An apparent signature of new French oak is married to a ripe fruit profile with brown spice and tropical notes.



Guarachi Family Wines 2017 Sun Chase Chardonnay, Petaluma Gap (\$60)

The majority of this Petaluma Gap-appellated wine undergoes barrel fermentation and completes a natural malolactic conversion. With this wine. Gonzalez proves he can craft cool-climate Chardonnay that's aromatic and precise without being stingy.



Guarachi Family Wines 2014 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast

(\$65) Fruit is sourced predominately from Sun Chase with some additional grapes hailing from Gap's Crown. The new oak (40%) is well integrated, and the wine shows apparent yet silky tannins, black cherry, and a flicker of char.



Guarachi Family Wines 2017 Sun Chase Pinot Noir, Petaluma Gap (\$75) Bright with cherry and plum, this expression has a deceiving amount of structure despite more

restrained extraction.



Guarachi Chief Winemaker Julian Gonzalez says that the Meadowrock estate vineyard in Atlas Peak is ideal for Cabernet Sauvignon, especially in cooler vintages.

ing elegance from slow ripening. The 2017 Pinot Noir shows delicate red fruits and light spice, with a signature juiciness and a long finish." Trubnik also notes that these wines represent a "fantastic" value.

Guarachi in Napa Valley

In his journey as a grower and vintner, Guarachi has also sourced Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley's most sought-after vineyards, including Beckstoffer Las Piedras Heritage Vineyard, the first winegrowing site in what is now the St. Helena AVA, and Beckstoffer To Kalon. He set his sights on vineyard ownership in 2012, when the price of Cabernet Sauvignon from Beckstoffer skyrocketed; the value of the same fruit shows no sign of slowing today.

The pursuit of superior Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon inspired the purchase of Meadowrock, a 62-acre estate in the Napa Valley Atlas Peak AVA, in 2014. The vineyard, which sits adjacent to Stagecoach Vineyard, is planted with 32 acres of mostly Bordeaux varieties at elevations up to 1,760 feet. The red volcanic soils there starkly contrast with the alluvial loams of the benchlands and valley floor below.

"Atlas Peak is an extraordinary site for Cabernet Sauvignon," says Gonzalez. "In cooler vintages that can be challenging on the valley floor, the elevation here means more ultraviolet and less of a struggle for physiological ripeness." Guarachi's Cabernet-dominant red blend, G by Alex Guarachi, which features 30% Syrah and 10% Merlot, is sourced from this estate vineyard.

With two superlative properties under his stewardship, Guarachi's intentions in regard to wine quality are crystal clear. After ten years of close collaboration, he appointed Gonzalez, who had worked with Paul Hobbs as a consulting winemaker on the brand, as Chief Winemaker in 2016. Together the two are forging the future for Guarachi Family Wines, and by all accounts, it appears to be extremely bright.



Guarachi Family Wines 2016 G by Alex Guarachi, Napa Valley (\$75) This Cabernetdominant blend ages in 40% new oak, which marries the dried herbs and dark spices from the Syrah (30%) with generous tannins softened by a 10% addition of Merlot.



Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$90) First tasted by The SOMM Journal's Meridith May as a barrel sample in late 2018, this 100% Cabernet is now ready for release. Both pretty and opulent, it features blue-floral aromas and pronounced flavors of black currant framed by supple, deftly integrated oak. Eighty percent of the fruit is sourced from the Broken Rock Vineyard on lower Atlas Peak, while the remainder hails

from Beckstoffer Las Piedras.

Guarachi Family Wines 2015



Guarachi Family Wines 2013 Beckstoffer Las Piedras Cabernet Sauvignon (\$250) There's a distinct red-apple

There's a distinct red-apple quality to this wine's aromas that are still quite youthful and nutty. Evolved pyrazines and tannins have clearly been worked in with restraint. While the price of access to this heritage vineyard continues to climb, the fruit is among the finest on the valley floor.



Guarachi Family Wines 2008 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$90) Offering primary aromas of black currant and black cherry, this wine is defined by amplified tannins and exotic spices of sandalwood, sweet tobacco, dried leaves, and earth.

Must Consume Fresh

BREAKING DOWN THE SHELF LIFE OF OLIVE OIL



Orietta Gianjorio is a Sensory Evaluation Specialist with certifications in wine, olive oil, honey, and chocolate. She works for the California Olive Oil Council; the Honey and Pollination Center at the University of California, Davis; and the Mars-UC Davis Chocolate Taste Panel. A published author with a master's degree in editorial/journalism, Gianjorio is also part of the Italian Registry of Journalists.

MANY SIMILARITIES EXIST between olive oil and wine. Both express different sensory profiles depending on genetics and terroir; can be described as having a robust, medium, or mild body; and offer infinite options for food pairing. But there's one difference that's incredibly important to note: Olive oil does not get better with age. As the freshly squeezed product of olive trees, extra-virgin olive oil, like all other juices, should be consumed as promptly as possible.

In the Northern Hemisphere, olives are harvested each fall. Considering it takes just a few hours, producing olive oil is a fairly quick process, so the harvest date and the production date should be viewed as one and the same. The freshest olive oil currently available on the market was harvested last fall.

An unopened bottle has a life expectancy of 12–14 months, but once you open it, start counting. After roughly six to eight weeks, all properties beneficial to health will start to fade (a shame, considering this liquid fat is one of the healthiest available) and the oil will lose its fresh aromatic compounds, instead developing characteristics of rancidity. If the oil is at least protected from light, heat, and thermal shocks, its true shelf life will depend on the level of phenols present that can act as antioxidants; these not only protect the oil but also benefit our bodies directly as we ingest it. Phenol levels depend on many factors, among them genetics, harvest practices, and extraction techniques.

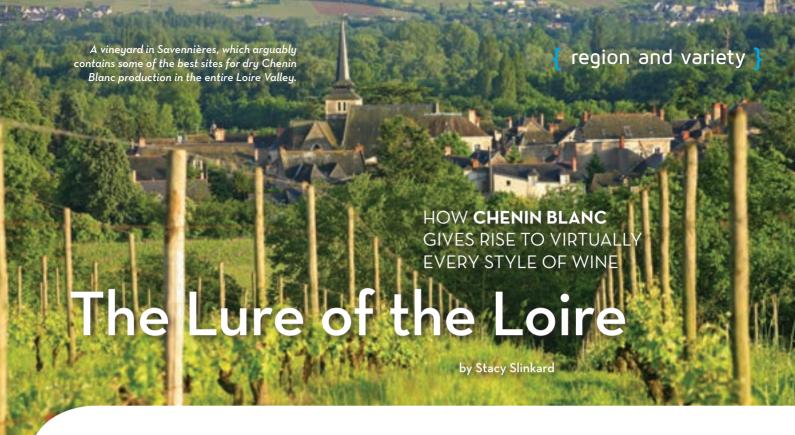
Checking the harvest date before purchasing will help you guarantee that your extra-virgin olive oil is fresh and that all healthful properties are still intact. It will also protect you from possible concerns regarding imported oils and their varying standards of quality.

Sometimes pretty labels and stylish bottles can catch our attention, but we should focus above all on finding information that will actually help us choose a high-quality product. Think of it like a new relationship: Instead of focusing solely on looks, gather the intel you need to determine if it's worth taking things to the next level. §

Did You Know?

There are more than 2,000 olive varieties, known as cultivars, in the world. (California alone is home to over 150.) Some are used strictly to produce olive oil, while some serve as table olives and others have a dual purpose. To help consumers make informed choices, olive cultivars should be identified on labels.





CHENIN BLANC'S FOOTING has held firm in the Loire Valley since the 15th century. While the variety also claims significant vineyard space in the U.S. and South Africa, its purest expressions of character and versatility rise from a mosaic of schist-, sand-, and limestone-laden soils between the cities of Savennières and Blois.

This 100-mile stretch of terroir serves as a showcase for Chenin Blanc's chameleon-like characteristics, which can be partially attributed to the grape's extended hang time, as it buds early and ripens late. "Chenin Blanc shows a wonderful diversity of styles, from bone-dry to off-dry and sparkling to some of the world's best dessert wines," says Raimonds Tomsons, the 2017 winner of ASI Europe's Best Sommelier competition. "Chenin Blanc is underappreciated, but [it's] truly one of the great wines of France."

According to InterLoire President Jean-Martin Dutour, 9.300 hectares of Chenin Blanc are planted across 22 of the Loire's roughly 50 appellations, representing 30% of the region's white-grape plantings. About 65% of the total yield is dedicated to sparkling-wine production, with 23% going to dry and off-dry styles and nearly 12% ending up in sweet wines. Favored for its elevated acidity and lively structure, the variety consistently shows floral- and mineral-driven characteristics with notes

of pear and citrus, while honey, almond, candied fruit, and snappy spice leave their mark with age.

The province of Anjou is home to the Loire's extraordinarily complex, intensely flavored botrytized wines from the Coteaux du Layon AOC and its two famous subregions, Quarts de Chaume and Bonnezeaux: Misty mornings, steep south-facing slopes, and shallow schist soils create favorable conditions for the development of the fungus. Ranking among the most celebrated dessert wines in the world, these 100% Chenin Blanc bottles carry rich profiles defined by stone fruit, hightoned acidity, and ABVs of 12-14% while delivering incredible ageworthiness.

Anjou also hosts the notable appellation of Savennières, which arguably contains some of the best sites for dry Chenin Blanc production in the entire Loire Valley. Austere in their youth and capable of developing both honeyed layers and a signature smoky minerality over time, Savennières expressions earned the title "most cerebral wine[s] in the world" from lacqueline Friedrich, the author of A Wine and Food Guide to the Loire.

Two small subregions exist in Savennières: La Roche aux Moines and Nicolas Joly's Biodynamically farmed vineyard La Coulée de Serrant, a 7-hectare plot with schist soils and steep, south-facing slopes

bordering the Loire River that constitutes its own AOC. Thanks to Joly's sustained success with Biodynamic viticulture, most growers in La Roche aux Moines are committed to organic and Biodynamic principles. These vineyards were planted by Cistercian monks in A.D. I 130 and have been continuously cultivated since, making 2019 their 889th consecutive vintage.



A Cistercian monastery in Coulée de Serrant.

According to Joly, the Biodynamic approach "ensures the wines are expressing local terroir with balanced soil structures." "Each time you bring in new animals to your vineyard, it's like adding strings to the orchestra," he adds, noting that they serve as both fertilizer and weed and pest control. Joly aims to capture this ensemble in the bottle, giving voice to the vineyard like few wines do for their respective sites. Whether it's Clos de la Coulée de Serrant made from 45-year-old vines or Les Vieux Clos from younger vines, this is "cerebral" Chenin Blanc at its very brightest. SJ





This home in Santiago Zacatepec, located in Mexico's Sierra Norte de Oaxaca region, is made with bricks from the Sombra Adobe Brick Project.

AS IT PRODUCES SOME OF THE BEST MEZCAL IN SANTIAGO MATATLÁN, SOMBRA SHOWS ITS **DEVOTION TO BOTH HIGH-QUALITY SPIRITS** AND COMMUNITY HOUSING

by Eric Marsh

WHEN IT COMES to the spirit of progress, it can be said that just because you've done well and good doesn't mean you can't do better. It would seem that Sombra Mezcal adheres to such a principle: In the 13 years since its founding, the brand has made great strides not only in quality—claiming a double gold medal at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition in 2016—but also in its commitments to both its community and the environment by reducing waste, upcycling its byproducts, and conserving water and energy.

Sombra's state-of-the-art palenque (distillery) is located in Santiago Matatlán in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, where it continues to produce its original spirit, Sombra Espadín, with organically farmed Espadín agave grown at high altitudes. The agaves are roasted in an underground stone pit known as a horno that's fueled by sustainably harvested Encino wood; inside, the high heat caramelizes the plants' starches into sugars fit for fermentation. After the agaves are crushed and their fibers and juice are fermented in wooden vats with ambient yeast, the liquid is distilled twice in copper pot stills. The resulting 90-proof mezcal is clean and fruity with notes of vanilla, faint smoke, and subdued ialapeño.

The brand recently announced the debut of a super-premium expression, Sombra Ensamble. The 103.2-proof, limited-edition mezcal—a blend of spirits made from wild Tepeztate (61%) and Tobalá (39%) agaves harvested high in the Sierra Juárez mountains—is crafted using the same process as the original expression.

In adherence with its mission, the brand is taking measures to ensure it doesn't deplete the area's natural resources as it broadens its portfolio. "In keeping with Sombra Mezcal's commitment to sustainability, we were meticulous in harvesting mature agaves, leaving many untouched to flower and propagate," says Distiller and Director General John Sean Fagan. "In addition, we planted 20,000 Tobalá agaves from seed and will replant them in the wild after two years of maturation to more than offset the 585 that were harvested for Sombra Ensamble."

Tinged with platinum hues, the clear spirit exudes an ethereal nose of citrus zest with a savory vegetal undertone and hints of honey and black pepper. On the silky, complex palate, something redolent of cake icing joins a note of tobacco and the essence of orange-peel oil, eventually leading into an opulent finish of sea-salt toffee.



Agaves roast by an open fire built with sustainably harvested Encino wood. Sombra roasts its agaves in underground stone pits before they're crushed and fermented.

Considering Sombra translates to "shadow," it's fitting that the Ensamble expression is bottled in sable glass and housed in a black box. With only 2,000 bottles produced, this is a sipping spirit



Rather than using a donkey to pull its heavy mill wheel, Sombra's distillery is outfitted with rooftop solar panels that power a mechanical tahona.

priced for special occasions at \$200 per 750-milliliter bottle. And with Sombra's innovations spawning a sort of ecorevolution in the mezcal industry, there's certainly reason to celebrate.

Spreading Environmental Awareness

It's no secret that mezcal production can be harmful to the environment: Liquid waste called *vinaza* has long been poured into the rivers near palenques, thereby polluting surrounding water sources. Because vinaza reduces oxygen levels in the water, the entire ecosystem is affected.

Sombra sought its own solution for mitigating these climate impacts, opting to mix dirt, the vinaza, and bagazo (the fibrous byproduct of mezcal production) with crushed limestone before forming the mixture into adobe bricks. The enterprise proved successful, and the brand now donates these sturdy slabs to earthquakestricken villages so residents can continue the process of rebuilding. Other mezcal producers have followed suit, a move Sombra strongly endorses, and the brand's leadership also wants to work collectively with other spirit companies to find new ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle within the industry. Sombra "welcomes other producers to visit our palenque and learn about our eco-friendly practices," says Fagan. "We actively encourage all producers to engage in a wider conversation and exchange ideas about ensuring a sustainable future for mezcal."

Meanwhile, on the roof of the Sombra palengue, a rainwater-collection system links to underground tanks that store water for non-potable purposes, including the watering of agave plants. Also on the roof are solar panels used to power the palengue's tahona, the millstone that's used to crush agaves. Historically, these heavy wheels have been manually pulled in circles by donkeys until the plants are rendered to fibers and juice, and while it could be argued that an electric-powered version might take away from the old-timey romance of traditional mezcal production, the animals would likely beg to differ.

Furthering its sense of responsibility toward both the land and its residents. Sombra donates at least 1% of its sales to environmental groups as well as to local educational programs as a member of 1% for the Planet, an international organization whose members contribute a portion of their sales to environmental causes. If you're not already inclined to support the brand, that 1% may be all the push you need: Sombra Ensamble is now available at select retailers and online at reservebar.com. It's a fair bet that once those new agaves have had time to grow and pullulate, Sombra will see to it that all other premium mezcal brands are standing in its shadow. SI

{ central coast }

LOYAL TO THE

SOLOMON HILLS

CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF GRAPE GROWING IN THE SANTA MARIA VALLEY AVA

> story by Meridith May photos by Jeremy Ball

THE DEFINING FEATURE of Solomon Hills Vineyard is its indisputable cool factor: That is to say, as the westernmost vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley, it's also the region's coldest. When a chilling breeze hits us in the face on an otherwise rather warm day in late June, you can almost smell the ocean air from the Pacific a mere II miles away.

In fact, this site was deemed so cold and so far west in the Santa Maria AVA that brothers Bob and Steve Miller were warned 20 years ago that grapes would not thrive in these conditions. "My dad and his brother were convinced otherwise," said Steve's son Marshall, who heads up farming and oversees Solomon Hills and his family's other world-famous site, Bien Nacido Vineyards.

Back then, this parcel of land was considered part of the Santa Barbara County AVA, but the Millers petitioned the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to expand the Santa Maria AVA's boundaries to include Solomon Hills. "It was a



Pictured at right are Steve Miller and his sons Nicholas and Marshall, fifth-generation grape growers and farmers, at their Solomon Hills estate vineyard. The site was named for the notorious bandit Salomon Picothe inspiration for the legendary character Zorro-who hid out in these hills in the late 19th century. Above: Solomon Hills distinguishes itself from other Santa Maria Valley vineyards through its sandy ocean soil; also known as oceana marina, it joins low moisture levels and cooling ocean winds to make this a remarkable site for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.



five-year process," Marshall explained.
"Our first Chardonnay was labeled as
Santa Barbara County, but after that, with
the new boundary at Clark Avenue and
the 101 freeway, these 100 acres could be
labeled as Santa Maria AVA wine."

While Solomon Hills' first plantings were Chardonnay, Pinot Noir now claims the majority of space. The earth is quite a departure from the shale- and clay-based soil of Bien Nacido just 8 miles east: The site sits in the valley on what was once an ocean floor, and the presence of oceana marina, which feels and looks like finely grained sand, results in crisp acidity and a bright fruit character that contrasts with the broodier nature of Bien Nacido Pinot Noir.

"Along with Bien Nacido, we wanted to produce world-class wines from the Santa Maria Valley. Our Solomon Hills and Bien Nacido estate wines are the Miller family's lens into these special sites," explained Marshall's brother Nicholas, who runs sales and marketing for the company, as he walked with us through the hilly slopes. "However, we also sell grapes to other top producers. Paul Lato, for

example, has stated that this vineyard has the potential to become the 'Grand Cru' of Santa Maria Valley, and Robert Parker's two highest Pinot Noir scores have been from this site."

A close-up view of these thin vines can be deceiving: Instead of the expected visual of gnarly, thick 20-year-old trunks, these plants look years younger: "This is what seven- or eight-year-old cordons look like," Marshall said. "The lack of nutrients in the soil and rapid water drainage create a lot of stress. It's like living in a sandy desert—the lack of water stunts their growth and creates a virtual fountain of youth."

In regard to the prevailing belief that yield is the enemy of quality in California grape farming, the Millers have the opposite "problem." With a naturally low production level, they have little fruit to crop. "Nature holds back here and slows things down: It's all a manifestation of how difficult it is to grow grapes here," Nicholas said. "But my father believed in this land, and getting 2 tons an acre for us, even if that is a struggle, works in our favor. That's the power of Solomon Hills."



Part of Thornhill Companies, Solomon Hills Berry Company yields some of the West Coast's finest blueberries for Driscoll's.

What Are Those Concentrated Berries?

Eager to prove the naysayers wrong, Steve Miller planted grapes on a site many had determined to be too cold—but his instincts were proven right by the long ripening times and ideal conditions for Burgundian fruit.

Thanks to the Millers' farming expertise, Solomon Hills is also home to some of the best blueberries grown on the West Coast. Just like the evolution of the Dijon clone for Pinot Noir, the family has gone through trial and error with various blueberry clones to uncover the ripening abilities of this fruit rich in antioxidants.

"This is the right place for blueberries," Marshall said. "We use hoop housing to precisely time ripening and plant roses just outside these tents to manage pest control. Degrees Brix matter here too, and because blueberries don't go dormant, we have two growing seasons—spring and fall."

Tasting Through Solomon Hills Pinot Noir and Chardonnay

Solomon Hills 2017 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley (\$45) This wine offers a fragrant array of lemon verbena, ocean air, and mineral-kissed butterscotch. That minerality, while edgy, refrains from cutting into the palate, instead inspiring a salted-taffy effect that's unique to this wine. White tea, unripe white peach, hazelnuts, and a squeeze of lemon keep the acidity ticking. With restrained opulence, it's Burgundian to the hilt, finishing with crème fraîche on the back of the mouth. 95

Solomon Hills 2016 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley (\$60) Intriguing aromas of strawberry and rhubarb just pulled from the soil and washed in brown sugar emerge vividly. On the palate, deep flavors of umami and mushroom join a green-tobacco quality. The mouthfeel is billowy, with velvety, refined tannins. Sandalwood and sassafras punctuate an Old World acidity. 96





THE RESTAURANT AT NOMAD IN LAS VEGAS IS SET TO ADD SOLOMON HILLS ESTATE TO ITS EXEMPLARY WINE PROGRAM

story by Jessie Birschbach photos by Mona Shield Payne

Standing in the grand dining room of The Restaurant at NoMad Hotel, I almost forgot I was in Las Vegas. Towering mahogany shelves containing over 19,000 books—some nearly 100 years old—seemed to fortify all four walls, and as I admired the organized grids of muted color, I learned that more than half of the collection was acquired from David Rockefeller, the late patriarch of one of America's most famous families.

Standing casually near a spiral staircase and chatting about Burgundy were Master Sommelier Will Costello, Estates Ambassador for Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills Estate Wines, and Kester Masias, NoMad's Wine Director. As friends and colleagues representing the tight-knit community of Vegas-based somms, Costello and Masias weren't just there to talk about Burgundy—even though, to be fair, the topic was timely given the astonishing similarities between the coveted Grand Cru versions of the French region's Chardonnay and that of Solomon Hills Estate.

In fact, it was the latter that initially lassoed the bright-eyed, savvy Costello into becoming an ambassador for the Solomon Hills Estate wines from the Miller family, who own both Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills, about two and a half years ago. He feels quite strongly that Solomon Hills is as close to Burgundy as it can get in the U.S. (Read more on the Millers in Meridith May's story on page 56.) "Of course I knew Bien Nacido historically—everyone knows Bien Nacido, It's one of the most famous vineyards in Santa Barbara," Costello told me. "When I tasted Solomon Hills, though, the vineyard spoke to me. I think it's a site that flies under the radar for so many producers. Bien Nacido is the one that people put on the list because it carries the cache, but Solomon Hills is the one where you're kind of in the know if you order that wine. As a sommelier, it's great to have it in your back pocket. It's fun to ask a guest if they'd like to taste something from California that doesn't taste like California."

Costello's insatiable appetite for learning has carried him far in the wine world. "For me, diving deep into a region like Santa Barbara is an amazing opportunity to find hidden gems for a wine list. That's how I really came across the [Solomon Hills] Estate wines," said the somm, who once claimed second place in the esteemed Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Young Sommelier Competition.

With plans to add both the Solomon Hills Estate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir to his program this summer, Masias shares Costello's excitement for the Central Coast winery. "These wines have purity and vibrancy—the cool climate and precise winemaking allow these expressions to shine in their youth," he said. "They

offer an appealing value and tip their hat to their Old World counterparts while remaining true to their surroundings."

Masias cut his professional teeth in the New York fine-dining scene, serving stints at Per Se and Marseille before running the wine programs for both Megu locations. After joining the NoMad somm team in 2014, he jumped at the chance to create a program from scratch when he was offered the Las Vegas wine director position almost a year ago. "We're a few months away from our one-year anniversary and we've opened three different spaces for food and wine here," he said. "The Restaurant offers a substantial wine list with 1.400 selections and growing to pair with the classic dishes

told us the story of a lauded Burgundian producer who mistook the latter for Corton-Charlemagne, we broke down exactly what we were tasting in the glass, attributing much of the wines' qualities not only to the site's windy, cool climate and well-drained sandy soils (read more on this in May's piece) but also to winemaker Trey Fletcher's careful and calculated approach to his craft.

Influenced by his time spent under the tutelage of Littorai Wines' Ted Lemon (who learned the winemaking techniques of Domaine Roulot and Domaine Dujac during his tenures at both producers), Fletcher is a strong believer in stem inclusion; the socalled Roulot technique, which essentially



NoMad Wine Director Kester Masias recommends pairing the Solomon Hills Estate Pinot Noir, which will soon be offered at the hotel's restaurant, with the dry-aged burger.

that we've brought from the menu in New York, like the fruits de mer and the NoMad roast chicken."

Much to my surprise, the thoughtful and soft-spoken wine director isn't prone to pairing the Solomon Hills Estate Pinot Noir with the latter dish, which is perhaps the hotel's most acclaimed across its three locations. Instead, he suggests the dry-aged burger, which comes topped with cheddar and caramelized red onion. "The subtle funk from the dry-aged patty calls for a bright, red fruit-driven wine to cut through the richness of the burger," he explained.

Even without these gourmand cheeseburgers, the three of us happily sat at a table to sip on the Solomon Hills Estate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. After Costello

entails transferring wine from an oxidative environment to a reductive one; and organic farming practices. The result, according to Costello—and bolstered by my own findings during our tasting—was a Chardonnay with lightning-like acidity, a slight phenolic bitterness, and incredible structure as well as a lean, savory, and bright Pinot Noir. Fletcher's skills are a perfect match for the Millers and their goal to produce the ultimate expression of the vineyard.

Considering the Miller family's almostpsychic intuition regarding site selection and Fletcher's exacting technique, the story of Solomon Hills Estate is one that deserves to be told. Perhaps it's even bound to become a classic fit to live on the bookshelves of The Restaurant at NoMad. 81

In a Dry Land,

AFLOOD OF NAMES A RISK WITH ITS NEW LABELING SYSTEM

story and photos by Doug Frost, MS, MW



Looking out above the town of Porrera into the vineyards of Priorat.

ALL THE ROADS in Priorat look the same: On one side, angled to the sky like a giant's fence posts, are massive piles of slate, while a scrubby, aromatic landscape of fennel, wild asparagus, lavender, and little yellow flowers dominates the other. These flowers, which emit a scent resembling cumin or curry, are referred to by the locals as *siempre viva* ("always alive"), and when I came across them a few years ago, they answered a question I'd mused over for years. I had always smelled cumin in the region's wines, but I didn't know at the time what the source could be.

Priorat residents think the wild fennel has an even bigger impact than the flowers, but it's universally held that the llicorella soil—represented by those slate slabs along the road—has the greatest influence on the wines, even if it can't be tied to a specific aroma or flavor. Those traversing the area will notice that the boundary between Priorat and Montsant is determined by that slate; the second you see it, you've entered Priorat.



Are Priorat and Montsant so different? Yes and no. The grapes are the same, as is their intensity, and both regions' wines boast robust alcohol and ever-present tannins. Miraculously, they carry higher acidity than they ought to, considering those alcohol levels (for that, we might thank the breezes coming off of the

Mediterranean Sea, which lies just 20-30 miles from any vineyard). Montsant's soils are more limestonebased, so the acids present in the wines can be even racier at times.

In Priorat, however, llicorella imparts a mineral feel and flavor to the wines that many can detect. While its true source remains controversial to some, if you're comfortable with the overall concept, Priorat (like the Mosel, Chablis, Douro, Martinborough, Piedmont, Santorini, and many other regions) offers an opportunity to taste this minerality through that grainy texture—that pop, that dryness—that cannot be wholly explained by phenols or acids.

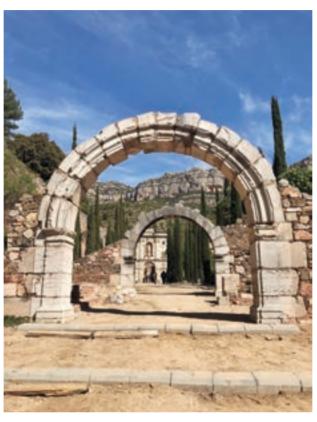
Priorat's vineyards have operated since the 12th century (Alfonso II, the

King of Aragon, gave the region's prime property, Escaladei, to Cistercian monks in A.D. 1194), and while the wine had a reputation, it may have been based more on politics or economics than founded upon excellence. The all-powerful church ended its reign during the Carlist Wars (1833-76), and the citizenry's disregard for the clergy is best exemplified by its pillaging of Escaladei for all manner of building materials for the next century or more.

The wine suffered a similar fate at the hand of phylloxera a few decades later, but in the 1980s, Priorat was championed by a cohort of 20-somethings, among them René Barbier, Daphne Glorian, Álvaro Palacios, Carlos Pastrana, and José Luis Pérez. Despite this shift in leadership and the innovation it's inspired, however, llicorella

has remained the driving force behind the region's rediscovery.

So, if the overarching personality of Priorat lies in its soil, according to Palacios, "It is time to respect a more specific origin." In short, generic Priorat no longer suffices. In hopes of creating something closer to the classic vineyard borders, the



The famed arches of Cartuja d'Escaladei, established in the 12th century, lead to a Carthusian monastery in Priorat, allegedly the first established on the Iberian Peninsula.

consejo regulador (regulatory council) and the vintners have spent a decade or so drafting new boundaries based upon the vineyard delineations of the mid-20th century. As Palacios says, "It is about naming a certain wine as it should be, according to the place it is from."

So paratges, or vineyard names, will soon be the new labeling norm for Priorat. But here's the problem: There are 459 of them. Pity the aspiring Master Sommelier candidate tasked with learning them, or, if nothing else, pity the consumer who must somehow accept on faith alone that each is worth naming in the first place. The motivation for the change is clear, as existing law only permits producers to use the name of the village closest to their vineyards. If Priorat indeed encompasses

great vineyards (a fact many agree upon), and if the world's greatest vineyards are known and named, then Priorat should do the same.

In creating a new classification system, the region is taking a risk, and many decisions are yet to come. As it stands now, the system includes:

DOQ Priorat Wine: The existing nomenclature regards generic Priorat as one of the top two DOQs in Spain (the other is Rioja).

Vi de Vila: Any producer can currently label a wine with any of the primary villages in Priorat (Escaladei, Poboleda, Torroja, La Vilella Alta, La Vilella Baixa, El Lloar, Gratallops, Porrera, Bellmunt, Masos de Falset, and Solanes del Molar).

Vi de Paratge: This term represents any one of the 459 individual vineyards or paratges.

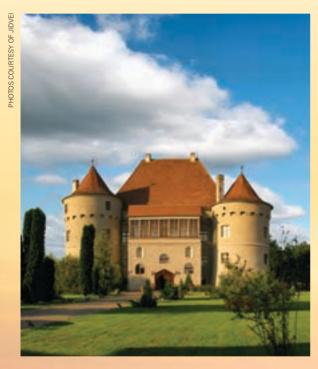
Vinya Classificada: To date, only four paratges have been awarded this status— Mas de la Rosa (owned by Vall Llach), Clos Mogador, and Mas d'en Gil's two vineyards, Coma Blanca and Coma Vella. The regulatory language describes it as a wine of "exceptional virtues [that] needs to be bottled separately."The consejo notes that it's received 20 new petitions for different qualifications, with a goal of resolving them in the coming months.

Gran Vinya Classificada: Only Palacios' famed L'Ermita vineyard has been granted this status at present. As the consejo says, "These are very rare samples of natural and historical talent." Meanwhile, Velles Vinyes (old vines) are officially defined as vines planted before 1945.

With nearly 5,000 acres of vineyards, 575 winemakers, and 109 wineries, Priorat is not the same sparse region it was only a decade or two ago. Its success has been hard won, and it's now demanding its status as a peer to the world's most prestigious wine regions. This new system may give Priorat a pulpit influential enough to command such attention, or it may devolve into an unruly choir of separate voices—but for now, encouragingly, everyone seems to be singing from the same hymnal. SI

20 Years and

Counting



Jidvei's Cetatea de Balta castle in Romania.

ROMANIA'S **JIDVEI WINERY** LOOKS TO BOTH ITS PAST AND ITS FUTURE

by Rina Bussell

ong before the mention of Transylvania evoked stories of Vlad the Impaler and Count Dracula, the area was known for its longstanding history of wine production. Evidence of winemaking in the region previously known as Weinland—and now named Târnave—can be traced back to the Iron Age, although it wasn't until the I 3th century that modern viticulture was introduced by way of the Saxons.

Growing conditions here are particularly favorable for white grape varieties. With its cool continental climate moderated by the Tâmava river; long, dry growing seasons; and rolling hills protected by the Carpathian Mountains, Târnave is quite similar to Alsace in France.

Romanian winery Jidvei was established in 1949, a time of turmoil for the winemaking industry in Eastern Europe. The country remained under communist rule from 1947 to



1989, and during that time, the economy partially relied upon forced collectivization of the agricultural sector. As a state-owned entity, lidvei produced wine as a form of currency for export markets, and after the Romanian Revolution, the winery floundered before falling into disrepair. When the Necsulescu family privatized lidvei along with the adjoining vineyards and the Cetatea de Balta castle in 1999, the facilities resembled graveyards filled with rudimentary winemaking equipment.

Although they lacked winemaking experience, the dogged perseverance and passion of the Necsulescus helped lidvei not only to survive but to flourish. They set upon modernizing the winery, outfitting it with technology that improved its efficiency. As Liviu Necsulescu managed the vineyards full-time, his son Claudiu frequently traveled to Bucharest and abroad to catch up on all the latest innovations in addition to setting up distribution and creating brands. They regularly brought in consultants from France and Italy as production steadily increased, and today, roughly 15 million bottles of lidvei wine are sold annually.

Maintaining Family Control

Upon celebrating his family's 20-year anniversary at the winery this year, Claudiu revealed to his daughters, Maria (who oversees sales and management) and Ana (who runs marketing), that offers had been made to purchase lidvei. Determined to continue running the winery as its production levels climb, both voiced their opposition to selling, so Jidvei remains a family affair.

Many members of the winery team, meanwhile, have been with the company since its resurrection in 1999. Dr. Ioan Buia, a 75-year-old veteran winemaker, currently oversees ten full-time winemakers and their adjoining teams at four facilities. Personnel are encouraged to participate in certification courses from organizations like the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) and can even stage at other wineries to gain useful experience.



Proprietor Liviu Necsulescu helped shape Jidvei into the winery it is today.

At the end of each year, the winemakers come together and decide on the blends for their high-volume and top-end wines. In January, they taste again alongside the sales team and a group of sommeliers, winemakers, and critics to establish their market audience.

Capturing Târnave Terroir

lidvei is known for wines that follow the concept of non-vintage Champagne in that they maintain the same consistency and taste year in and year out; over 90% of its products are estate-grown and DOC-approved. Having control of 2,500 hectares of vineyards allows the winery to maximize volume while also producing high-quality selections from top-tier sites that are fully expressive of their terroir and varietal character.

When the Necsulescus first acquired Jidvei, they had already anticipated the need to increase the global appeal of their wines, a goal they achieved by planting well-known grape varieties like Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Muscat Ottonel, Pinot Noir, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Over the years, Sauvignon Blanc in particular has proven it can capture the essence of Jidvei. The winery's

2018 ANA Sauvignon Blanc won a Grand Gold medal at the Concours Mondial du Bruxelles competition this year, and Export Manager Ioana Benga believes that the wine "encompasses [the Târnave terroir] perfectly: from grassy and bell-pepper notes on the nose to a full palate with tropical flavors, a long finish, and a zesty acidity."

lidvei is now attempting to use Sauvignon Blanc and other familiar varieties as stepping stones to introduce a younger generation of consumers to native grapes like Fetească Albă and Fetească Regală, from which the winery produces both single-varietal expressions and blends. While Fetească Albă's origins are yet unknown, there are theories that its parent grape was first domesticated as many as 2,000 years ago. Developed in the 1920s, Fetească Regală was initially praised for its high productivity, but the Grand Gold medal that Jidvei's 2009 vintage received this year at the Concours Mondial du Bruxelles shows its potential for yielding wines with unexpected finesse.

Even as it celebrates overcoming the challenges of its past, lidvei is focused on furthering the freshness, vibrancy, and quality of its broad portfolio as it ventures boldly into the third decade since its reinvention.

cover story Being Merry: Winemaking trailblazer Merry Edwards. "BETTER THAN MERRY EDWARDS REFLECTS ON A LIFETIME OF 64 { THE SOMM JOURNAL } AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2019



Merry Edwards Winery is located in Sebastopol, CA.

by Karen MacNeil

early half a century ago, a handful of women quietly worked their way into the California wine business. Together, they helped set the course of the industry for the next 50 years, and along the way, each became not only a trailblazer but an icon—no one more so than Merry Edwards.

At 72, Edwards has now closed a highly influential chapter of her professional life: In February, she sold Merry Edwards Winery in Sonoma's Russian River Valley to Maison Louis Roederer for an undisclosed sum. What follows is an interview with the winemaker on a spring day soon after the deal went through, but first, a bit of background:

The daughter of an electrical engineer and an artist, Meredith Edwards was born in Boston. At the age of 13, having moved to Southern California, she began cooking for her family after her grandmother helped inspire her love of food. As chance would have it, the cookbooks she pored over were published by the Wine Advisory Board of California (now the Wine Institute), and every recipe featured wine as an ingredient.

When Edwards went to Berkeley to study physiology at the height of protests against the Vietnam War, she recalls that "everyone was drinking horrible, cheap wine and beer." Reassured by the notion that wine is "just a recipe," she began making her own from leftover fruit that was too ripe to sell at the local farmers market.

She credits her friend Andrew Quady of Quady Winery in Madera, California, as the person who inspired her to attend the University of California, Davis, to study wine. A star student, she became close to two of the university's most renowned Ph.D.s, Maynard Amerine and Ralph Kunkee. Both were outraged



when, after graduating with a master's degree, Edwards was continually overlooked for winemaking positions because of her gender.

In 1974, she was finally hired as the winemaker of Mount Eden Vineyards on the Central Coast. The winery had no running water, no forklift, scant winemaking equipment, and almost no staff. The owners, however, had also hired Richard Graff, the co-founder of Chalone Vineyards, as a consultant, and he soon became Edwards' mentor.

Edwards went on to become the winemaker at Matanzas Creek, establishing a stellar reputation for the Bennett Valleybased producer's wines. She later began consulting herself, and by the late 1990s, she was acquiring and leasing vineyards in addition to making her own wines at custom-crush facilities. At last, in 2006, she built Merry Edwards Winery.

The brand has, by all accounts, earned an avid and loyal following—one that Maison Louis Roederer's leadership hopes will endure. "Over the years, we have had opportunities to look at renowned wineries in Northern California, but it was not until I met Merry Edwards that I felt my heart beating," says Maison Louis Roederer President Frédéric Rouzaud. "Her personality, her story, [and] her wines won me over ... Going forward, it is our mission to ensure continuity."To that end, Merry Edwards' lead winemaker for the last several years, Heidi von der Mehden, will continue to produce the winery's award-winning expressions of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc.

In our aforementioned interview, Edwards shared her thoughts on the people who helped launch her career, women's talents for tasting, and what makes a great wine. Below are excerpts of our conversation.

Karen MacNeil: What was the toughest part of your early years as a winemaker?

Merry Edwards: When I started at Mount Eden Vineyards, there was one vineyard guy and me. I knew how to do lab work, but I had to teach myself farming and viticulture, which they didn't teach winemaking students at U.C. Davis back then. And I had to figure out how I should



Merry Edwards toasts to a new chapter with Frédéric Rouzaud, President of Maison Louis Roederer.

make Pinot Noir and what Pinot should taste like—I had no point of reference, which was probably a good thing, because in California at the time, Pinot Noir was pretty god-awful.

When you started your career in the California wine industry, there were very few women in it. Was that an absolute disadvantage or was it, in some ways, an advantage?

At U.C. Davis back then, I did have professors who discriminated against me, and I reported them to the chancellor of the university. But I also had a great support group of colleagues and professors, most

of whom were gay, [including] Richard Graff, Ralph Kunkee, and Maynard Amerine. None of these men ever questioned my ability, and they never thought of me as being different in any way ... maybe because they understood what that felt like. I don't know what I would have done without them.

Do you think women and men experience wine differently?

Yes. I think women have a certain advantage, not just in experiencing wine but also in making it. It takes a good team to make wine. It helps to have a mom-like figure who nurtures everyone. I also think

women are, because of childbirth, more emotionally durable. I've never heard of a woman having a breakdown during harvest, but I know a lot of men who've had one

You live and work in Sonoma. What other wine region inspires you?

I find Champagne very exciting. Sparkling is difficult. I have a bottle of Champagne right now in my refrigerator—I love wines that are textural.

Is there a type of wine you don't like?

I don't really care much for Zinfandel. I've kind of moved past Cabernet, I find Pinot so much more interesting. I look at the money that's paid for top Cabernets and I think it's backwards—Pinots should cost \$150 and Cabernets should be way less.

When you taste a really great wine—a wine of a lifetime—would you be more likely to scream, laugh, or cry?

None of those. But if it's a wine I made, it's more like a joy that something I created actually turned out that good. It's a combined sense of relief and just being knocked out by the fact that all the work you did, all the angst you went through, was worth it. So I wouldn't scream. But I do remember being really stunned once when I went to a tasting of 1999 Domaine de la Romanée-Conti wines. It was not only the wine that impressed me but also



Heidi von der Mehden will continue to make Merry Edwards wine as lead winemaker.

Aubert de Villaine, the owner. Great wine is always a whole picture.

How do you know when a wine is great?

I guess it's like love. Greatness is in the eyes and perception of the beholder. I know what I like and I've always tried to make the kind of wine I like. So is it great? I can't say. But I do have a lot of fans and that's all I can go on. In the end, that's what feeds me—trying to get a wine right, trying to get it to be better than right. §



Merry Edwards and Karen MacNeil.

Merry Edwards: A Brief Timeline

1970: Edwards completes a bachelor's degree in physiology from the University of California, Berkeley.

1973: Edwards earns a master's degree in food science with an emphasis in enology from the University of California, Davis.

1974: Working alongside consulting winemaker Richard Graff, Edwards begins serving as winemaker for Mount Eden Vineyards.

1977: David and Sandra Steiner (now Sandra MacIver) hire Edwards to help build Matanzas Creek Winery, where Edwards takes a position as winemaker.

1985: Edwards and Dr. Harold Olmo of U.C. Davis present the first clonal seminar offered at the university.

1989: Vintech, an investment company, recruits Edwards as vice president and winemaker for the Laurier winery before Vintech files for bankruptcy the following year.

1997: Edwards meets her future husband and partner, Ken Coopersmith, while rafting in the Grand Canyon.

2006: Construction begins on Merry Edwards Winery, located adjacent to Coopersmith Vineyard in the Russian River Valley.

2013: Edwards is inducted into the Culinary Institute of America's Vintners Hall of Fame and also wins the James Beard Award for Wine, Beer or Spirits Professional of the Year—making her one of just three women to receive both honors.

> Karen MacNeil is the author of The Wine Bible and the creator of the digital wine newsletter WineSpeed. For more on Mac-Neil, visit karenmacneil.com.





A view of the M. Chapoutier Crozes-Hermitage vineyards in the Rhône Valley.

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

A really cute distributor recently offered me a trip to the Rhône Valley. We seek a lot of wines from the region and I've never been to France before. Is this a date?

> Sincerely, Blushing

Good Somm

Dear Blushing,

Let's not put the cart before the horse and focus on remaining professional. While it's human nature to see a potential relationship with someone you find attractive, consider that they are, after all, running a business first and foremost.

Since you do source many wines from the Rhône Valley, this is a way to increase your knowledge while exploring a part of the world you've never been to. Ask questions and absorb it all: There's no need to see this as anything other than a wonderful trip that can expand your mind, body, and soul.

> Bon voyage, Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Blushing,

It doesn't matter if it's Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, or Coffee Meets Bagel—consider it time to delete your profile, because you've nailed this whole dating thing. This is clearly a romantic gesture that could lead to an unexpected love; it's like you walked onto the set of The Bachelor, but better! Who knew that your interest in the Rhône Valley would lead to an international whirlwind romance? Just be yourself: totally unhinged and uncensored. You got this!

> Yours truly, Bad Somm

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm.

I'm a buyer for a relatively well-respected restaurant in a small market. The chef has won many awards and has appeared on TV shows. Recently, a distributor brought in a winemaker who criticized me for having "grocery-store wine" on my list, but he didn't criticize the chef for using items I can also find in a grocery store. Why is broccoli OK to eat but Chardonnay isn't cool to drink?

> Signed. Store Bought

Good Somm

Dear Store Bought,

These days, there's a movement in the restaurant industry to source ingredients locally, and wine directors often apply a similar philosophy to their programs by showcasing wines that are smallproduction, organic, Biodynamic, or natural. However, it's worth noting that many esteemed wineries that have been in existence for decades or even centuries have been able to use their accumulated experience to increase production; as a result, they can share their products with a larger audience by becoming—you guessed it-grocery-store wine.

So, food and wine aren't really an equal comparison here, and authentic winemaking isn't a privilege exclusive to small-production wineries. To defend your program, keep this in mind: Some of the best wine directors out there simply find the best selections for their business, learn as much as they can about them, and communicate that information to their customers.

> Best. Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Store Bought,

Whatever you do, remain calm and stand your ground. Sommeliers and chefs are often in the spotlight, so take criticism with a grain of salt. People will knock you down from every direction, but you become immune by taking nothing personally. Sounds like it's their problem, not yours.

> Sincerely. Bad Somm

Expanding the Family

TRANSCENDENT WINES MAKES AN IMPRESSION AT ASPEN'S FOOD & WINE CLASSIC

by Jonathan Cristaldi

AT THIS YEAR'S Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, Colorado, I caught up with Cheryl Indelicato inside one of the main tents to taste four labels under her family's new Transcendent Wines portfolio, a division focused on representing and selling fine wine. Curated by Delicato Family Wines (formerly known as Delicato Family Vineyards), it debuted earlier this year and encompasses both domestic and international brands.

In Aspen, the Transcendent team represented four diverse winegrowing regions by offering selections from Napa Valley's Black Stallion Estate Winery, Monterey-Santa Lucia Highlands' Diora Wines, Lodi's Three Finger Jack, and Torbreck Vintners of Australia's Barossa Valley. According to Indelicato, the division focuses on the onpremise market and fine-wine off-premise accounts. "We are very selective," with the aim of "representing different parts of the world," she added.

Debuting at the event was an intriguing red from Three Finger Jack, which at \$20 makes for an excellent by-the-glass option for on-premise. A 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon from Lodi's East Side Ridge, the wine is packed with ripe black-fruit aromas as well as layers of strawberry and black cherry preserves, sweet oak spices, and dusty tannins.

Delicato Family Wines Director of Winemaking James Ewart, meanwhile, poured a Chardonnay and a Pinot Noir from the Diora label: Priced at \$20 and \$25, respectively, they're also tailor-made for by-the-glass programs. "We bottle our best grapes from the San Bernabe AVA, a sub-appellation of Monterey County, where unique aeolian soils, which are wind-derived, offer a contrast to the rest

Cheryl Indelicato hangs out at the ranscendent Wines booth during the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, CO

of Monterey, which is mostly river deposits," Ewart explained. The Diora 2017 La Petite Grace Pinot Noir—abundant with notes of red berries, cinnamon, and dark cherries underscored by sweet baking spices—showed fine-grained cedar tannins rounded out by a clean and juicy finish.

Regarding Torbreck, Indelicato said her family's company is "so proud to have them in our portfolio."The feeling is mutual: Legendary winemaker Scott McDonald, who poured at the classic, is excited to have a dedicated sales force to increase the winery's footprint in the United States. When it comes to its approach to organic farming, Torbreck doesn't "skimp on anything," McDonald said, noting that the producer has "some of the oldest pre-phylloxera, own-rooted vineyards in the world."Torbreck's 2015 The Factor wine (\$125) is 100% Shiraz; showing black, brambly fruit, it's concentrated and rich but light on its feet, with notes of blackberry jam and crushed stones leading into an olive-tapenade finish.

Circling back stateside, Napa's Black Stal-

lion Estate Winery offers two tiers: four wines under the Heritage tier that retail from \$15 to \$30 and three under the Limited Release tier, which runs from \$60 to \$150."Our winemaker, Ralph Holdenried, grew up on a family vineyard in Germany," Indelicato said. "He's a U.C. Davis grad and has been with us for five years now, making beautifully balanced Napa wines."This fact is indisputable given the elegance of the Black Stallion Estate Winery 2016 Limited Release Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60), which offers dense notes of black olive, black fruit, and graphite as well as powerful tannins and mouthwatering acidity.

The Transcendent Wines portfolio also includes luxury estate wines imported from Germany, among them Schloss Vollrads, Franz Keller, and Bischöfliche Weingüter, in addition to legendary Chilean labels Santa Rita Casa Real and Triple C. The broader Delicato Family Wines portfolio encompasses beloved brands such as Bota Box, Noble Vines, Gnarly Head, Z. Alexander Brown, 1924, Toad Hollow, and Mercer Family Wines. §



All La Adelita expressions are double-distilled in the distillery's copper pot stills.



Pictured here on a conveyor belt, harvested agaves can shrink to nearly half their original size when steamed.

LA ADELITA MAKES ITS DEBUT WITH FIVE EXPRESSIONS OF TEQUILA. INCLUDING AN AÑEJO CRISTALINO

by Eric Marsh

THE TEMPERATURES VARY greatly in the arid highlands of Los Altos in Jalisco, the Mexican state that's now home to new premium tequila brand La Adelita. At the label's single-estate agave plantation, which sits at an elevation of 7,780 feet above sea level, the sun sears at high noon before eventually giving way to algid gusts of wind past nightfall. These diurnal swings stress the plants in a way that imparts character and, in turn, yields a nuanced tequila.

"Tequila from the highlands tends to be more herbaceous," explains Miguel Rodriguez, La Adelita's West Coast Sales Manager. "Both [high and low] regions produce amazing tequilas—it really comes down to personal preference, but you get a more pronounced agave flavor from plants grown in the highlands of Jalisco."

La Adelita owes its creation to Chris Radomski, a veteran spirits producer and vintner who set out to make a superlative teguila with the help of some experienced collaborators. Finding the ideal partners and forming a genuine relationship with them, however, took time; after searching for over six years, he met the Barbas—a family of distillers who have been making the spirit in the heart of Los Altos since 1892—and a bond was formed.

Thanks to his time spent growing grapes in Napa, Radomski is well aware that farming requires patience. "No other spirit is as farm-centric as tequila, where the art of farming has to be taken into consideration ... that and there's a lot of waiting involved," Radomski says with a laugh.

In the wake of agave spirits' surge in popularity, farmers are often pressured by major brands to essentially mow down entire fields of the plant regardless of maturity. By contrast, La Adelita closely monitors its agaves to ensure that they remain unharvested for roughly six to eight years—giving the plants adequate time to pollinate and propagate. It's a savvy strategy, considering that fully mature agaves are the most crucial ingredient in making tequila that's both authentic and exceedingly good.

One of five expressions La Adelita produces, the brand's blanco tequila features citrus on the nose along with Bosc pear, spice, and a vegetal note that becomes more complex on the palate, where it's accompanied by black pepper, subtle hints of raw mint, and basil on the finish. The fawn-colored reposado, meanwhile, spends a brief time aging in oak; as a result, aromas of woody spice and fresh vanilla bean are echoed on the palate with butter and toasted almond. More pronounced woody notes can be found in the añejo expression (which La Adelita ages for 18 months) alongside hints of cinnamon, nutmeg, hazelnut, cocoa, and salted caramel.

The brand's more unconventional offering, an añejo cristalino, undergoes a post-aging charcoal-filtration process that extracts both the color and some of the flavors imparted by the barrels. While bereft of woody spice, it does manage to retain its caramel notes as well as an herbaceousness that's similar to the blanco's. While a unique quality reminiscent of an orange-flavored Creamsicle sans sweetness is also present, what's perhaps most surprising about the cristalino is an elongated finish that's largely unexpected from a clear spirit.

Aged three to five years, the extra añejo possesses a dark-chocolaty nose tinged with orange blossoms that might trick consumers into thinking they're just around the corner from a chocolatier. At first sip,



La Adelita founder Chris Radomski shares a laugh with Miguel Rodriguez, the brand's West Coast Sales Manager.



La Adelita produces five expressions of tequila.

however, the velvety palate abundant in rich butterscotch might instead transport the drinker to western France. Rodriguez jokes that the expression is "like Mexican Cognac," and the comparison is accurate on several fronts. All of La Adelita's aged expressions spend time in American white oak barrels; previously used to age whiskey, they're charred once more upon delivery in Jalisco. Another parallel can be found in the distilling process: Generations ago, the Barba family acquired copper pot stills from pre-Castro Cuba—the same stills that the brand now uses to double-distill its tequila. Fermentation occurs in stainlesssteel vats with a proprietary yeast formula,

but only after the agaves have been halved, steamed for 24-36 hours, and shredded into fibers and juice.

The plant itself, then, is of chief importance, as is its terroir, the care taken when farming it, and the wisdom of knowing when to harvest and when to wait. For La Adelita, this patient and precise approach ultimately amounts to luxurious spirits that the brand manages to keep affordable. "As the [tequila] category blew up, it lost its authenticity, and I wanted to do something at a higher level while keeping it authentic [and while also making] the price point approachable," says Radomski. It seems he's succeeded, five times over.



August Sebastiani Embraces a Trend

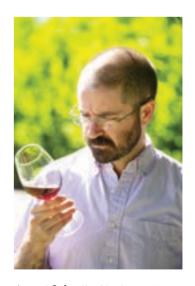
3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP. LAUNCHES
A DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER LINE OF
PREMIUM WINES FROM GEHRICKE

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by John Curley

FOURTH-GENERATION VINTNER August Sebastiani would love nothing more than to eventually see any of his four children step into the family business. There's no pressure for them to do so anytime soon—soccer practice and adjusting to high school are the pressing challenges of the moment. And when it comes time for them to go off to college, Sebastiani understands that post-graduation, the need to explore different paths and see the world is critical, too.

It is, after all, a trajectory he followed as well: As a 26-year-old, Sebastiani put his political science degree from Santa Clara College to good use by becoming possibly the youngest person ever to serve on the Sonoma City Council. So, when and if the fifth generation is ready to join his company, 3 Badge Beverage Corp., he'll be thrilled to welcome them.

August Sebastiani, founder of 3 Badge Beverage Corp., and Gehricke winemaker Alex Beloz stand amidst Cabernet vines just outside the Gehricke tasting room in the central Sonoma Valley.



August Sebastiani tastes 2016 vintage Cabernet from the Upper East Side Vineyard just behind him. The site is the source of one of his new direct-to-consumer labels.

"Gehricke is your little slice of Sonoma, wherever you are."

-Gehricke winemaker Alex Beloz



After all, the future is always driven by the next generation of leaders who will usher in a new era of ideas, desires, and expectations—all of which almost always upend the passing trends of the moment. When Sebastiani launched 3 Badge in 2005, he knew the market would change, but only in the last decade has it become clear that in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, there's been a push more so than ever toward premium beverage brands. As a result, he's decided to launch a direct-to-consumer line of premium, high-quality, small-production wines from Gehricke.

"You look at the trends, you embrace them, and you run in the same direction as fast as you can," he told The SOMM Journal over glasses of Gehricke Pinot Noir. "We're in a big economic upturn and people are not afraid to spend \$15 or \$20 by the glass on a wine. That's been huge for us. You have a consumer who has the entirety of human knowledge in their pocket and are a mere 30 seconds away from an unreasonably deep dive on any topic, so you have a more informed consumer than the world has ever known."

Those informed consumers may be the force behind a 14% uptick in national off-premise case-buys, said Sebastiani, citing internal Nielsen data; now, he wants to make sure they have something extra special from 3 Badge to delve into. "Forty or 50 years ago, people were drinking 'Hearty Burgundy' and just beginning to understand varietal wines." he continued. "But understanding the soils, farming, and whether there's an impact of American versus French oak, or new versus used—that understanding puts the onus on the producer to meet the needs of a more discerning consumer."

Because Sebastiani designed 3 Badge to operate like a negociant business, he and winemaker Alex Beloz are perfectly positioned to adapt and take advantage of new opportunities. "We have one-off labels and rare opportunities, and Gehricke evolved out of that," explained Sebastiani. "Three-tier is a huge part of our business, and our relationships with our distribution partners are largely responsible for the successes we've had. When you look at our push to a more premium space, we find it to be increasingly important to have a direct line of contact with the end consumer."

"As times and vineyards change, we're trying to create classic, delicious, and refined wines under Gehricke," added Beloz. "We're not trying to be the flashiest wine—our Pinots from Sonoma Coast are more subtle than typical Russian River Valley wines today, which stylistically are bold and rich. But we show more red berry fruits [and] spicier, herbal notes in a less jammy style. Our Chardonnays are classic with full malolactic fermentation in barrel—we're not going down the buttery path, but rather aiming for a rich and creamy California style while retaining plenty of acidity so we have a lively, delicious wine that stands the test of time."

In Beloz's words, "Gehricke is your little slice of Sonoma, wherever you are." "All those dusty back roads and different microclimates have their own unique fingerprint," Sebastiani added. "I love being a virtual winery, picking up the phone and buying fruit from the best places we can find up and down California and beyond. Being able to get our fingers purple again is fun!"

Tasting Notes

Gehricke 2014 Ponzo Vinevard Zinfandel. **Russian River** Valley (\$50)

This wine is loaded with ripe red fruits, green peppercorns, dark cherries.



and generous earthy notes. It has a voluptuous mouthfeel with plenty of classic Zin spice and Russian River tannin carrying through a lasting finish of baking spice and tinges of vanilla. 94

Gehricke 2015 **Chalk Ridge** Chardonnay, **Russian River** Valley (\$49)

Barrel-fermented and aged sur lie for 18 months. this wine is loaded with lemon



curd and brioche. It's creamy and round with layers of Golden Delicious apples, stone fruits, and fine French oak on a ginger-tinged finish. 92

Gehricke 2015 Sangiacomo Vineyard Pinot Noir, Los Carneros (\$59)

Raspberry and tangerine notes appear alongside a touch of pomegranate and rhubarb. The mouthfeel is soft and elegant, unveiling layers of flavors from raspberry to strawberry. Pops of vanilla, cinnamon, and red-berry pie appear on the enduring finish. 94

Gehricke 2016 Upper East Side Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$65)

Aromatically explosive with blackberry preserves and creamy oak notes, this wine features a palate coated with rich black fruits that's underscored by finegrained tannins with integrated cedar spice and Madagascar vanilla. The long, cocoa-dusted finish is marked with fresh tobacco notes. 94

Thinking in Smell

EXPLORING THE CULTURAL APPRECIATION—OR LACK THEREOF—OF SCENT

IN HIS 1966 book *The Hidden Dimension*, anthropologist E.T. Hall states that Americans are culturally underdeveloped when it comes to olfaction. He attributed this deficiency to the extensive use of deodorants and the suppression of odor in public places, a cultural norm that has resulted in a land of olfactory blandness. This state of neutrality, which exists in other first-world countries as well, is described by populations like the Bororo people of Brazil and the Serer Ndut of Senegal as the smell of death.

In societies where odors have been repressed, people have no cultural model in place to organize their olfactory life experience; as such, their response to smells is measured in terms of relative pleasure. Simply put, they only react to odor. By contrast, cultures that attach symbolic meaning to scent, like the Suya people of Brazil and the Onge of the Andaman Islands, are said to think in smell.

In the English language, there are fewer positive equivalents for the sense of smell than there are for the other four senses.

You might sniff out a deal or smell a rat, but the terms for nose in our vocabulary—particularly as they relate to wine—are derogatory more often than not (snobby, snooty, snotty, etc.).

Our struggle to describe scent is characterized by Avery Gilbert, author of What the Nose Knows, as the verbal barrier. Given that there's no lack of words for smell in the English language, Gilbert defines this barrier as a cognitive problem: Because smell tends to evoke memories more powerfully than either vision or sound, olfactory blandness works to obscure memory.

Imagine the rich olfactory landscape of the Onge, the aforementioned tribe that defines everything primarily by smell. Their calendar is dictated by the nose; seasons are named after particular scents, largely depending on which flowers are in blossom or which fruits are in season. They personally identify according to scent, and their smell-centered culture is expressed via an emphasis on the nose in their language. Even the Onge greeting "Konyune"

onorange-tanka?"—the English equivalent of "How are you?"—translates as "How is your nose?"

The Onge aren't the only culture that holds scent in high esteem. In Algeria, the nose—called "nif"—is synonymous with honor, while in India, greeting someone by smelling their head is the equivalent of a hug or a kiss in the West. In many societies, the symbolic links between scent and emotion make smell the most powerful of the five senses.

As wine professionals, we operate in a culture where odors have been coded largely through the use of rubrics like the Wine & Spirit Education Trust Systematic Approach to Tasting (SAT) and the Court of Master Sommeliers' Tasting Grid, both of which are decried as insufficient for being analytical. In response, let's look beyond language and shift our cultural norms instead by creating a richer olfactory landscape that encourages us to attach meaning to scent. SI



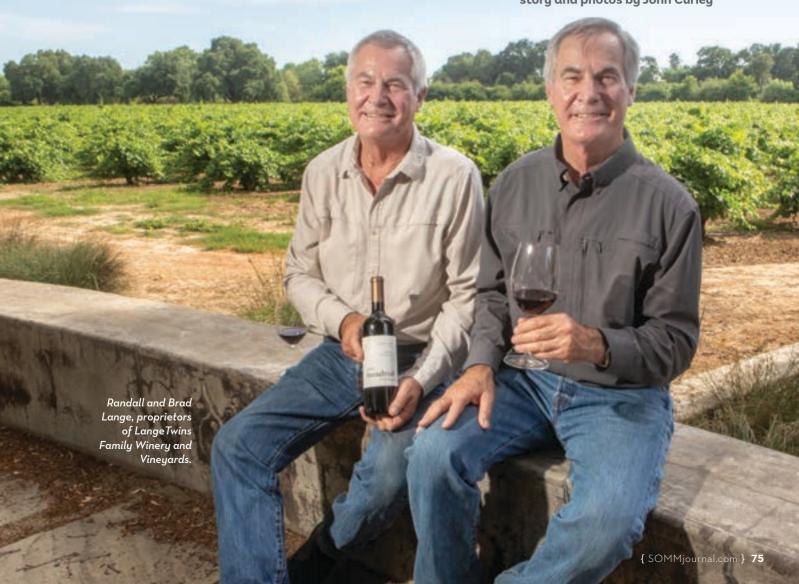


Drinking It

LANGETWINS FAMILY WINERY AND VINEYARDS

CELEBRATES OLD RELATIONSHIPS AND NEW RELEASES

story and photos by John Curley





New vineyard-designate wines from Lange Twins Family Winery and Vineyards: One Hundred Vineyard Petite Sirah, Miller Vineyard Cabernet Franc, and Prince Vineyard Chenin Blanc.

ou sit in the shade outside Brad Lange's house in Lodi, under beautiful oaks, and every now and then you hear a quail calling in the distance. There's only a slight rustle of wind, and through the dappled sunlight, you can see a 70-year-old Zin vineyard almost ripening before your eyes in all its bright-green summertime lushness.

Brad's twin brother, Randall, lives a short walk away on the same property, in the same town that their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before them called home.

And you think to yourself, Well, sure, why not? What could be more natural, more preordained? The descendants of one of the area's first farmers would of course still be living on the land: Why would they ever leave? Yes, you might think, this generational wine story has flowed as smoothly and as easily as the Mokelumne River that meanders through the property.

But you'd be wrong.

Between the time that Johann Lange, the twins' great-grandfather, was growing watermelons on his Lodi farm and today—LangeTwins now oversees 1,500 acres of family estate vineyards—there were plenty of existential moments spent facing an uncertain future. There were risks, and there was no knowing if those risks would be rewarded.

Perhaps the most foundational challenge came in 2005, when the brothers, along with their wives and children, had to figure out what would allow them to stay on the

land, stay in the farm business, stay viable in the wine world.

To that point, the Lange twins had worked strictly as farmers; they oversaw vineyards and grew grapes that other people turned into wine. But to survive, they had to change. To secure a future for the fifth and following generations, they had to build their own winery and start pressing their own grapes to make wine.

That decision has led directly to three expressions that are coming to market now: the One Hundred Vineyard Petite Sirah, the Miller Vineyard Cabernet Franc, and the Prince Vineyard Chenin Blanc. All of the new releases are vineyard-designate, and each reflects the deep partnerships that the brothers have nurtured over the years, much in the way they have nurtured the lands entrusted to them.

Shaping a Family Legacy

When Brad and Randall left for college, they both had two words to say about the prospect of coming back to work on the family farm: "Hell, no!" But they did come back, and they returned knowing that they were going to have to do more than farm to succeed. So they started a management company, overseeing the land of absentee owners and producing grapes that winemakers appreciated.

"We came back to 135 acres," Brad says, "but we also came back to a good name established by my father and grandfather. The first people we worked for were gen-

erational here, as well." Maintaining those long-term relationships has been key to their business model: "You do a good job for one, and word gets out."

Randall adds: "And another big thing, besides a lot of work—seven-days-a-week kind of work—was [that] Bob Mondavi came back to Lodi in the late '70s, and he started a simple kind of program that we called Bob Red and Bob White. And Bob Red and Bob White, by the time they sold in 2006, had grown to 7 or 8 million cases of wine."The Lange twins just so happened to grow a lot of the grapes that went into these winesotherwise known as Woodbridge.

"We really didn't know," Randall says, what was to come. "Bob stood on the property and said, 'Well, we really think Cab is going to grow up in the foothills, but ... 'We planted some of the first Cabernet in the Lodi district because Bob was willing to give us a contract."

It was a good start—one that presented new challenges. Two of the twins' sons were already working with them in the vineyards, but two of their daughters had started their own careers in sales and marketing. And so a family council was convened, and all parties agreed that if they were going to continue on the land, they'd have to go into the winemaking business.

"It was a very risky decision on our part," Randall says, "but we really felt that if we were going to remain an agriculture company into the sixth, seventh, and eighth generations ... we had to add value." 81



"It was a very risky decision on our part, but we really felt that if we were going to remain an agriculture company into the sixth, seventh, and eighth generations ... we had to add value." - Randall Lange

Regarding the three new vineyard-designate wines, Randall Lange says, "We feel that carrying the family names is really demonstrating who we are and what we're about. We're a generational agricultural family. And the wines coming from those vineyards still tie us to the soil . . . We're the real deal."

Keleases

The Miller Vineyard, where the Cabernet Franc is grown, is owned by the Miller family, whom the Langes have grown wine grapes for over the course of the past 40 years. And the One Hundred Vineyard, which yields the Petite Sirah, is a family estate vineyard that they've farmed for more than three decades. (Where did the name come from? "It's 100 acres," Randall says with a laugh.) Finally, the Prince Vineyard-source of the Chenin Blanc-is a distinctive site in the Clarksburg appellation that the family has been farming since 2011.

While these three are the first arrivals, the release of at least four more vineyard-designate wines is on the horizon.



{ perlage } The caves of Schramsberg A Sparkling Vineyards were hand-carved from volcanic rock in the 1880s. chramsberg PROVES DOMESTIC WINERIES CAN MAKE **EXEMPLARY BUBBLY** by Bonnie Graves The view from Schramsberg Vineyards in Napa's Diamond Mountain District. 78 { THE SOMM JOURNAL } AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2019

THOSE WHO HAVE driven north through Napa on Highway 29 recently may have found themselves disoriented: New (or newly branded) wineries seem to have popped up in droves overnight, and while that speaks to the economic vitality of the valley, it also underscores how Napa is constantly reinventing itself.

It's refreshing, then, to visit a producer with more than 150 years of winemaking history. Schramsberg Vineyards, located just south of Calistoga in the Diamond Mountain District, was founded in 1862 as the second bonded winery in Napa. Local wine expert and winemaker Tim Carl puts the current number of Napa wineries up to as many as 1,100, if one includes nonland-owning brands. In such a crowded valley—both literally and figuratively—it's increasingly difficult to make an impression, so historicity helps.

In the early 20th century, decades before Jack and Jamie Davies purchased the winery in 1965 and began producing that same year, Schramsberg fell into disuse; its caves, however, remained intact, Handcarved from volcanic rock in the 1880s. the caves to this day maintain a consistent temperature for the aging and élevage of fine sparkling wines. The stateside evolution of the category has been centered around authenticity; while a few notable producers have consistently made wines in the traditional Champagne-inspired method, far too many domestic brands once used "Champagne" on their labels while making mass-market products as cheaply as possible.



Hugh Davies, vintner for Schramsberg Vineyards, was born in 1965—the same year his parents purchased the Schramsberg estate.

Thankfully, the Napa Declaration on Place—signed by eight global winegrowing regions in 2005—successfully delimited the number of sparkling-wine producers claiming to be "Champagne," and most consumers now know that "real" Champagne only comes from the eponymous region. But do they know that world-class bubbles can be found elsewhere? That's where Schramsberg comes in.

Proprietor Hugh Davies, one of Jack and Jamie's three sons, is arguably the most experienced American winemaker using champenoise methods. Born the same year his parents acquired the historic property, Davies' first vintage was in 1987, and he's been continuously making bubbles as other (often French-owned) houses have come calling in California. Roederer established Roederer Estate in 1982 in the Anderson Valley, and five years later, Taittinger launched Domaine

Carneros. When viewed through the lens of discretionary capital and enduring expertise, Schramsberg's dogged pursuit of excellence in the face of these deeppocketed rivals is especially impressive.

Like fine Champagne houses, Schramsberg mixes estate grapes with fruit purchased from respected growers in a house style marked by assiduous blending. Davies currently works with an astonishing 120 vineyard blocks, which extend from Anderson Valley to as far south as Marin County, granting him access to an incredible array of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grown across diverse microclimates. Schramsberg produces an extensive lineup of bubbly that spans from non-vintage Mirabelle Brut bottlings to extraordinary, vintage-dated I. Schram "tête de cuvées" that can hold their own with the very best of Champagne—truly marking the producer as a major player on the international stage. SI



The Schramsberg winery is located in Calistoga, CA.

RECOMMENDED SCHRAMSBERG WINES

Schramsberg Mirabelle Brut Rosé, North Coast (\$31) With mouthwatering notes of guava, watermelon, and raspberry leaf, Mirabelle is a carefully balanced blend of 65% Chardonnay and 35% Pinot Noir selected from cool-climate sites in Napa, Sonoma County, Mendocino County, and Marin County.

Schramsberg 2016 Blanc de Blancs, North Coast (\$42) Blended with small lots of malolactic, barrel-fermented wine, this 100% Chardonnay bubbly offers crisp notes of green pear and lemon zest with hints of nutty roundness that reflect the extraordinary vintage.

J. Schram 2000 Late-Disgorged, North Coast (\$185) Lovers of Bollinger's legendary R.D. wines understand how a late disgorgement—one in which sparkling wine stays in extended contact with the lees—contributes both longevity and complexity. This expression is a wonder, with layers of smoked hazelnuts, pain grillé, and marzipan.



AT A MEMORABLE TASTING IN CHARLESTON. SOUTH CAROLINA. EXPERTS ASSESS OAK'S INFLUENCE ON CABERNET SAUVIGNON

story by David Gadd / photos by Paul Cheney



Moderator Desmond Garrity and Angela Smith, Jordan Vineyard & Winery's Regional Sales Director-Southern U.S., pour wines at The Oyster Shed at Leon's, which proved to be the perfect venue for the Charleston tasting.

he debate over the use (and misuse) of oak in wine has endured for decades, and as winemakers continually fine-tune their oak regimes, the opportunity for discussion only deepens. The issue of French versus American oak has long been a focal point of this back-and-forth, with proponents of both types offering valid justification for their choices.

The team at Jordan Vineyard & Winery, which just switched to 100% French oak for its celebrated Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (see the sidebar on page 83), felt it would be instructive to bring together sommeliers in Charleston, South Carolina, to examine Cabernets aged in French oak and American oak in a side-byside blind tasting dubbed "Oak's Influence on Cabernet Sauvignon."

"We've never done anything like this before, but we thought it would be interesting for sommeliers to taste two Cabernets from the same region—one aged in French and one in American oak," said Lisa Mattson, Director of Marketing & Communications for Jordan. "It could make for a fascinating discussion."

Charleston's vibrant restaurant and retail scene makes the city one of the most exciting food-and-wine destinations in the U.S.—and an ideal venue for the tasting, which was held at The Oyster Shed at Leon's Fine Poultry & Oyster Shop, a historic venue outfitted with reclaimed wood, high ceilings, exposed beams, and original brick.

The panel was moderated by Desmond Garrity, owner of retail shop Crushed Fine Wine in the upscale Charleston suburb of Mount Pleasant. Participating industry experts included Ashley Broshious, Wine Director of Zero Restaurant + Bar at historic luxury hotel Zero George; Andres Contreras, Manager and Wine Director of bustling Broad Street seafood restaurant The Establishment; Donald Funk Wine Steward at local Italian favorite Al di La Trattoria in West Ashley; Davis Hong, CEO and Executive Chef of the inventive 843 Korean BBO & Sushi House in North Charleston; Bill Netherland, Wine Director of Hospitality Management Group, Inc., which owns pioneering local restaurants Magnolias and Blossom; and Joshua Walker, owner/ operator of cutting-edge boutique retailer and wine bar Wine & Company on Charleston's historic Meeting Street. The wines were poured and later revealed by Angela Smith, Regional Sales Director-Southern U.S. for Jordan Vineyard & Winery.

Mattson and Smith selected ten wines for the tasting, striving where possible for Cabernet Sauvignons using 100% French and 100% American oak. Finding Old World Cabernet Sauvignons aged in the latter proved problematic, so all of the wines on the table were from New World regions in California, Washington, and Australia. All except one were from the 2015 vintage.

The participants tasted the wines in randomly mixed sets of two, with conversation ensuing after each set. The wines in each set were revealed before the tasting proceeded to the next two, and as Mattson had hoped, all of the pairings did indeed lead to fascinating discussions. (Note: The oak regimes as listed were provided by the producers.)

WINES 1 AND 2

The Fableist 2015 373 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles

76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot. 5% Tempranillo, 5% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petite Sirah

100% American oak (225-liter barriaues. 25% new)

DAOU 2015 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles

76% Cabernet Sauvignon. 9% Cabernet Franc, 8% Merlot, 7% Petit

20 months in French oak (50% new)

Contreras aced the oak on The Fableist, which he found had "red fruit and some darker fruit." "I went with American oak on this because I felt it has more spice," he concluded. Hong also guessed American oak, noting the wine's "dark plum fruit and medium tannins."

"There's a lot of extraction in these wines," noted Broshious, while Funk found "green pepper, licorice, and tea" in the second wine, correctly deducing that it was from Paso Robles. After the reveal, Walker summarized, "If we all said nice things about both these wines and they're from Paso, that's notable." Netherland added that he "wouldn't have been surprised if [the DAOU] had been a recent-vintage Bordeaux."

WINES 3 AND 4

Dunham 2015 XXI Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

60% new oak (80% new French, 20% new American), 40% neutral oak

Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Luchessi Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains

100% Cabernet Sauvignon Predominately French oak

"Approachable and jammy," said Funk of the Dunham expression, while Hong liked its "spice, vanilla, and red fruit"; Broshious, meanwhile, found "boysenberry, cherry, and cherry cola." Walker commented, "The first wine was interesting in that the color saturation, pigment, even the staining viscosity and the tears—everything pointed to ripeness, with tannin structure being very bright and soft." Most tasters who hazarded an opinion on the Dunham guessed American oak, which may serve to prove Walker's quip: "If we all agree, we'll be wrong."

The Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard Cabernet prompted much discussion both before and after the reveal. Tasting blind, Walker was of the opinion that it "has everything you want in Cabernet Sauvignon: loads of complexity, really nice graphite, pencil lead, pencil shaving. Of the first four we've tasted, it's the best built to age." Netherland agreed: "It's the most complex and structured so far. This is the first wine I felt I'd rather lay down than drink." Broshious concluded that it was "ageworthy because it's not overripe." The reveal of the cool Santa Cruz Mountains appellation confirmed this.

Despite offering a plethora of tasting notes, few expressed opinions on the oak, perhaps reflecting the attitude of Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard owner/ winemaker Jeff Emery: "My philosophy on oak is that if you can obviously find it, then I haven't done my job right."

WINES 5 AND 6

Jordan 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County

77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 2% Malbec

100% French oak for 13 months, 47% new and 53% one-year-old barrels

Ridge Monte Bello 2015 Monte Bello Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains

77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot, 5% Cabernet Franc

97% American oak, 3% French oak

Hong appreciated the "well-balanced" nature of the first wine in this set, while Funk labeled lordan's 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon from the Alexander Valley a "favorite" for its elegance and dark-chocolate tones. Contreras picked up meaty notes with "peppercorns, dark-red fruit, and tight tannins."

Delving deeper, Broshious opined that the Jordan was "the first wine that's showing tertiary notes; it smells like an old-barrel cellar with caramel, barnyard, wet soil, and aromas of wisteria and lavender. I think it's Bordeaux."Those comments would certainly be music to the ears of lordan winemaker Rob Davis, who strives for "balance, elegance, and refinement" by using French oak and percentages of three other Bordeaux varieties in this blended Cabernet Sauvignon. The panel's assessment also confirmed the realization of founder Tom Jordan's dream of creating a true Bordeauxstyle wine in California.

Contreras described the Ridge Monte Bello as showing a "slight pyrazine nose," with "herbal red fruit" and "pronounced acid." Netherland found it had "more overt wood on the nose." After the reveal, Broshious remarked that "Ridge has been letting their grapes hang longer and longer; I would not expect this Ridge to age like some of the ones from the 1990s."

WINES 7 AND 8

Silver Oak 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, **Alexander Valley**

97.7% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1.3% Merlot, 0.5% Petit Verdot, 0.3% Malbec, 0.2% Cabernet Franc

24 months in 50% new and 50% once-used American oak

Wakefield 2015 St. Andrews Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

French oak, 40% new, 60% two to three vears old

Broshious felt that these were "the two most red-fruited of the group" but noted that "the oak is not as prominent as on the previous wines." Walker correctly surmised that the "racy, spicy" expression had "all attributes that I attribute to American oak—serious intensity, with vanilla shining through." Contreras also nailed the American oak on this one, expressed through the wine's "dill and coconut" notes.

Several panelists pegged the geographical origin of Wakefield's "big and lush" (in Funk's words) Cabernet; Walker agreed with Contreras and Broshious in noting that it "feels like South Australia through and through." Broshious remarked on its "cherry-cola notes and stem inclusion," while Walker also noted the "soda components and sarsaparilla" as well as "tons of ripeness and a nice long hang time—almost raisinated." Hong correctly picked up the influence of French oak on this "subtle and very well-balanced" wine.

Moderator Desmond Garrity (center) leads the Charlestonbased attendees through the tasting.





Ashleu Broshious. Zero Restaurant + Bar



Davis Hong, 843 Korean BBQ & Sushi House



Andres Contreras. The Establishment



Bill Netherland, Hospitality Management Group, Inc.



Donald Funk. Al di La Trattoria



Joshua Walker, Wine & Company

Penfolds 2015 Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon, Barossa Valley

100% Cabernet Sauvignon 20 months in 100% new American oak hogsheads

Quilceda Creek 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley

100% Cabernet Sauvignon 20 months in 100% new French oak

"I think No. 9 is doing the same 'new American oak' thing," Walker correctly remarked of the Penfolds. "The fruit is bright—it's clean, fresh, and very well put together. I get the most dill on the palate from this one," he added. Contreras noted that "the amount of extraction on [No.] 9 is surprising," while Funk found the wine "leathery and aggressive." Hong, meanwhile, appreciated its notes of "ripe red fruit, vanilla, tobacco, and pepper."

Broshious noticed a "high amount of oak and polish" on both wines but picked up "pyrazines on [No.] 10 that [made him] think of Bordeaux." Contreras also detected pyrazines on the Quilceda Creek; Hong found "buttery and chocolate" notes; and Funk liked the hints of "creamy vanilla." Netherland called it his "favorite wine of the day—impressive."



Of the revealed wines, Andres Contreras said there were "no dogs on the table."

CONCLUSIONS

"There's no wine here that we're trying to put down or build up," concluded Smith at the close of the tasting. "It's meant to be educational for all of us." In a witty understatement, Contreras put it more simply: "There are no dogs on the table."

Commenting on American versus French oak, Broshious noted that American oak is changing—"[it's] grown longer, with tighter rings, and dried for three to four years"—making it easier to confuse with French oak. Walker's conclusion was that "there is a mystery to wine that will always go deeper than the sum of the parts. We've been tasked with a big responsibility to be openminded, to allow the world of wine to be very big. I feel really happy with the

diversity that it brings when winemakers do different things."

"Having so many Cabernets side by side, with different types of oak aging, was eye-opening," Contreras said. "It was really exciting for me personally to be proven wrong when I thought I was fairly certain of an oak type."The lesson: "There is no superior oak. The winemaker is utilizing oak in a manner that benefits the wine," he added.

"If we walk away with anything today, it's that oaks are different," summed up moderator Desmond Garrity. Or, as Funk put it in a musical analogy: "Love both for what they are. Sometimes you want to listen to the Stones and sometimes the Beatles. No wrong choices here!"



Why French Oak at Jordan?

Several years ago, second-generation owner John Jordan and founding winemaker Rob Davis began to source Jordan Vineyard & Winery's Cabernet Sauvignon from Alexander Valley benchlands instead of the valley floora shift in terroir that results in riper fruit with intense flavors and more refined tannins that Davis felt called for a change to the wine's oak regimen. He sourced Colbert oak from the Tronçais forest for its tight grain and ability to bond with the Cabernet's tannins while highlighting the wine's aromatic notes. The result is distinctly Bordeaux-like.

"We don't want the word 'power' in our tasting notes," Davis recently told The SOMM Journal. "Balance, elegance, refinement, length of finish—these are the qualities I strive for in our wines." Arriving after the winery used a combination of French and American barrels for nearly 40 years, the 2015 Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon is the first release that used 100% French oak; according to Davis, it "exudes great fruit character and fine structure that French oak supports and elevates. I've been dreaming of releasing a wine like this for decades."

Earlier this year, Davis announced his transition to focusing fully on winegrowing at Jordan, turning over day-today winemaking responsibilities to his protégé of 13 years, Maggie Kruse. SJ





AS PRICES RISE FOR WINES FROM THE LIKES OF SANCERRE AND POUILLY-FUMÉ, TOURAINE OFFERS COVETED VALUE

story by Courtney Schiessl / photos by Doug Young

he Loire Valley, a region that has attracted some attention in recent years for its food-friendly and quality-driven wines, has managed to remain under the radar of most buyers and consumers. Perhaps that's partially because only 20% of the wines produced in Touraine, a relatively large AOC, are exported to the world, or maybe it's due to the wide array of varieties grown there: Though the area has its strengths, it's associated with many styles rather than a singular specialty.

Whatever the explanation for Touraine's humble profile, a May lunch held at Manhattan restaurant Racines for top New York wine buyers showcased the many reasons why enophiles should pay attention to this exciting appellation. As evidenced through a series of 11 Touraine AOC expressions, its wines consistently overperform at their price points and, most importantly, are here to stay for the long haul.



Diverse Touraine

To underscore this theme for attendees, host Arthur Hon, who serves as the Beverage Manager at two-Michelin-starred restaurant Momofuku Ko, described Touraine as "a hodgepodge of different kinds of wines at different price points." Located between Saumur and the Centre-Loire, the AOC encompasses 5,000 hectares of land from the Loire River to the Cher River, making it one of the largest appellations in the Loire Valley. Its vineyards are interspersed among rolling hills at the confluence of continental and maritime climates, and the wide diurnal temperature swings promote optimal grape ripeness while preserving acidity. Those swings become even more dramatic toward the region's eastern reaches, where the influence of the Atlantic Ocean becomes less pronounced.

Touraine was first established in 1939 as Coteaux de Touraine, officially becoming the Touraine AOC in 1953. But because this appellation is home to a sizable quantity of vineyard land with distinct mesoclimates, it was updated to include five geographical denominations, adding Touraine-Amboise, Touraine-Oisly, Touraine-Azay-le-Rideau, Touraine-Chenonceaux, and Touraine-Mesland to the existing Touraine specification. After all, the region's soils—which include flinty clay, clay limestone over chalk, and gravel over alluvial sediment—are incredibly diverse.

Averaging about 220,000 hectoliters of production each year, Touraine makes wines in all colors; each step of the growing and winemaking processes, meanwhile, is focused on yielding expressions with pure varietal character and clean, approachable flavor profiles with mouthwatering acidity. Easy-drinking, vibrant reds are often made from the Gamay grape, though varietal Cabernet Franc and blended reds—many of which incorporate Côt (Malbec)—are common as well. The region is also a leading producer of sparkling wine.

But white wine, typically made from the Sauvignon Blanc variety, is by far the most important Touraine style in terms of the opportunity it offers for global success: "Sauvignon Blanc is a competitive market," said Hon. "But Sancerre is getting more and more expensive, so Touraine is another option." Several buyers agreed with this sentiment. "Sauvignon Blanc is definitely the most requested wine by the glass," said Tira Johnson, a sommelier at Terroir wine

bar in New York's Tribeca neighborhood. Added her colleague Emily Ann Wagener, also a sommelier at Terroir, "Everyone asks for something crisp and dry, and these are just that: fruity and easy-drinking."

Valerie Pimpinelli, a buyer and floor manager at Flatiron Wines & Spirits in the Flatiron District, often sells Touraine wines to clients looking for acid-driven Sauvignon Blancs in the sub-\$20 range. "[They are great for people who are turned off by \$25 to \$30 for Sancerre," she said. "Many obscure or natural wines are \$25 to \$30 as well, and Touraine Gamay is often naturally made and \$18. People are looking for quality wine at lower price points."

Beyond the natural resources that make Touraine a high-performing wine region, Hon thinks that the overall philosophy of the appellation has something to do with its reputation for quality. "It's about that welcoming energy and the small producers, and that reflects in the wines," he said.

Endless Possibilities

The New York lunch exclusively featured still, dry whites made with Sauvignon Blanc during the 2018 vintage—a choice Hon



said was made to emphasize the wide range of high-quality wines made from a single variety in this diverse region. Buyers mingled while tasting two expressions alongside passed hors d'oeuvres of fluke crudo on crostinis and spring pea and asparagus velouté. The first, the Domaine François Cartier Sauvignon Blanc, was a fitting match for the spring soup with its grassy notes, hints of lemon, and refreshing acidity, while the second, the fragrant and apple-scented Domaine des Pierrettes Sens'S, featured a zingy finish that complemented the mild fish.

Guests then sat down to savor spring salad with cured egg yolk alongside three wines: the clean, juicy Domaine Merieau L'Arpent des Vaudons, which jumped out of the glass with apple and blossom aromas; the mineral-driven Domaine Michaud Touraine Sauvignon, which tasted of crunchy green apples, lime zest, and almond; and the Domaine Octavie Sauvignon, which showed notes of zesty citrus and fresh greens with rocky undertones. Buyers commented on how well the trio melded with the seasonal menu. "There are a lot of greens in today's lunch," said Johnson, "and they all pair perfectly."

For the main course, a poached striped bass with overwintered greens was served with three multidimensional Sauvignon Blancs: the generous Domaine Xavier Frissant Touraine Sauvignon, which greeted the palate with notes of juicy peach that moved through a limestone mid-palate into a clean, tart finish; the savory Domaine du Chapitre Sauvignon Blanc, which mingled hints of tart lemon and sea salt; and the bright Domaine Thierry Delaunay Sauvignon Blanc, with mixed flavors of pear, peach, and lemon.

At the conclusion of the luncheon, the trademark acidity of Touraine Sauvignon Blanc proved an ideal match for a plate of tangy spring goat cheese with herbes de Provence and fruits. From the apple blossom-laden Domaine Beauséjour Les Grenettes to the savory, rocky Domaine Lionel Gosseaume Les Sauterelles and the ripe, minerally Domaine Sauvète Sauvignon, the final course proved that just one key variety from this singular Loire Valley appellation can offer endless possibilities.

Seizing New Potential

As one generation passes the torch to

another, expect to see new energy in the Touraine AOC. "In the next five years, a lot of Touraine vineyards will change hands," said Hon. Because the region is generating more jobs, young people are increasingly flocking to Touraine and the Loire Valley to establish themselves. "It's much more affordable to purchase land," Hon added, "and the region is open to change and technology."

Because of this willingness to explore innovative techniques and set new standards for winegrowing, Touraine winemakers are increasingly paying attention to things like biodiversity and sulfur impact. Gilles Tamagnan, who purchased vines to establish Domaine des Pierrettes after transitioning to the winemaking business, approaches his craft today with the future in mind. "I make wine that is representative of me, my wife, and my soil and place," he said, "and I want to leave land that is good to the next generation. This region is made of people who love what they are doing."

So as buyers increasingly turn toward the Touraine AOC as a source of highquality wines that consistently overdeliver for their price points, they needn't worry—this region is preparing to sit on the world stage for decades to come. SI



eadlines in recent years have helped raise awareness of the dangerous effects of human exposure to agricultural chemicals. For Fred Cline of California's Cline Cellars, however, an instinctive concern for his children's well-being on his farm first arose decades ago, eventually serving as the catalyst for his fastidious commitment to sustainable farming.

Cline's sustainability practices, which go above and beyond the requirements of today's related certifications, were inspired by organic-farming pioneer Bob Cannard. Cannard, who has long provided produce for chef Alice Waters' Chez Panisse, is the man behind an approach known as the Green String Method: It refrains from using pesticides and herbicides, helping to produce a healthier crop and bigger yields as a result.

"It's about doing what's right for the environment and making it better—understanding your sites, understanding what works and what doesn't work," says Tom Gendall, associate winemaker for Cline Cellars and another Cline venture, Jacuzzi Family Vineyards. "You've got to think about the insects; you've got to think about the soil; you've got to think about the air, what your vegetations are, and how it's all tied together."

After Cannard and Cline met in 2000, it wasn't long before Cline became a Green String convert. By the following year, he had begun making the arduous transition to this new system; today, the winery uses no pesticides or glyphosates (weed-killing herbicides), and the only chemical it sprays is sulfur."My dad realized that the safety of his children and his workers—and everyone—was more important than the quick and easy fix of using Roundup," says second-generation proprietor Megan Cline.

> Located in Petaluma, CA, Green String Farm opened in 2008 as a means of providing high-quality and affordable organic produce to the area.

·CLINE CELLARS ASSOCIATE **WINEMAKER TOM GENDALL**

"IT'S ABOUT DOING WHAT'S

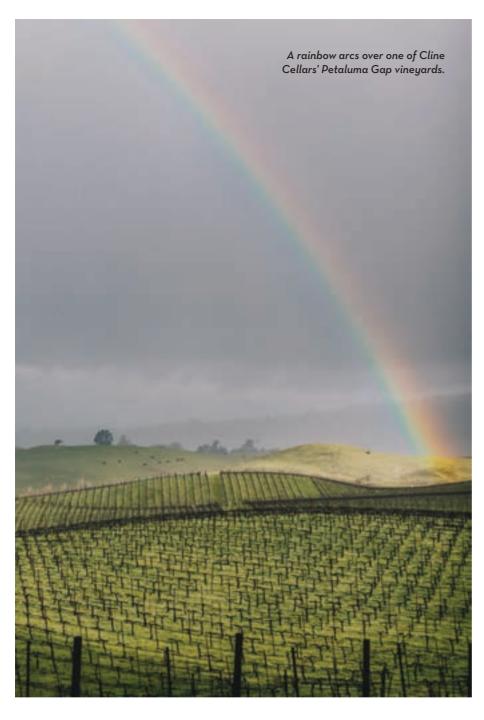
AND MAKING IT BETTER-

RIGHT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SITES,

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS

AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK.'



Beyond Organics

Switching to Green String farming isn't easy or cheap: It requires more passes through the vineyard, which necessitates a significant uptick in labor. The Clines had to find alternative methods to control weeds and fight disease, but nearly 20 years later, the land has reaped the benefits. "They say it takes about ten years to get all the glyphosate out of the soil, so it really was a long process," Megan recalls. "The first year, we had the problem of

pulling out an abundance of weeds that were difficult to remove in between the vineyard rows, but long-term, it has been so helpful to the health of our vines."

The most obvious indicator of that health? A total absence of disease, "The vines start becoming more resistant, and overall you're building up a healthier system," Gendall says. "Last year, we were picking in November after 2 inches of rain and there wasn't a touch of disease anywhere, which is a testament to our vineyard practices but also to the work of the vineyard crews. They're in the vineyards all the time making sure we get the best crop possible and [that] the canopies are open to lower the disease pressure."

In place of glyphosates, Cline Cellars uses weed wackers and sheep to control weeds. Since 2005, they've had 1,500 sheep and goats graze through the vineyards three times a year in addition to helping with leafing in the summer. "They're fantastic in the winter," says Gendall. "Especially in a wet year like this, the sheep can get in before the tractors can."

Compost teas, which naturally fight disease by making the soil healthier and promoting biodiversity, are another useful tool, as are seaweed fertilizers, which provide more nutrients to the vines and in turn help produce higher-quality fruit. And to target each vineyard's specific needs and disease pressures, Cline Cellars has partnered with BioFlora, a company that takes vineyard samples and creates custom nutrient programs for wineries.

Diverse Agriculture

The main reason Cline Cellars could economically justify the expense of adhering to the Green String Method is because, unlike most wineries, it farms much more than vines. In 2008, Cline and Cannard opened the 160-acre Green String Farm in Petaluma; located right across the street from one of Cline's Petaluma Gap vineyards, it sells seasonal produce, nuts, and meat it raises on site. "They wanted to create a space that was easily accessible to the local community, where [people] could get great-quality organic produce at a reasonable price," says Megan.

While it's a sound move to have more than wine to profit from, diversifying their crop truly fits into the Cline family's philosophy of leaving the land better than they found it. "By planting other crops in unfavorable viticulture areas, we diversify our horticulture system and our overall biosystem," says Gendall. "We also offer year-round work for our employees. By providing steady as opposed to seasonal jobs, we benefit from employees who are able to execute time-consuming jobs like weed wacking. In turn, when the vineyards are not needing attention, we have other crops for them to work on. The end result is a consistent work crew who understands our crops better and better each year. It is a win-win-win situation."

Leading the Charge

A leader in sustainability, Cline Cellars was also at the forefront of farming in the Petaluma Gap, which was officially designated as an AVA in 2018. Of its three vineyards there, Catapult was the first Cline planted, back in 1998. The winery was also one of the first to use Petaluma Gap on a label, displaying it on its Amphora portfolio.

The wind is the biggest differentiator in this region, and Gendall, a Petaluma Gap AVA board member, says the wines produced here have an extra-savory character that particularly shines through in Syrah. "It's one of the first AVAs created that's not based on the soil and typography; it's based all on that wind," he says. "The average wind here is 8 to 10 miles per hour, which results in a longer growing season and more flavor development over that time"

Willing to Experiment

The Cline Cellars team is constantly on the lookout for additional ways to improve their sustainability practices, especially in the face of climate change. Since 2008, for example, they've experimented with native root plantings, in which vines are planted right into the dirt without being grafted and then dry-farmed. "The idea is that you own-root it. Without water, the roots are forced to grow deeper into the soil, so you get a bigger, healthier root system," says Gendall. "With the water pressure issues throughout California, we're going to have to be smarter about water, so this is a really fantastic experiment that makes fantastic wine."

So far, the biggest challenge has been the low yields, as the vines produce roughly I-I.5 tons per acre. Gendall, however, believes the tradeoff is worth it: "The grapes we do get are fantastic,"

Gendall says. "They're really concentrated, you get phenolic brightness at lower sugar levels, and they just make really delicious, elegant wine."

But with this experiment also comes a giant risk: phylloxera. After the devastating outbreak in the late 19th century, it became common practice to graft vine cuttings on American rootstock, which is resistant to the bug. "The big fear for everyone with doing own-roots is phylloxera, obviously, but by going dry-farmed, the roots should go deep enough," Gendall explains. "Phylloxera only lives in the top part of the soil, so hopefully these roots get down low enough and you get healthier root systems that are more resistant."

The winemaker is the first to acknowledge that "there's still lots to learn" when it comes to Cline's pioneering methods. "We are so prone to drought in California that this possibly could be the answer," he says. "Maybe this will be what we have to do in the future, but for now, it's more of an experiment."



{ portugal }



SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1834, **JOSÉ MARIA DA** FONSECA HAS REFUSED TO SETTLE FOR LESS

by Carl Corsi

"THE PERSEVERANCE, the will to do more, to create something new, to never forget our past": This is a statement of values from the leadership behind one of Portugal's most highly regarded wineries, José Maria da Fonseca in the Setúbal DOC. These words exemplify the commitment of the Soares Franco family, who have managed to maintain a reputation for innovation and a capacity for renewal over the course of seven generations of ownership. Today, father-and-son team António Soares Franco Sr. and António Maria Soares Franco Jr. stand at the helm with

Chief Winemaker and Vice President Domingos Soares Franco (brother and uncle, respectively, to Antonio Sr. and Antonio Jr.).

When founder José Maria da Fonseca established his eponymous winery in 1834, Portuguese producers weren't exactly known for their forward thinking; the people of the time would simply bring their flagons to a tavern and fill them with the standard wine of the area, straight from the cask.

Maria da Fonseca, however, had a different idea when he began planting indigenous grapes on a property named Cova da Periquita in Setúbal—one of his first land purchases. From the beginning, the Periquita wine was exceptional, but selling casks to taverns meant that it would be susceptible to natural oxidation or unwelcome alterations by unscrupulous owners seeking to make a little extra profit. So, for the 1850 vintage, Maria da Fonseca decided to bottle a wine that would serve as both a commitment to quality and a

statement of origin.

Produced with native grapes like Castelão that thrive in Setúbal, the Periquita and Periquita Reserva labels now represent one of Portugal's most enduring wine brands. Still popular in its home country, it's now exported to many countries around the world, including the United States.

Accumulating Expertise

One of the driving forces behind this historic winery's position of prominence is Domingos: A member of the family's sixth generation, he grew up among the vines and in the cellars, where he developed a passion for all aspects of winemaking. In the late 1970s, that aforementioned "will to do more" led him to California, where he became the first Portuguese person to earn a degree in fermentation sciences from the University of California, Davis.

Upon returning home, Domingos began helping to build a long-term strategy for expanding the holdings of José Maria da

Fonseca. From the José de Sousa property in Alentejo, where the tradition of fermenting grapes in talhas (clay pots) is still followed, to the far north of Portugal in Vinho Verde, these opportunities to "create something new" have lifted the winery's products to new heights.

Domingos and his team of specialists are elevating Portuguese wines to stand among the best in the business—an effort that's evident in José Maria da Fonseca's purchase of a site named Ouinta de Mós in the Douro Superior DOC. Of the many varieties growing there, Domingos decided to focus on 10- to 15-year-old vines relatively young for this site—of

characteristics that set the producer's Moscatel de Setúbal apart originate in the vineyards; within the Setúbal DOC, which was established in 1907. José Maria da Fonseca owns prime Moscatel sites that enable Domingos and his team to source some of the highest quality fruit in the region. His decades of experience in understanding the complexities of this fortified wine—which undergoes many more production steps than still expressions—only add to its strengths, and the result is so distinctive that the winery decided to brand it as Alambre, a nod to both the name of the original vineyard planted to Moscatel and the wine's amber color. Domingos



The Museum House in the Setúbal Peninsula, where José Maria da Fonseca was established in 1834.

Touriga Francesa (a floral, elegant grape officially known as Touriga Franca), Touriga Nacional, and Tinta Roriz to produce the Domini and Domini Plus wines. The 2015 vintage of the latter features 96% Touriga Francesa and 4% Touriga Nacional, resulting in a wine with complex flavors of bright red fruits, abundant minerality, and a nuttiness that finishes with balanced acid and tannins.

Giving Moscatel Its Due

Another jewel in José Maria da Fonseca's crown is its Moscatel de Setúbal, a historic wine that's been enjoyed by the likes of Louis XIV of France. The

recently visited the U.S. to introduce special aged 10-, 20-, 30-, and 40-yearold expressions of Alambre; made via careful blending of multiple vintages as old or older than their corresponding age statement, the wines showcase losé Maria da Fonseca's—and Domingos'—signature style.

Next year will mark his 40th vintage at his family's winery, but what's unfolding at José Maria da Fonseca goes beyond winemaking: Domingos and his team are using each vineyard, each variety, and every viticultural method at their disposal to create an artform meant to be enjoyed by enophiles the world over.

Tasting Notes

by Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Meridith May

José de Sousa 2017, Alentejano **(\$22)** This fruity red (58% Grand Noir, 22% Trincadeira, and 20% Aragones) has power and edge. (A small portion of the wine aged in clay amphorae.) Dusty notes of plum and violet perfume the glass as spiced mocha and boysenberry pie lengthen on the palate. Gripping tannins, dried flowers, and currants show alongside an underlying black-peppered earthiness. What an amazing value! 92



José Maria da Fonseca 2016 Periquita, Setúbal Peninsula (\$12)

Expressing a nose of plum and brown sugar, this blend of 52% Castelão, 38% Trincadeira, and 12% Aragones goes hedonistic with flavors of brandied cherry, toasted coconut, blackberry, and brush. Aged six months in French and American oak (new and used), it has a low ABV of 13%. 90



José Maria da Fonseca 2015 Domini Plus, DOC Douro (\$44)

A blend of estate-grown Touriga Francesca (96%) and Touriga Nacional (4%) aged ten months in new French oak, this wine exudes scents of blueberries in tilled soil that are further enhanced by aromas of vanilla latte. Bittersweet dark chocolate enters silkily alongside round yet dry tannins. Blue flowers, hazelnuts, and fennel contribute further complexity. 94



Alambre 20-Year Moscatel de Setúbal DOC (\$70) This expression, aged in used oak for 20 years, adds dimension to the fortified-wine category with its exquisite character. (No bottle aging is required because of its oxidative state.) At 36.8 proof, the wine is dense, heady, and sweet without being cloying. Aromas of salted apricots, dates, and dried plums serve as refined base notes, paving the way for liquid that bears the weight of burnt



Flowery tones ignite a passionate core of savory essences such as coffee bean and rosemary. 93



The Burgundian Model

Par Excellence

DRAWING ON HERITAGE
AND KNOW-HOW,
DOMAINE MOILLARD
AIMS TO REMAIN
ACCESSIBLE TO ALL
BURGUNDY LOVERS

by Izzy Watson

THE OLDEST WRITTEN records of Nuits-Saint-Georges show that the Moillard family already owned vineyards in this important commune in Burgundy's Côte d'Or before the French Revolution. But they really found their footing in 1850, when Symphorien Moillard received an order that was too large to fill from his estate alone. Turning to surrounding growers, he purchased grapes for the first time, thus launching his eponymous company's wine-brokerage business.

Today, with Domaine Moillard having evolved into a highly regarded négociant-vinificateur-éleveur, the art of selection still plays a pivotal role. Continually striving to improve the quality of the wines produced within its estate, the company procures its grapes or must directly from growers it's partnered with for many years. Using this material, Moillard vinifies and matures its vintages in this long tradition.

In 2009, a new winery was established in Nuits-Saint-Georges to process grapes selected from premier sites in Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune. Equipped with

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRAND CHAIS DE FRANCE

"Our white wines are fine and complex, fresh and balanced—they offer good length on the palate. Our red wines are both elegant and powerful, and are able to age and be appreciated throughout their aging."

–Baptiste Corrot, Enologist

small, open vats, this facility was designed to keep the grapes intact before vinification:
As soon as it arrives at the winery, the fruit is gently pressed and the resulting juice is allowed to settle. Depending on the appellation, the must ferments in thermoregulated stainless-steel vats (for Chablis and Mâcon) or in oak barrels and undergoes bâtonnage; this step contributes to its complexity and length before the wine is transferred to the old vaulted cellars on site, which contain over 1,000 barrels. There, they're managed and matured by enologists throughout the 14- to 20-month process.

Today, the Domaine Moillard estate spreads over Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune from Vougeot to Volnay, spanning nearly 20 hectares. The company's sense of heritage, earned through decades of experience, puts a stamp of history on its wines, half of which are Premier Cru; its respect for site specificity, meanwhile, assures authenticity as it expresses the nobility of the terroir in the truest Burgundian sense.

Domaine Moillard's vineyard in Chablis rests on a limestone plateau.

Burgundian Value

While some of the jewels in Moillard's crown include the prestigious Pommard 1er Cru Les Rugiens, Volnay 1er Cru Clos des Chênes, and Nuits-Saint-Georges Les Argillats, equally attractive are the winery's Chablis and Haut Côtes de Nuits offerings, which represent real values in the often-pricey landscape of Burgundian wine.

MOILLARD CHABLIS COQUILLAGE

Located in northern Burgundy near Auxerre, the Chablis vineyards run alongside a small river aptly named Le Serein ("The Serene"). The region sits on a limestone plateau crossed by valleys, and tiny deposits of shellwork in the rock—remnants of the warm, shallow sea that covered Burgundy 155 million years ago—give the wine its name: Coquillage is French for shell.

The wine is stainless steel—fermented and aged on the lees (also in stainless) for nine months before bottling. A dazzling shade of pale yellow, Coquillage exudes floral and slightly smoky aromas before rich, persistent mineral tones arise on the palate, making the wine ideal for pairing with oysters and other shellfish.



MOILLARD HAUTES CÔTES DE NUITS LES VIGNES HAUTES BLANC

The Hautes Côtes de Nuits vineyards overlook the Côte de Nuits to the west of the woods of Corton above Gevrey-Chambertin. Situated on clay and limestone soils with some marl content, they're located between 300–400 meters (roughly 984–1,312 feet) above sea level, hence the name Les Vignes Hautes ("The High Vines") carried by Moillard's white and red expressions from this terroir:

Harvested by hand, the Chardonnay grapes for the Les Vignes Hautes Blanc undergo traditional vinification: After they're pressed immediately upon arrival at the winery in pneumatic presses, fermentation follows in stainless steel at 16 degrees Celsius before the wine ages for ten months in oak barrels used between one and five times.

Pale yellow with bright highlights, the wine expresses its terroir through floral notes that lend elegance to the nose. The liveliness of this expression melds seamlessly with a beloved Burgundian specialty—snails—yet it also pairs well with stewed or grilled poultry, veal with cream sauce, or raw or cooked fish and shellfish. Soft aged cheeses such as Camembert and brie, meanwhile, make for a superb end to a meal when matched with Les Vignes Hautes Blanc.



Like its white counterpart, Les Vignes Hautes Rouge is crafted to showcase the terroir of the Hautes Côtes de Nuits. Traditional vinification takes place in thermoregulated stainless steel after a temperature-controlled cold maceration, and punch-downs and pumping over are performed during the long fermentation process. The wine is then aged on fine lees for ten months in oak barrels mainly from the Vosges region that have also been used between one and five times.

An intense nose of red fruit and spices leads to a delicate palate enhanced by fine tannins and a fresh finish. This is a rounded, balanced wine ideal for serving alongside rabbit, lamb, duck, or other grilled meats. It also pairs beautifully with sweet-and-sour or spicy dishes and can accompany moderately strong cheeses such as Camembert or Morbier.

For more information, visit moillard.fr/en.html.





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Wednesday, November 13

Registration Desk Open 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Seminars: 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Bourgogne Wines: The First Step to the Notion of Terroir

11:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

The Mystery of the Climats de Bourgogne

Albarino & Somms: A Focused Tasting from Rias Baixas

Bob Bath, MS, Culinary Institute of America

2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Bourgogne Wines: Tracking Down Iconic Village Appellations and their Unfamiliar Neighbors

Global vs. Domestic: Is the World Wine Stage Getting Smaller?

Bob Bath, MS, Culinary Institute of America

Thursday, November 14

Registration Desk Open

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m

Networking Coffee & Pastries 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Seminars: 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Discover Lugana, the Graceful, Unique White Wine of Lake Garda Laura Donadoni, LA Com Wine Agency

Spirits of Japanese Craftmanship: Whiskey & Shochu

shio Ueno, MSS, Sake School of America

Syrah Smackdown Thomas Price, MS, Jackson Family Fine Wines

The Emperor Has No Clothes

Larry O'Brien, MS, Jackson Family Wines Joseph Spellman, MS, JUSTIN Vineyards & Landmark Vineyards Charlie Arturaola, Award Winning Wine Linguist

Varied Aging Vessels' Impact on Wine Flavor and Style Bree Stock, MW, Constant Crush Advisors

Winning at Beverage Programs! Part 1: Revenue Erik Segelbaum, SOMLYAY LLC

Tasting Break hosted by WhyNot

WSET Fireside Chat: Enter the Z

10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Seminars:

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Bordeaux and Germany's Best Kept Secrets

Lindsay Pomeroy, MW, Wine Smarties

Deconstructing SpiritsBill Brandel, The SOMM Journal & Tasting Panel

New & Pending Pacific Northwest AVAs & Trends David Glancy, MS, San Francisco Wine School

The Genius of Pinot Noir

Charles Curtis, MW. Wine Alpha

Winning at Beverage Programs! Part 2: Expenses Erik Segelbaum, SOMLYAY LLC

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Seminars: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

California Terroirists: Rethinking Assumptions from Paso to Lodi, Napa to Sonoma David Glancy, MS, San Francisco Wine School

Oxygen Management & Wine Evolution Through Wine Closures
Mary Gorman-McAdams, MW. International Wine Center

Portugal, A Modern Day Classic! Eugenio Jardim, Wines of Portugal

Savory & Saline

Nick Hetzel, MS, Jackson Family Wines Larry O'Brien, MS, Jackson Family Wines Thomas Price, MS, Jackson Family Fine Wines

The Value of Single Blind Tasting

Eric Entrikin, MS, E & J Gallo & Germain Robin

Trentodoc's Timeless Passion: A Study of Ferrari's Traditional Method Sparkling

Wines from the Italian Alps Laura Donadoni, LA Com Wine Agency

Tasting Break hosted by WhyNot & Black Stallion Estate

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. WSET Fireside Chat: WSET's New Look

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

4.15 pm = 5.30 pm

It's Willamette Damnit! A Deep Dive Into Oregon's Willamette Valley Bree Stock, MW, Constant Crush Advisors

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Mead: What is all the Buzz About?

Gillian Balance, MS Traci Dutton, CIA

Peter Bakulic, Local Expert
Ash Fishbein, Sap House Meadery

Study Tips for Advanced to Master Level Candidates Lindsay Pomeroy, MW, Wine Smarties Peter Neptune, MS, Neptune School of Wine

Tempranillo Master Class

Nicole Andrus Trinchero Family Estates

Wines of Israel: Unknown Side of the Mediterranean

Sandy Block, MW, Legal Sea Foods

Medi-Tasting with Maison's Domaines & Henriot

Charles Curtis, MW, WineAlpha Natalie Bell, Mindful Wellness

Tasting: 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Concours d'Spirits Tasting *Trade Only*

Friday, November 15

Registration Desk Open 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Networking Coffee & Pastries

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Seminars: 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Lee's Aging Effect on Sparkling Wine

Diego Meraviglia, North American Sommelier Association

New Horizon of Asian Wines

Toshio Ueno, MSS, Sake School of America Tommy Lam, Asian Wine Institute

New Zealand Master Class

Cameron Douglas, MS, AUT University

Vintage California Cabernet Christopher Hoel, Harper's Club

Women in Wine Panel Discussion

Courtney Quinn, Women's Wine Alliance Lisa Redwine, Regal Wine Co.

Tasting Break hosted by WhyNot

10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m

WSET Fireside Chat: Under the Influence?

10:30 a.m. - 11: 15 a.m.

Seminars:

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Alto Adige: A World Apart Tim Gaiser, MS, Author

Career Prospects in Today's Wine Industry

Jann Cotter, Jackson Family Wines Ira Norof, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits

How to Really do a Deductive Tasting: Like for Real, for Real

Will Costello, MS, Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills Estates

Master Class on Tasting Whiskey for Quality David Rudman, WEST Americas

The World's Many Styles of Chenin Blanc Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler Vineyards

Networking Lunch 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Seminars:

2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Blind Taste with the Masters

Will Costello, MS, Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills Estates Joseph Spellman, MS, JUSTIN Vineyards & Landmark Vineyards David Glancy, MS, San Francisco Wine School Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler Vineyards

Franciacorta: The Region, The Method, The Wine Michelle Williams, Rockin Red Blog

From Peasant to Artisan: Probing into Wild Agave Used in Mezcal Maurice DiMarino, Cohn Restaurant Group

Master Class on Natural Wine Patrick Ballow, Vino Carta

Not Since Lunch: Unconfusing Barolo and Brunello

Viewing Wines Through the Lens of Diversity

Lia Jones, Diversity in Wine and Spirits

Tasting Break hosted by WhyNot

3:30 p.m. – 4: 15 p.m.
WSET Fireside Chat: Top Talent Attract, Train and Retain 3:30 p.m. - 4: 15 p.m.

Tasting: 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Grand Decant Tasting *Trade Only*

5:30p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Grand Decant Tasting

Schedule

Produced by: **FAST FORWARD** { wine auctions }

Auctioneer John Curley pits a "B" bidder against an "A" bidder.



Dueling Paddles at MacMurray Ranch

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Bob McClenahan

THE 2019 SONOMA **COUNTY BARREL AUCTION RAISES** \$645,000 FOR SONOMA **COUNTY VINTNERS**



Kate MacMurray of MacMurray Estate Vineyards pours glasses of the winery's Pinot Gris.

ON A SUN-SOAKED day in early May, the Sonoma County Vintners' Sonoma County Barrel Auction celebrated its fifth anniversary at the iconic MacMurray Ranch in the heart of the Russian River Valley. Upon arrival, I bolted to the tasting tent to sample as many of the 85 "Never Before, Never Again" lots on offer. When everything was said and done, over 450 attendees helped raise \$645,000; to date, the auctions have generated more than \$3.4 million in support of the Sonoma County Vintners' efforts to globally promote the region's wines.

On hand to greet guests was Kate MacMurray herself, who poured some of her refreshing MacMurray Ranch Pinot Gris. "My father was a young actor in Hollywood and was just 32 years old when he came out here and began building up this property," said MacMurray. As the former venue for Taste of Sonoma events,

MacMurray Ranch was a natural fit for the auction, "and it's a great honor to host," she added.

I also bumped into the always-affable Lon Gallagher, Senior Manager of Public Relations for E. & J. Gallo Winery, who provided crisp and delicious bottles of J Vineyards & Winery sparkling wine for the closing celebratory toast. "There's a genuine joie de vivre ... that I equate to California winemaking," Gallagher said of the Sonoma Barrel Auction weekend. "There's so much diversity here. You have Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay and genuine respect for the land and your fellow vintners."

Another asset was the positively electric and oft-hilarious performance of auctioneer John Curley, whose charismatic flair kept everyone engaged through all 85 lots. Two of the most exciting moments saw bidding wars for Silver Oak Cellars'

First of Its Kind 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon. which sold for \$40,000, and Williams Selyem's The West Side 2018 Pinot Noir, which earned \$33,000.

Tent Tastings and Auction Lots

Situated front and center inside the tent was Lot No. I: a Sun Chase Vineyard Pinot collaboration from Dan Kosta's AldenAlli Winery and Rolando Herrera's Red Stitch Winery. After selling off his stake in Kosta Browne Winery, Kosta launched Alden Alli to "explore the limits and cooler climates of Sonoma Coast Pinot."

Next, I met winemaker Aaron Piotter of Bear Flag, which made a Monte Rosso Vineyard Zinfandel blended with a redskinned grape called Dakapo from a site at the base of the Sierra Foothills. The winery annually produces 5,000 cases of Zinfandel, 3,000 of Cabernet, and a multi-vintage Red Blend that retails for \$25. Five cases of its 2017 vintage earned a winning bid of \$5,500.

At another table, I found an energetic Courtney Foley; she's now a year into her role as winemaker at Chalk Hill Estate, where Chardonnay is the primary focus. "Chardonnay is my dad's favorite wine, so no pressure," she said through wry laugh-



Pictured from left to right are Chris Crispo of Bush Crispo Vineyards, Kerith Overstreet of Bruliam Wines, Erica Stancliff of Trombetta Family Wines, and Bob Cabral of Three Sticks Wines (Cabral's "Winemakers of the Year, Chardonnay of the Century" lot was another top seller at \$8,000). Overstreet and Stancliff partnered with Ana Keller of Keller Estate (not pictured) to produce Lot No. 56, called "Aura-Goddess of the Wind," on behalf of the Petaluma Gap Winegrowers Women's Team.



Auctioneer John Curley; Dana Macaulay, Managing Director of Sonoma County Auctions; and Michael Haney, Executive Director of the Sonoma County Vintners, raise a celebratory glass of J Vineyards bubbly at the close of the auction. The event welcomed a who's who of Sonoma County.

ter. The winery's Lees Is More Lot No. 13 expression hailed from two of Foley's favorite "founders" blocks planted to Clone 15. Stirred on the lees in François Frères barrels, it was a beauty.

The party continued at the Kosta Browne Winery table, where Director of Hospitality Damon Wong, Director of Brand Engagement Regina Sanz, and winemaker Nico Cueva poured an exclusive Pinot Noir (Swan clone) from the Russian River Valley's Treehouse Vineyard. Cueva is producing impeccably fresh and balanced wines abundant with complexity, and needless to say, this was a popular table.

Sosie Wines' Over the Moon expression, meanwhile, came from winemaker Kieran Robinson and owner Scott MacFiggen, who both poured other portfolio wines with lots of structure, energy, and verve. Also fitting squarely into that category was Westwood Estate Wines; produced by winemaker Philippe Melka, its Pièce de Annadel fetched \$9,000—which, for a Syrah, was a real coup.

Glenn Hugo, winemaker for B.R. Cohn Winery, poured a 2017 Olive Hill Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from one of the earliest plantings on the B.R. Cohn estate in Sonoma Valley; dubbed Triple Platinum, it aged in French Taransaud

barrels (100% new oak). While Hugo has mastered the art of making delicious, affordable wines, his auction lot is proof that he's got the Midas touch when it comes to working with small quantities.

Final Thoughts

Michael Haney, the gregarious Executive Director of the Sonoma County Vintners, was thrilled with the day's outcome. "As in previous years, our Sonoma County Barrel Auction and related events showcased our world-class, diverse wines while also highlighting the camaraderie and spirit of our wonderful Sonoma County community," he said.

With SOMM Journal readers in mind, I asked Haney to give his perspective on why buyers should consider attending next year's auction. He pointed to the "one-ofa-kind wines that are not offered anywhere else in the world." "The wines handcrafted for this year's auction are completely different from those that will be auctioned next year," he added. "Through the preview tastings, the trade can also connect with the winemakers directly, experience firsthand the diversity Sonoma County offers through our 18 unique appellations, and, last but not least, experience an incredibly fun event."



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.





Minus Tide proprietors Kyle Jeffrey, Brad Jonas, and Miriam Pitt.

IT'S A LONG, winding road along redwood forests to the Mendocino coast, where the cool air of the Pacific influences the character of wines from a burgeoning grape-growing community in the Anderson Valley.

A trio of up-and-coming 30-year-olds, Kyle Jeffrey, Brad Jonas, and Miriam Pitt, have jumped into the fray, working with organic and sustainable vineyards to produce new label Minus Tide (it's named for the very low tides that "expose

hidden gems of the sea"). While Pitt oversees marketing and design, leffrey and lonas are experienced co-winemakers who focus exclusively on cool-climate wines from an area that is naturally gifted with high elevation, fog, and old vines, among them the 110-plus-year-old Carignan vines of Feliz Creek Vineyard in southeast Mendocino. Minus Tide also produces Malbec, Pinot Noir, Riesling, and Chardonnay.

Creek Vineyard, Hopland, Mendocino County AVA (\$24) This wine hails from head-trained Carignan vines planted in 1908. Unique, clean scents of thyme and MacIntosh apple precede salted raspberry and rose petal sweetened by melon on the palate, An herbal note of rosemary lends dryness to the finish. 92

Minus Tide 2017 Carignan, Feliz Creek Vineyard, Hopland, Mendocino County AVA (\$29) White peach and lemon ice grace the nose before an edgy minerality emerges on the palate. Lemon-kissed applesauce is spiced with cinnamon and rhubarb. Chocolate and cranberry give off aromatics while also contributing flavor; sugared roses and cherries are lovely on the finish. Carbonic maceration is implemented here, along with partial destemming, a technique that Kyle Jeffrey learned during a winemaking stint in Switzerland. 94

Israel's Golan Heights:

Where Terroir and Culture Are Partners in History

NAMED FOR THE region that's put Israel on the world wine stage, Golan Heights Winery is producing some eye-opening, mouthwatering selections through its Yarden label.

An American-born talent, chief winemaker Victor Schoenfeld graduated from the University of California, Davis, in 1988 and worked at wineries in California and France before moving to northern Israel, where he joined Golan Heights in 1992. The latest releases we tasted with Schoenfeld prove both his ability and his love for this region, which is bordered by the Mediterranean to the east; it boasts the highest elevations in the country as well as five distinct types of volcanic soil. "This is an interesting time to be a winemaker." Schoenfeld said, "New tools allow us to learn more about our conditions in this ancient terroir and more and more we are able to reflect the best we can for this specific spot on the planet."

Yarden 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Galilee/ Golan Heights, Israel (\$20) This wine offers grapefruit and jasmine on the nose, which persist alongside exotic floral notes, balanced ripeness, and a creamy texture. A small percentage (25%) was fermented in French oak for spice and length. 92



Yarden 2014 Merlot Odem Organic Vineyard, Golan Heights, Israel (\$105)

Made with fruit sourced from a single vineyard 3,900 feet above sea level, this small-production red aged for 18 months in French oak (70% new). It proves this region's ability to exhibit Old World elegance as well as New World sunshine and freshness of fruit. Flavors of blueberry, sweet tobacco, and dark chocolate meld with an innate earthiness. Espresso tannins are pronounced but held in check. 94

Yarden 2015 Petit Verdot, Galilee, Israel (\$39) This was, for us, the standout of the tasting, gorgeously displaying chocolate, blackberry, and violets on the nose and a mouthfeel that's supremely elegant. Whitepeppered blueberries and tomato leaf echo on the finish. 95

A Tribute to the **Old West:** Dancehall



WITH DANCEHALL, NOTED vintner Rolando Herrera of Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Mi Sueño fame brings us back to the days before technology ran our lives. The Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Malbec in this blend are grown mostly in Napa Valley's Mount Veeder region at elevations exceeding 900 feet—more hillside than mountain.

YARDEN

Dancehall 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Mount Veeder, Napa Valley (\$100)

Part of the Little Village Collection portfolio from industry veterans (and former Freixenet execs) Mitchell Glick and Kirsten Hamilton, this wine exudes a fresh nose of just-juiced blueberries and black pepper. The palate showcases a striking array of violets, mountain brush, fennel, and peppered plums. Minerality takes shape within a dark-chocolate core. Powerful and statuesque. 95

Defender of the North:

Bridging Napa and Sonoma Counties, Monte Rosso Vineyard Is the Minder of Mount Peak Sentinel



The iron-rich, red volcanic soils of Monte Rosso Vineyard set the stage for Mount Peak, a three-story gravity-flow winery built in 1886 with rocks pulled from the site. After it shut its doors during Prohibition and became an abandoned ghost winery, its name was resurrected more than 125 years after its founding, and winemaker Mark Williams is now crafting its current legacy of greatness.

IN ITS SECOND VINTAGE, the Sentinel 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$70) from Mount Peak is in its glory. Its fruit is borne from the celebrated Monte Rosso Vineyard, which spans the border of Napa and Sonoma counties in the Mayacamas Mountains. Depicted on the label, the Sentinel represents a watchful eye shielding the entrance to the vineyard. Aged in American and French oak for 18 months, it possesses femininity of Amazonian proportions: It's bold and round, with a strikingly beautiful perfume of blueberries and purple flowers. The palate is washed with melted dark chocolate and fine-grained tannins. Spiced black cherries spread generously on the finish. 97

Sentinel is marketed through E. & J. Gallo.



Sbragia's Advantage: His Home Field

KNOWING BEFORE OUR first sniff that we were tasting a new release from the venerable Sbragia name, our senses were on high alert. The illustrious Ed Sbragia's son Adam, a fourthgeneration Sonoma winemaker, has launched his own brand,

Home Field, with a 2016 Red Blend (\$25) that way overdeliv-

ers for its suggested price: You can pour this one by the glass all night long.



"I want to extend the winemaking tradition that my great-grandfather started when he came to Dry Creek Valley from Italy in 1904," noted Sbragia. "I grew up in the vineyards, riding a tractor with my grandfather Gino. I've been making wine

side by side with my dad for a dozen years. It's exciting to take what I've learned and make a wine that's all my own."

The five grapes that go into the blend—Zinfandel, Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Merlot—are grown in six different Dry Creek Valley vineyards. With aromas and flavors of blueberry, thyme, blue flowers, and plum, this is a decidedly juicy, power-driven red with streamlined tannins and an exciting, food-friendly acidity. 93



Veteran winemaker Ed Sbragia with his son Adam.



The Seersucker Distillery tasting room resembles an old-timey ice cream parlor—now that's Southern hospitality!

An In-GIN-eous Approach to Flavor

by Meridith May

OUR SUMMER ISSUE is a fitting time to espouse the virtues of a gin that's been on our radar for about half a year now. Even the packaging is reminiscent of a summer wardrobe, highlighting the fact that Seersucker is named for the striped cotton fabric that's lightweight and breezy.

Owned by husband-and-wife team Trey and Kim Azar, the Seersucker distillery is located in San Antonio, Texas; adorned by a tasting room that resembles an old-timey ice cream parlor, it's known for offering true Southern hospitality to its guests. Spirits buyers should take note that Seersucker Southern Style Gin's citrus-forward, ethereal expressions are inspirational as cocktail bases—but on their own, we find them as refreshing as any summer cooler. In fact, they all warranted high scores: See the sidebar for tasting notes. §

Seersucker Limeade Southern Style

Gin A 70-proof treat for the senses, with aromas of fresh-squeezed lime that perfume the air. Tingling the palate, a hint of salinity opens up an array of gardenia, lanolin, and honeysuckle. Spearmint feels clean in the mouth as juicy lime and dots of juniper and basil persist through the finish. **94**

Seersucker Lemonade Southern Style

Gin Meyer lemon has never smelled so intriguing—it conjures a coastal orchard swept with sea breezes. Lemon zest emerges on the initial sip, blossoming into a fruit basket of cantaloupe and Golden Delicious apple with a spray of white pepper. Dried lavender forms on the finish, changing the landscape to a field of flowers. 95

Seersucker Grapefruit Southern Style

Gin In the glass, it looks like fresh-squeezed Ruby Red juice. Aromas are fresh, sweet, and clean, with additional scents of jasmine-kissed juniper and salted raspberry. The authentic flavor profile is seasoned with a touch of rosemary, which gives it length and a dryness on the finish. Spectacular: **96**



And as for Seersucker Southern Style Original Gin, the influence of its slow copper-pot distillation process and its botanicals help produce an eloquent perfume on the nose as well as texture, length, and elevated flavors on the palate. Delicate, angelic aromas of baby's breath, spearmint, and marshmallow glide toward a graceful mouthfeel; juniper is kept in check behind elegant notes of lavender and honeyed pears. The finish is dotted with salted fennel root and a twist of lemon. 96

PHOTO: JOSH HUSKINS



PINNFFRING I INHR VINEYARDS **& WINES DEBUTS ITS** FIRST PROPRIFTARY **RED WINE**

story by Michelle Ball photos by Jeremy Ball

It was the early 1970s when Jerry Lohr, a civil engineer in the Bay Area and a former NASA research scientist, planted the first grapes for J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines in an unproven viticultural region on California's Central Coast. Having grown up on a farm in South Dakota, Lohr was captivated by the wine industry, as it allowed for complete control of all aspects of the business—from farming the grapes to making the wine.

In contrast to most early beginnings, the Stanford graduate formed a business plan for a winery with an annual production of 125,000 cases and an initial goal of being 80% estate-grown. "The reason





"What we always want to do is completely control our own grapes. It's estate fruit made by us, barreled by us, blended by us, and bottled by us."

- Jerry Lohr

I wanted to be at a reasonable level was so I could bring in the best barrels, the best winemakers, the best vineyards, the best technology, the best marketing, and so forth," explains Lohr, who at 82 still fires off dates and facts from his past as if they happened yesterday.

When it came time to plant, Lohr wanted to look beyond Napa and Sonoma, which were already on the verge of tremendous growth. "I thought, OK, what can I learn from those places, but more importantly, where else can I go?" recalls Lohr. The desire to forge a new path and improve beyond the status quo led Lohr to cultivate vineyards in Monterey County, whose coastal proximity was ideal for retaining natural acidity. A little over a decade later, Lohr expanded to Paso Robles to add Bordeaux varieties to his portfolio.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines, and a constant drive to improve, a commitment to being estate-grown and -bottled, and a dedication to its people remain integral to the winery's success. The longevity of the latter mission is evident from the lengthy tenures of employees throughout the company, among them Brenden Wood, who was recently promoted to red winemaker after 15 years with J. Lohr.

"Always Willing to Invest"

After graduating from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, with a degree in biochemistry, Wood traveled through France and Italy to glean valuable winemaking experience. Joining J. Lohr in 2004, he began as a lab technician and worked his way up to enologist, then assistant winemaker; now, in his new role, he's overseeing the entire portfolio of red wines at the company's Paso Robles winery.

As a scientist, he says he values I. Lohr's commitment to continually increasing quality through research and testing. "I could see early on that they were always willing to invest in improvements to make the wines better," adds Wood, who explains that one of his initial projects was focused on promoting phenolic development. J. Lohr was one of the first producers to closely examine how pigmentation is derived from tannins, a practice that helps guide winemaking decisions to achieve Lohr's stylistic goals: plushy, soft tannic character and intense color. "We've seen a steady growth [in phenolics] over the last 15 vintages, so the wines keep getting darker each year. That's easy to do—what's hard to do is to keep tannins soft," says Wood. "We've actually seen our wines

J. Lohr 2017 Pure Paso™, Paso Robles (\$27) Opaque with a fuchsia rim, this wine features aromas of warm blackberry pie that punch through the glass. Under a veil of savory mint and subtle notes of lavender, spicy tannins lead to generous black fruit and whispers of sage and graphite. There is so much pleasure in this wine, yet there's still a cerebral quality that begs for further discovery.





get denser over time, but also softer. Softer in this case relates to that skin ratio of color and tannin."

J. Lohr Pure Paso Debuts

That trademark flavor profile is evident in the winery's latest release, the I. Lohr Pure Paso Proprietary Red Wine, which Lohr describes as "an opportunity for our winemakers" to make an ultimate red blend."

The very first I. Lohr wine was a 1974 Petite Sirah, which was also one of the first varieties planted by Lohr and his team in Paso Robles. It flourished in the region's warm, arid climate, and the winery continues to annually produce a popular Tower Road Petite Sirah under its Vineyard Series tier. "What we always want to do is completely control our own grapes. It's estate fruit made by us, barreled by us, blended by us, and bottled by us," Lohr explains.

With J. Lohr Pure Paso, Petite Sirah takes on a different role, making up nearly 30% of the final blend. Mild fermentation temperatures and a shorter maceration time give the variety a fresh blackberry profile and a soft tannin structure. Cabernet Sauvignon serves as the backbone (70%), seeing the addition of small amounts of Merlot, Petit Verdot, and Malbec for complexity.

For this particular wine, Wood focuses on Cabernet Sauvignon from the Shotwell Vineyard in the El Pomar District. This site sits directly in the path of the Templeton Gapa series of passes in the coastal mountains. This geological feature allows maritime air currents to flow, moderating afternoon heat and heightening the aforementioned savory red fruit and herbal characteristics in the Cabernet grapes. On the nose, the Petite Sirah leads with opulent and fresh blackberry while the Cabernet frames the palate with greater restraint, cassis, and subtle minty notes: an interplay Wood describes as a "yin-yang," considering how the two varieties both contrast with and complement each other. SI

The view from Shotwell Vineyard, which is located in the El Pomar District sub-AVA of Paso Robles. The cool breezes from the nearby Templeton Gap contribute to the development of savory, herbal flavors, making the site an ideal source for the Cabernet Sauvignon blended into J. Lohr's Pure Paso wine.



A FRESH LOOK FOR THE J. LOHR **VINEYARD SERIES**

In 1986, J. Lohr planted its first vines in Paso Robles at the Home Ranch in what was to become the Paso Robles Estrella District sub-appellation. Fastforward to today, when the winery now farms over 2,600 acres of vines spanning five of Paso Robles' sub-AVAs. Around 20 years ago, I. Lohr launched its Vineyard Series portfolio, highlighting the character and profiles of single-vineyard estates throughout Monterey and Paso Robles; now the series includes the J. Lohr Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon, named for a vineyard located on the Home Ranch. The J. Lohr Tower Road Petite Sirah completes the tier's Paso Robles offerings, while Monterey and the Arroyo Seco AVA's cooler climate contribute the series' J. Lohr Arroyo Vista and October Night Chardonnays, the Fog's Reach and Highlands' Bench Pinot Noirs, and a Late Harvest Riesling. J. Lohr's Ione Napa Valley property in St. Helena is the source of the I. Lohr Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon.

Since its inception, the J. Lohr Vineyard Series wines have benefited from the company's constant viticultural investment and innovation. Tighter spacing, advancements in farming techniques, new irrigation protocols, and experience with choosing better-suited rootstocks and clones are all instrumental in improving fruit quality.

With such significant advancements in the vineyard over the past 20 years, a refresh in packaging for the Vineyard Series tier seemed appropriate. The new look was thoughtfully crafted in collaboration with highly regarded firm CF Napa Brand Design not only to communicate the series' focus on place but also to better differentiate it visually from the I. Lohr Estates tier. In addition, a conscious effort was made to preserve elements from the original design so as to retain familiarity among buyers. Keep an eye out for the brand-new Vineyard Series label beginning with the release of the 2017 J. Lohr Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon this fall.



Full Circle beverage conference

Full Circle Beverage Conference is a wine and spirits conference exclusively for 100 top retail and restaurant buyers, wine directors, journalists, and sommeliers. In its fifth year, the program will take place on **September 4 - 6** at the beautiful **Drake Hotel** in **Chicago, IL**. Full Circle Beverage Conference passes are **sold out**, but please join us on the second day of the conference for **Full Circle Around the World Tasting**. This large-scale tasting will take place on Thursday, September 5th from 3:30 - 8:00PM featuring a global selection of over 300 wines curated by Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein.

SCHEDULE AND TICKETING INFORMATION:

FULL CIRCLE BEVERAGE CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 4-6

fullcirclewine.com

SOLD OUT

FULL CIRCLE AROUND THE WORLD TASTING ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH

Register for the Trade tasting from 3:30 -5:30pm at **FullCircleTasting.eventbrite.com** Complimentary for qualified wine trade and media only

Purchase tickets for the Consumer tasting from 5:30 - 8:00pm at

AroundTheWorld2019.eventbrite.com

Tickets cost \$70 each, use code **TASTE** for 40% off



DAY 1 - SEP 4, 2019

PROGRAM STARTS AT 2PM

SEMINAR'

Unexpected Gems From Around The World

SEMINAR 2

VIGNO 2019: Old-vine Cariñena from Chile's Secano

SEMINAD 3

Whiskey and Whisky: Does Terroir Really Matter?

DAY 2 - SEP 5, 2019

SEMINAD A

Wines with A(I)ttitude: Contemporary Roussillon, New Approaches & Implicit Elevation

SEMINAR 5

Patricio Tapia's Best of Descorchados 2019

LUNCHES

Terroir and Style: A Universe of Pinot Noir Extreme Chile: Pushing Boundaries Salt and Grit: Volcanic Wines

SEMINAR 6

Many Faces of Touriga Nacional from Portugal

SEMINAR 7

Franc(ly) Speaking: Global Cabernet Francs

WALKABOUT

Trade & Media Tasting | Consumer Tasting

DAY 3 - SEP 6, 2019

SEMINAR 8

Where the Wild Things Are: An Exploration of Native Yeast Fermentation

SEMINAR 9

Up, Up and Away: Exploring High Altitude, Terroir-specific Argentinian Wines

SEMINAR 10

France's Hidden Corner: Discover Wines from Southwest France

LUNCHES:

Right Bank Rules: Saint-Emilion, Pomerol and Fronsac Explore Portugal at Table Três, tres, tre, three: Alentejo, Rioja, Tuscany and Washington

SEMINAR 11

Maturity Counts: Old Vine Chenin Blancs of South Africa

SEMINAR 12

Retrospective Vertical featuring Bodegas Faustino PROGRAM ENDS 5:30PM ON DAY 3

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EXHIBITORS

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MIDDLEMUSTWORLD

TIO (THE SOMM JOURNAL) AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2019

VIRGINA DEFIES EXPECTATIONS DURING ITS FIRST-EVER **SOMM CAMP**

"Bordeaux," I thought immediately as I breathed in Virginia's similarly humid air for the first time and watched lush meadows and dense forests whiz by the window of my Uber. The Mother of States may lack the French region's gothic cathedrals and other glorious 13th-century buildings, but compared to the rest of the country, it offers some of the oldest remnants of American history.

In a few days, I joined a small, distinguished group of sommeliers and wine buyers in visiting a winery that harbors Barboursville, the ruins of an octagonal mansion designed by Thomas Jefferson. Sipping on a well-structured Barboursville Vineyards Cab Franc while staring at the residence's remains, I would realize that the Declaration of Independence wasn't the only extraordinary creation our third president helped bring to fruition—but I've already gotten ahead of myself.

As I stepped out of the car upon my arrival at the Airlie hotel in Warrenton, located about an hour south of Dulles International Airport, a great crash of thunder ripped open the sky; as the storm unfurled sheet after sheet of water, flashes of lightning lit up the large lake in the center of the massive property. Originally part of a town established in 1850, the Airlie House was built in 1899 and was featured in Home and Garden magazine in 1907. In 1960, the entire 300-acre site—replete with streams, gardens, bridges, homes, and farming facilities—was converted to be used for meetings and lodging, and it would now serve as the historic headquarters of our inaugural Virginia SOMM Camp.



BIG HEARTH, FULL HEARTS

Dinner on our first night took place in Marshall, an endearingly small town about 12 miles south of Warrenton. Field & Main, a sophisticated yet inviting farm-totable restaurant and one of the six or so buildings on West Main Street, has made Marshall a destination: It's perhaps best known for its 10-foot-wide wood-burning hearth and its perfectly charred fare courtesy of chef Anthony Nelson.

The culinary pièce de résistance of the evening? Whole lobes of foie gras unearthed from a bed of embers and served with strawberry-rhubarb compote and brioche. Owner Neal Wavra, as gracious as he was nimble, conducted the sixcourse dinner and pairing; with the foie, he offered a Petit Manseng from Delaplane Cellars, a Cabernet Franc from James River Cellars, and a Cabernet Franc-based

blend (with a touch of Petit Manseng and Riesling) from Lightwell Survey. The trio of well-made yet very different wines heightened distinct elements in the dish, but the searing acid, slight sweetness, and nearly full body of the Petit Manseng seemed to play best with the caramel- and umamitinged decadence of the liver.

During the dinner, Delaplane Cellars winemaker Rick Tagg hinted at a topic that would come up again and again over the next two days: Petit Manseng's great potential in Virginia. "Petit



Neal Wavra, owner of Field & Main in Marshall, VA, and the recipient of the Commanderie de Bordeaux Wine Scholarship, addresses the private dining room full of SOMM campers and Virginian winemakers.

Manseng is a very versatile grape. It doesn't misbehave in the vineyard, it's got loose clusters with thick skins, [and] it grows well," he said. "You can hang it through rain and it can hang a long time, but it will still retain acid. So what you end up with is a very high-acid, high-alcohol wine if you ferment it dry."

As we were introduced to Tagg and a few other winemakers and proprietors throughout the night, we quickly noticed they had a few things in common: a sincere, humble gratitude to be a part of the wine industry and an industrious penchant for overcoming Virginia's often-merciless weather. Several winemakers did not make a red wine in the rainy 2018 vintage, and those who did produced a small quantity. The evening's powerful rainstorm made their struggles resonate that much more, but as if to discredit their claims, the next few days of the camp would be perfectly sunny.



The "Does a Region Need a Signature?" panel from left to right: moderator Caroline Hermann, MW; Tayloe Dameron, co-owner of Upper Shirley Vineyards; Swati Bose and Kabir Amir, owners of Flight wine bar in Washington, D.C.; and Adam Caperton, Winebow's Brand Manager and Import Specialist for the mid-Atlantic region.

A (SURPRISINGLY) SPIRITED MORNING

The next morning, I found myself rubbing my eyes in disbelief, considering that perhaps the coffee from breakfast had yet to take effect. It was not yet 8 a.m., but to my surprise, all of the other SOMM campers were already in attendance for two back-to-back educational seminars.

The first, titled "Does a Region Need a Signature?", spurred an animated debate despite the early hour. Moderated skillfully by Master of Wine Caroline Hermann, the panel aimed to explore whether grape variety, history, culture, or style typically define a region before applying a lens specifically on Virginia. The panelists represented various facets of the industry: Certified sommeliers Kabir Amir and Swati Bose are the owners of Flight wine bar in Washington, D.C.; Adam Caperton serves as Brand Manager and Import Specialist for Winebow in the mid-Atlantic region; and Tayloe Dameron is the outspoken and businesssavvy co-owner of Virginia's own Upper Shirley Vineyards. Read on for the abridged versions of three panelists' assessments.

Dameron: "For me, signature is variety, and thank god it's no longer Viognier. We abandoned Viognier as the official grape of Virginia in 2011—it's a really shitty grape to grow. Whoever made that the official grape of Virginia doesn't own a telephone ... We're still experimenting, but I think Tannat is going to be the signature grape in the next five years. It says Tannat on my license plate."

Bose: "I think it is grape variety, but the customer doesn't always know what that means ... At our wine bar. we offer three Virginian wines by the glass at any given time. Every year we see more and more choices in terms of quality, and even the same wines are getting better and better too."

Caperton: "We're in an amazing time where a lot of people are experimenting. We can sit here today and talk about what we think the signature

grape is, but ten years from now it's going to be a completely different conversation. Signature for me is grape, but just as equally, quality. I think the future for Virginia's reds is going to be in blends given the inconsistent weather. The whites are kind of all over the place right now, but predominantly we're starting to be known for crisp, mediumto full-bodied whites that still have great acidity like Petit Manseng, and 100% Petit Manseng at that. Throughout the world, you'll rarely see that."

Hermann concluded the seminar by suggesting that perhaps Virginia's signature is exactly what's claimed on the Virginia Wine organization's website: "There's no singular style. No signature grape. Just a community of artisans obsessed with expressing the character of their land." And considering the strength of the state's agricultural economy and sense of community, everyone could agree on this—for the moment, at least.

STRANGELY REFRESHING

The "Stranger Things" seminar—co-moderated by writer/bartender/wine enthusiast Dillon Mafit and Sebastian Zutant, co-owner of Primrose, a natural-wine bar and bistro in Washington, D.C.—was refreshing on multiple levels. Together, the Virginian young guns led the somms off the beaten path through a tasting of six different wines.

"There's a level of creativity with all of these," said Zutant, who's also the proprietor of Lightwell Survey, a producer that sources fruit from distinctive sites in Virginia. The Lightwell Survey 2016 Los Idiots is a blend of Syrah (55%) and Riesling (45%) co-fermented with ambient yeast, and the result was likely the most invigorating experience I've ever had involving Syrah: The medium-bodied wine was bright, floral, and completely crushable.

After we tried a sip of the King Family Vineyards 2017 Small Batch Viognier, Mafit noted that "one of the interesting things [the state is] seeing is that you have these bigger producers like King's Family experimenting and making wine that's a bit more off the cuff."

While I've attended many SOMM Camps, this was my first experience with a panel of, in Zutant's words, "new kids



Writer Dillon Mafit and Sebastian Zutant, co-owner of Primrose, a natural-wine bar and bistro in Washington, D.C., get obscure during the "Stranger Things" seminar.



The "off-the-cuff" wines sampled during the "Stranger Things" seminar.

doing weirdo shit" who've been given their own chance to shine. Considering this novelty as I sipped on an uncharacteristically crisp skin-contact Rkatsiteli from Stinson Vineyards, I looked forward to the rest of my time in Virginia with a revitalized spirit.

STEEP SENSE OF STEWARDSHIP

The word "glen" is a Scottish term for a secluded valley, and perhaps there's no better and more beautiful example in the United States than the mountainous enclosure surrounding Glen Manor Vineyards. During our visit, leff White, its unassuming proprietor and winemaker, pulled us in a rickety cattle trailer up to about 1,300 feet in elevation until we stood at the crest of an immensely steep slope; there, we peered over the top of a block of Cabernet Sauvignon as we overlooked the small valley below. "The mountain behind us here is 2,400 feet: the tallest over here is 3.400 feet." White said as he pointed out our surroundings. "Many days I will see this thick cloud that looks like a wave of water trying to push itself over this mountain here to the south of us, but most of the time it just steers the weather around us."

This protection allows White to grow Sauvignon Blanc, Petit Manseng, a handful of Bordeaux varieties, and, more recently, a strategically placed

SOMM campers playfully reenact holding on to the cattle trailer at Glen Manor Vineyards.



block of Nebbiolo. Driving back down into the valley, we passed a herd of cows sipping from a stream, a wild turkey or two, a few deer, a proud peacock, and, of course, one winery dog.

As a fourth-generation farmer, the devotion White feels for these 212 acres of land—purchased by his great-grandfather in 1901—was palpable. "I've been in love with this place since I was a kid," he said. In 1995, in an effort to support his family, White planted 6 acres of grapes, and today he lovingly maintains 17 acres of vines.

For lunch, we enjoyed four Glen Manor Vineyards wines with Virginian barbeque. As dense as it was, the 2013 Hodder Hill—a deep, dark red—fruited, and gravelly Cabernet Sauvignon—dominant blend with just a touch of menthol—shone brightly. White noted that he did not make any red wine, including the Hodder Hill, in 2018. "This is a high rock-content soil, and that helps to allow the water to percolate through," he explained. "The slope itself too helps, as the water just rolls off, but last year it just never stopped raining."

VIRGINIAN FRESHNESS



The vines at RdV Vineyards are strategically planted above granite bedrock, which serves as an powerful hydraulic-management tool in Virginia's rainy climate.

At RdV Vineyards, the group managed to keep up with quick-witted Master Sommelier and Estate Director Jarad Slipp as they followed him down the spiral staircase of a decorative silo. Slipp rapidly fired off bits of trivia not only on Virginia history but also on RdV's longer aging regimens, the winery's early approach to blending, and the climatic similarity between the state and Bordeaux (exempting, of course, the amount of rain).





Thirty-five feet underground, through a hall lined with barrels filled with the 2016 vintage, Slipp stopped in front of an exposed wall of bedrock. "If we do have one secret, it's hydraulic management by nature," he said, attributing this effective drainage tool to the choppy, dark-gray wall behind him. "When we're getting hammered with 2 inches of rain in an hour, it'll saturate that topsoil, but then eventually the water hits the solid granite bedrock, and the slope of the hill kicks in and it all slides off."

We remained at RdV Vineyards for yet another panel, this one moderated by Master of Wine Jay Youmans. Under a wooden depiction of the American flag in the lofty winery sat some of the Virginian wine industry's most influential players, who were there to taste through two examples of each of their respective Bordeaux blends from the 2012 and 2016 vintages.

Rhône native Matthieu Finot, winemaker for King Family Vineyards; Jim Law, winemaker/proprietor for Linden Vineyards (Virginia's equivalent to André Tchelistcheff); and RdV vigneron Rutger de Vink joined Slipp in discussing why they chose to settle in an emerging wine region, their relationships with each other (Law is a mentor to de Vink), and how far they've come since they began producing in Virginia. Other topics included which soil types perform well with which varieties, the higher acidity levels present in wines grown at higher elevations, how vine age is possibly overrated, the necessity of blending with vintage variation, and more.



A 2012 and 2016 vintage comparison with King Family Vineyards, RdV Vineyards, and Linden Vineyards wines unfolded in the RdV Vineyards winery (pictured above).

Across the board, the 2016s showed more powerfully, but not just because they were younger: The year was a warm one in Virginia, and the impact was detectable even in the always elegant Linden Vineyards Hardscrabble, sourced from fruit grown at 1,200-1,400 feet above sea level. The 2012 vintage, which hailed from what was considered to be a typically wet year in Virginia, was meant to improve with age.

No matter the vintage, however, all six blends had one thing in common: freshness. "We just poured this for some of the top people in Bordeaux, and many thought this was Right Bank," de Vink said, his voice echoing off of the concrete floors and steel tanks. "But we're not trying to emulate Bordeaux—we want to be Virginia. We want the world to know that Virginia can make great wines."

After the seminar, as the sun set behind the vines, chef Nicholas Tang and executive sous chef Amin Mina of DBGB in Washington, D.C., served grilled T-bone steaks alongside creamed spinach, mushrooms, and gratin dauphinois. The best meal of the trip, it was of course paired with more RdV, King Family, and Linden wines, and while this second lot may not have been entirely made up of Bordeaux blends, it certainly continued to nod to the Old World in a hospitable, distinctly Virginian sort of way.



The panel for the 2012 and 2016 Bordeaux blend comparison from left to right: RdV vigneron Rutger de Vink; Jim Law, winemaker/proprietor for Linden Vineyards; Master of Wine Jay Youmans; Matthieu Finot, winemaker for King Family Vineyards; and Master Sommelier Jarad Slipp, Estate Director at RdV Vineyards.



The decorative silo at RdV Vineyards is illuminated at night.



Barboursville Vineyards winemaker Luca Paschina holds examples of the greenstone found among the producer's vines. The stones eventually erode into clay.

THE PRAGMATIC PASCHINA

Upon our visit to Barboursville Vineyards on day two, a few SOMM campers found themselves bumping around the red-clay soils in winemaker Luca Paschina's truck. Later we'd learn that the clay stems from eroded greenstone, which can trace its origins to the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains; roughly 400 million years old, they were once as high as the Alps.

Of the estate's 800 acres, 180 are under vine. Paschina proudly pointed out blocks of Muscat Ottonel and Vidal, which will eventually be used to make a passito dessert wine. At a higher point in the vineyard, we met up with Paschina's righthand man, Vineyard Manager Fernando Franco. Together, they spoke of large diurnal swings; the benefits of owning a leaf-shatter machine; variation within block ripening and vintages; the blind-tasting process behind blending their flagship Bordeaux blend, Octagon; and the mélange of French and Italian varieties grown on the property.

Paschina told us the story of how he acquired one such variety, Vermentino, from Sardinia via a California nursery in 2009 as we sipped on a high-acid yet somehow still supple tank sample. His pragmatic approach to winegrowing was telling: "We produced a small barrel in 2010; it was great. In 2011, we had a ton of rain, but still the wine was OK—not great, but good," he recalled. "That to me [was] the sign that we should keep the Vermentino. Easy growing season: great wine. Difficult growing season: good wine. If it was mediocre, I'd be skeptical to make an investment of planting more acres."

THE POTENTIAL OF A COOLER VINTAGE

Known as Library 1821, a Barboursville's tasting room decorated with memorabilia from the winery's history served as the venue for a cooler-versus-warmer vintage comparison tasting. The host showed two Cabernet Francs and two of its Cabernet Franc Reserves: Keswick Vineyards, located just northeast of Charlottesville, brought a duo of Cabernet Francs and Bordeaux blends; and the historic Williamsburg Win-

ery showed two Merlot-dominant blends with a pair of its Archer Reserves (a Bordeaux blend that varies with vintage).

"I'm hoping to show you what a cooler year does for us with Cab Franc in texture and aromatics," Paschina said. Keswick Vineyards winemaker Stephen Barnard, a South African transplant, chimed in, "As Luca hinted, I think wine is made in the vineyard, and Virginia does challenge



From left to right: Stephen Barnard, winemaker for Keswick Vineyards; Matthew Meyer, winemaker for The Williamsburg Winery; and Luca Paschina, winemaker for Barboursville Vineyards.



Barboursville Vineyards, Keswick Vineyards, and Williamsburg Winery expressions were served during lunch on day two.

you to get grapes ripe. I tend to favor cooler vintages because of the acid and aging potential, but the business model is that our wines are coming onto market way sooner than we would like. So, the trick is, how do you make a wine ageworthy but drinkable? We're still learning." Considering the bright, pure core of red fruit in his Cab Franc, I can't imagine what else Barnard would have to learn.

While The Williamsburg Winery's 2015 Merlot was grown in a warmer year, it maintained an ABV of just 12%, perhaps due to the tempering nature of the surrounding bodies of water. "One thing I think separates Virginia is that we bridge Old Word and New World perfectly. We have big wines but with elegance and structure," said winemaker Matthew Meyer. "That Old World style of blends really fits here. Some of the best wines I've had here are blends."



SOMM campers taste their way through Barboursville Vineyards, Keswick Vineyards, and Williamsburg Winery wines in Barboursville's Library 1821 room.



Four site-specific Early Mountain Cabernet Francs were sampled at the bottom of Quaker Run. Standing are Early Mountain Vineyards winemaker Ben Jordan and Maya Hood White, associate winemaker and viticulturist.

A QUAKER STROLL

Later that day, in the late afternoon heat, we stopped to catch our breaths as we hiked up to the top of Quaker Run, Early Mountain Vineyards' 20-acre property in Madison. A grating yet necessary screeching sound played from a speaker inside a fake owl near a tree, serving as a reminder of the surrounding wilderness (and prompting a story involving some grape-stealing bears).

Early Mountain Vineyards winemaker Ben Jordan and Maya Hood White, associate winemaker and viticulturist, led the charge up (to 1,110 feet) and down (to 900 feet) the steep hill, which comprises an alluvial mix of granite and greenstone. We covered a lot of ground in our conversation as well, transitioning from temperature stratification and water evacuation to hang-time length, the higher level of concentration typically found in mountain fruit, and effective ways to battle trunk disease (primarily via tighter spacing and cane pruning). "To me," said Jordan, "the most interesting wines in Virginia are made on these ridges and mountainsides with the rocky soils."

After the trek, a tasting of four site-specific Early Mountain Cabernet Francs confirmed Jordan's estimation. Despite their differences, the four expressions further solidified what the group had concluded after sampling the Barboursville and Keswick wines: Virginia is capable of producing incredible Cabernet Franc. "Where some grapes can overcome mediocre sites, Cab Franc doesn't, but it does really well on great sites," Jordan noted. "It's pretty transparent." The aromatic, silky, and savory Quaker Run Cab Franc exemplified this.

After a discussion regarding the evolving identities of the state's AVAs—or, rather, its lack of sub-AVAs, where smaller regions can really start to differentiate themselves—the point was made that Early Mountain Vineyards' ultimate goal is to elevate Virginia wine as a whole.

AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE

After working up an appetite playing cornhole—and watching an entire lamb roast on a spit—we sat down at Early Mountain for our farewell dinner with the Virginian-wine-industry brass. (To my right was Emily Pelton, head winemaker at Veritas Vineyard & Winery in Monticello, and across from me sat Kirsty Harmon, winemaker and General Manager at Blenheim Vineyards.) During the four-course meal, which was prepared by a talented team of five chefs, we were serenaded by a live bluegrass trio cleverly covering '80s hits. A seemingly never-ending stream of Virginian wines passed through everyone's hands; Blenheim's Albariño served as a crisp starter, while the Veritas Viognier was the perfect foil to the sweet, tangy, and spicy craband-oyster soup.

A banjo-centric take on Tears for Fears'"Everybody Wants to Rule the World" played as chef Ryan Collins of



Craig Rogers, a shepherd at Border Springs Farm, makes a special appearance to roast a whole lamb.



SOMM camper Rebekah Graham helps herself to some Blenheim Vineyards rosé.

Little Start in Charlottesville revealed the trip's dramatic curtain call: a hot air balloon ride during sunset. I'm a bit embarrassed to say, though, that this wasn't the biggest surprise of our two full days in Virginia, at least from my heightened point of view in the basket of the balloon. For me, it was the undeniable quality of the wines. I expected at least a few would make a memorable impression, but not at this level and certainly not in such a high quantity. These Virginians have created a place somewhere between the Old World and the New, and in this middlemost realm, they have proven themselves fit to rule.



A full lineup of wines was served during the farewell dinner at Early Mountain Vineuards.



The SOMM campers from left to right: Peter Nelson, Wine Director, Puritan & Co., Boston, MA; Rebekah Graham, sommelier, Chicago, IL; Nicolette Anctil, Manager/sommelier, Husk, Nashville, TN; Ali Yakich, General Manager/sommelier, Deuxave, Boston, MA; Kelly Neel, General Manager/wine buyer, Quarry Wine & Spirits, Baltimore, MD; Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor, The SOMM Journal; Alex Basich, co-owner/wine buyer, The Noble Grape, Chicago, IL; Brittany Herlig, Wine Manager, Heritage, Fredericksburg, VA; and Marcel Abisamra, ENO Supervisor, Four Seasons Hotel, Washington, D.C.

> To view a complete list of wines featured during the Virginia SOMM Camp and to read the expanded story, visit sommjournal.com. For more information on Virginia's wines, visit virginiawine.org.

VIRGINIA IS FOR (WINE) LOVERS

In the early 17th century, Virginia became the first colony to begin making wine. Today, the state encompasses over 280 wineries and growing, with nine major winegrowing regions, seven AVAs, and roughly 4,000 acres under vine.

■ Regions/AVAs

- ◆ Shenandoah Valley
 - Shenandoah Valley AVA
- ◆ Blue Ridge Highlands
 - The Rocky Knob AVA
 - The North Fork of Roanoke AVA
- Chesapeake Bay
 - Northern Neck George Washington Birthplace AVA
- Eastern Virginia Region
 - Eastern Shore AVA
- Hampton Roads
- Central Virginia
 - Monticello AVA
- Northern Virginia
 - The Middleburg Virginia AVA

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- Heart of Appalachia
- Southern Virginia

The Major Grapes

White: Chardonnay,



WINE SPEAK 2020: SAVE THE DATE

Premier Trade Summit Returns to Paso Robles

INNOVATIVE TRADE SUMMIT FEATURES ALL-STAR CAST OF MASTER SOMMELIERS & WINEMAKERS





3 DAYS 1 INTIMATE EXPERIENCE

In just two short years, Wine Speak Paso Robles has established itself as one of the wine industry's premier trade experiences—and now it is set to return for a third edition.

Indeed, the third annual Wine Speak will come to the Paso Robles wine country on January 13-16, 2020 with an all-star cast of master sommeliers, winemakers and hospitality professionals. Featured experiences will once again include winemaker panels, technical tours, special tastings and hospitality seminars.

"Wine Speak is all about gathering industry luminaries from around New World to share their knowledge, wisdom and experience," says master sommelier and cofounder Chuck Furuya.

Added co-founder Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins, Ancient Peaks Winery's VP of operations, "Wine Speak gets better each year, but our vision remains the same: to create a special experience for wine industry professionals to grow and learn together."

Wine Speak is not a single event, but rather a series of happenings that feed into each other over a three-day

period. Guests can pick and choose their experiences à la carte, or they can immerse themselves into all that Wine Speak has to offer.

The second annual Wine Speak last January featured 30 speakers, up from 15 in the inaugural year—and now the 2020 edition promises to showcase the most dynamic cast yet. "While all of the speakers and panelists may know each other by reputation, Wine Speak presents an opportunity to create further camaraderie and collaboration," Furuya said.

Wine Speak ultimately serves as a unifying force in the wine industry. "Wine Speak is important because it brings together all of the different sides of our industry under one roof," says Matt Dees, winemaker at Jonata.

Master sommelier Greg Harrington, who is winemakerowner at Gramercy Cellars, agrees. "Wine Speak encompasses sommeliers, vineyard managers, winemakers and consumers. It brings all the segments together to have an entire discussion about wine."

For information and tickets on

Wine Speak 2019, visit

WINESPEAKPASO.COM





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WINE SPEAK ENCOMPASSES
SOMMELIERS, VINEYARD
MANAGERS, WINEMAKERS AND
CONSUMERS. IT BRINGS ALL OF
THE SEGMENTS TOGETHER TO
HAVE AN ENTIRE DISCUSSION
ABOUT WINE.

-Greg Harrington, MS, Gramercy Cellars

SCHEDULE SNEAK PEEK

January 13-16, 2020

www.WineSpeakPaso.com

Wine Speak Paso Robles is a premier industry summit that brings sommeliers, wine industry leaders and hospitality professionals together for an intimate educational journey. Here is a sneak peek at the schedule of events for Wine Speak 2020:

"INSIDE & OUTSIDE: CRAZY RED WINE BLENDS"—A lively discussion with proprietor / winemaker Stephan Asseo of L'Aventure and Emmanuel Kemiji, master sommelier of Clos Pissarra.

"TALK STORY WITH BRUCE NEYERS: WINE YODA UNFILTERED"—A deep dive into the wisdom, experiences and insights of legendary winemaker Bruce Neyers.

"DREAM BIG DARLING: A CONVERSATION WITH MASTER SOMMELIER MADELINE TRIFFON"— Insights into the evolving experiences of women in the wine industry.



PASOROBLES
CALIFORNIA

A portion of the proceeds benefit Dream Big Darling a non-profit 501C3 and all of the community charitites it serves. The Dream Big Darling nonprofit will be responsible in collecting all donations and tickets sales.

DREAM BIG

Pictured from left to right: Moderator Jay Youmans, MW, led the "Digging into Global Terroir" discussion at SommCon D.C. with Santiago Margozzini of Montgras Winery in Chile; Ioana Benga of Romania's Jidvei Winery; Paul Yanon, representing Wines of Israel; Sharron McCarthy of Banfi Vintners; Katie Voat of Louis M. Martini Winery: and Wayland Boyd, representing Trivento Winery in Argentina.



ISOMM CON DC PANEL REPORT

DIGGING INTO UNIQUE GLOBAL TERROIR

story by Lars Leicht / photos by Nick Klein

As the media sponsor of SommCon D.C., The SOMM Journal took on the task of organizing four seminars during the well-attended three-day trade conference. First up was a panel of distinguished wine-industry veterans, who talked about—and tasted—their respective wines with 60 attendees.

Moderator lay Youmans, MW, who serves as Managing Director of Capital Wine School in Bethesda, Maryland, opened the discussion, titled "Digging into Unique Global Terroir." He was guick to pass the microphone to his distinguished panel, but first, he provided some key definitions. Regarding the truly global nature of the topic, he pointed out, "We have wines here from the Old World and the New World, the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere." He then took on the formidable task of defining terroir—a term that shifts like quicksilver to mean different things to different people."My own definition of terroir," said Youmans, "is the ability to taste a wine and identify where it came from."

Each member of the panel then proceeded to describe the character of the place their wine was made as reflected in the glass. In what you could call "drawing a parallel to a parallel," Ioana Benga of Jidvei Winery, the largest wine producer in Romania, noted that the 45th parallel running through Bordeaux also crosses just below the Tarnave-Jidvei appellation in central Transylvania. Here, at the 47th parallel, vineyards range from 200 to 500 meters above sea level and are surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains. (For more on Jidvei, see page 62.)





Speaker: IOANA BENGA JIDVEI WINERY. ROMANIA

"We have a higher altitude and a cooler climate than Bordeaux," Benga continued. "But with temperatures gradually rising over the past ten years and rainfall increasing, we are clearly witnessing climate change. This year, we started a program to replace white varieties with red for our rosés and sparkling wines."

All of Jidvei's wines are estate-grown and -bottled, and the winery's 6,000-plus vineyard acres are mostly planted to aromatic white varieties, both indigenous and international.

The growing popularity of native Romanian varieties is gratifying to the lidvei team, albeit overdue. "Historically, it was challenging to sell our indigenous varietal wines on the international market," said Benga. "During the Communist era, many of them were replaced with international varieties, so, sadly, we have lost a lot of genetic material."

Take the lidvei 2018 Maria, an expression Benga proudly presented that's made with the indigenous Fetească Albă grape. Authorities are unable to definitively trace the grape's origins. "We guess it is an ancient varietal that was originally wild but was domesticated about 2,000 years ago," she said. "I can tell you this much: It is the only grape that smells like wine!" Fetească Albă has a naturally high sugar content but is neither highly aromatic nor acidic; instead, the high-acid soils in this region give it perfect balance. Though the wine is fermented in stainless steel and aged in neutral oak to round out its flavors, Benga recommends moderate aging, allowing it to develop for at least two to three years. Our sample, clean with some richness, showed strong gravel-like minerality and hints of pear as well as fresh and baked apple.

Next up was the lidvei 2018 Ana Sauvignon Blanc. "I know everybody has a Sauvignon Blanc," said Benga, "but we have a unique story here." Frustrated by lackluster results from its 500 hectares of the grape, Jidvei engaged a consultant from Friuli four years ago who discovered that about 100 hectares wasn't Sauvignon Blanc after all, but Sauvignon Vert. Separating the Sauvignons in both the vineyard and the winery, they finally found what they were looking for: recognizable varietal aromas with more body and length on the palate, akin to the French style. Youmans pointed out the wine's "shocking minerality," but it also showed flavors of ripe melon and citrus, including Meyer lemon and clementine; it was round and rich thanks to well-ripened fruit.





Speaker: ANE ORTUETA

J. GARCÍA CARRIÓN WINERY. SPAIN

During her presentation, Ane Ortueta boldly compared herself to Christopher Columbus, who brought Toro Roble with him aboard his fleet. "I came all the way from Spain," she declared, "but I brought with me the first wine ever tasted in America!"

Toro is located in the northwestern part of Spain, just west of Ribera del Duero; at 15,000 acres, it is only one-tenth the size of Rioja. It boasts a continental climate and unique terroir that fended off what Ortueta called "the most feared disease of European wine," phylloxera, thanks to its chalky, calcareous, sandy, and rocky soils. These soils, which still support many pre-phylloxera vines, keep yields relatively low: 6 tons per hectare on average, though Pata Negra struggles to get 4 tons. The average annual rainfall is only about 13–15 inches, and the temperature commonly exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer while rarely dipping below freezing in winter.

To help showcase what makes up the region's soils, Ortueta brought a rock to pass around."We are the number-one tourist destination in the [European Union] in part because of our very low rainfall ... but we make our plants suffer so we can get the most out of the grape," she said.

The dominant variety in Toro, Tinta de Toro is a strain of Tempranillo, Spain's most widely planted grape. It has a similar profile but a differing gene that adds color to the pulp. "Also, the berry is slightly smaller," Otueta explained, "so there is a higher ratio of skin to pulp and more extract. This makes stronger, more powerful wines with deeper color."

In 2001, García Carrión formed a joint venture with the Rodicio López de Letona family, owners of the Sietecerros winery, to produce Toro wines. Sietecerros sits in the village of Pedrosa del Rey in the eastern part of the DO, where it's surrounded by 135 acres of dedicated vineyards that yielded the monovarietal Pata Negra 2017 Toro Roble. Following alcoholic and malolactic fermentation, the wine spent about three months in new French oak, a requirement for the designation of Roble (Spanish for "oak"). It showed aromas of cherry, plum, and blackberry, which were echoed on the palate alongside earthy, leathery flavors and a clean finish.

The vintage we tried is on the market, Ortueta reported, but quantities are very low due to the severe frost damage sustained that year. The 2018 will arrive in the U.S. soon.

Speaker: PAUL YANON

DALTON WINERY, ISRAEL

Paul Yanon quickly learned to never underestimate a SommCom audience when he inquired, "Have any of you ever had a wine from Israel?" Shocked by the many hands that went up, he promptly recovered to explain



that although Israel is in the Middle East, "in terms of terroir, it is at the very start of the Mediterranean."

Despite the region's ancient winemaking tradition, Israel's modern wine industry is about a half-century old and just coming of age. It started in the coastal regions, but with a quality revolution underway, vineyard plant-

ing is moving north and east toward higher elevations.

"We are just now tapping into what's in the dirt," Yanon said. "Political, cultural, and religious reasons have inhibited people from understanding what these vines can do in this terroir, [but] Israeli wine has become more terroir-driven, with single-vineyard designations highlighting characteristics from individual plots."

Founded in 1995 by father and son Mat and Alex Haruni, Dalton is known for benchmark Rhône-style wines from Galilee, one of Israel's highest regions. Yanon presented Dalton's 2016 Grenache, fermented in cement using 30% whole-cluster and then aged for 12 months in second-use French oak.

"This wine maintains freshness, structure, and intensity without suffering from high heat in this climate," said Yanon. "It carries its weight and alcohol really well." The nose showed intense red fruit, including dried cherry and raspberry, that reappared sweetly on the palate, where it was complemented by notes of dusty, dry soil and firm tannins.

"There is a lot of stuff happening here," Yanon noted. "A new generation of winemakers is tapping into what is going on in the wine world, with amphorae, carbonic maceration, and so forth. There is a whole new Israel for the world to see."



Speaker: OLIVIER LOTTERIE

FAMILE PERRIN, RHÔNE VALLEY, FRANCE

Olivier Lotterie considered himself lucky to present what he called "one of the most famous Rhône Valley [producers] in the world." The fifth generation of the Perrin family are now the leading organic winegrowers of the southern Rhône.

The region is known for the rounded stones that cover its vineyards,



The Perrin Family 2017 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Sinards is imported by Vineyard Brands.

which absorb the sun's heat and gradually release it overnight. However, the area's geological makeup is "much more complex than that," said Lotterie. "Beneath those rocks is a mixture of clay and limestone that help retain water and nourish the vines. On the eastern part of the appellation, above the town, we have clay rouge, a mix of limestone and clay—perfect for our whites. To the west we have hills of sand, just like being at the beach. To the east, in Gigondas, there are layers of decomposed limestone, where Grenache thrives."

Lotterie presented the Perrin Family 2017 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Sinards, a second label made from 15-plus-year-old vines at Château de Beaucastel. The mix of

terroir is what makes the wine special, he said, endowing it with red fruit, chalky character, and minerality.

Indeed, the latter characteristic was rock solid, showing notes of blood and iodine beneath dried and ripe cherry, tart strawberry, pomegranate, and ripe black-plum flavors. The finish expressed dried lavender and thyme and well as hints of tobacco leaf.

A blend of just three of the 13 varieties that can be used in Châteauneuf-du-Pape—Grenache, Mourvèdre, and Syrah—it ages for a year in foudres. "This is the other Châteauneuf," declared Lotterie. "It is different, but also a little less expensive."





Speaker: SHARRON MCCARTHY CASTELLO BANFI, MONTALCINO, ITALY

Sharron McCarthy couldn't help herself: She was supposed to show just one wine, a single-vineyard Brunello, but decided to also share its "younger brother," a Rosso di Montalcino from the same cru. Needless to say, nobody complained.

She described Castello Banfi as a "constellation of single vineyards" united by a philosophy of blending tradition with innovation. In a moment of "fossil envy" over Ortueta's rock, she added, "I didn't bring my seashells, but we have some that are over 4 million years old on our estate."

She also detailed Banfi's groundbreaking study of Sangiovese clones and the revelation that there were 650 in Tuscany alone. "We took 180 [that] were considered to be the best and narrowed them down to 15, and then to three. We found that there was no 'super clone' that stood out after years of research, but when you combine these three, you get consistency and greatness year after year. These wines are the result of that research."

"To me this is a sexy red; this is the Brad Pitt of red wines," McCarthy said of the Poggio alle Mura 2017 Rosso di Montalcino. The 2012 Brunello, as "the older brother, is more sensuous—to me it's George Clooney. He is always so well dressed and debonair." She recalled visiting the vineyards with late winemaker Rudy Buratti, who was concerned that the small berries might fall through the grates of the presses that year. "They were tiny, but they gave us great concentration!" she added.

Speaker: WAYLAND BOYD

TRIVENTO WINERY, Argentina

Wayland Boyd believes in terroir, but he believes even more in trifectas. Trivento is named for Mendoza's three winds: the icy Polar; the hot Zonda; and the cool, moist Sudestada. Its vineyards sit in three valleys: the high-altitude Uco, the mid-range Luján-Maipú, and the low-lying San Martín y Rivadavia. Its wines ferment in oak, stainless steel, and cement, and its homeland was founded by Spaniards, settled by Italians, and made famous thanks to French varieties. "Each culture," Boyd said, "has a voice in the flavors of Argentine wine."

He recounted the evolution of Argentina's long winemaking tradition: From the establishment of plantings for sacramental wines in the 1500s to the introduction of new cultivation techniques and varieties by 19th-century European immigrants, the industry grew over the centuries—but "we didn't focus on small production until the 1990s," acknowledged Boyd. "Today we are putting emphasis on terroir-driven small-lot wines." He illustrated his point with two expressions of Argentina's signature variety, Malbec.

The Mendoza-based **Trivento 2015 Amado Sur**, a blend of 70% Malbec with 20% Bonarda and 10% Syrah, showed juicy, bright, ripe blackberry, black cherry, and blueberry flavors



Trivento 2015 Eolo is a 100% Malbec from a single high-altitude vineyard in Luján de Cuyo in Mendoza, Argentina.



Trivento is imported by Fetzer Vineyards.

along with hints of freshly tilled soil. The three varieties were harvested and fermented separately, undergoing three months of bâttonage before blending and bottling.

The **Trivento 2015 Eolo** is a 100% Malbec from a single high-altitude vineyard containing vines at least a century old. Here, the poor soil limits growth and yields jammy, concentrated fruit; abundant in notes clove and cinnamon, the wine is framed with strong, limestone-tinged minerality. From the audience, *SOMM Journal* Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Meridith May described the wine as bearing "the velvety texture of the Old World with New World sunshine."



Speaker: SANTIAGO MARGOZZINI

MONTGRAS, CHILE

Montgras head winemaker Santiago Margozzini likes to say that the Gras family, descendants of Spanish wine merchants, survived "the dark days" of Chilean winemaking: "From the days of the conquistadores all the way to the 1970s, we

made wines in Chile that only Chileans would drink. Under military rule, we had a huge consumption as people drank to forget and to get wasted."

The next phase started in the 1990s, he explained, when those who "drank to get wasted" switched to pisco and those who drank for thirst switched to beer: "Chilean wine changed," he said. "We opened our economy and began showing the world what we have to offer. We found the advantage of new investors and technology, becoming a player in the world wine business. But it took 20 years!"



Montgras is imported by Guarachi Wine Partners.

Margozzini described the ensuing "terroir revolution" that led to new plantings in soils where grapes grew best, resulting in vast improvements in quality. "Chile's natural barriers from east to west [and] north to south allow us to have healthy agricultural processes, making us almost organic by nature," he said.

With vineyards in Chile's most renowned regions, Montgras has created the Antu label, named for the indigenous Mapuche word for "sun," to focus on single-vineyard wines from Maipo. Antu Cabernet Sauvignon hails from the Intriga vineyard at the foothills of the Andes in the Alto Maipo DO. Snowmelt washes minerals down the slopes, and the soils here are gravelly and deep as a result, yielding Cabernet with round, elegant tannins. The expression he shared, aged in French oak barrels (one-third new) for 14 months, underwent classic fermentation and three daily pumpovers to extract flavor and color. Showing aromas of violets and roasted bell pepper, ripe cherry notes, and black-currant and black-plum-skin flavors, it finished with hints of rosemary, vanilla, and cinnamon derived from the oak.

Speaker: KATIE VOGT

LOUIS M. MARTINI WINERY, CALIFORNIA

Katie Vogt is usually all about Napa, but her SommCon game was all about Sonoma. Monte Rosso Vineyard, located east of the Mayacamas, was planted in 1886 and purchased in 1938 by Louis Martini, one of Napa's first post-Prohibition wineries. Positioned above the San Pablo Bay fog line, it's the first to see morning sun, and its layers of bedrock and shale drain quickly as a result.

"If it rains on a Sunday, we can't go into Napa vineyards until Thursday, even with my Jeep," said Vogt. "But I can go into Monte Rosso first thing Monday morning." Acidic, volcanic-red

soils add spice to the wine, a factor that "transcends varietal," she explained. "We get it in the Zin as well as the Cab."

In the vineyard, old Cabernet vines from 1940 are trained to two wire sprawls. "Modern trellising makes winemaking easy," Vogt noted. "Older trellising requires highly trained teams and varies from vine to vine, but we end up with this incredible range of flavors, from spice to fruit."

The 2014 vintage saw a mild winter, early bud break, and a "gloriously long growing season [that] allowed us to pick at a nice cadence,"



The Monte Rosso Vineyard is one of Sonoma County's most celebrated site. The winery is owned by E. & J. Gallo.

Vogt said, adding that the process for making her hand-harvested Monte Rosso 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon was "straightforward": a three-day cold soak followed by 17–25 days of skin contact, alternating pumpovers (for elegance) and punch-downs (for extraction), and aging for 28 months in 76% new French oak, 11% new American oak, and 13% second- to third-year oak. Super-ripe black cherry, baked plum, and cassis were its hallmarks, along with silky tannins and notes of vanilla bean, cinnamon, and nutmeg. The levels of concentration and power were intense.

Monte Rosso, said Vogt, is an exception to the rule that new oak yields green flavors. She pointed to the nuances of bacon, cocoa, and vanilla that complemented the spice from the terroir: "We're not shy about oak," she said. "It's California, after all!" SJ



blending



Pictured from left to right: Jessie Birschbach, Managing Editor of The SOMM Journal; Kelley Creamer Jones of Jackson Family Wines; Christopher Carpenter, winemaker for Cardinale; Anthony Dias Blue, Editor-in-Chief of The Tasting Panel; Dana Farnar, wine consultant at Massanois; and Nathaniel Muñoz, General Manager/sommelier at Bar Avalon in Los Angeles.

story and photos by Jessie Birschbach

ON A SUNNY day at Anthony Dias Blue's house in Los Angeles' Pacific Palisades neighborhood, the host and a small group of sommeliers sat down with Cardinale winemaker Christopher Carpenter to taste a twelve-year vertical of the extraordinary Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend from Napa Valley.

Before diving into the 1998 vintage, Carpenter shared his winemaking beliefs in a gruff voice: "Wine is first and foremost made in the vineyard. [It] sounds ubiquitous, but I spend a tremendous amount of time walking vineyards in Napa. I want to reflect place as much as possible, but I also want to achieve the highest quality in that vineyard. The third [key] is to keep it simple in the winery. Don't use a lot of technique or technology. The minute you start doing that, you negate all the work you've just done to preserve place and quality."



At the vertical tasting, Cardinale winemaker Chris Carpenter also shared four vintages of Hickinbotham Clarendon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from the McLaren Vale as well as his latest project: the first release from Caladan, a 2015 Cabernet Franc-dominant blend from Napa Valley.

Depending on the vintage, Cardinale wines are more or less blends of fruit from Mount Veeder, Oakville, Howell Mountain, Spring Mountain District, Stags Leap District, St. Helena, and Diamond Mountain District. "Cardinale is a wine about place but also winemaking from a blending perspective—it's about taking multiple appellations and understanding how those appellations express themselves, then layering those characters to form a bigger, more complete wine representing Napa Valley," Carpenter explains. "My job is to identify the superstars of that particular vintage and then build around [them]."



Group Tasting Notes

1998: Sour, tart red plum and currant. Astringency reflects refinement. Touch of cellar must; ripe but tame. Rocky and leathery with length. 98 —Nathaniel Muñoz

2002*: Blackberry, dark boysenberry, black tea, and candied black olive. Vast width on the palate. Structurally intense with a touch of Brett. **95** — lessie Birschbach

2005: Smooth, seductive, and delicious. Bright red fruit. Lovely, with perfect balance. 97 —Anthony Dias Blue

2006: More blackberry. Rich yet silky; great height with a full tannic push. Drinks big! Warm but stays cool and dry on the lips. A wonderous marvel. Acidity keeps kicking in. 96 — N.M.

2007: Both red and black currant. Wood and deep, dark soil notes are subdued by fruit brilliance. Very youthful and delicious. 97 — Dana Farner

2009: A bit of spice here. Black currant and capsicum are the loudest of the flavors, but also boysenberry and violet. So much happening in a very graceful way. 96 —J.B.

2011: So Howell-driven. Sanguine. Red sous bois, just-ripe mountain berries, leather, meat, olive, blackberry, warm spices, fir, and pine. Cool, candy-coated, and so textured. 95 —N.M.

2012: A spectrum of berries: red, blue, and black plus gravel. Big yet polished tannins. In one year, this will be damn near perfect. 96—1.B.

2013: Blackberry and bramble berry with dark chocolate and pencil shavings. Wants time. 96 — D.F.

2014: Chalk and gravel, rose petal, ivy, dried leaves, and blueberries. This is a construction zone, but it's all the nicest wood, with mineralpacked barrels. Reminds me of Conterno Monfortino with age. 95 —N.М.

2016: Stunning and delicious, it shows great depth and finesse without taking itself too seriously. Yes, it was an exceptional year, but this wine goes beyond the great fruit into a rarefied realm: It's rich, structured, and complex with memorable layers of flavor. 98 —A.D.B.

2015: Intense ruby color; velvety texture with notes of black plum and blackberry. Structured and generous with toasty vanilla and new oak; deep, creamy, and rich with length and beautiful balance. Unlike some Napa producers that expect you to wait years, Chris Carpenter makes wines that are immediately drinkable and delicious. 97 — A.D.B.

*2002 was the first year Cardinale became 100% Napa.

IN NEW ORLEANS, WINES OF CHILE PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS TO SHOW U.S. BUYERS THAT THE CHILEAN WINE INDUSTRY IS UNSTOPPABLE by Right Tobias

urelio Montes is a long-celebrated pioneer of the modern Chilean wine industry, and he's been a Wines of Chile board member for some 20 years. But he's brand-new to his role as President of the trade organization; in fact, his appointment began just three weeks before it hosted Chile Uncorked: A NOLA Retreat in New Orleans June 5–7.

Even so, Montes' ultimate aim for the association was already perfectly aligned with the immediate objective of the event: in his words, "to make Chile better known" to American consumers. As he pointed out to me, "The U.S. was always the number-one market for Chile, but today it's number two, behind China. So one of our goals is to recover the U.S. market as an export destination."

Wines of Chile President Aurelio Montes is also the longcelebrated founder of pioneering winery Montes.



To that end, they welcomed some 50 buyers and writers from around the nation to participate in Chile Uncorked, whose action-packed schedule included six seminars, four multicourse feasts. and one summary roundtable over the course of 48 hours—not to mention the presentation of some 12,000 glasses for tasting 190-plus wines. All were designed with four intertwining leitmotifs in mind: diversity, sustainability, innovation, and quality versus perception of quality.

EXPLORATION

Stateside, even serious wine drinkers are likely to know the names of one or two of Chile's Denominations of Origin at most. But there are 25, and they span a remarkable array of terroirs: "We're blessed by geography, with the Andes just touching on the Pacific Ocean, with our northern deserts and green pastures to the south," said Montes. "There are 1,000 miles between the vineyards up in Huasco Valley down to Patagonia, and we have been nonstop in terms of discovering places that no one else ever thought of."

Regional difference was thus a focus throughout the conference. For instance, a dinner at Calcasieu was organized around the theme "Coastal Gems" to show that, in the words of Full Circle President and Chief Education Officer Evan Goldstein, MS, "cool is hot in Chile." As we sampled Sauvignon Blancs from Leyda Valley and Casablanca Valley, among other regions, panelist and Wine Folly co-founder Madeline Puckette observed that "saltiness is a highlight in a lot of these wines," along with "earthy, grassy" notes—"look for thiols." An eclectic sampling of Pinot Noirs followed, prompting Viñedos Veramonte Winemaker Sofia Araya to acknowledge that "we're still discussing what Pinot from Casablanca is."

Similar questions regarding Chile's viticultural and geographical identities reverberated across our sessions, including the seminar titled "Go South, Young Man." As Goldstein explained, most of the vineyards in the Itata, Bío Bío, and Maule valleys—collectively known as the Secano

"I THINK CHILE DESERVES TO BE IN A FAR BETTER POSITION THAN WE HAVE TODAY. [CONSIDERING] THE BEAUTY, THE HONESTY, THE PURITY OF OUR PRODUCTION, OUR VALUE IS UNBEATABLE."

-Wines of Chile President Aurelia Montes



Legal Sea Foods Vice President of Beverage Operations Sandy Block, MW, and Full Circle Wine Solutions President and Chief Education Officer Evan Goldstein, MS, were key speakers at Chile Uncorked.

Interior—are more than four decades old, and some are as old as 200 years, amounting to "a really precious resource that [could be] Chile's signature." Here, said wine writer and panelist Patricio Tapia, the vineyards are overseen by "small campesinos" who have traditionally tended not Bordelaise or Burgundian varieties but País; maligned for decades as strictly bulk-quality, it's today poised to become what Tapia called "our own Beaujolais Nouveau"not least because area producers are no longer, in the words of Viña Morandé winemaker Ricardo Baettig, turning the light yet funky red grape into "something it is not, asking it to be Cabernet Sauvignon." Meanwhile, they're also working increasingly with Mediterranean varieties, most notably Carignan and Cinsault from old, dry-farmed hillside bush vines.

And they're hardly alone in such experiments. Over the course of the conference (in particular during a luncheon titled "I Didn't Know Chile Produced That!"), we tasted everything from Chasselas, Viognier, and dry Pedro Ximénez to a Carménère-Sauvignon Blanc blend (really) and Viña Bouchon's País Salvaje Blanco, made from a wild-growing white grape that winemaker Christian Sepulveda's team discovered was a mutation of País in 2017—but only after they started working with it in the winery. "It is what it is—that's nature," said Sepulveda with a laugh.

PRESERVATION

Whether Chileans are planting in virgin terroir or vinifying an unidentified grape, their acceptance and even embrace of the process of trial and error "is why I say we're courageous," Montes told me. "Exploring brings with it a certain amount of risk." (He speaks from experience, having raised eyebrows across Chile when he planted the country's first Syrah vines. The many Syrahs we tried proved him right.)

Yet preservation, no less than innovation, requires resolve. This is of course true from an environmental standpoint. As Montes noted, Wines of Chile is "recognized around the world" for its awardwinning National Sustainability Code, under which more than a guarter of the country's roughly 350 wineries are certified—and many producers are, as Matetic Vineyards head winemaker Julio Bastías put it, "trying to push our vines to survive in a natural way," dry farming being of particular importance. But the preservation of winemaking heritage is of equal concern. From massal selections, field blends, and hand harvests to destemming via wooden zarandas, foot pressing, native-yeast fermentation, and aging in tinajas (amphorae), everything old is new again in Chile.



Participants from around the country included Maxwell Park owner/sommelier Brent Kroll and In Living Kuller founder Max Kuller, both of Washington, D.C.

restaurant in 1988: "When I read that Lafite had bought a property in Chile, it changed everything—big shocker to me." As we sampled the Los Vascos 2016 Grande Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, he added, "This wine was important in terms of my perception of Chile: It's classic Colchagua—

producers are revealing the myriad, terroircut facets of Chilean Cabernet—and consumers are noticing, Enolytics CEO Cathy Hugyhe has found through a long-term study of social media: "Five years ago, it was 'Jammy. Big oak. Bring on the meat.' Now, [people are] talking more seriously about food pairings, lovely dark fruits, [and] bold structure. We're seeing the development of an awareness, of an audience."

Carménère may likewise be entering a golden era, according to Goldstein, who noted that to complete "the gargantuan learning curve" they faced upon discovering in 1994 that their plantings were not, in fact, Merlot, Chilean winemakers have had to reject both the bland international and the overly lean, green styles of yore: "The general consensus today is to lean into the herbal character while managing it." It's working, said Montes, explaining that Carménère "demonstrates our passion: We jumped into it, we failed a lot, but in the end we found a way to make something very interesting"—something that happens to be enjoying "very healthy growth, even healthier than Cab." As he told me later, "We have spread our wings so much, and we still have more to go; it'll take ten to 20 years to appreciate what Chile is offering to the market. But you

have to start somewhere."

"PRIOR TO CHILE UNCORKED, MY PERCEPTION OF WINES FROM CHILE REPRESENTED A DICHOTOMY OF \$5 CARMÉNERE IN SUPERMARKETS AND \$100+ ICON CABS, NOW I SEE MUCH OPPORTUNITY FOR WINES IN BETWEEN. IN THE 'SWEET SPOT' FOR MY LIST. THERE'S A LACK OF AWARENESS OUT THERE. AND TRADE AND CONSUMERS NEED TO CATCH UP!"

-Jason Percival, Beverage Manager, Post 390, Boston

PERCEPTION

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of Chilean winemakers' increased ability to simultaneously honor and reshape tradition came from the seminars "Cabernet Legitimacy" and "Carménère 3.0." During the former, speaker Sandy Block, MW, recalled his days as a young somm at a French beautiful structure, lush black cherry, herbs and smoke." By contrast, he singled out Pérez Cruz's 2015 Pircas from Huelquén in the Maipo Valley for "showing the difference between the Andes and lower elevations." with its "mineral edginess but also a supple, creamy, minty character." The point was that as they work toward hillside plantings, earlier harvesting, and less oak influence,

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Since its founding last summer, Dream Big Darling has galvanized a community, raised more than \$100,000 and provided eight scholarships to Wine Speak, a Paso Robles trade event held last January.

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-AMANDA WITTSTROM-HIGGINS

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DREAM BIG

Heading in the Phone Direction

THREE PASO ROBLES
PRODUCERS SEEK TO
DEFINITIVELY PROVE THAT
THE REGION IS RHÔNEGRAPE COUNTRY

story and photos by Randy Caparoso

Saxum Vineyards' James Berry Vineyard in the Paso Robles Willow Creek District AVA. n August 25–28, *The SOMM Journal* will host one of its most exciting and focused SOMM Camps to date: a Rhône-focused excursion in Paso Robles. Sure, other types of grapes are grown in the AVA, whose sunsoaked Mediterranean climate and vast diurnal swings of 40–50 degrees Fahrenheit—the largest night-to-day temperature fluctuations on the West Coast—provide a hospitable environment for a wide swath of varieties. Yet, anyone who has walked the rocky, steep calcareous slopes and felt the mornings' foggy chill, as well as the whistling winds whipping through the Templeton Gap every afternoon during the peak days of summer, would draw an obvious conclusion: How can Paso Robles be anything but an appellation best suited to Rhône grapes?

Like wizened old vines, the region's Rhône specialists have grown wiser and wilier over the past several decades. As a result, vineyards have been planted with the demands of their respective terroirs in mind, fermentation processes are typically minimalist, and aging vessels are largely neutral. Rather than crafting wines explicitly to attract high scores or to kowtow to varietal expectations, these producers are bent on channeling the character of their site and their grapes. The ensuing culture—almost retro-California—is reminiscent of both the pioneering 1880s and the brave 1960s, and the wines it yields are transparent, soulful expressions from high altitudes with zero attitude: making them both amazing with food and exhilarating as standalone tasting experiences.

Over the past year, we've had the opportunity to converse with many progenitors of this recent movement. Here are three sides of the story:

Justin Smith, Saxum Vineyards



Saxum Vineyards co-owner/ winegrower Justin Smith and his dog walk along a row of head-trained Mourvèdre in James Berry Vineyard.



A crucial signal that a given movement has become significant is when at least one of its producers achieves cult status. This applied to Saxum Vineyards almost from the get-go, beginning with its first commercial vintage in 2000. While the quality of their wines has grown by leaps and bounds, the Smith family has also done an admirable job of meeting increasing demand, opening a new winery in 2015 and digging caves deep into the hill of their original property, James Berry Vineyard. They're currently up to an annual production level of roughly 8,500 cases.

Co-owner/winegrower Justin Smith, son of founder James Berry Smith, told The SOMM Journal how this all came to be: "We were Chardonnay growers until 1986, when John Alban knocked upon our door and introduced us to the idea of Rhône varieties—first Mourvèdre and Viognier, and a couple years later, Syrah," he explained. "After those first plantings, we knew the direction we should be headed in was Rhône. These grapes just make the most sense in our warm, dry summers and Mediterranean climate."

Smith acknowledged that the transition required "a little bit of adjustment and fine-tuning," particularly in terms of water management. "We learned to withhold water during the summer," he explained, noting that this strategy "involved redirections of rows, trellising and canopy management, and a different approach to crop levels." "Slowly we moved more toward traditional, headtrained vines, especially for Grenache and Mourvèdre for the simple reason that trellising was OK for these grapes but in some places not as good. We learned that these grapes thrived on south- and west-facing slopes, whereas Syrah did better on cooler, north- and east-facing slopes," he added.

Smith also learned to identify which varieties would perform better in different soils, "whether it was shallow, rocky limestone soils on hilltops or deeper clay-loam soils on lower slopes." "Just in our own home estate we've identified some 20 different microclimates ... so now, when we plant new vineyards, we go at it totally backwards. First, we find the dirt—the best spots for Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, et cetera—with the thinking that what each site has to offer is what you get," Smith said. "We let the sites dictate what we're doing and how we do it, rather than bringing any agenda or preconceived notions to our plantings."

The majority of Saxum's vines are rooted in a Monterey shale formation that's "typical of the west side of the appellation," said Smith, who noted that it's "a fractured shale with high lime content, and for Rhône grapes, the more fractured shale the better." "It has high pH, which preserves acidity in grapes while having a capacity to absorb moisture and nutrients," he added. "This is a soft, fluffy soil that soaks up the heavy rains we get during the winter, which it holds onto all the way through summer, allowing us to dry farm."

While some perceive Paso Robles as a hot region, Smith was quick to note the aforementioned diurnal swings, which can cause summer nights to "drop down into the 40s." This, in the winegrower's words, "does a nice job of preserving acidity and extending the growing season." "Daytime temperatures can hit the 90s, but morning temperatures are fairly cool before heating up in the afternoons. Thus, more often than not, we are pushing our season deeper into the cooler weather of fall," he added. "We usually pick in late September, sometimes all the way into November."

Saxum currently controls about 85 acres across eight sites, the smallest of which spans 2 acres; the largest, James Berry Vineyard, encompasses 40 planted acres. All are located in the Paso Robles Willow Creek District except for a 7.5-acre vineyard in the Adelaida District. "Ultimately, it's the grapes and sites that determine what we produce in the way of blends, varietals, and vineyard designates," Smith explained.



Jordan Fiorentini, winemaker for Epoch Estate Wines, stands amid Syrah vines.

Upon their arrival from Denver in 2003, Epoch proprietor Bill Armstrong and his wife, Liz, knew little about Paso Robles. In an effort to familiarize himself with his new home, Bill cold-called none other than Justin Smith, who over coffee mentioned the potential of one of the region's historic properties. Planted at the time to old-vine Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, and almond trees, the 350-acre Paderewski property is located in what is now the Paso Robles Willow Creek District AVA, and after the Armstrongs purchased the site, they began the replanting process in 2004.

According to Epoch winemaker Jordan Fiorentini, "Historically, Paso Robles may be a little late to the show when it comes to Rhône varieties, but once it started it expanded on its own volition. First of all, there's lots of limestone here, on rocky, sloping hills. That's the main reason Tablas Creek first came here, and that's what got Saxum started ... When Justin first pointed out the Paderewski property, he suggested

that this mountaintop [at an elevation of I,350–I,450 feet] would be ideal for Rhône grapes, even though it had never been planted with that before. That paradigm doesn't exist in every place in Paso Robles, but Paderewski hits a sweet spot—especially in the mid-slopes, where you have maybe about 4 inches of topsoil before you hit beautiful, rocky limestone ideal for the acid balance of warm-climate grapes."

After Fiorentini first visited the property in 2010, she said she was "immediately struck by how effortlessly the wines spoke of a place" the moment she tried some barrel samples. "I had tasted other wines in Paso Robles that confirmed how special this appellation is—that combination of limestone, shale stones, the warm climate and diurnal swings, and the close proximity to the ocean," she added. "You can taste that in any wine from Paderewski: For Rhône grapes, it all comes together here."

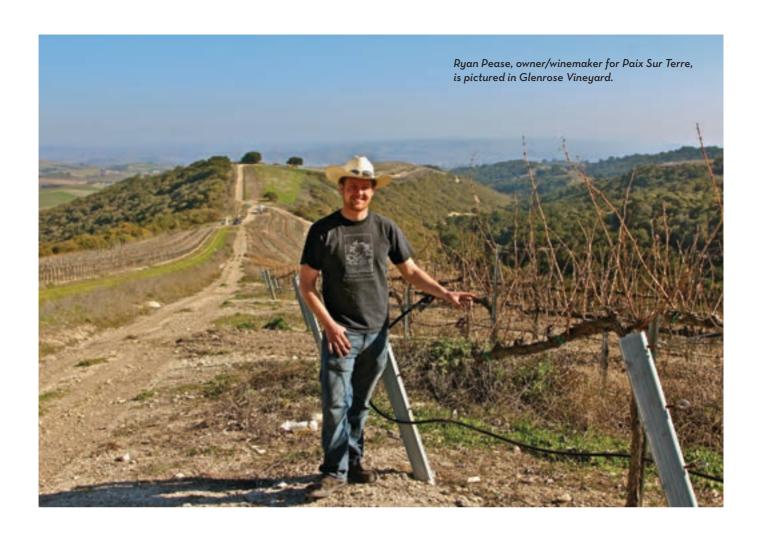
In a nod to the vineyard's history, Epoch still cultivates Zinfandel on the site; Fioren-

tini noted that Tempranillo has also been successful given that the climate is similar to Spain's. "The way I describe the results is a fine balance between massively bold fruit and earthy, mineral-driven sensations coming together in a structural elegance," she continued. "These wines retain this beauty through the years—something we have shown after over ten years of bottlings."

Of Epoch's 100% estate-grown fruit (in addition to Paderewski, the winery owns another Paso Robles vineyard, Catapult, and a 640-acre property in the coastal York Mountain AVA), Fiorentini said she "love[s] its phenolic ripeness at lower sugars, which we've been able to refine over the years as we move to tighter and tighter close spacing." Many of the blocks are head-trained, and by employing organic and Biodynamic methods, they can "farm with fewer and fewer inputs," she added.

In the winery, meanwhile, stems are included "when it makes sense," in Fiorentini's words, and many of Epoch's wines are as much as 30% whole cluster. With a goal of reducing the influence of oak, fermentation occurs in concrete and the wines age in 300- and 500-liter barrels for up to six years to help retain "the true essence of the fruit," she said, adding that her team has also recently started using 2,200-liter foudres as well. "As a result, we are already seeing more emphasis on qualities of minerality, earth, and spice in our wines," she explained."In our view, the best wines are the wines that taste like where they're grown, and everything we do in the winery and vineyard is geared toward that goal."





Ryan Pease, Paix Sur Terre Winery

Paix Sur Terre owner/winemaker Ryan Pease has a day job as the winemaker at Paso Robles' Grey Wolf Cellars, but he's also steadily grown his own brand and tasting room since he produced his first six barrels in 2010. "Paix Sur Terre," Pease explained, "translates as 'peace on earth,' because it's like I've found my own slice of heaven doing what I do—not just in Paso Robles but also with my specific focus on Mourvèdre, which I identified very early on as my true passion."

Pease said he was drawn to the variety because of Paso Robles'"poor, rocky soils and the fact that limestone helps grapes retain acidity. Then there is the close proximity to the coast that gives us a unique expression, but [one that's] not dissimilar to what you find in Bandol, another coastal appellation."

The winemaker sources Mourvèdre from three sites: Glenrose Vineyard, a terraced property in the Adelaida District that has virtually no topsoil and is carved into a white-limestone hilltop at 1,800 feet; Denner Vineyard, a calcareous hilltop (1,200 feet) in the Willow Creek District, which is closer to the fog and cooling influence of the Templeton Gap; and Alta Colina Vineyard, located on an 1,800-foot slope in the Adelaida District that consists of siliceous shale with a slightly lower pH.

"I produce wines from all three sites in the exact same way: All are fermented

100% whole cluster with punch-downs only and aged 14 months in strictly neutral French oak," Pease said. "The differences in the wines are definitely about terroir, not winemaking. Denner sees more fog than Glenrose, and the result is Mourvèdre with more anthocyanin, darker color, chewier tannin, and more greenand black-olive tones than in Glenrose.

"Because there is an inverse relationship between pH in soil and pH in wines, Mourvèdres from Alta Colina are slightly lower in acid definition, but have an earthier, almost umami-like profile," he continued. "It's really undefinable, but if you try to put a finger on it, you might say it has more of a chaparral character—sort of an herbaceous funk not like barnyard, [but] more like fresh-turned organic loam."

If, as many believe, Mourvèdre is all about transparency, this varietal essence of the Rhône has truly found a home in Paso Robles.



A Rising Tide Lifts All Ships

NICK GERGEN, BEVERAGE DIRECTOR AT JUNIPER & IVY IN SAN DIEGO, CREDITS HIS MENTORS FOR HIS SUCCESS by Kenny Daniels

NICK GERGEN'S RISE to the role of beverage director at esteemed restaurant Juniper & Ivy in San Diego was no fast and furious joyride: A former host at Red Lobster, the 27-year-old Certified Sommelier credits his mentors for fueling his enthusiasm and making his success possible.

"It is the biggest honor of my career and, subsequently, the most humbling and a bit terrifying, because I have enormous shoes to fill," Gergen says. His initial trepidation was understandable, as he was appointed to the job before he officially obtained his certification; instead of a lapel pin, it was the knowledge and respect earned through apprenticeship that warranted the promotion.

This guidance came from three people who he says molded him both personally and professionally: Kenon Nibbs at Red Lobster, Dan Valerino of The Hake, and Mike DelGrosso at Juniper & Ivy. Though each of these mentors guided him through different portions of his career, Gergen notes that they all taught him how to be a successful leader. "Once I got a taste for management, I knew I wanted to do it," he adds.

The sommelier's most inspiring quality is perhaps his ability to openly recognize his limitations in spirits and beer; this prompts him to collaborate closely with his bar manager, Corey Tigge, who is highly passionate in both areas. Gergen also encourages his staff to practice a mantra he was taught: "A rising tide lifts all ships," a notion he believes is crucial to building a better beverage program.

Another strength is his affinity for esoteric wine, which complements Juniper & Ivy's food. "[The chefs] collectively put together a melting pot of the coolest, most fun cuisine that I have the privilege to pair," he says. His current passion is Portuguese wine, which he believes is "complex and underrepresented." "The Baga grape is funky and rustic, and it works exceptionally well for the venue," Gergen adds. Efforts were made to no avail to import a pre-phylloxera Quinta do Ribeirinho Baga from Luis Pato, but he's likely to try again.

Juniper & Ivy is known for pushing the envelope through its deliciously innovative dishes and pairings; in May, the Michelin Guide included the restaurant on its Bib Gourmand list, a recognition awarded to establishments that offer "exceptionally good food at moderate prices." With Gergen in the driver's seat on the beverage side, we're eager to see what other milestones lie ahead.



NICK GERGEN'S TOP FIVE FAVES:

- 1. Entertaining and cooking at home
- 2. Rock climbing
- 3. Sushi
- Star Wars and Marvel movies
- 5. Tuner and classic cars

NICK GERGEN'S TOP FIVE PET PEEVES:

- 1. Referencing movie quotes
- 2. Not returning items where they were found
- 3. Not using blinkers
- 4. Rolling through stop signs
- 5. Dogs in grocery stores

"Travel more. Eat more foods from different parts of the world and taste all different sorts of wine, even wines you may not like. Experiencing different cultures will change your perceptions of dining possibilities and your expectations." —Nick Gergen



The Man Behind the Brands





A MEETING PLACE OF SEA, SUN, MOUNTAINS & TERROIR

In Israel, a tiny sliver of a land of stunning beauty and extreme contrast, grapes of every type - classic and local varieties, ancient indigenous vines - are planted in every region. From the sandy Coastal Plain to the volcanic Golan Heights, from the majestic forested peaks of the Galilee to the stony Biblical hills of the Central Mountains, from the verdant valleys of the Judean Foothills to the blooming desert of the Negev, the diversity of the land and its bounty challenges a winemaker by offering unlimited opportunities to create.

GRAPES, GRAINS, AND OLIVES

The three basics common to all Mediterranean cuisine – bread, wine, and olive oil - originated here in ancient times, and became the foundation of civilizations and a food culture that persists until this day. In Israel, with its wealth of fresh and simple flavors and ingredients, that culture means friends sharing wine around a mezze laden table.



WHERETHE MEDITERRANEAN

BEGINS



LOOK EAST

Where the Fertile Crescent meets the Mediterranean, wine was produced 5000 years ago. Over millennia it earned a reputation for quality, and was sent west in Canaanite Jars to ancient empires in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. For the local people, it was essential to their livelihood and culture, even their health, and it became a sacred part of everyday life.



MODERN WINES FROM AN ANCIENT LAND

Inspired by tradition but driven to innovate, a new generation of Israeli winemakers and growers are combining global training with Israel's world-leading agricultural technology. With their anything-is-possible attitude they are fulfilling the promise of this fertile land by creating wines that are increasingly receiving international recognition and awards, and are enjoyed by wine lovers worldwide.

