

THE SOMMELIER JOURNAL

*CLIMBING THE
LADDER OF*

SUCCESS

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES'

TERRY WHEATLEY

IS COACHING TOMORROW'S
BEVERAGE LEADERS TO THE TOP

Amanda McCrossin, Wine
Director at PRESS Restaurant
in St. Helena, CA, pours Clos
Pegase Cabernet Sauvignon
for Vintage Wine Estates
President Terry Wheatley.



DON MELCHOR

2014	2015	2016
2011	2012	2013
2008	2009	2010
2005	2006	2007
2002	2003	2004
1999	2000	2001
1996	1997	1998
1993	1994	1995
1990	1991	1992
1987	1988	1989

*Celebrating the
30th vintage*



WWW.DONMELCHOR.COM

THE SOMM JOURNAL

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2019 • Vol. 6 No. 5

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Meridith May
mmay@sommjournal.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Jessie Birschbach
jabs@sommjournal.com

SENIOR STAFF EDITOR

Kate Newton
knewton@sommjournal.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Michelle Alexandra, Jeremy Ball, Dan Berger, Kyle Billings, Laura Donadoni, Amanda M. Faison, Orietta Gianjorio, Simi Grewal, Richard Carleton Hacker, Nick Klein, Ellen Landis, Michelle Metter, Alexander Rubin, Jeanne Rutherford, Courtney Schiessl, Mark Stock, Irene Virbila, Todd Westphal, Peter Wilke, Doug Young

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Rachel Burkons; Carl Corsi; Janet Fletcher; Jay James, MS; Karen MacNeil;
Chris Sawyer; Wine Country Editor

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

The Material in each issue of *The SOMM Journal* is protected by U.S. Copyright © 2019

USPS Publication Number: 024-88i

Filing Date: September 10, 2019

Published: 6x a year

Annual Subscription Rate: \$52.

Mailing Address: 6345 Balboa Blvd; Suite 111, Encino, CA 91316

Phone: 818-990-0350

Contact: Meridith May, Publisher

Email: MMay@sommjournal.com

Total copies run: 64,940. **Outside County Paid/Requested:** 24,555. **In-County Paid/Requested:** 7200. **Sales through dealers and carriers:** 15,500. **Distributed by other mail carriers and through USPS:** 4675. **Total paid or requested:** 51,930. **Outside county non-requested:** 3300. **In-County non-requested:** 1700. **Non-requested copies distributed through USPS or other classes of mail:** 3010. **Non-requested copies distributed outside the mail:** 3,000. **Total non-requested circulation:** 8010. **Copies not distributed:** 2,000. **Total distribution:** 61,940.

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

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

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

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

VP/SALES & MARKETING

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

VP/COMMUNICATION & TRADE RELATIONS

Lars Leicht
lars@sommjournal.com

VP/FINANCE DIRECTOR

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

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR

Michael Viggiano

SENIOR CONSULTING EDITOR

Anthony Dias Blue

SENIOR COLUMNIST

Ruth Tobias

DEPUTY EDITOR

Eric Marsh

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR

David Gadd

GLOBAL WINE EDITOR

Deborah Parker Wong

EAST COAST EDITOR

David Ransom

FEATURES EDITOR

Michelle Ball

EDITORS-AT-LARGE

Randy Caparoso
Jonathan Cristaldi

LONDON CORRESPONDENT

Steven Spurrier

©2019 The SOMM Journal, The Sommelier Journal.
All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part
without written permission is prohibited.
Sommelier Journal USPS 024881, ISSN 1944-074X



PHOTO: FRANK MICELOTTA

Pictured from left to right: Elizabeth Jagger, Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger, Jerry Hall, News Corp. Executive Chairman and Fox Corporation Co-Chairman Rupert Murdoch, Harvey Keitel, and Daphne Kastner celebrate Moraga Bel Air's 30th anniversary.

Celebrating 30 Years of Moraga Bel Air

TO PUBLICIZE 30 YEARS of winemaking in Los Angeles, Moraga proprietors Jerry and Rupert Murdoch hosted a celebration in their Bel Air vineyard complete with a barbeque lunch and library tasting set to the music of a live mariachi band.

Reflecting on the occasion, winemaker Scott Rich commented, "I'm so happy that we were able to share Moraga with so many people. The highlight for me was seeing how well the 1991 red wine has aged—and to be able to expose so many people to these very special wines was a thrill. I look back at what we've accomplished over the past 30 years and it still astounds me that we're making world-class wines at a small vineyard in Los Angeles. We want the whole world to know about Moraga."

Flâneur Wines Opens New Hospitality Center

IN SEPTEMBER, Flâneur Winery opened a new hospitality center inside a rehabilitated 125-year-old grain elevator in its hometown of Carlton, Oregon. To kick off the grand opening of the full-service tasting facility, the winery will offer 600 magnums of Cuvée for a Cause, a 2017 Pinot Noir made by Flâneur winemaker Grant Coulter. One-third of the proceeds will go to Yamhill Carlton Together Cares, a local nonprofit that provides opportunities for the children and families of Yamhill and Carlton.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLÂNEUR WINES



The Cuvée for a Cause Pinot Noir is pictured in front of Flâneur Winery's new hospitality center.

Sonoma Wine Writer Wins Constellation Brands Scholarship

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSTELLATION BRANDS



CONSTELLATION BRANDS HAS awarded the first of two Master of Wine (MW) student scholarships this year to Sonoma-based wine writer and educator Matthew Gaughan. Gaughan, who achieved the highest overall score of any North American student in the stage-one assessment, will receive a \$1,000 scholarship award sponsored by Constellation Brands to assist with his continued studies in stage two. In addition, Constellation Masters of Wine Nova Cadamatre and Mark de Vere will host him at Robert Mondavi Winery for a special tour and tasting this fall. "I am delighted to receive the student scholarship from Constellation," Gaughan says. "Studying for the MW takes a great deal of time, effort, and financial investment, so to receive support from the industry is very helpful and bolsters my commitment to the program." ❧



TRUE TO THE *Source*

KAREN CAKEBREAD'S **ZIATA LABEL** IS A PROJECT OF PASSION

Charismatic, creative, conscientious, and competent are just a handful of the words that best describe Karen Cakebread, founder of wine label ZIATA. Well before establishing the brand in 2008, her perseverance in understanding wine culture from soil to bottle led her to become an expert in the industry.

Part of Trinchero Family Estates' growing luxury portfolio, ZIATA began with two of Cakebread's favorite varieties—Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc—and has since grown to include five wines, each of which reflects the true nature of the vineyard or appellation from which it was sourced.

ZIATA founder Karen Cakebread (right) with winemaker Jennifer Williams at Bistro Don Giovanni in Napa, CA.

first press

story by Peter Wilke / photos by Alexander Rubin

AFTER LEAVING SILICON VALLEY, Cakebread entered the wine industry in 1988 and immediately committed herself to Cakebread Cellars. Throughout her 18 years with the brand, she acted as the primary ambassador for hospitality, marketing, and education across the globe. With that experience came a passion for understanding all aspects of winemaking and viticulture: Thus, the ZIATA label—named for Cakebread's mother, Mary Annunziata—was born.

With her mother's determination and her own success to drive her, Cakebread sought out a winemaker who would share her vision of creating vineyard-focused, site-specific wines. After working with Anne Vawter for several years, ZIATA hired Jennifer Williams as winemaker in 2015. A graduate of Cal Poly, her Napa Valley credentials included stints at Trefethen, Spottswoode Estate, Zeitgeist Cellars, and Arrow & Branch, and she was mentored by renowned vineyardist David

marketing and sales. She spends much of her time on the road to establish new clients across the United States, focusing her marketing on boutique wine shops and high-end restaurants.

The ZIATA Wines

I had the opportunity to taste through all five wines with Cakebread and Williams while sheltered in the beautiful hedged courtyard of Bistro Don Giovanni in Napa. The wines themselves are stunning examples of what the North Coast can produce; sourced from Sonoma and Napa counties, the grapes are sometimes blended across different AVAs or offered under a single appellation. Cakebread's Napa Valley relationships, built over decades, play a key role in ZIATA's sourcing.

The **ZIATA 2018 Sauvignon Blanc (\$30)** delivered lively tropicality through a vibrant character of papaya, golden apple, and honeydew melon. Fermented primarily in French oak, the wine has a pleasant roundness that harmonizes beautifully with the fruit. The grapes—50% of which are the Musqué clone—were selected for their aromatic intensity from five different vineyards in Sonoma and Napa.



Karen Cakebread and Jennifer Williams enjoy a close working relationship.

Cakebread attributes much of her drive to succeed to her mother's work ethic. Embracing a role as a Rosie the Riveter-type laborer during World War II, Mary was a strong head of household who would put her head down and move forward when faced with adversity. "Her tenacity and determination helped build the brand and shape me into the person I am today," Cakebread says.

In the early days of ZIATA, Mary was responsible for establishing the brand's first account, Sunshine Market in St. Helena. After tracking down the wine buyer there, she passed his card along to Cakebread and insisted that she give him a call; after he tasted the wines, the market began carrying her Sauvignon Blanc, and ZIATA was on its way.

Abreu and winemaker Françoise Peschon at Araujo Estate.

At ZIATA, Williams is focused on properties with excellent drainage, soil, and exposure and takes a vineyard-first approach when crafting her wines. Together, she and Cakebread focus on establishing long-term relationships with their growers and can often be found sampling grapes together as harvest approaches.

As the pair will tell you, each vintage presents new challenges both in the vineyard and in the marketplace. "The goal is to find people that share our passion for the wine," Cakebread says.

Cakebread's commitment to ZIATA is evident in her involvement at every step, from grape growing and winemaking to





The **ZIATA 2015 Meteor Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$150)**

is the first vintage of an expression that Cakebread describes as the “intersection of power and elegance.” The vineyard itself is situated on a hilltop overlooking oak trees in the Coombsville AVA of Napa Valley: True to form, Cakebread and Williams sought out a site with good drainage and succeeded. Stony volcanic soil dominates the area, and the resulting wine tells its story through deep, brooding fruit that envelops the nose. The sizable backbone will allow this Cab to age gorgeously.




The fruit for the **ZIATA 2017 Chardonnay (\$50)** came from two Carneros vineyards and was entirely fermented in French oak barrels (40% new). A subtle balance of nutmeg, peach, and lemon pie couples with a creamy texture and an enticing bouquet. Both Williams and Cakebread seem to have an honest appreciation of the AVA for its ability to consistently produce high-quality cool-climate varietals.

The two women continued their success with the release of the **ZIATA 2016 Russian River Pinot Noir (\$50)**. After tasting the fruit from Charlie Chenoweth’s Bootlegger’s Hill Vineyard in the Russian River Valley sub-AVA of Green Valley—

which Cakebread describes as a “virtual candy land” of clones, rootstocks, and pruning methods—the pair traveled to Kosta Browne to try its Pinot Noir from the previous vintage. At that point, they knew they had hit pay dirt: The combination of excellent drainage and low fertility found in Goldridge soil provides a concentrated red-berry profile. The 2016 vintage was the first to include fruit from Stephen’s Vineyard, also located in the Green Valley AVA. After Chenoweth told them about the site, they became enraptured with the quality of the grapes, enjoying the violet and spice character that the vineyard brings to the wine.

Utilizing an ever-changing combination

of Bordeaux varieties, the **ZIATA 2016 Mia Madre (\$100)** is a Napa Valley blend produced in honor of Cakebread’s late mother. This vintage includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Malbec; intensely focused, a seductive mixture of red and black fruit couples with hints of blueberry and spice. With a firm mouthfeel and acidity that can only be found in Atlas Peak, the wine will drink beautifully over the next decade and a half or more.

After taking a closer look at ZIATA, it’s abundantly clear that Cakebread and Williams intend to remain true to the source through their commitment to the growers and their vineyards. Wines such as these are truly the gems of the North Coast. 

THE SOMM JOURNAL

FEATURES

77 CLIMBING THE CHARTS

How California's B Side Wines Bolstered Its Growth by Hitting Reset

92 A FRESH FACE

Wente Vineyards' In-House Restaurant Overhauls Its Wine and Food Experience as a Tasting Lounge

99 PRECISION AND NUANCE

A Luncheon at Misirizzi in New York Celebrates a Kettmeir Milestone

102 HERE'S WHAT THEY'RE REALLY DRINKING IN COGNAC

Introducing Pineau des Charentes to American Consumers

106 IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

The Willamette Valley Carves a Special Place in Its Diverse Terroir for Pinot Noir

120 THE CRAFT BEHIND ITALIAN WINE

A SommCon D.C. Panel Debates Whether the Country's Diverse Wines Are Born or Made

COVER STORY

54 CLIMBING THE LADDER OF SUCCESS


Vintage Wine Estates' Terry Wheatley Is Coaching Tomorrow's Beverage Leaders to the Top

FIRST PRESS

5 TRUE TO THE SOURCE

Karen Cakebread's ZIATA Label Is a Project of Passion

PHOTO: MICHELLE ALEXANDRA



Director of Winemaking Paul Clifton cuts loose in Hahn Family Wines' Smith Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA.

86 THE ZEN OF SLH WINEMAKING

Hahn Family Wines' Pinot Noir Is the Product of Unique Terroir and an Enlightened Winemaking Approach



SKREWBALL

PEANUT BUTTER WHISKEY

An unlikely duo has been born -
the new peanut butter whiskey sensation
that people are going nuts over!



Platinum Medal / Best in Class
Innovation Award
SIP Awards 2019



Double Gold
Best Flavored Whiskey
NY World Spirits Competition 2019



Gold Medal / Best of Category
Los Angeles Intl. Spirits Competition 2019



  @skrewballwhiskey

THE SOMM JOURNAL

48

Sheep graze in the vineyards of Zind-Humbrecht in Alsace.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZIND-HUMBRECHT

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|------------|---|
| 4 | <i>Reader's Corner</i> | 38 | <i>Italy: North to South</i> | 70 | <i>Milestones: Eberle Winery</i> |
| 12 | <i>Elevating the Rockies</i> | 40 | <i>The Giving Vine: ArtCrush</i> | 72 | <i>California Crus:</i>
<i>Robert Mondavi Winery</i> |
| 14 | <i>One Woman's View</i> | 42 | <i>Vineyard Management</i> | 80 | <i>Out and About</i> |
| 16 | <i>Effervescence: Champagne</i>
<i>Barons de Rothschild</i> | 44 | <i>Vinicultural Practices</i> | 82 | <i>Chile: Viña Concha y Toro</i> |
| 18 | <i>Bottom Line</i> | 46 | <i>Sparkle Motion</i> | 84 | <i>Spain: Pere Ventura</i> |
| 20 | <i>Inside Sonoma</i> | 48 | <i>Alsace: Zind-Humbrecht</i> | 90 | <i>WSET: Wine</i>
<i>Education Week</i> |
| 22 | <i>The Ransom Report</i> | 50 | <i>Olive Oil</i> | 96 | <i>One on One: Pedro Garcia</i> |
| 24 | <i>Five Minutes With . . .</i> | 58 | <i>The Rhône:</i>
<i>Jean-Luc Colombo</i> | 110 | <i>In Memoriam: Stefano Riboli</i> |
| 26 | <i>Extensions: Résonance</i> | 62 | <i>Scents & Accountability</i> | 114 | <i>SOMM Camp Preview</i> |
| 28 | <i>The Punch-Down</i> | 64 | <i>New Releases: Pio Cesare</i> | 116 | <i>Somm Joury</i> |
| 30 | <i>Wheying In</i> | 66 | <i>Steven Spurrier's</i>
<i>Letter from London</i> | 128 | <i>SommFoundation Letter</i> |
| 32 | <i>Faces to Know: Heitz Cellar</i> | 68 | <i>Varietal Spotlight:</i>
<i>Alicante Bouschet</i> | 130 | <i>Wine Scribe:</i>
<i>Karen MacNeil</i> |
| 34 | <i>Good Somm/Bad Somm</i> | | | | |
| 36 | <i>Sense of Plate</i> | | | | |

It's a matter of Style



*Italian
lifestyle
is our
wine making style*



FONTANAFREDDA



by Ruth Tobias

The entrance to Slow Food Nations' Taste Marketplace is marked by a sculpture of its mascot, the snail.

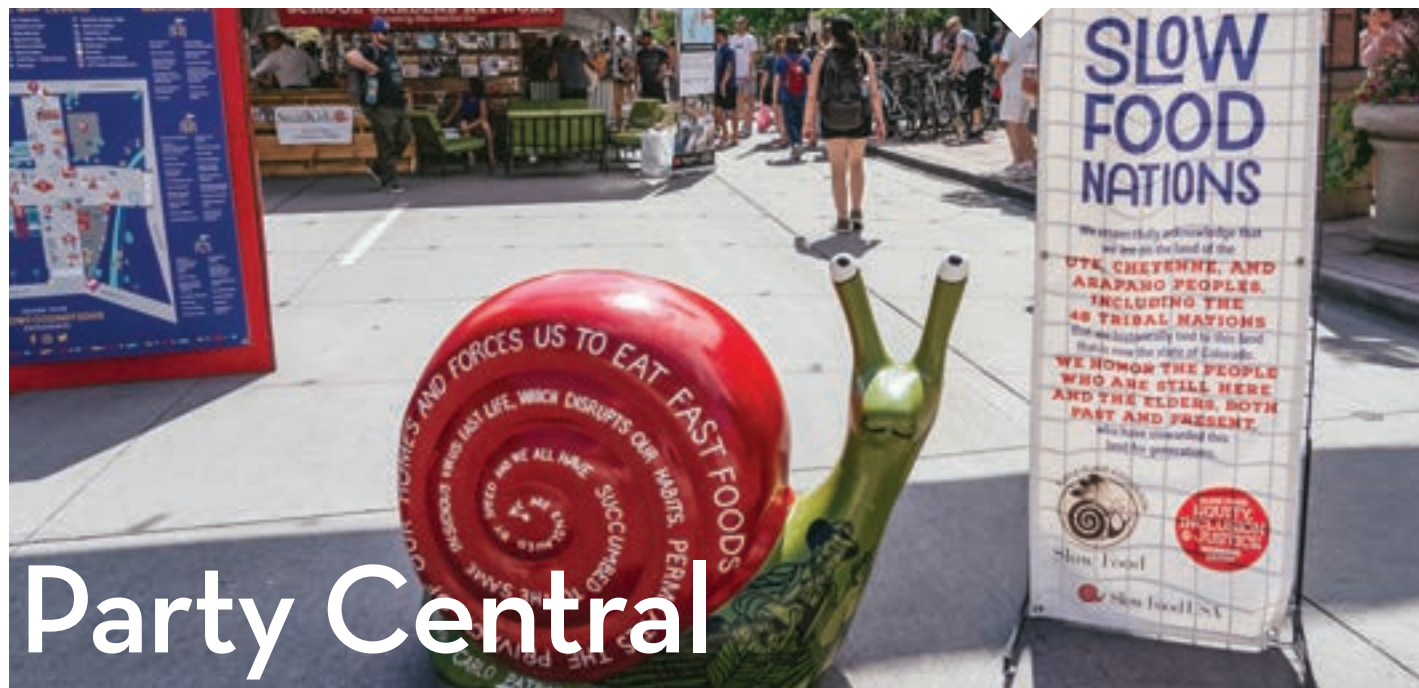


PHOTO: © BRENT ANDECK | VISIT DENVER

Party Central

FROM EXCLUSIVE GALAS TO ENORMOUS FESTIVALS, THE WORLD DESCENDED ON DENVER THIS SUMMER AND FALL by Ruth Tobias

COLORADO'S LONG BEEN home to two of the most renowned culinary and craft-beverage extravaganzas in the nation: the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen and the Great American Beer Festival in Denver, which together could be considered unofficial bookends to festival season in the state (held as they are in June and October, respectively). But in between, noteworthy gatherings large and small gave Denverites numerous opportunities to eat and drink their way around the map without leaving home.

At the ambitious end of the spectrum, Slow Food Nations once again turned Larimer Square into a veritable world's fair of activists, forward thinkers, small producers, and conscious consumers for three days in July. Cooking demonstrations and craft workshops, seed swaps and policy discussions, tastings and block parties filled the schedule—and, as has become my wont since the inaugural congress in 2017, I attended as many events as I could to soak up knowledge about everything from the African ancient grain called fonio and the versatility of the geoduck clam to the ranching industry's movement toward re-

generative agriculture. It's the rare festival that you leave feeling more energized than you did when you entered.

On the just-for-fun smaller scale, acclaimed Israeli-born chef Alon Shaya brought a taste of the Big Easy to The Source—an epicurean marketplace and boutique hotel that includes Shaya's first restaurant outside of Louisiana, Safta—with Bacchanal x Denver, transforming the parking lot into a pop-up for one weekend in August. To recreate the experience at the namesake wine shop/bar and al fresco music venue, the Bacchanal team shipped in a wildly eclectic array of bottles from cult producers like Oregon's Hiyu Wine Farm and Georgia's Tchotiashvili for purchase by guests who lingered at picnic tables to the strains of live jazz, nibbling on salumi and small plates from the Safta crew all day and night. But for the lack of humidity in the high-desert air, you could've mistaken RiNo for NOLA.

Joined by a few other top Denver chefs, Shaya also happened to be a featured guest at the fourth annual Den Corner Rooftop Party, which Japanese-born brothers Toshi and Yasu Kizaki—who own the venerable



PHOTO: AMANDA PROUFFT

Guests at Bacchanal x Denver fueled up on small plates from Safta, which means "grandmother" in Hebrew—as depicted on the sassy T-shirts worn by servers.

Sushi Den and its adjacent siblings Izakaya Den and OTOTO in Platt Park—started in 2016 to raise money for Kumamoto earthquake victims. Today, it's a splashy benefit for various relief organizations, held in late August on the top level of the lot the Kizakis themselves built to ease parking in the neighborhood. Beneath the paper lanterns amid a swirl of revelers, both the locals and some 20 chefs flown in from Japan cooked up a storm of dishes traditional and otherwise—from ramen and sushi to huitlacoche okonomiyaki and swordfish spiedini. Some days, the Mile High City seems rather to span the globe. **SJ**



THE STORY OF AN ESTATE

Making wine is a beautiful experience. There is nothing quite like growing fruit in the vineyard and crafting it into something people enjoy. At Murrieta's Well, this is especially true.

No one else can tell the story of our vineyard.

Located in the heart of the Livermore Valley, the story of our estate began in 1884 with cuttings from Chateau d'Yquem and Chateau Margaux. The story continues today with our small lot approach to winegrowing and winemaking. We farm acre-by-acre. We craft our wines barrel-by-barrel. And through the art of blending we harness the true potential of the vineyard to share the best story of our estate with you... vintage after vintage.

MURRIETA'S WELL
ESTATE VINEYARD

Robbie Meyer

Robbie Meyer, Winemaker for Murrieta's Well



Betting the Farm

MIKE ETZEL OF BEAUX FRÈRES TALKS HIS NEW PARTNERSHIP AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FAMOUS BROTHER-IN-LAW

PHOTO COURTESY OF BEAUX FRÈRES



Mike Etzel, owner and President of Beaux Frères.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, right before the harvest began in Oregon's Willamette Valley, I went to see Mike Etzel, founding owner and President of Beaux Frères. Our conversation—conducted in part on a dusty ATV as we zig-zagged through his hilly vineyards on Ribbon Ridge and in part in his closet-size tasting room—ranged all across the board. Read on for a few snippets from that day, but first, some background:

Etzel was a wine salesman in Colorado when, while on a family vacation in the Willamette Valley in 1986, he and his wife and young sons stumbled upon a pig farm for sale: 88 acres, a barn, and a house for \$129,000.

They bought it, but not by themselves. Etzel's sister Patricia and her husband, the wine critic Robert M. Parker, became partners. Parker disclosed the arrangement in his newsletter *The Wine Advocate*, noting that he would never review the wines, which were named Beaux Frères (French for brothers-in-law). He's since kept that promise.

Initially strapped for cash, Etzel learned to do everything himself, from repairing machinery to planting a vineyard and learning how to make wine. He worked numerous side jobs, including falling timber and working in a machine shop. And for several vintages before Beaux Frères' first, he worked as a right hand to Ponzi Vineyards' Dick Ponzi, who also became his mentor.

The Parkers recently sold their investment in Beaux Frères, and in 2017, Etzel and his son Mikey (now the winemaker) took on a new partner—the French firm Maisons & Domaines Henriot.

Karen MacNeil: How and when did you become fascinated by wine?

Mike Etzel: My brother-in-law, Robert Parker, visited my sister in college in France. After his return, Robert's obsession with wine rubbed off on me. He exposed me to wines from all over the world. I still remember tasting a DRC wine with him. It was so completely ethereal.

KM: What's your relationship with Robert Parker like? Has he ever given you comments or pointers on the wines you've made?

ME: It's been a brother/father/mentor relationship. He is very opinionated and had a clear vision on the style of wine that we were to make.

KM: What style of Pinot Noir are you making today?

ME: At first, we were making fairly extracted Pinots. Today, we've evolved. We are making lighter, more savory, more precise, less monolithic Pinot Noirs. It's been a movement driven by sommeliers.

KM: You and your wife, Carey, now also own a separate vineyard and brand called Sequitur, and Beaux Frères now makes a Pinot Noir from the Sequitur Vineyard. The 2017 was recently released. What do you think about it?

ME: I like its sluttiness. *sj*

An Editorial Quandary

We had a PC moment in our editorial meeting over the term “sluttiness” in this column. One editor found it demeaning to women; another thought it appropriately described the voluptuous character found in some wines. (A Google search for “slutty wine” brings up 38.5 million results.) In the end, we opted to leave Mike Etzel's use of the term in the story. It's his wine, after all.

But what do you, our readers, think? Can Pinot Noir (or any other wine) be “slutty”? Is this, or any other sexual reference, appropriate when describing wine? We'd be interested to hear your thoughts. Send your comments to comments@sommjournal.com.

For an interview with Karen MacNeil, see page 130.

Grown

FROM OUR OWN CLONE.



Silverado
VINEYARDS

SOLO

CABERNET SAUVIGNON
STAGS LEAP DISTRICT
NAPA VALLEY

Silverado's SOLO Cabernet Sauvignon hails from Silverado Vineyard in Stags Leap District, one of the six vineyards on the family-owned estate. SOLO is crafted exclusively from the Heritage Disney Silverado clone, Napa, California registered as UC Davis Cabernet 30. It is one of only three Cabernet Sauvignon clones to attain this status.

NAPA VALLEY ESTATE GROWN, PRODUCED AND BOTTLED.

Silverado
VINEYARDS

SILVERADOVINEYARDS.COM

© SILVERADO VINEYARDS, NAPA, CA

Banking on Bubbly



THE ROTHSCHILD FAMILY SHINES A SPOTLIGHT ON THEIR CHAMPAGNE PORTFOLIO

by Kyle Billings



Frédéric Mairesse, Managing Director of Champagne Barons de Rothschild.

FRÉDÉRIC MAIRESSE IS easily intrigued: During a recent luncheon held at Los Angeles restaurant Providence, the Managing Director of Champagne Barons de Rothschild was equally keen on discussing the eccentricities of the city as he was on showcasing his portfolio. Seated at the head of a large table, Mairesse volleyed between topics of conversation like L.A. traffic and the local return of the *Michelin Guide* before soliciting wine recommendations from the group, but between courses, he managed to introduce Rothschild wines that many consumers are likely unfamiliar with.

Mairesse boasts a resume as distinguished as the navy-blue suit, spotted pocked square, and full head of silver hair he sported at the luncheon. He's supervised production at heralded estates Perrier-Jouët and Mumm and holds a degree in business from INSEAD, but his current charge is to blend Champagne and Rothschild—names evocative of once-disparate wines.

Mairesse, for his part, is clear about his intentions. "What is our target? To be the best in the world," he said of the lofty expectations of Champagne Barons de Rothschild, which was founded in 2005. According to Mairesse, this is the first business venture that the three remote branches of the Rothschild family tree have shared since 1743. Despite the Rothschilds' storied legacies in wine and banking, Mairesse denied that he's been made to feel any sense of undue pressure; instead, he recounted, the family simply told him, "Don't make any compromise on quality." "They wanted to make a premium wine and they wanted to use Chardonnay," he added, noting that they ensured access to whatever resources Mairesse and his team would need to create a Champagne as highly regarded as, say, Mouton or Lafite.

This focus on quality is achieved through discerning parcel selection, low dosage, and the blending of juice exclusively derived from first pressings. Grapes are sourced from the usual suspects of touted Côtes des Blancs villages: Avize, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Avize, and Cramant as well as prominent crus in the Montagne de Reims. Chardonnay dominates the blends, including 85% of the rosé, which joins a brut, a blanc de blancs, the Cuvée Spéciale Vintage 2008, and the Millésime 2010 in filling out the Champagne portfolio.

At lunch, the wines—which are imported by Taub Family Selections—flawlessly accommodated a mélange of seafood dishes, from steamed mussels to crab quiche tartlets and black cod. Decided by consensus, the standout was the Vintage 2008, a tête de cuvée matured for seven years on the lees that exclusively features Chardonnay grapes from Grand Cru vineyards.

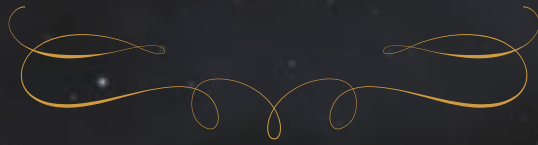
Mairesse conceded that consummating the aspirations of the house will take time: "We want to offer a super-premium Champagne for the next generation," he said. If these future connoisseurs need to clarify which style of Rothschild they prefer, they're sure to find a willing conversation partner in Mairesse. **||**



You're invited to
the world of

LYRE'S™

IMPOSSIBLY CRAFTED
NON-ALCOHOLIC SPIRITS



EXPLORE OUR RANGE OF NON-ALCOHOLIC TIPPLES

Curious? Get in touch to explore the range

(562) 926-2000 | southernglazers.com | lyres.co



Playing Catch-Up

IT'S TIME TO WRITE YOUR
OWN SCRIPT WHEN
DESIGNING A WINE LIST

by Randy Caparoso

HERE'S A TOPIC we've been talking about for some 40 years: How good are restaurant wine programs compared to the quality of cooking that has been unleashed by chefs since the days of Alice Waters, Jeremiah Tower, Wolfgang Puck, Charlie Trotter, and similar legends?

In my mind, the vinous equivalent within this culinary epoch is the way sommeliers or restaurant wine buyers, in the '70s and '80s, began to stack their lists with the basic components—that is, the great, authentic growths of the world, epitomized by French Grand Crus or classic California labels like Stag's Leap, Kistler, and Williams Selyem—and then built out from there.

But then, in the '90s and early 2000s, chefs blasted off in terms of creativity. It wasn't so much the ingredients they used as the imaginative and often cross-cultural ways in which those ingredients were combined. Ever since, sommeliers have been trying to catch up. As a whole, wine lists are still a little behind the menus in our top restaurants; whereas our most successful chefs are crafting dishes with brilliant grace and originality, most wine

lists are still stuck on the usual obsessions with major name brands, basic varieties, predictable categories, and the baffling concept that bigger is somehow better.

Imagine if chefs felt compelled to put out menus with hundreds of dishes in order to seem impressive. That would be stupid. So why do sommeliers feel that the only way they can make waves is to offer hundreds—even thousands—of wines?

Is it possible for a sommelier or wine director to be as creative as a top chef and as successful in business, all while pleasing guests and employers at the same time? I think so, but it takes an equivalent level of imagination, not to mention guts. Stick your neck out once in a while. Chefs aren't afraid of putting out dishes with unfamiliar ingredients, because guests aren't willfully ignorant—they're hungry, especially for distinctive wines and foods.

Writing a successful wine list today involves more than making the "right" choices. Like a good chef, you have to be conscious of what works well together and put a little of yourself into it. The result should be a selection of offerings that guests can't get

at home, the same way that chefs create dishes that can only be found in restaurants. The vast majority of American consumers, for instance, would never dream of buying black cod, miso paste, and mirin and putting them together in their kitchen, but they love to pay big bucks to eat it at Nobu.

The irony is that a dish like miso-marinated black cod is not hard to prepare—it's drive-in food in my home state of Hawaii—but it's celebrated because it's become a certain famous chef's signature. Do you have a signature on the wine side that distinguishes your panache, your restaurant, and your staff? It doesn't have to be weird, super-rare, or expensive; in fact, it can be an "everyday wine" in the place it comes from—as long as it's special in *your* corner of the restaurant world.

The goal, as with all businesses, is differentiation. Today's "hot" new restaurants don't get that way by serving dishes that can be found just anywhere. These days, it's also about authenticity and creating buzz. To build a wine program that possesses these qualities, you can no longer follow the same old script. You have to write your own. **SJ**

STEWARDS OF THE LAND



At Cline Cellars we act as stewards of the land, farming sustainably and naturally with a commitment to create wines that reflect the vineyards from which they're grown. Discover more at www.clinecellars.com

“Best Wine Ever”

PINOT NOIR PRODUCERS IN THE RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY CELEBRATE THE GRAPE AT THE **RRV PINOT FORUM**

by Chris Sawyer

IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT lessons learned along the way for winemakers working with precious Pinot Noir grown in the diverse selections of soil, weather conditions, and other elements that define the Russian River Valley's five distinctive “neighborhoods”: Sebastopol Hills, Green Valley, Laguna Ridge, Middle Reach, and Santa Rosa Plains.

As part of this summer's RRV Pinot Forum, Master Sommelier Michael Jordan led the provocative Vintner's Choice tasting seminar; hosted by Martin Ray Winery, the event invited 20 guest panelists to bring their “Best Wine Ever” selections to share with the 60 sommeliers in attendance.

For some of the winemakers, the bottlings reflected both the history of the region and a true sense of community. Among them was Jeff Mangahas, Vice President of Winemaking at Williams Selyem, who felt that the 2015 Rochioli River Block Pinot represented a direct connection between the winery's co-founders, Ed Selyem and Burt Williams, and the Rochioli family, who planted their first Pinot Noir vines on Westside Road in 1968.

Other presenters focused on pivotal vintages that made their respective labels stronger. For Akiko Freeman, the 2010 Freeman Pinot from the Keefer Vineyard in Green Valley was not only a challenge in terms of farming but also the first vintage she made on her own. Therefore, she followed the golden rule she learned from her mentor, winemaker Ed Kurtzman: “Let the fruit speak for itself and don't touch it too much.” The end result is a wonderful wine with fragrant aromas, savory flavors, natural acidity, and silky texture, representing the beginning of a successful run that's continued over the past nine years.

Some expressions, meanwhile, represented vineyards that are finally coming



PHOTO: STEVE AJA

Winemakers and sommeliers gather for the “Best Wine Ever” seminar hosted by Martin Ray Winery during the Russian River Valley Pinot Forum.

into their own. A delicious example was the Benovia 2013 Tilton Hill Vineyard Pinot, the first vintage from this special site the winery purchased in 2008. It truly expressed its personality inside the bottle: “What I love about this wine is its spice with a blast of potpourri [and its] great intensity, bright acidity, and texture,” said winemaker/co-founder Mike Sullivan. “It definitely speaks about the unique qualities of grapes grown in the Sebastopol Hills.”

The event also focused on world-class wines made from Pinot selections grown in different subregions of the valley. An excellent example was the DuMOL 2014 Finn, a blend of the Calera clone planted in O'Connell Vineyard in Green Valley in 2005 and fruit from vines planted on Occidental Road in 1992. Assistant winemaker Julie Cooper said the team has been extremely proud of it: “There is just so much complexity in this wine, with layers and layers of flavors mixed with precision and elegance,” she added.

Wines representing benchmarks for aging included the Patz & Hall 2012 Chenoweth Vineyard Pinot. Winemaker/co-founder James Hall said the Dijon clone selections from this warmer site tend to be floral and lifted when the wine is young and savory and dry after more time in the bottle. That was particularly true in 2012, a vintage known for its full-sized berries with seeds, producing deep flavors that integrated seamlessly with fine-grained tannins. “It's fun to take a snapshot of a wine that I think will last a long, long time,” added Hall.

Yet another ageworthy selection was the Scherrer 2015 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir. This single-block selection is made exclusively from Elite, a rare Pinot clone known for its ability to produce flavorful clusters with high pH levels comparable to Riesling. “The energy and concentration of flavors really resonate in this wine,” said proprietor Fred Scherrer, noting that it “was built for success the moment it was bottled.” **SJ**



HAHN FAMILY
— WINES —



©2019 Hahn Family Wines.



WHAT DOES GOLF HAVE TO DO WITH MAKING GREAT PINOT NOIR?

Everything. Because at least a couple times a week, Patrick Headley, our Director of Viticulture, takes the narrow road up to Inspiration Point to drive a few golf balls toward our Deer Valley Vineyard. From this vantage point, he gets a clear sense of wind speeds and the temperature of breezes sweeping across our vineyards from Monterey Bay. Next time you visit, look up on the ridge, and you might see Patrick working on his long game.

Visit Hahn Estate, 37700 Foothill Rd, Soledad, CA 93960

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.



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

Bourbon Beyond Kentucky

AMERICA'S NATIVE SPIRIT SPREADS ITS WINGS

by David Ransom

THERE WAS A TIME when those seeking a good bourbon would automatically look to Kentucky. After all, most other whiskey-producing states—and there were few—labeled their expressions as something else. However, bourbon, while it is Kentucky's official spirit, need not be made exclusively in the Bluegrass State. It's a recipe, not a product bound by location, so it can be made in any state by anyone who chooses to do so. Intrigued, I thought I'd do some digging to see what's currently out there.

First, what exactly is bourbon? Distilling laws state that the spirit's mash bill must contain a minimum of 51% corn. Tradition and history dictate that the balance of ingredients is made up of rye, (malted) barley, and wheat, though the exact recipe is up to the individual distiller's preference. "Like wine, bourbon is a personal choice,

and the first thing I tell my customers during my whiskey classes is this: Try as many different brands as you can," says Tommy Tardie of New York's Fine & Rare. "Eventually you'll find your own bourbon-profile sweet spot." (A lightbulb moment for this wine guy: Making bourbon is somewhat like making a varietal wine—as long as you meet the minimum percentage required to label it as such, the balance can be tweaked infinitely to create the final flavor profile you want.)

So what did I find? On my metaphorical journey across the country, I encountered many styles of bourbon based on distillers' flavoring grain of choice. Some are "high rye," some are "wheated," and another producer, the Texas-based Balcones, even uses blue corn. "Unlike with grapes and wine, distilling grain doesn't present terroir in the traditional sense—though climate

and proximity to the ocean definitely influence my products," says Richard Stabile of New York distillery Long Island Spirits, whose Rough Rider Bourbon is aged just steps from the sea. Adam Spiegel of California's Sonoma Distilling, which sources its grains locally, adds, "Since bourbon can be made anywhere, only when a distiller makes their bourbon with intention will it have authenticity."

After sampling spirits from all over the nation, I learned that the craft-distilling movement has opened the door to a whole new world of American bourbons of exceptionally high quality, and with a little homework, one can find a stylistic fit for their palate. It is, after all, "America's Native Spirit," even if roughly 95% of it is currently made in Kentucky. So get out there and find some new bourbons for your list: Your customers will thank you. **RS**

ANDIS WINES

*“Probably the best
domestic Barbera
we have tasted...”*

— TASTING PANEL MAGAZINE



WINE
ENTHUSIAST
90
POINTS



TASTING
PANEL
94
POINTS

TASTING
PANEL
92
POINTS

Susie Scott

BEVERAGE DIRECTOR AND HEAD SOMMELIER
AT THE CARILLON, AUSTIN, TEXAS

by Michelle Metter



A HOSPITALITY VET, Susie Scott has worked in the wine industry for over 15 years. During a stint at Morrell Wine Bar and Café in New York, Scott earned her Level 2 certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers, and since then, she's continued honing her expertise by taking classes all over the world. We caught up with this storied somm to discuss the evolution of the wine industry in Austin, what she enjoys about wine study, and more.

Q: How have you seen the wine scene evolve since you came to Austin?

When I moved here six years ago, the industry was in its early growing stages. As Austin has grown, more wine-focused restaurants have opened and more people are developing their knowledge and influencing market trends, leading to a renaissance of wine culture here.

Q: What advice do you have for your peers who are pursuing the Level 2 certification?

Whether you're starting out or are a seasoned pro, I'd remind you that we're here to guide guests with our knowledge and hospitality. It's easy to get carried away when suggesting a wine you're excited about; however, it's important to remember that each person has a different palate to cater to.


Q: You have worked at The Carillon for several years now. What goals do you have in mind for the restaurant not only this year but further down the line?

We've been focusing on service and staff education. We've expanded our by-the-glass selections, and by using a Coravin, we're able to offer wines that we wouldn't normally be able to. We've also restructured the bottle pricing to be more conducive to exploring new varietals so guests can try a bottle they may have thought was too expensive to order before.

Q: What do you enjoy most about working in the industry?

When reading about a wine, you're also learning about geology, history, chemistry, or even anthropology. It's hard to grow tired of a subject when there are so many ways to approach it.

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

I would sit down with a glass of Burgundy Pinot Noir with Becky Wasserman—the "Queen of Burgundy." I would have her tell me about the wine and what she experiences in the glass. 

 **SOMM|CON**

The SOMM Journal and The Tasting Panel are proud supporters of SommCon and its Young Leader Summit. Join world-class educators at SommCon San Diego November 13–15.



LOUIS ROEDERER
HAND IN HAND WITH NATURE



The Résonance team in the vineyard.

“The Soul of Oregon”


MAISON LOUIS JADOT LAUNCHES RÉSONANCE WINES IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY by Ellen Landis

ONE OF THE MOST well-respected producers in Burgundy, Louis Jadot is raising eyebrows, earning accolades, and broadening the global appeal of winemaking in the Pacific Northwest even as a newcomer to the region: The debut of Résonance in Yamhill-Carlton, a sub-AVA of Oregon’s Willamette Valley, marks the producer’s first venture outside of France.

Winemaker Guillaume Large relocated to the valley from Maison Louis Jadot, where he served as cellar master and formerly assisted world-renowned winemaker Jacques Lardière. Intrigued by the potential of this new project, Lardière came out of retirement to oversee production.

Perched atop rolling hills, the breathtaking Résonance property is surrounded by majestic oak and pine trees as well as colorful hydrangeas and rhododendrons. While the well-appointed tasting room replaced a field of wild thistle and blackberries, a centuries-old white oak was preserved to welcome visitors along the entryway; the use of materials recovered from charming old barns in the region, meanwhile, gives the architecture a sophisticated yet assuredly rustic-chic feel.

The tasting-room terrace opens to a panoramic view of the vineyards—including Résonance’s eponymous site, which encompasses 20 acres of ungrafted Pinot Noir vines first planted in 1981—and the resplendent mountains of the Coast Range. Large is quick to enthuse about the maritime climate and the rocky, well-drained marine sedimentary (Willakenzie) soil of the Yamhill-Carlton estate property as well as the nutrient-rich, redder-toned volcanic (Jory) soil of another estate vineyard, Dundee Hills.

Channeling fruit from these sites, Large and Lardière join Director of Operations Thibault Gagey in creating remarkable Pinot Noir and Chardonnay that have already garnered high praise. In Large’s words, they wanted to create “part of the soul of Oregon”—and they’ve proved they’re well on their way. 

Résonance 2017 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley (\$35) Fully flavored, refined, and precise in balance, with bright red cherry, strawberry, and tayberry at the core. A touch of earthiness, herbs, and subtle oak spice add depth. According to winemaker Guillaume Large, this vintage experienced a late bud break after a cold, rainy winter followed by a record-setting warm summer and shorter maceration time.

Résonance 2017 Résonance Vineyard Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton (\$65) This flagship single-vineyard wine from the organically dry-farmed Résonance Vineyard displays enticing violets on the nose. Pure and elegant with flavors of blueberry, black raspberry, cocoa, Bing cherry, anise, exotic spice, and integrated oak nuances, it’s well balanced and textured, with silky tannins and a long-lasting finish.

Résonance 2017 Découverte Vineyard Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills (\$65) From Résonance’s second estate vineyard comes this deep-hued, tightly wound Pinot Noir: Intense and complex, this ageworthy expression offers up layers of red and black cherry, wild raspberry, earth, nutmeg, a thread of minerality, and savoriness supported by fine acidity and a firm spine of tannins.

Résonance 2017 Hyland Vineyard Chardonnay, McMinnville (\$50) This mouthwatering wine presents a fragrant floral aroma; on the palate, it gracefully melds earthy Old World tones with New World purity of fruit (crisp apples and fresh peaches) and mineral notes oft found in fine Chardonnay from the Willamette Valley and Burgundy. This hillside site was planted in 1979.

For more information, visit resonancewines.com.

PHOTO: ANDREA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY



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.

WHERE THE 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.

Visit www.winesofisrael.com



A Summer of Tastings

IPNC, BENOVIA, AND GIRARD WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF A WHIRLWIND SEASON by Jonathan Cristaldi

IN TERMS OF TASTINGS, this summer was a busy one. First, I attended the 33rd annual International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC), hosted by Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. The school offers wine studies as a major, making it a convenient option for burgeoning winemaking talent in the Pacific Northwest.

While IPNC attracts fewer trade and media members than Oregon Pinot Camp, I had to see what the former event was all about, and I was quite impressed by the level of organization, the high-quality cuisine, and the lineup of global producers. Keynote speaker Steven Spurrier said it best about today's Oregon Pinots: "The winemaking is impeccable, rather hands off, and they have a definitive sense of place."

This was exactly the case at *Résonance*, Louis Jadot's new Oregon property helmed by Guillaume Large and Jacques Lardière, who came out of retirement for this project. Currently, they produce two single-vineyard Pinots at \$65, *Résonance* from the Yamhill-Carlton AVA and *Découverte* from the Dundee Hills AVA; a Willamette Valley AVA Pinot (\$45); and a Hyland Vineyard Chardonnay (\$50). Classic and delicate, the Pinots boast structure and elegance akin to a Chambolle-Musigny. (Editor's note: See Spurrier's take on IPNC on page 66 and our introduction to *Résonance* on page 26.)

Back in California, I spent a morning in the Russian River Valley with Benovia winemaker Mike Sullivan (Chateau St. Jean, Landmark Vineyards, Chappellet). Proprietors Mary Dewane



PHOTO: CAROLINWELLS KRAMER

Steven Spurrier, far left, appeared on a panel at the International Pinot Noir Celebration.

and Joe Anderson purchased Hartman Lane Vineyards and Winery in 2005 from Cecil DeLoach, the former owner of DeLoach Vineyards, and under Sullivan's stewardship, Benovia's Sonoma expressions are immensely fresh, with energy and tension.

Sullivan is an encyclopedia of viticultural knowledge who knows precisely how to coax ripeness while retaining high natural acidity from a healthy mix of Heritage, Old Wente, Hyde, and Dijon clones, to name a few. The Benovia 2017 Russian River Valley Chardonnay (\$38) from the winery's 12-acre Tilton Hill estate lies just south of Phelps' Freestone vineyard and produced a stunning Montrachet-like Chardonnay that bursts with lemon oil, white flowers, and rich layers of silky lemon-lime notes. The Benovia 2017 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$45) blends fruit from all three estate sites (Tilton; Martaella, which surrounds the winery; and Cohn); it shows ample dark cherry and savory spices with pops of clove, cedary tannins, and sarsaparilla atop a rich mid-palate that finishes with freshness and energy. Leisurely tast-

ings are by appointment on the Ranch House deck or inside by a cozy fireplace.

Lastly, I caught up with winemaker Glenn Hugo at the new Girard Winery in Calistoga. Hugo works on both sides of the fence, making taut, structured, value-driven Cabernet at B.R. Cohn in Sonoma and rich and elegant Oakville AVA Cabernet at Girard. His first crush at the new winery was in late 2018, and right out front, he's planted roughly 7 acres of head-pruned vines that are a mix of black and white varieties—just like in the old days, when Napa Valley was still the Wild West. Hugo is planning to debut white and red field blends sometime in 2021 and 2022. **STJ**



PHOTO: JONATHAN CRISTALDI

Girard Winery winemaker Glenn Hugo.

B SIDE

Wines with Soul



  @bsidewines bsidewines.com

© 2019 DON SEBASTIANI & SONS, NAPA, CA

Into the Comfort Zone

THE SURPRISING COMPATIBILITY OF BOURBON AND CHEESE by Janet Fletcher

WHEN A REPRESENTATIVE for the bourbon brand Basil Hayden's asked me to devise a cheese board for a private event, I felt out of my comfort zone for about two minutes. Wine and beer pairing I can do in my sleep, but bourbon-knowledgeable I am not.

Even so, it didn't take more than a swirl and a sip to know which direction I should take: The spirit's butterscotch scent and alcoholic heft steered me toward aged cheeses with intense flavors and complementary aromas of brown butter, toast, roasted nuts, and caramel. The tasting also featured Basil Hayden's Dark Rye, which has a splash of California Port in it, opening the door for the inclusion of a buttery blue cheese.

If you're looking to make your own cheese plate to accompany dark spirits, these suggestions should point you in the right direction:

Capriole O'Banon (Indiana): It would have been malpractice not to include this goat cheese from whiskey-loving cheesemaker Judy Schad. Like the Provençal Banon that inspired it, O'Banon is cloaked in chestnut leaves previously soaked in Kentucky bourbon. The result is creamy and potent, with an herbaceous scent.

Ombra (Spain): This artisanal sheep's milk wheel made by a Catalan producer is matured for four to six months, yielding aromas of butter, butterscotch, and bacon. It's clearly in the manchego family, but the flavor is more mellow and sweet.

Challerhocker (Switzerland): The creation of cheesemaker Walter Rass, Challerhocker is a 14-pound alpine cow's milk wheel aged for a minimum of ten months. Rass makes his own calf rennet



and cultures the milk with whey from the previous day's make—traditional steps that help give this dense and creamy cheese its personality. It exudes aromas of roasted peanuts, caramel, and aged beef.

Cabot Clothbound (Vermont): Widely considered one of America's finest cheddars, Cabot Clothbound is made at Cabot Creamery—Vermont's largest co-op—with milk from a single farm. When it's less than a week old, it moves to the caves at Jasper Hill Farm, where experts in affinage (cheese aging) pamper it for a year. The mature cheese smells of toffee, roasted nuts, freshly cut grass, and candle wax, and its rich and sweet flavor lacks the acidic bite of some English cheddars.

Vella Dry Jack Special Select (California): The "Special Select" designation is reserved for extra-aged wheels of Vella Dry Jack that are at least eight months old (and often older). The long maturation produces a firm yet smooth paste, with a more

concentrated character and pronounced nutty aroma. With its cocoa-dusted rind, Vella Dry Jack is instantly recognizable, and its balanced sweet-salty flavor is unique as well. There's no other cow's milk cheese quite like it.

L'Amuse Gouda (The Netherlands): Matured for two years by esteemed Dutch affineur Betty Koster, L'Amuse is the connoisseur's Gouda. It smells like butterscotch and tastes like a salted caramel, but it's never overly salty or cloying. Cut it into chunks with a blunt Parmigiano Reggiano knife to savor its crunchy protein crystals, then let it melt on your tongue until it coats your palate with creaminess.

Point Reyes Farmstead Bay Blue (California): Modeled after Stilton, this buttery, luscious cow's milk blue pairs seamlessly with dark spirits. Matured for about three months, the 6-pound wheels have a natural rind and an interior that smells of praline, brown butter, and saltine crackers. 

PHOTO: KRYS MANDILAG/KM DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY

Our goal has always been to connect people to the land through wine.

Randall and Brad Lange
of LangeTwins Family
Winery and Vineyards



Single Vineyard Wines

Feeling part of nature is difficult amid 21st-century trends toward urbanization and technology, but the LangeTwins family is fortunate. By continuing a family-farming tradition dating back to the 1870s in Lodi, California, they stay linked to the land each day as they walk through their vineyards. To share this connection to the land, the family just introduced estate-grown Single Vineyard wines: Prince Chenin Blanc, Miller Cabernet Franc and One Hundred Petite Sirah. Every bottle highlights how each winegrape variety interacts with soil and weather to create a one-of-a-kind wine.

In 1973, fourth-generation farmers and identical-twin brothers, Randall and Brad Lange, returned home and began cultivating winegrapes. Their passion for the land and its ecosystem intensified. “We quickly realized that we weren’t going to be farming the same ground our family did in the 1900s without doing things differently,” says Brad. Today the family grows winegrapes in the Jahant, Clements Hills, Mokelumne, and Clarksburg Appellations. Each area has distinct terroir that guides their path to farming. “By walking the rows and ‘listening’ to what the land and grapes convey, we make

sure our Single Vineyard wines are the exact expression of each block,” says Brad.

This devotion to the land continues in their winery. They gently guide winegrapes through fermentation, allowing natural winemaking to reveal the distinctiveness of the vineyard. The winemaking brings out the uniqueness of each variety. And each vineyard.

“Our Single Vineyard wines take our family closer to our roots,” says Randall. “We are proud to share this connection to the land with you.”



93

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

LangeTwins 2016 Cabernet Franc, Miller Vineyard, Clarksburg AVA

This is an expressive, opulent red. Heather, brush undergrowth and plum skin form a piquant bouquet. On the palate, lavender-dotted plum and nutmeg form a base. White pepper spices the tongue, and sweet basil keep a savory quality in motion. An underlying juiciness and a finish of chocolate spice is delectable. Meredith May, The Tasting Panel, 10.2019

92

LangeTwins 2018 Chenin Blanc, Prince Vineyard, Clarksburg AVA

The maritime influence here brings out a romance of aromas: lanolin, linen, honeysuckle, and white pear. These scents are mirrored on the palate, crisp, clean, with a hint of minerality. Gorgeous. Meredith May, The Tasting Panel, 10.2019

Letting Heitz Be Heitz

**MASTER SOMMELIER
CARLTON MCCOY JR. STRIVES
TO MAINTAIN THE NAPA
WINERY'S SIGNATURE STYLE**

by Jeanne Rutherford



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEITZ CELLAR

Carlton McCoy Jr., MS, is Heitz Cellar's CEO.

ACCORDING TO CARLTON McCoy Jr., MS, the road to Heitz Cellar's future leads through its past. Pairing the palate and perspective of a Master Sommelier with his role as a charismatic, energetic business leader, Heitz's new CEO is bringing a bold vision to the venerable brand, which was founded in 1961.

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, McCoy was named a Master Sommelier in 2013 at just 28 years old—making him one of the youngest people and the second African American to earn this prestigious title.

McCoy first met Heitz Cellar owner Gaylon Lawrence Jr. in Aspen, Colorado, at The Little Nell, where Lawrence was a frequent guest and McCoy served as wine director. Lawrence turned to McCoy for his opinion after learning that the winery might be available for purchase, and after several months of lending informal advice, McCoy was tapped by Lawrence to become Heitz's CEO last December.

For both men, Heitz Cellar represents a

very particular brand of Napa winemaking that speaks to an earlier era: The wines are equal parts site-specific, elegant, and individually expressive. "From the beginning, my conversations with Gaylon had everything to do with seeing the Heitz style continue, because we both love the style," McCoy says. "It is fortunate that the Heitz family believed in their style and didn't change it over the years."


In the effort to "let Heitz be Heitz" while still ensuring his team could meet their projected goals, McCoy assessed the portfolio and saw a bold opportunity. While the winery was making some interesting wines like its red and rosé Grignolino (a rare Italian grape) and a Port-style wine from Portuguese varieties, these expressions seemed to distract from the producer's overarching identity. "What do we want Heitz to stand for?" he recalls asking.

The answer? Cabernet of the highest quality. Going forward, single-vineyard and single-varietal expressions of the grape will remain the beating heart of Heitz Cellar;

joining a small amount of single-vineyard Chardonnay from the Oak Knoll District. The other expressions will then form the core of two new brands defined by their own distinct winemaking style that highlights their terroir and varietal character.

The transition, McCoy says, will free up resources so that Heitz Cellar can focus on continuously improving quality, exploring its individual vineyard holdings, and adding to its 476 planted acres (to that end, the company recently purchased a 51-acre parcel adjacent to its Trailside Vineyard). Further diversifying its sources of revenue, Heitz Cellar sells roughly 40% of the fruit it farms.

McCoy sees a bright future for Heitz Cellar, one in which its legacy remains supported and respected even as new businesses strengthen its potential for growth. "You need both vision and resources—one without the other is useless," he explains. "Coming in excited and creative-minded, paired with the resources Gaylon has allocated, has allowed progress to happen fast." ❧

A black and white photograph of a wine bottle lying on its side on a sandy surface. The bottle is the central focus, with a wicker basket to its left and a large rock to its right. The bottle's label is partially visible, showing the text 'IRON + sand' at the top and '17 PASO CAB' at the bottom. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the sand, the wicker, and the bottle's surface.

**A WINE BORN FROM
THE GRIT OF PASO ROBLES**

©2019 Iron and Sand Wines, St. Helena, CA

The natural draw of the historic hot springs, Iron Spring and Sand Spring, propelled Paso Robles into a bustling destination in the late 1860's. Today, wine, especially Cabernet, is what draws us to Paso Robles.

IRON + sand



PHOTO: LUCKYPHOTO VIA ADOBE STOCK

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

I work at a very high-profile restaurant, and once in a while, a celebrity dines with us. Do you have any tips on how to talk to them without embarrassing myself?

Sincerely,
Frozen by Fame

Good Somm

Dear Frozen by Fame,

I know it's easy to feel starstruck, but celebrities are people too! This is a rare opportunity to engage, so think about how you can relate with them before you approach. Get your creative juices flowing and make a connection by asking about their hobbies and passions or simply by giving them a compliment. Starting a conversation is like learning karate—you just have to practice.

In the end, though, it's important to respect boundaries on behalf of the restaurant, as the hope is that they'll remain a regular customer. Resist the temptation to ask for a photo or, even worse, a role in their upcoming film. The goal is to be gracious and professional but memorable. Good luck!

Best,
Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Frozen by Fame,

I don't particularly care about celebrities, because they don't care about me. Do you think Kim Kardashian gives a damn if I can pay my bills, if I'm healthy, or if I have a good life? Don't be so naive—being famous is not a skill worth fawning over, and none of these people are deities. All I care about is if they leave a fat tip!

Regards,
Bad Somm

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

I recently landed a date with an amazing person who doesn't work in the wine industry and who also doesn't drink. I've had a crush on them for a long time, so I feel a lot of anxiety about things finally coming together. Have I waited all this time just to find out that we're incompatible?

Signed,
Pit in My Stomach

Good Somm

Dear Pit in My Stomach,

Going in with the mindset that you're not compatible is like the kiss of death for a potential new relationship. Instead of feeling negative, think about the bigger and deeper questions. Do they have similar life goals? Is there chemistry there that would help you overcome your differences?

When you can change your perspective, everything shifts, so wait to see what they reveal about themselves before you make judgements. Be bold and authentic, tell them what you're looking for, and, above all, enjoy the process.

I actually prefer to date someone who's not in the wine industry because it helps your world expand. Many sommeliers are in this profession because of their love and passion for the work, but your world doesn't have to revolve around wine. That said, if it's just a drinking buddy you're looking for, it's best to move on for both of your sakes.

Sincerely,
Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Pit in My Stomach,

Would Ray Kroc have dated a vegetarian? Hell no! Talk about a supersized conflict of interest. The way to this somm's heart is down his gullet. Cheers, Felicia! 🍷

Yours truly,
Bad Somm



IT'S NOT WHAT YOU DO.
IT'S HOW YOU DO IT
THAT LEAVES A LEGACY.



LOUIS M. MARTINI.
CRAFT YOUR LEGACY

NAPA VALLEY
254 SAINT HELENA HWY S





Engaging Other Senses

CHEF GABRIEL RUCKER
OF PORTLAND'S LE PIGEON
USES HIS SOBRIETY TO
HIS ADVANTAGE

GABRIEL RUCKER LOVED WINE—maybe too much. Six years ago, the chef behind the wildly popular Portland restaurant Le Pigeon walked into work one day, announced that he was joining Alcoholics Anonymous, and stuck to it. (His drink of choice these days? Sparkling water.)

The winner of two James Beard awards (Rising Star in 2011 and Best Chef Northwest in 2013), Rucker grew up in Napa Valley and started cooking at 18 after dropping out of college. Like so many in the restaurant world, fueled by the image of the hard-partying chef's life the late Anthony Bourdain's book *Kitchen Confidential* made so attractive, he started drinking to excess. After service most nights, you'd find him at a bar.

So, when Rucker stopped drinking, he had to find a way to navigate wine and food pairings. Once his partner Andy Fortgang came on board in 2007, a year after Le Pigeon opened, Rucker says he never weighed in on the wine list; he did, however, put a lot of thought into the wine dinners that are so much a part of the restaurant's culture. "Since I gave up drinking, my appreciation for food has gone through the roof," he adds.

Nowadays, their routine goes more or less like this: "We open the wines, I sit down with Andy, and he tastes and I smell," Rucker says, noting that he'll start off by asking if the wine tastes similar to its aromatic profile. "It's easy if that's the case. I've been working in restaurants long enough to know that an Oregon Pinot Noir is going to have some richer dark-berry notes and is going to be bigger than a soft Gevrey-Chambertin. I know Syrah is going to be all peppery."

Next, Rucker says he'll "throw out descriptors" he gets from the nose as the pair tries to come up with food-associated words that express what they're individually experiencing with the wine—apple, lime peel, black pepper, plum, et cetera. "Once we have them, I'll build a dish around those words," Rucker explains. "Take, for example, scallops, toasted orange, and seawater—I might first suggest smoking the scallops, [but] Andy might say the smoke won't work with the wine, so then I'll think about curing the scallops in seaweed . . . because it will play with the mineralogy in the wine. A lot of times, that's kind of how it goes."

Despite not taking a sip of wine in six years, the chef is still able to compose a dish by referencing everything he gleaned during his drinking years in addition to utilizing the insights he gets from Fortgang. "To tell the truth, it works very well—or seems to. I actually have no idea if it does or not. I don't know if people are lying to me," he says with a laugh before adding that this approach encourages him to take his time with pairings. "If thought can be considered a sixth sense, now instead of just 'taste and go,' the process engages more of my senses. I thoroughly enjoy doing it." SJ

Gabriel Rucker has three Portland restaurants: Le Pigeon (opened in 2006), Little Bird Bistro (2011), and all-day cafe and wine bar Canard (2018). He also authored the 2013 cookbook Le Pigeon: Cooking at the Dirty Bird.

PHOTO: MARK PRATFUSSUM

cedar + salmon

EXPERIENCE THE HARMONY /

Wines that honor the unique spirit
of the Pacific Northwest.

FOUR
90+
POINT
SCORES

TASTING PANEL



f t i @CEDARANDSALMON
CEDARANDSALMONWINES.COM



Worth the Wait

THE AGEWORTHY **SAGRANTINO** GRAPE RISES IN POPULARITY

SAGRANTINO, THE RED GRAPE

responsible for producing one of central Italy's most tannic wines, is predominantly grown by a handful of producers in Montefalco, Umbria. In recent years, however, this elusive variety has made gains in popularity despite its limited availability outside of Italy, drawing attention from the international wine community.

Because of its high amount of tannins, Sagrantino needs five years or more in bottle to soften, but when it does, it proves worth the wait: It's a wine of great character, with an enviable capacity for long aging. The grapes themselves, grown in Montefalco's clay soils, greatly benefit from their exposure to the sand and limestone pockets found within Umbria. Considering the region has no access to the coastline, the terroir eventually captured in these wines is vastly influenced by the mineral-rich soils and the climatic effect of the surrounding Apennine mountains.

Historically, Sagrantino was used primarily for sweet passito wines; the grapes were partially dried to yield thick, syrupy expressions with raisin and blueberry notes, much like a Recioto della Valpolicella. Since the 1970s, however, Sagrantino wines have typically been made in a dry secco style, with bold extraction and no residual sugar.

In Montefalco, Sagrantino can currently be produced as Sagrantino di Montefalco DOCG or Sagrantino di Montefalco Passito DOCG. The variety must make up a minimum of 95% of the blend for either designation, but most Sagrantino di Montefalco wines comprise 100% Sagrantino to ensure the purity of the grape's robust, distinctive flavor. They're required to age for a minimum of 30 months, 12 of which be spent in oak barrels. Sagrantino di Montefalco earned its DOCG status in 1992, making it one of just two Umbrian wines to earn this distinction.

An alternative appellation for the variety

is Montefalco Rosso DOC, a deep red wine that's primarily a blend of Sangiovese (about 60–70%) and Sagrantino. Even a minimal inclusion of the grape imparts a richer color while increasing the level of tannins, resulting in a softer version of the more powerful Sagrantino di Montefalco DOCG expressions.

Must-try Sagrantino wines include the Tenute Lunelli 2015 Carapace, a successful example of domesticated tannins: Silky yet powerful, they're balanced by refreshing acidity. In ten years, this wine will make gains in complexity, with hints of tobacco heightening the intensely fruity aromas.

The Tenute Lunelli 2016 Ziggurat, meanwhile, blends Sangiovese and Sagrantino in an approachable interpretation of the Montefalco terroir; with its notes of red fruit, aromatic herbs, and delicate tannins, it's a perfect match with barbeque or any grilled red meat. Both are available through Taub Family Selections. [SJ](#)

The Tenuta Castelbuono winery is housed under a large copper-covered dome.



GREAT BURGUNDY WINES

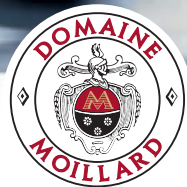
MOILLARD

Depuis 1850



' The longstanding and well-established Maison Moillard makes high standard wines of a unique finesse and elegance, since 1850. Historically founded in the heart of the Côte de Nuits, in the city of Nuits St Georges, Moillard offers nowadays a large portfolio of authentic Burgundy wines.'

Come & Visit us at
PROWEIN DUSSELDORF
17-19 March 2019 - Hall12 - E22



MOILLARD

Depuis 1850

*Un Domaine ancré au coeur
de la Côte de Nuits.*



www.moillard.fr

"DRINK RESPONSIBLY"

Jay Fletcher, MS (center), is pictured at the ArtCrush fundraiser in Aspen, CO, with major University of Denver contributors Kitzia and Richard Goodman (left) as well as music-management mogul Troy Carter and his wife, Rebecca.



Crushing It

MASTER SOMMELIER JAY FLETCHER POURS WINE FOR THE WELL-HEELED AT THE ASPEN ART MUSEUM'S 15TH ANNUAL ARTCRUSH FUNDRAISER

by Amanda M. Faison

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE:

That was Master Sommelier Jay Fletcher on the evening of August 3, which marked the 15th annual ArtCrush gala and art auction for the Aspen Art Museum in Aspen, Colorado. One minute Fletcher was pouring Domaine G. Roumier 1996 Ruchottes-Chambertin Grand Cru into tasting glasses and posing for photos, and the next he was listening intently as a patron waxed rhapsodic over a sip of E. Guigal 1987 Côte-Rôtie La Mouline. Then he was off, his lanky frame striding quickly toward the next matter at hand.

And so it goes for Fletcher every year at the three-day fundraiser, which includes a \$2,500-per-seat dinner called WineCrush, a wine-saturated preview of the upcoming art auction, and, finally, the main event itself. The Master Sommelier, who serves as Wine Director for the museum, has been

involved with the event long before it became known as ArtCrush. Starting about 20 years ago, a much-smaller annual benefit called Howl at the Moon would unfold at a ranch outside of town, but when the event moved to the parking lot of the old museum, it was renamed ArtCrush.

As they say in the wine world, it had legs: The fundraiser is a boon for the museum, raising a mighty \$2.3 million dollars this year and some \$28 million over the past 15 years. What makes the occasion particularly special is the intersection of fine wine and art—two different but complementary crafts coming together for a blow-out affair. “This event is the greatest large wine event in the country—serving a mix of Old World and New World wines, including rare wines from France, Italy, and the Oregon Coast,” said Fletcher. “Rarely do you have so many rare and

old wines open in one place.”

After the tasting and silent auction, patrons moved to the adjoining tent for dinner and the live auction, where the showpiece, New York-based artist Lisa Yuskavage’s “Merlot,” sold for \$450,000 (\$125,000 over its estimate). For each of the 50 tables of eight, Fletcher provided a selection of wines, the quality of which depended on how much attendees paid for their ticket. With the price tag of many bottles ranging from \$400 to \$800, Fletcher estimates that the total value of the wine for Friday night’s festivities reached \$80,000.

Because there’s no wine service during this portion of the event, people are left to their own devices—but it hardly seems a burden. “Everyone has two glasses and there are ten bottles on the table. It’s indulgent!” Fletcher said before racing off to wherever he was needed next. **SJ**

ELEVATE YOUR GIN AND TONIC TO A NEW STRATOSPHERE



Seeking the Sweet Spot

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE IS AFFECTING THE WATER NEEDS OF NORTH AMERICA'S WINEGROWING REGIONS

story and photo by Mark Stock

Young vines navigate large rocks and irrigation lines in Oregon's Dundee Hills AVA.



AT TIMES, THE STATE of the American West in the summer of 2018 seemed apocalyptic. California battled its biggest wildfire in state history as countless other blazes ravaged the region. The growing season unfolded beneath an orange sky and relentless layers of smoke.

As the climate continues to warm and growing conditions become more challenging, where does that leave thirsty vineyards? Can wineries that prefer employing dry-farming or minimal irrigation maintain their status quo?

In the Willamette Valley, producers have arrived at a crossroads. The acclaimed appellation is still known for its precipitation and water-retaining soils, but it's also endured warm-to-hot vintages every year from 2012 on. As a result, winegrowers are rethinking their water needs and seeking the services of companies like the McMinnville-based Results Partners, which manages scores of Willamette Valley sites.

"The abnormally dry spring of 2018 was concerning for me, because even in a year with a hot summer, the winter and spring always had plenty of moisture," says Director of Vineyard Operations Evan Bellingar. "If we have more springs like that, that assumption is called into question."

To help adjust to this shift, Results Partners now irrigates more of its new vineyards than it did previously. "In young vines, we irrigate to reduce vine mortality, to increase uniformity, and to get more growth out of the vines in their second year—and thus more yield potential in their third year," Bellingar explains.

The decision to water an older vineyard, meanwhile, can be influenced by many factors, Bellingar says. Among them are the onset of high temperatures that reach the mid-90s and noticeable vineyard stress, which can appear in the form of dropped tendrils, stalled growth, and hot, droopy leaves.

More and more vineyards, meanwhile, are being established in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley at a rate similar to that seen in Oregon. The need for water in this semi-arid region is palpable, but unlike in the states, there's little competition for the stuff: Water rights are shared and managed by local municipalities.

"Sustainability is a big focus here in the Okanagan," says Rebecca Mikulic, Vice President of vineyard-management firm Earlco Vineyards. Her team is currently working with water-saving technologies like soil-moisture monitors and rain meters, which sync with irrigation systems to minimize water waste. Mikulic also credits Regulated Deficit Irrigation (RDI)—a relatively new player in the grape-growing industry—for stressing minimal irrigation prior to the ripening period. It directly opposes the Old World practice of stressing vines just before harvest, but it's offering positive results in studies by institutions like the University of California, Davis, and Washington State University.

Back in Willamette Valley, there's room for optimism. Bellingar paints a positive picture of the region 50 years from now: one with higher yields, earlier harvests, and cool-climate varieties planted higher up in the foothills of nearby mountain ranges. "In the 1980s, we were considered to be on the marginal northern edge of viticulture," he says. "So as the climate warms, perhaps we move more into the viticultural sweet spot." ❧



INTRODUCING


tenshen

**CABERNET
SAUVIGNON**

100% Paso Robles, CA

The first varietal from
the acclaimed makers of
tenshen red and white

Aromas of dark chocolate and violets
mingle with dark fruit flavors of
blackberry and black cherry while sweet
tannins and oak entice your palate.

 / tenshenwine

**GUARACHI
WINE PARTNERS**

www.GuarachiWinePartners.com

818.225.5100

The Outlasting Vines

A NEW SYSTEM CONCEIVED IN OREGON'S ROCKS DISTRICT
AIMS TO ADDRESS THE STRESS OF EXTREME WEATHER

story and photo by Mark Stock

EXTREME CONDITIONS CAN produce breathtaking wines. Testimony comes from all over the globe, from Listán Negro grown on ever-windy Lanzarote—the easternmost of the Canary Islands—to vibrant Sauvignon Blanc grown in the high-altitude vineyards of Bolivia.

In The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater AVA on the Oregon side of the Walla Walla Valley, winegrowing is often a dramatic affair: Intense summers with daytime highs often reaching the triple digits give way to merciless winters with lows dipping well into the negatives. It's an unforgiving environment, but the results—expressed most often through one-of-a-kind takes on classic Rhône varieties—are well worth the struggle.

SJR Vineyard was established in 2007 by Steve Robertson and his family, and in its relatively short lifespan, the site has produced some remarkable wines. Planted mostly to Syrah amid the appellation's signature cobble-strewn soil, SJR is harvested by the family's own label, Delmas, as well as esteemed fellow Rocks producers like Force Majeure. (Wine critic Jeb Dunnuck recently awarded Force Majeure's 2016 SJR Vineyard Syrah a perfect 100 points.)

Such results, however, don't come easily. "We have had to cut down the entirety of the vineyard due to freeze three times," says Steve's daughter Brooke, who serves as Director of Viticulture at Delmas. She's also a viticulturist for Les Collines Vineyard on the Washington side of the appellation.

The brutal winter of 2016–2017 presented Robertson with an opportunity of sorts. An estimated 70% of the vineyard's buds perished due to extreme cold, and according to Brooke, "out of tragedy came this idea." Initially, several Rocks growers had buried their vine canes to protect them from the potentially lethal weather,

but Brooke ruled this approach unsustainable; not only was it costly and labor intensive, it proved somewhat inconsistent in terms of fruit quality.

She instead sought a method that would

we can bury the entire head plus the first two to three buds on each shoot, thereby ensuring complete safety."

In the summer, she relies on strategies like 9-foot row spacing and careful spur



The Mini-Head-Trained System keeps this head-trained Syrah vine low to the ground while providing a trellis for support.

balance the insulation gained from vines being set low—and buried in the winter—with the support of a trellis system. (The latter is especially crucial for Syrah, a variety known to slouch.) The result is something Brooke calls the Mini-Head-Trained (MHT) System, which she says "can basically be summed up as a head-trained vine with a trellis."

"We build the head of the vine as low as we can go; this way, we eliminate the use of burial canes altogether," she explains. "By keeping the vine head low,

positioning; these allow for vital shade and ventilation as well as balanced sunlight, resulting in uncrowded, sunburn-free clusters. "All of these things lead to less passes in the vineyard, less canopy management, less fruit-thinning needs, and less manipulation of the vine on the whole," she says.

After the MHT System proved successful in trials, fellow growers have followed suit in adopting it. "It's my personal goal that the vines currently planted at SJR will outlive me," Brooke adds. "The MHT may just get us there." ❧


TASTE THE REVOLUTION

EXQUISITE SINGLE ESTATE TEQUILA



LA
ADELITA

LaAdelitatequila.com

 [laadelitatequila](https://www.instagram.com/laadelitatequila)

Sparkle Motion

"Sometimes I doubt your commitment to Sparkle Motion," moans one frenzied pageant mom to another in a scene from the cult-classic film *Donnie Darko*. Well, don't doubt ours. In this column, the editors at *The SOMM Journal* rate the most notable sparkling wines that cross our desks and lips each issue. Given the wide range of production methods, styles, and price points the category covers, we've devised the following system to score each on its own merits.

1 BUBBLE ●

Simple but satisfying.

2 BUBBLES ●●

Satisfying and a little more complex.

3 BUBBLES ●●●

A strong example of its kind.

4 BUBBLES ●●●●

A superb example of its kind.

5 BUBBLES ●●●●●

Stellar by any standard.

For details on submitting wines for review, contact Deputy Editor Ruth Tobias at rtobias@tastingpanelmag.com and Managing Editor Jessie Birschbach at jabs@sommjournal.com.



Alice Marzemino M Fondo, Veneto, Italy (\$25)

"We take a cautious approach to overtly funky natural wines," Elliot Strathmann, owner and Beverage Director at Denver's Spuntino, told us after introducing us to this frizzante red. But the 100% Marzemino "pulls off the funk with such unquestionable charm," he added, that "it's just fun to pair food with." We agree. Undergoing secondary fermentation in bottle in accordance with the *col fondo* method (aka *rifermentato in bottiglia*), the wine is hazy in the glass and striking on the nose—all fresh-turned earth and balsamic-splashed wild mushrooms that wash away to reveal crystal-clear, early-summer red berries and sour cherries dusted in savory white pepper. It paired magically with the restaurant's prosciutto-wrapped elk tartare.



PORTOVINO



Lucas & Lewellen 2016 Méthode Traditionelle Brut, Santa Barbara County (\$36)

55% Pinot Noir and 45% Chardonnay from estate vineyards in Los Alamos Valley. The warm, sunny gold hue in the glass complements a rich profile akin to a cross-section of apple pie—aromas and flavors of baked filling and buttery crust combined with a whipped-creamy mouthfeel that's balanced by the fine mousse.



Štoka 2017 Vitovska Peneče, Kras, Slovenia (\$25)

The *SOMM Journal* team tried this Slovenian pét nat at Thai hot spot Night + Market in West Hollywood, California. Hailing from the curious Kras region—known for its cross-border location (the Italian side is called Carso), strong winds, and terra rossa soils—it's hazy straw-yellow in the glass, with the softest of beads. Lemon, sage, and chamomile meet buckwheat and nuts, with flashes of minerality. Savory and refreshing.

BLUE DANUBE WINE



Faire La Fête Crémant de Limoux Brut Rosé, Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$20)

Sourced from a consortium of sustainable growers in Limoux, this pale-coral blend of 65% Chardonnay, 20% Chenin Blanc, and 15% Pinot Noir is low on perlage but high on appeal, with the requisite burst of fresh strawberries enhanced by ripe cantaloupe and grapefruit pith on the nose and a splash of blood orange on the palate. A hint of flint edges the slightly sweeter finish. Made in the traditional method and aged 15 months.



FIRST GROWTH BRANDS



Veuve Clicquot Extra Brut Extra Old Champagne, France (\$85)

Despite its pinprick precision, the mousse doesn't let up—and what a nose: crisp buttered rye toast, chalk and rock, lemon soda with a quinine-y tinge. On the palate, mixed citrus and red apple mixed with crushed nuts and herbs—walnut, basil, tomato leaf—and yet the mouthfeel is almost sensuous in its scintillance. Combining 47% Pinot Noir, 27% Chardonnay, and 26% Pinot Meunier, this unprecedented assemblage of six reserve wines spanning 1988 to 2010 is aged three years on the lees and three in bottle. 



LVMH



Uncork
with Felix Solis Avantis
& get your temp on



Felix Solis avantis
EXTENDING WINE CULTURE

www.felixsolisavantis.com
www.getyourtemp.com

A Balancing Act

ZIND-HUMBRECHT'S 2017 WINES PROVE THE ALSATIAN WINERY HAS GROWN MORE SOPHISTICATED WITH AGE

by Dan Berger

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZIND-HUMBRECHT



Sheep nap after grazing in Zind-Humbrecht's Clos Windsbul vineyard.

IN THE 1990s, as many consumers were experiencing their first real introduction to some of the world's greatest nontraditional winegrowing regions, Alsace immediately drew fans for how radically different it was from the rest of France.

The wines of Zind-Humbrecht were generally regarded as some of Alsace's finest, mainly because of their remarkable ability to split the difference between dryness and richness. It's a trait that Olivier Humbrecht, son of founder Léonard Humbrecht, now acknowledges was transitional: During a wide-ranging interview in mid-June, he implied that he considers the better-balanced wines of today to be even more interesting than their highly popular '90s counterparts.

Partway through a tasting of Zind-Humbrecht's top wines, I noted how much drier most of them were compared to those from the previous era. "[Dryness] is a powerful trend [throughout Alsace]," he said, suggesting that it might be a reflection of a broad "misjudgment of ripeness" in years past.

Not to suggest that wines back then were too sweet—indeed, no one can deny the impact of these monumental expressions. Today, however, the products of Zind-Humbrecht have reached a level of sophistication that should please anyone who appreciates better structure, greater potential for aging, and, of course, a sense of balance that complements a wide variety of dishes. **SJ**

Tasting Notes

The following Zind-Humbrecht wines are all from the 2017 vintage.

Pinot Gris Roche Roulée: Dried elderflowers and soil with a soft, rich entry.

Pinot Gris Roche Calcaire: "Calcaire" means limestone, which joins slate in defining the aromas of this wine. A more food-friendly, balanced approach.

Gewürztraminer Roche Roulée: Aromas of cinnamon and fenugreek add to the overall spicy character of the wine. Slightly succulent, but dry enough for any form of Asian food—the spicier the better.

Gewürztraminer Roche Calcaire: Hints of soil appear within this expression's flavory and spicy nose, but there's an exotic note to the mid-palate, almost as if someone added a tiny amount of dulce de leche to the wine. A most dramatic presentation from a year that was a lot warmer than anyone had anticipated.

Muscat Roche Roulée: Astounding notes of rose petal, gardenia, and carnation, with a hint of white pepper on the nose. The balance is impeccable and the finish on the drier side.

Zind: A vin de France blend of two-thirds Chardonnay and one-third Auxerrois, this dry, crisp white has a non-floral aroma and a lovely, mineral finish.

Riesling Brand Grand Cru: Older vines on a granite substrate imparted aromas of petrol and green apple. The entry is so crisp, indicating that the wine needs several more years in bottle. A dry Riesling lover's windfall.

Riesling Clos St. Urbain, Rangen de Thann Grand Cru: Flinty minerality, a classic dry mid-palate, and a long future ahead of it.

Gewürztraminer Clos Windsbuhl: Cardamom (almost akin to a Christmas cookie) is the main aroma, appearing with hints of nutmeg, cinnamon, and roses. The sweetness is balanced by perfect acidity—there are few wines like this in the world.

E&J REMASTERED

**FRESH
NEW
LOOK.**

**SAME
SMOOTH
TASTE.**



LEARN MORE AT
EJBRANDY.COM



The Myth of “First Cold Pressed”

IS THE TERM A
MARKETING PLOY
OR A LEGITIMATE
PRACTICE?

by Orietta Gianjorio

EVERY TIME I ASK someone if they know what extra-virgin olive oil means, the answer is almost always the same: “Extra-virgin is first cold pressed.” But what if I told you that the term represents nothing but a marketing strategy that does nothing to define the difference between a high-quality and a low-quality oil?

First, olive oil is extracted not by “pressing” but by grinding the entire olive, including the pit and the flesh. The resulting paste is slow-churned in a process known as malaxation, which allows small oil droplets to combine into larger drops; it’s then centrifuged, separating the solids from the liquids.

Second, olive oil is not produced “cold.” During the extraction process, the oil typically reaches temperatures of 80–86 degrees Fahrenheit, which, while cooler than levels formerly seen in the industry, could hardly be described as cold. In the past, temperatures were higher because big slabs of granite pulled by donkeys were used to grind the olives; after several hours, the surface of the rock would grow hot enough to literally cook the paste.

Improved temperature control provided one incentive to evolve beyond this method, but there were others as well. Because the grinder and press would be left open, they would expose the paste to oxygen, inducing an oxidation process that couldn’t be stopped once it began. Oxidation is known to lower both the quality and the health benefits of olive oil.

Lastly, the usage of first in “first cold pressed” implies the usage of at least a second press. Producers in the past did indeed employ several presses: The first extracted the best oil, the second an inferior product (known today as a “virgin” oil), and the third an oil not fit for consumption (today’s equivalent to a *lampante*, literally derived from the Italian word for “lamp,” which referenced exactly what that oil was used for— burning lamps).

Today, however, olive-oil production is almost entirely performed by state-of-the-art equipment with a goal of preventing sensory defects and high levels of what’s known as free fatty acids, which by law would prevent the oil from being labeled as extra-virgin. It also aims to maintain those aforementioned health benefits, including high levels of phenols and monounsaturated fat and low levels of polyunsaturated fat. **SJ**



PHOTO: JEFF GRIFFIN

Did You Know?

In the Northern Hemisphere, olive harvest season spans from October to January but peaks in November and December. Olives mature differently due to their cultivar and terroir, influencing yield, extraction, sensory characteristics, and the shelf life of the oil they produce. Keeping genetic differences in mind, green olives generally see a lower yield and produce a more robust oil with higher polyphenols, while olives picked black give a higher yield and produce a more delicate oil with lower polyphenols.





THE ACCOLADES KEEP COMING




95 POINTS
- Decanter
ASIA WINE
AWARDS
2018



93 POINTS
- SOMMELIERS
CHOICE AWARDS
2019





**THINK
OUTSIDE
THE
BOTTLE**

CIA SUMMIT for BEVERAGE PROFESSIONALS

March 1-3, 2020



THE CIA AT COPIA

Formerly the Sommelier Summit, the **CIA Summit for Beverage Professionals** celebrates its fifth anniversary by expanding its focus to the entirety of the beverage world, reflecting the changing landscape of the industry.

Join beverage experts and colleagues for interactive panel discussions, seminars, tastings, and more. You'll deepen your knowledge of all things beverage and make essential connections that will take your career to the next level.

And it all happens at The CIA at Copia in the Napa Valley—America's wine and beverage mecca!

More Information:
ciabevpro.com

Here are just a few of the many confirmed speakers to date:



Proud sponsors of CIA BevPro:

THE SOMM JOURNAL



napa valley vintners

CLIMBING THE LADDER OF

SUCCESS

STORY BY JONATHAN CRISTALDI / PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDER RUBIN

Terry Wheatley's focus is on up-and-coming talent as she assists in fostering the future leaders of the beverage industry.

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES' TERRY WHEATLEY IS COACHING TOMORROW'S BEVERAGE LEADERS TO THE TOP



One of Terry Wheatley's early jobs was to promote a Gallo mass-market brand as the "Thunderbird Girl."

Terry Wheatley, President of Vintage Wine Estates, has always loved a good challenge. A rodeo rider in her youth, which she spent in a small Northern California town called Red Bluff, she was raised by "very strong cowboys and very strong women," Wheatley says. At age 20, she married Jim Wheatley, a national rodeo champion and "very accomplished cowboy" whom she looked up to for "his competitive nature." As a young couple, they moved to Jim's family ranch outside Modesto, California—a decision that unintentionally set her on a course toward working in wine.

"Jim left for a rodeo on a Thursday," Wheatley recalls, "and I told him I'd be

employed before he got back." On Friday, she landed an interview with Gallo, got hired, and started work on Monday before Jim returned home. Forty-six years later, she's more than satisfied her own competitive spirit with a lifetime of achievements, including being named the 2018 *Wine Enthusiast* "Innovator of the Year." Just a few of her major accomplishments include leading the team that introduced a new cube-shaped boxed wine aptly called Wine Cube in Target stores, creating female-focused brands like Middle Sister and Girl & Dragon, and, as a cancer survivor, helping to raise over \$30 million dollars to fight the disease through her Tough Enough to Wear Pink campaign.

Today, Wheatley's focus is on up-and-coming talent as she assists in fostering the future leaders of the beverage industry. At Vintage Wine Estates (VWE), she's the company's driving creative force, collaborating with her team to acquire, build, market, and re-define brands. If history tells us anything about Wheatley's impression on her chosen field, her mentorship of future leaders will have lasting and profound impacts.

Alan Dreeben, a partner at Republic National Distribution Company (RNDC)

who has been in the business for more than 50 years, recalls meeting Wheatley at Sutter Home when "wine was a man's world," he says. "But she fought through that and did it by being creative, a visionary, and at times aggressive—but she did it honorably and gained incredible respect. She's a formidable force that quietly, with style, gets things done."

Breaking Plates

One of Wheatley's favorite sayings is, "Let's just break this plate," which offers a bit of insight into her creative psyche. "Repeating the actions of the past means arriving at the same result," she says, "unless you break the pattern." It's a formula that's worked exceptionally well, considering she's made a career out of breaking patterns.

For almost 18 years, Wheatley worked for some of the most powerful and innovative people in wine at E. & J. Gallo Winery. "Being surrounded by the best," Wheatley recalls, "I had to struggle to get where I needed to be at times." (She also credits the secretaries—now "administrative assistants"—with pointing out her early mistakes and helping "mold [her] behavior and best practices.") Wheatley was able to work on major projects because the leadership saw something in her passion and drive, and she names Joseph Gallo, Ken Bertsch, Rich Keer, Procter & Gamble veteran Peter Conway, and Jack Dadam, who left Gallo to launch Red Bull in the U.S., as colleagues who have made a lasting imprint on her life.



Clos Pegase (above at left) is one of the venerable labels under Wheatley's expert care. At right, a magnum of Napa Valley classic Rudd Oakville Estate holds pride of place at PRESS Restaurant in St. Helena, CA.

One of her great success stories at Gallo was overseeing the launch of numerous wines for a young, burgeoning restaurant chain—Applebee's, which at the time had less than 100 locations. As that number grew to over 2,000 nationwide, Gallo reaped the benefits.



Wheatley oversees growth for innovative spirits products such as GAZE, a low-calorie, low-alcohol wine cocktail.

In 1991, Wheatley joined Trinchero Family Estates as Director of Marketing; by 2005, she'd risen to the role of Senior Vice President of Marketing for National Retail Sales, where she oversaw an impressive team who launched the aforementioned Wine Cube and earned a major bid from Target—an account the Trinchero family still holds today. After departing the business, she dabbled with a label from Argentina called "(oops)" before forming Canopy Management Wine Company in 2008.

At Canopy, she focused her attention on a female audience, helping to create such brands as Middle Sister, which produced wines called Sweet & Sassy, Drama Queen, and Surfer Chick. Also launched in Target, Middle Sister in its heyday was a 300,000-case brand, and by 2014, Canopy's gross annual sales hovered around \$20 million.

The company's meteoric rise caught the attention of Pat Roney, CEO and founding partner of Vintage Wine Estates, and

in 2014 he purchased Canopy, bringing Wheatley into the fold. "She invests a lot of time in relationships and she's very supportive, looking at the needs of the buyers. She brings a ton of personality, work ethic, mentoring, and vision—all the things you want in a president," Roney explained. While Roney "is focused on the numbers," Wheatley is "focused on the creative," he says, making for "a perfect business marriage."

Wheatley was promoted to President of VWE in 2018 and now oversees acquisition, engagement, innovation, and growth for the company's wine and spirits brands, including B. R. Cohn Winery, Cameron Hughes, Clos Pegase, Firesteed, Girard Winery, Distillery No. 209 Gin, and GAZE—a new low-calorie, low-alcohol wine cocktail in a sleek aluminum bottle—among many others.

Public-relations expert Tim McDonald, whose friendship with Wheatley spans

THE SOMMELIER

Amanda McCrossin

Wheatley: "Amanda is the person you meet that provides a level of service and education and has that charismatic personality and warmth—it makes you want to spend more time with her. She's doing so much for PRESS and beyond the restaurant peripherally with her @SommVivant Instagram personality. She hungers for life and is looking at things differently."



"Terry is one of the only people in her position taking an interest in people like me," says Amanda McCrossin, the 32-year-old Wine Director at PRESS Restaurant in St. Helena, California. "There are not a lot of presidents that care to dine at the restaurants and engage with the market or look at what's happening in the wine world at a micro-level like she does. Terry leads by example, and watching her make decisions every day that lead to an outcome that is positive for all parties—that's the kind of leader I want to be."

Having amassed more than 25,000 dedicated Instagram followers, McCrossin has focused on building her own branded identity through creative content. "Terry helped me answer the hardest question: What do I want?" she says. "She understands the value of building your own identity."

THE MARKETER

Jenna Duran

Wheatley: "She never says no, no matter how tough the project, and when I can work with someone who I can spar with on ideas and who brings me inspiring ideas, then that is someone I will spend a lot of my time with—because she gets it."



Jenna Duran, 33, left Vintage Wine Estates to pursue an MBA in wine business at Sonoma State University, but one phone call from Wheatley reeled her back in. "I knew direct mail, e-commerce, and wine club," says Duran, "but this was the bigger side of the business, and Terry could throw projects at me on the wholesale side, which is what I wanted to learn."

As the company's Director of Marketing, Duran saw an opportunity to move into a brand-manager role for VWE's lifestyle brands shortly after her return. Roney wanted her to continue to work on exclusive brands like Chariot for Trader Joe's and Buttery Bomb for Kroger; "but Terry," explains Duran, "realized the lifestyle brands would be good for me to work on." They struck a compromise, and today Duran does both, working for Roney and also with Wheatley on brands like Middle Sister, Bar Dog, and Girl & Dragon.



PRESS Restaurant Wine Director Amanda McCrossin, public-relations expert Tim McDonald, Terry Wheatley, and VWE Director of Marketing Jenna Duran toast Wheatley's long career at PRESS Restaurant in St. Helena, CA.

four decades, worked for her at Trinchero and later at Canopy. "One of the things I most enjoy is dining out with Terry and seeing how she engages with everybody

in the house from server to sommelier," he says. "She has the utmost respect for the profession. She wants to know what they're thinking and how she can be the

best producer partner possible."

McDonald and countless others note Wheatley's brilliance at connecting with people—a skill that might be the best wisdom she can impart as a mentor: "Tomorrow's beverage leaders must work at connecting with people at an emotional level," she says. "That's the power of an authentic brand. The future is all about authenticity."

Wheatley spends her time coaching people at VWE and beyond, from cannabis-company CEOs to sommeliers and wine-industry personalities. "If I can provide the same kind of influence over the people that are the next generation that was provided to me by great people, then that's the best way I can give back. Walt Disney said, 'If you can dream it, you can do it,' and that's my motto too," she says.

See the sidebar below for interviews with four of Wheatley's current mentees.

THE BUSINESS OWNER

Samantha Rudd

Wheatley: "When I met Samantha, I found a humble young woman who was wiser than her years and who asked great questions, but at the same time, she was so eager to learn from my experiences. That to me makes the perfect person I want to help develop. They take your advice and filter it into what works for them."

"Terry is incredibly focused and direct, which you grow to appreciate about her," says Samantha Rudd, 34, who first met Wheatley when she joined VWE as General Manager at Clos Pegase. Her father, the late Leslie Rudd, co-founded VWE with Roney. Today, Rudd is focused on running Rudd Oakville Estate and PRESS Restaurant with a renewed focus on projects in California through the Leslie Rudd Investment Company.

"Terry is the personality of the company and the connector at board meetings. She's the innovator; she's pushing what we're doing all the time. I learned to toughen up and work," Rudd says. "Terry leads by example—she doesn't talk about how much she works. She just does it. And the work is never done. When she sold Middle Sister, she could have retired, but she always wanted more."



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUDD OAKVILLE ESTATE

THE WINEMAKER

Josh Phelps

Wheatley: "Josh is overflowing with ideas and aspirations, and I help channel his dream. I have a different approach with each person—I don't view it as mentoring."

"I had the great pleasure of working with Trinchero Family Estates," says Josh Phelps, 34, winemaker and proprietor of Grounded Wine Company. "When I sold my equity in Taken Wine, I had a connection through the Rudd family to Pat Roney, and knowing that Terry was with VWE, I grew excited at the prospect of working with her and Pat."

Phelps directly credits Wheatley for helping him conceive Grounded: "She was involved in the naming, structure, and the direction of the company," he says. "All the regions and wine-making and design I've handled, but Terry has been a soundboard and mentor and advisor every step of the way."

Working with VWE, Phelps now has five wines on the market with a focus on the Central Coast, Napa Valley, Washington, and Oregon. He's in the early phase of developing what he calls "a true California-appellated brand for national distribution under the Grounded umbrella," and Wheatley will be fully involved. **SI**



PHOTO: JONATHAN CRISTALDI

Conqueror of Cornas

JEAN-LUC COLOMBO HAS GONE FROM RENEGADE TO ICON IN THE RHÔNE by Lars Leicht

THE WINE WORLD of the 1980s was a pretty heady place. Winemaking in Napa Valley was starting to come of age and Chile was gearing up to take the world by enological storm. Italy was starting to flex its Super Tuscan muscle, Brunello was barely on the radar, and Barolo was undergoing a nasty civil war between modernists and traditionalists. A little-known critic named Robert Parker, meanwhile, had made his bones with a longshot call on 1982 Bordeaux. Thrilling times, indeed.

teauneuf-du-Pape. Wines there remained rustic at best, with grapes fermented on the stems in large wooden vats and aged in creaky old casks.

Enter Jean-Luc Colombo, the man who would conquer Cornas. "Many of the appellations in the Rhône," said Colombo at the time, "are inherently faulty, poorly vinified wines which don't develop well and tend to taste much the same!"

Armed with a freshly minted degree in enology from the University of Montpellier

Colombo's sensitivities are firmly rooted in his pharmacology studies and upbringing as the son and grandson of chefs. He holds a deep-rooted conviction that cleanliness is as fundamental in the winery as it is in the kitchen, for wine should be treated as an entity on par with cuisine. "Not all winemakers have a passion for food," he once told an interviewer, "but because everyone in the family was a chef, all we talked about was food." Initially considered a radical and controversial figure, Colombo was labeled as a heretic, yet much of the region has since embraced his technique and style—vaulting him from renegade to icon.

Colombo and his wife, Anne, opened their consulting lab in 1984 and purchased their first vineyard parcel in the same year. Their first release was the 1987 vintage from the now well-known Les Ruchets vineyard in Cornas. He bought a new winery in Cornas in 2009 and expanded it by 60% in 2016, highlighting his cornerstone Cornas wines: La Louvée, Terres Brûlées, and Les Ruchets. His expansion across the Rhône is demonstrated in his Viognier-based Côte du Rhône La Redonne, Saint Péray La Belle de Mai, and Les Collines de Laure Syrah, the latter two both an homage to and a project for his daughter. He has been making wine in Provence near his native Marseille since 1996 and dedicated his new winery there last year; as for the original consulting business, it still counts over 100 client estates.

Colombo's signature style focuses on preserving—if not exalting—fruit flavors and primary aromas, yielding refined wines with depth and the ability to age. This combination of complexity and elegance stands out as a common thread across the range, from the entry-level Les Abeilles to single-vineyard crus of Cornas. With age,



Jean-Luc Colombo with his daughter, Laure; his wife, Anne; and their dogs Corton, Fitou, and Myrtille.

Meanwhile, in southeast France, the sleepy southern Rhône Valley had not seen much action since 1367, when the Pope abandoned his "new home" there after just over half a century. Across the rest of the valley, techniques and traditions had not changed much since Roman centurions built their stone terraces and planted their grapevines—case in point being Cornas, a relatively obscure subzone located about halfway between Côte-Rôtie and Châ-

and swinging an evangelistic attitude, the outspoken Colombo took the region by storm—or, as he puts it in classic understatement, "shook some habits." Pointing out the success of modern winemaking techniques at the top houses of Bordeaux, he rallied for the use of destemming, green harvesting, controlled-temperature fermentation in stainless steel, and aging in new oak (120-hectoliter neutral foudres and 225-liter barriques).



Jean-Luc Colombo's Les Ruchets vineyard in Cornas boasts 90-year-old Syrah vines. While Colombo figuratively put Cornas on the map, Anne—the first woman president of Cornas—earned the nickname “Mother Earth” for literally creating that map as she dissected the appellation's various terroirs. Both she and Jean-Luc have been awarded the French Legion of Honor, France's highest accolade, for their contributions to the French wine industry.

the 2012 vintage of both La Louvée and Les Ruchets has seen the disappearance of oak notes and the muting of herb elements, instead yielding to deeper and richer fruit flavors. Much like the evolution of a long-simmered stew or sauce, time binds the components of these wines and introduces greater harmony.

High achievers clearly run in the family. The couple's daughter, Laure, claims inspiration from Sunday tastings of the world's leading denominations in her adolescence as fuel for the wanderlust of her post-graduate days. Soon enough, however, DNA called her back to her roots: the hillsides she played in as a child and the vines she walked past as a schoolgirl. Today she serves as wine-maker alongside her father, equipped not with a silver spoon but with a hard-earned bachelor's in viticulture, a master's in enology, and, for good measure, an MBA (she's also interned with prestigious producers like Château Haut Brion and Dom Pérignon). Today, Laure's pet project is the St. Péray sub-appellation, which she approaches with zeal not dissimilar to that seen in her father during his early missions in Cornas. Her parents' pet projects have become hers as well. *sj*

Tasting Notes by Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Meridith May

Jean-Luc Colombo 2017 Les Abeilles, Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$13) This blend of 60% Grenache, 30% Syrah, and 10% Mourvèdre overdelivers. Juicy notes of dark plum and rhubarb, spiced cherry, and heather complement fine acidity as meaty notes grace the mid-palate.



Jean-Luc Colombo 2017 La Belle de Mai, Saint Péray AOC (\$46) A blend of 60% Roussanne (from 80-year-old vines) and 40% Marsanne from this AOC in the high-altitude Rhône-Alpes, just south of Cornas. On the lees for six months and fermented in oak for 10–12 months, it's perfumed with white flowers and white-peppered hazelnuts. Candied pineapple notes endure with a fleshy texture and a lemon-pudding character. Cinnamon and apple pie are further enhanced by lemon blossom.



Jean-Luc Colombo 2016 Terres Brûlées Syrah, Cornas (\$58) Vine age ranges from 20 to 60 years old and the juice spends two years in oak. This is an earthy red (the name means “burnt earth”), with a nose of coffee, leather, plum, and dark chocolate. Taste the terroir and smell the garrigue (which is present in the below Cornas Syrahs as well). Savory and silky, with juicy dark plum and minerality highlighted by fennel and soy sauce. Pretty, vibrant, and fresh.



Jean-Luc Colombo 2016 Les Ruchets Syrah, Cornas (\$105) Les Ruchets means the “the beehives.” These Syrah vines are 90 years old and grown on granite subsoil. Spiced rhubarb perfumes dried violets and minerality supercharges the fruit as oak notes slowly develop. The brushy garrigue is sweeter here, with chewy, round tannins on a silk bed. Black pepper peeks through and stings red licorice on the regal finish.



Jean-Luc Colombo 2016 La Louvée Syrah, Cornas (\$110) This is the she-wolf of the Cornas pack: Aromas of meaty and brushy lavender, dark plum, and even darker soil make you howl. Tobacco leaf and dried lavender are sparked by black pepper and soy sauce. Black olives intercept and pounce on black plum and fennel. Wildly exciting.



THE
tastingpanel
MAGAZINE

THE **SOMM** JOURNAL



INVITE WINE PROFESSIONALS TO:

L U X I C O N

TREASURY WINE ESTATES

TOUR 2019-2020



TREASURY
WINE ESTATES

Register for the Luxicon Tour at SommJournal.com/Luxicon



ESTD 1876
BERINGER


MINUTY



Etude



RSVP NOW — LUXICON IS COMING TO A CITY NEAR YOU!

Join us for an educational “Techniques of Tasting” session led by Gillian Ballance, MS. **Guests will have a chance to win one of three professional certification scholarships valued at \$1,200.**

The session will end with a rare opportunity to taste limited-production wines from the Treasury Wine Estates portfolio. For more information or to reserve a seat, visit SommJournal.com/Luxicon.

JOIN US:

Tuesday, October 22
Atlanta

January 2020
Miami

Gillian Ballance, MS, will lead an exclusive “Techniques of Tasting” session.



PHOTO: REBECCA PEPLINSKI



THIS COULD BE YOU!

Three Luxicon scholarship winners are pictured with Master Sommeliers Emily Wines (second from left) and Gillian Ballance (center): Andy Lock, Sommelier at Cask & Ale in Madison, WI; Elizabeth Kowal, Assistant Wine Buyer at Geneva Wine Cellars; and Ryan Baldwin, Head Sommelier at the Waldorf Astoria Chicago.



Falling Hard for Petrichor

INTERPRETING OUR ATTRACTION TO THE SMELL OF **WET ROCKS**

EVEN KNOWING FULL well that geological minerals (with the exception of halite, aka sodium chloride) have no smell, we've inherited a liking for the smell of petrichor from our ancestors, who relied on rain for their day-to-day survival.

The term, derived from the Greek words *petra* (stone) and *ichor* (the blood of the gods), was coined by researchers Isabel Joy Bear and Richard Thomas in their 1964 paper "Nature of Argillaceous Odour" to describe the scent of rain. At the time, the source of this particular smell was still unknown to scientists, but it had already been successfully captured in sandalwood oil by an Indian perfumer who called it *matti ka attar*, or "earth perfume."

Bear and Thomas, who were working in the Division of Mineral Chemistry at Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), mimicked the humid conditions experienced prior to a rainstorm by steam-distilling rocks that had been exposed to warm, dry conditions. The experiment produced an aromatic, yellowish oil that shared the same distinctive smell, which the researchers promptly named petrichor—the blood of the stone.

Petrichor is a combination of several fragrant chemical compounds, and while some have yet to be identified, one is

2-isopropyl-3-methoxy-pyrazine (IPMP). Also found in Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc grapes, it has a very "rain-like" smell.

Beyond plant oils, the primary contributors to petrichor's complex aromatics are actinobacteria, a genus of soil-dwelling bacteria. Actinobacteria decompose dead and decaying organic matter into simple chemical compounds, and a byproduct of that activity is the organic compound geosmin.

When the air becomes more humid and moistens the ground prior to a rainstorm, actinobacteria speed up their activity and produce more geosmin, which is the dominant aromatic compound in petrichor. Also found in beets, it can be considered a flaw or fault when readily apparent in wine and has a very low threshold for human detection at 5 parts per trillion.

It wasn't until 2010 that the "petrichor process" was documented on slow-motion video by a team of scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Using high-speed cameras, they witnessed how tiny air bubbles are created when a raindrop hits a porous surface; the bubbles shoot upwards, bursting from the drop in a cloud of aerosols that carry volatile aromas (and even bacteria and viruses) found on rocks and soils that are then spread by the wind.

Another compound associated with the smell of rain is ozone, created when lightning or ultraviolet light in the atmosphere splits oxygen molecules that then reform to create trioxxygen. The average human nose can pick out the distinctive smell of ozone—often described as the "clean" smell after a rainstorm—at a concentration as little as 10 parts per billion; due to this higher detection threshold, ozone can be masked when geosmin is present.

In a subsequent paper, "The Genesis of Petrichor," Bear and Thomas elaborated on the process by which rocks, clay, and soil absorb organic compounds. Silica absorbs more atmospheric contaminants—compounds like lipids, terpenes, carotenoids, and other volatile decomposition products—when humidity is low. Those compounds are increasingly oxidized and transformed when it's hot, and their volatile aroma compounds combine to produce petrichor when humidity increases before and during a rainstorm.

All of the organisms and compounds that have been identified in petrichor can be found in a vineyard, and as a result, many can also be found in grapes and wine—for better or for worse. But no matter the result, our appreciation of that unique scent known as earth's perfume is seemingly innate. **S**

MYSTERIOUS TRANSYLVANIA

Discover Transylvania with Mysterium
from Jidvei, the wines that come
to life in the dark.

*Meet us May 13-14, at USA Trade Tasting
in the City That Never Sleeps.*



Campaign Financed with EU Funding.

A Tribute to *Distinction*

PIEDMONT'S **PIO CESARE** PREMIERES ITS BAROLO AND BARBARESCO WINES FROM THE 2015 VINTAGE

story by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball



Fourth-generation vintner Pio Boffa describes the history of Pio Cesare and offers guests a glimpse of the new 2015 vintage. He's flanked by Dirk Smits, SoCal Regional Manager for Maisons Marques & Domaines, on the left and Michael Coleman of American Wine & Spirits (SGWS) of California on the right.

"I PROUDLY REPRESENT the fourth generation of my family," said Pio Boffa, the owner and vintner of well-respected Piedmont winery Pio Cesare, as he spoke at an intimate winemaker dinner in June at Wally's Wine & Spirits in Santa Monica, California. Boffa not only shared personal bottles directly from his family's cellar but also offered a first look at the 2015 vintage, including the premiere of Mosconi, the producer's new single-vineyard Barolo.

"Pio [Cesare] is known for being traditional," noted Boffa, whose great-grandfather, Cesare Pio, founded the eponymous winery in 1881. "Tradition for our family means we continue to produce wines year after year that represent the style of our family and the style that Pio Cesare has made for over 130 years. It means we strive to interpret what Mother Nature does and use minimal intervention both in the vineyards and in the cellar."

Located in downtown Alba, a historic city in the heart of Piedmont, Pio Cesare's winery and longtime family home dates back to the 17th century; the building's medieval brick walls were erected on top of Alba's ancient Roman ruins in a dramatic display that also ensures naturally cool conditions. The winery is known internationally for producing classic, ageworthy Nebbiolos that are 100% estate-grown and -bottled. "Our wines depend entirely on the quality of our vineyards, the terroir, the different soils, and the individual microclimates," explained Boffa, emphasizing that the winemaker's priority is not to use elaborate technology but to fully understand the vineyards themselves.

Large estate vineyards are a rarity in the region, as viticulture and winemaking were traditionally kept separate. Up until the 1970s, Pio Cesare had no estate properties and instead maintained long-term "gentlemen's agreements" to uphold rigid quality standards. In 1974, the producer's leadership had the opportunity to purchase the Il Bricco vineyard in the Barbaresco DOCG—one of the many esteemed properties they'd worked with—and five years later, they acquired the Ornato vineyard, a highly regarded south-facing amphitheater in the Barolo DOCG. Since then, they've expanded their total holdings to 173 acres, and now the Pio Cesare Barolos and Barbarescos are entirely estate-grown.

In December 2014, Boffa purchased what he proudly described as his "new baby," a Barolo property he gifted to himself for his 60th birthday. The Mosconi vineyard checks all the boxes for a Neb-

A springtime image of Pio Cesare's new Mosconi vineyard, located in the prestigious town of Monforte d'Alba in the Barolo DOCG. ▼

biolo with an impressive pedigree: limestone soils, curved southern exposure, an elevation of 400 meters above sea level, and the presence of old vines.

While the site has earned a strong reputation over the years, it was a completely new source for Pio Cesare, so the fruit from the 2015 harvest was vinified and aged separately to better understand what the vines might offer. "But when we tasted the wine, we were tempted to keep it separate for the rest of its life because it was so different," noted Boffa, adding that he attributes much of its distinction to the vines, some of which date back to 1947. As a testament to the wine's excellence, the Mosconi was bottled independently and now, after the Ornato vineyard expression, is the second single-vineyard Barolo in Pio Cesare's history.

THE CLASSICS

"We used to call it the classic style," Boffa said of Pio Cesare's approach to crafting the 2015 Barolo DOCG and the 2015 Barbaresco DOCG. Produced with fruit from Pio Cesare's estate vineyards, the two bottlings clearly convey the vintage and the expression of their respective terroir. "Some regions are good for color, others for longevity, some for finesse, depth, and tannin—it is up to the winemaker and the producer to be able to do what the chef does in the kitchen and to create what is the essence of the entire region," Boffa explained.

The 2015 vintage has been met with praise for its exuberant aromatics, well-developed fruit profile, and approachable tannin structure. Upon tasting, the elegant **Pio Cesare 2015 Barbaresco DOCG (\$75)** showed fragrant aromas of red plum skin, orange peel, burnt sugar, and anise that were echoed on the palate alongside a dark fruit core framed by delicate, fine tannins. The **Pio Cesare 2015 Barolo DOCG (\$75)** displayed firmer tannins and richer texture, yet despite the added muscle, it offered instant appeal: Perfumed with smoky scents of blond tobacco, it possessed layers of black fruit framed by a spice rack of amaro-like botanicals.



THE SINGLE VINEYARDS

Representing distinctive personalities within the DOCGs and produced in small quantities, Pio Cesare's single-vineyard wines still share a common thread of weight and power compared to the classic style. The **Pio Cesare 2015 Barbaresco DOCG Il Bricco (\$144)**, the only single-vineyard wine from the Barbaresco region, flaunted sweet aromas of Indian spice mixed with herbal notes of hyssop and menthol. An amalgam of black plum, rose hips, licorice root, and flint with ripe, supple tannins, it still needed time to soften.

Broody and dark with whispers of tar, melted candle wax, and redwood fronds, the **Pio Cesare 2015 Barolo DOCG Ornato (\$150)** featured a rich palate, with layers of black cherry balanced by a tight assembly of tannins and endless length. For its debut vintage, the **Pio Cesare 2015 Barolo DOCG Mosconi (\$200)** contrasted the Ornato with a showy and vibrant display of lavender and crushed blueberries mingled with a touch of white peppercorn and cardamom. The velvety mouthfeel wrapped around a core of spicy chai and cherry; framed with grippy tannins up front, it opened to a plush mid-palate and a juicy finish. *—SJ*



Staying Unbuttoned

Red and white Burgundies in the \$20–\$30 price range at IPNC.

THE INTERNATIONAL PINOT NOIR CONFERENCE MAINTAINS ITS ACCESSIBILITY

IN JULY, I ATTENDED the 33rd International Pinot Noir Conference (IPNC) in McMinnville, Oregon, as this year's guest speaker, exploring the theme "Chalonnaise, the 3rd Côte." Once described by Frank Prial, the late wine columnist for *The New York Times*, as "the world's most unbuttoned wine conference," the IPNC has lived up to this characterization while never losing sight of its core values: to gather enophiles from around the world for a weekend of eating, drinking, learning, and celebrating in honour of Pinot Noir. I would describe the event as "casual professional"—including its dress code—and encourage any lover of Pinot to attend. France lost its monopoly on *joie de vivre* long ago.

Within the Côte d'Or region, Côte de Nuits lies to the north and the Côte de Beaune rests in the south; located further south in Burgundy, the Côte Chalonnaise subregion is smaller than its two neighbours, and for many years it was viewed by the other two as a sort of distant cousin. The unfairness of this was evident to me in the mid-1980s, when I was writing the *Académie du Vin Guide to French Wines*: "With high demand for Burgundies causing a notable rise in their price, more interest has been focused on the Côte Chalonnaise, where improved vinification techniques and attention to quality have seen positive results."

That this is even more true today was certainly proved by the range of eight wines presented to 450 IPNC attendees; producers in attendance included Anne-

Laure Hernette of Antonin Rodet, Thibault Gagey of Maison Louis Jadot, and Amaury Devillard of Château de Chamirey. The quality was as evident as the value, with all retail prices falling within the \$20–\$30 bracket (I prefer to refer to this as "value for pleasure"). Here are the wines:

Côte Chalonnaise White

Domaine A. & P. de Villaine 2017 Bouzeiron (Aligoté)

Antonin Rodet Château de Rully 2016 La Pucelle, Rully Premier Cru

Côte Chalonnaise Red

Antonin Rodet Domaine de la Bressande 2016 Préaux, Rully Premier Cru

Domaine de Villaine 2017 Bourgogne Côte Chalonnaise La Digoine

Château de Chamirey 2017 Mercurey
Maison Louis Jadot 2017 Sazenay, Mercurey Premier Cru

Maison Louis Jadot 2015 Givry

Domaine de la Ferté 2017 Givry Clos de Mortières

Walkaround Tastings

Daily after 5 p.m. during IPNC, lavish dinners for 500 or so guests would be prepared by local chefs of high repute, joined by bow-tied sommeliers serving a dazzling array of wines. But before these unfolded, attendees could explore walkaround tastings focused, of course, on Oregon Pinot Noir. Here, from the superb 2016 vintage,



PHOTO: CAROLYN WELLS KRAMER

Bow-tied sommelier Chris Murphy of Eddie Martini's in Milwaukee, WI, pours a white Burgundy during the 2019 IPNC.

are those that I ranked 92 and above in alphabetical order:

Anam Cara Cellars (Reserve), Andrew Rich Wines, Archery Summit Winery, Cristom Vineyards, Domaine Serene (Aspect), Domaine Drouhin (Roserock Zéphirine), Dukes Family Vineyards (Charlotte), Elk Cove Vineyards (Mount Richmond), Evesham Wood (Le Puits Sec), Goodfellow Family Cellars (Heritage No. 7), Johan Vineyards (Estate), King Estate (High Wire), Lange Estate Winery & Vineyards, Nicolas-Jay, R. Stuart & Co. (Autograph), Rex Hill, Sokol Blosser Winery (Big Tree Block), and Winderlea Vineyard and Winery

FORTY.

"Back in 1979, I didn't call myself a pioneer. I wasn't yet known as the 'Godfather' of Paso Robles. I just wanted to find the best untamed land in California and to create a fantastic bottle of wine."

Gary Eberle



EBERLE WINERY



EBERLEWINERY.COM • 805.238.9607

*Located at Highway 46 East, just 3.5 miles
east of Paso Robles, California*



Cooperativa Agrícola de Reguengos de Monsaraz (CARMIM) was established in 1971 by a group of 60 winegrowers. The largest winery in Alentejo and one of the biggest in Portugal, it's one of the driving forces behind the economic and social development of the region.

As grape varieties go, it's fair to say that Alicante Bouschet (*Ah-lee-KANT Boo-SHAY*) is flashy in the vineyard. It's one of the few—along with Chile's Carménère and Campania's Piediroso—whose leaves turn a deep, brilliant shade as the growing cycle winds down. The resplendent, purple-hued robe of the variety's canopy emerges when anthocyanins, the same pigments responsible for its red pulp and dark skin, are activated as the vine approaches dormancy.

A relative newcomer to the teinturier family of grapes, which are so named for their red pulp, Alicante has a unique anthocyanin fingerprint. It was bred as an improvement over its grandparent grape, Teinturier du Cher, a variety hybridized by renowned French viticulturalist Louis-Marie Bouschet with Aramon to create Petit Bouschet. Henri Bouschet continued the experiments of his father in 1866 when he crossed Petit Bouschet with Grenache Noir (known as Alicante in southern France), resulting in Alicante Bouschet and several biotypes.

The Dark Horse

**ALICANTE BOUSCHET TAKES THE LEAD
IN PORTUGAL'S ALENTEJO REGION**

by Deborah Parker Wong

*The Castelo Real de Montoito
and its adjoining vineyard.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINES OF ALENTEJO



Traditional granite lagares at Dona Maria Vinhos.

Alentejo, which covers almost a third of Portugal by area, encompasses roughly 18,000 hectares of vineyards. Last year, the region ranked third behind the Douro and Lisboa (formerly Estremadura) in total wine production, and although Alicante Bouschet is not among the country's top ten varieties under vine, Alentejo is second only to Spain (where the grape is known as Garnacha Tintorera) in plantings of the variety.

In addition to vineyards, the region's gently rolling landscape has historically been dotted with cereal crops, olive trees, and cork forests. In this continental climate with very low rainfall, the winters are cold and an ever-present risk of frost extends to the spring season; the hot, dry summers, meanwhile, necessitate irrigation. A mix of heterogeneous soil types abounds, with outcrops of clay schist, granite, gravel, and *rañas* deposits of sandy, clay loam, and ferrous limestone.

The region's natural landmarks have helped producers define mesoclimates ideal for producing monovarietal Alicante Bouschet. The Vidigueira fault, which marks the border between the Alto Alentejo and Baixo Alentejo provinces, is a long, east-west-facing escarpment that tempers the warmer southern climate. It's here that Herdade do Rocim, an estate sited between the municipalities of Vidigueira and Cuba with 60 hectares under vine, produces an Alicante Bouschet expression from vines planted in the 1970s. Traditional foot treading and barrel aging produced a 2016 vintage laden with deep plum and velvety tannins framed by sandalwood and dark spice.

South of the fault lies the 1,700-acre Herdade dos Grous estate; its 70 acres under vine share the schist soils of the nearby hills of Monte dos Magros. The 2016 Moon Harvested Alicante Bouschet, aged in French oak, illustrates how young Alicante Bouschet tends to show fewer primary aromas. Instead, there's the promise of tertiary aromas that will develop and even predominate during aging, with bittersweet chocolate, espresso, char, and mulberry on the palate. Moderate acidity helps counterbalance the wine's grip, and decanting will help release any reined-in aromas.

Alicante Bouschet's adaption to this terroir has been helped along by its drought-tolerant nature and producers' shared understanding that this thick-skinned, high-yielding variety performs best when it's planted in low-vigor soils and aggressively pruned. Traditionally reserved for blending with Aragonez, Castelão, and Touriga Nacional as well as Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, Alicante Bouschet-dominant wines can be labeled either Alentejo DOC or Alentejano Vinho Regional (IGP). With a total approved vineyard area of 11,763 hectares, DOC wine production exceeds the IGP's production of 6,233 hectares.

Another producer, Dona Maria Vinhos, bottles an Alicante Bouschet-dominant (50%) DOC Grand Reserva: a classic blend that sees the addition of 20% Syrah, 20% Petit Verdot, and 10% Touriga Nacional. Produced from old, dry-farmed vines planted in iron-rich clay-limestone soils at an elevation of 400 meters, the grapes for the 2012 vintage were foot tread before the wine aged one year in new oak. The firm and lithe

result positively vibrates with crisp dark fruit, mocha, and uncured tobacco.

Because of its heritage, Alicante Bouschet contains a higher proportion of anthocyanins than all of the other international varieties planted in Alentejo and in Portugal at large. With a total phenol index over 60, it ranks among the grapes—including Portugal's native Tinta Barca and Borraçal, Italy's Barbera and Corvina, and France's Tannat—with the highest levels of antioxidant stilbenes known as resveratrol.

The presence of high phenol levels is readily apparent in the mouthcoating texture of the 2015 Alicante Bouschet from Herdade São Miguel, whose clay- and schist-based vineyards are surrounded by the cork forests of Redondo. Lighter and more medium-bodied than the wines of southern Alentejo, the wine spends one year in oak and shows a combination of red and black fruit with lavender, nutmeg, and some white pepper. *sj*



The More You Alentejo

- At 51,000 acres, its vineyard plantings are slightly more than Napa's 45,000 acres and about the same as Washington's wine acreage.
- The Portuguese love Alentejo: It's the source of one of every two bottles of still wine consumed in the country.
- Alentejo wines are gaining traction—production has quadrupled since the mid-1990s.
- Alicante Bouschet is Alentejo's flagship red. A French crossing of Petit Bouschet and Grenache Noir, it was introduced to the region over 100 years ago by the Reynolds family.
- The variety is nicknamed Tinta de Escrever (writing ink) for its ability to produce an inky red wine.

Honoring a Humble Visionary

EBERLE WINERY MARKS ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY AS FOUNDER GARY EBERLE TURNS 75

by Jessie Birschbach

YOU COULD SAY that Gary Eberle had the foresight to settle in Paso Robles, but in actuality, the AVA more or less chose him. Even in the early 1970s, the cost of land in Sonoma and Napa was beyond what he could afford. Driven to search elsewhere after graduating from the University of California, Davis, Eberle was compelled by his former professors' enthusiastic assessments of the area's soil and weather to begin building his legacy in this then-little-known slice of San Luis Obispo County, notable for having California's largest diurnal swings. "I came to Paso Robles in 1973, and I was the only one down here with a degree in enology. In fact, I think I was the only one who could spell 'grape,'" jokes Eberle, who turned 75 earlier this year.

After co-founding Estrella River Winery, where he helped plant 700 acres of vines and designed the irrigation systems, Eberle spent the next several years there building up what he refers to as "sweat equity." Then, after obtaining a bank loan and a few partners, he opened his eponymous winery, releasing its first Cabernet Sauvignon in 1979.

Now, 40 years later, Eberle is revered as one of the founding fathers of the Paso Robles wine industry—so much so that an exhibit documenting his career is currently on display outside the Eberle Winery tasting room. The project was commissioned by the Wine History Project of San Luis Obispo County, and while the Paso pioneer is grateful for the organization's efforts, he's a bit too humble to fully bask in the presence of the exhibit before it eventually moves to join the rest of the Wine History Project's collection. "Honestly, I am a little embarrassed. That's where I sit and talk to people," Eberle says of the spot, which used to feature his quote, "The difference between wine and children is that you can sit down and reason with a bottle of Cabernet."

Gary Eberle arrived in Paso Robles in 1973 after graduating from the University of California, Davis, with an enological degree.





PHOTO COURTESY OF EBERLE WINERY

The famous Eberle Winery standard poodles: Sangio and Barbera.

Regarding the emphasis he places on hospitable practices—like greeting visitors outside the winery, never charging for tastings, and offering tours—Eberle credits the influence of one of his mentors, the late Robert Mondavi. His packed tasting room is a testament to such methods, and because he's content to keep producing roughly 28,000 cases a year, his only plans for expansion at the moment are geared toward accommodating more guests.

In the meantime, Eberle eagerly awaits a smaller change whenever he finds himself sitting at his usual post. "Here I am in front of this picture of me. I mean, it's cool, it's educational, and it's true about me being first to use Paso Robles [on a wine label] and all that, but I don't think people know it was created by a third party," he says. "I'm getting used to it, but it will not hurt my feelings when it disappears into the museum and my quote goes back up on the wall behind me." SJ

"So Many Firsts"

In 2015, Libbie Agran established the Wine History Project of San Luis Obispo County to preserve the area's rich agricultural history. One of its most compelling exhibits, for example, attempts to uncover the origins of Zinfandel—California's heritage grape—and how it became one of the most important varieties in the state.

There's also, of course, the Eberle exhibit. "When we began working with Gary and [his wife] Marcy Eberle and documenting Gary's life, we uncovered so many firsts that Gary brought to the local wine industry," historian Heather Muran explains. "He is considered a visionary who saw the importance of creating a regional identity for Paso Robles and lent his support to establish the Paso Robles AVA in 1983."

Eberle was the first to introduce Syrah to Paso Robles, and at one point, he had the largest planting of the variety in California, from which he produced a 100% Syrah wine—an anomaly for the time. Beyond establishing two state-of-the-art wineries, Eberle also helped launch the Paso Robles Wine Festival alongside Tom Martin of Martin Brothers Winery in 1983.

Beyond focusing on his own ventures, Eberle has "mentored countless other winemakers in Paso Robles, who have then started their own wine labels and wineries," Muran says, adding that he defined the hospitality standard of the region "by inviting local chefs to host winemaker dinners and by training tasting room staff to promote the local wine industry to visitors."

The milestones of Eberle's professional career aside—including his years at Estrella River Winery and his time spent building the Eberle Winery caves—the exhibit features a timeline of important events in his personal life as well, "giving a glimpse into [his] years at Penn State as a football player" and other experiences, Muran says.

For information on the Wine History Project of San Luis Obispo County, visit winehistoryproject.org.

True to Her Roots

Affectionally named "Mama Eb" by Eberle Winery employees, Gary Eberle's wife, Marcy, works tirelessly to run the brand's PR and marketing efforts while also traveling for sales calls and somehow finding time to bake and cook for her extended family at the winery. If Gary retires in the near future, the couple already plans for Marcy to step into his role, with the hope that one of their daughters will take the reins next. "We have no plans to sell—ever. I am fifth generation here, and I'm not going to pull up my roots," Marcy says.

Gary's spot: Gary and Marcy Eberle sit in front of the Wine History Project of San Luis Obispo County exhibit currently on display at Eberle Winery in Paso Robles, CA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EBERLE WINERY

Long recognized for striking a balance between honoring tradition and embracing technology, the late Robert Mondavi steadfastly employed the latest innovations in winemaking and viticulture while maintaining an Old World sensibility in the craft of his wines. From the onset of his career in the industry, he made use of cold-jacketed tanks for white wines, fermentations in French oak barrels, and oak aging to achieve the highest quality possible. “He

never settled for easy—he always wanted to push for more and get better. That was his vision and that is how I was educated,” says chief winemaker Geneviève Janssens, who credits “the philosophy of Mr. Mondavi” for inspiring her move from Bordeaux to Napa Valley in 1978.

Mondavi’s vision and constant drive for improvement continue today at his eponymous company, which is making significant advancements in vineyard management. In March 2018, Robert Mondavi Winery

hired senior viticulturalist Seth Schwebs, who’s been tasked with elevating the already highly revered To Kalon property to its highest potential. A specialist in geographic information systems (GIS), Schwebs utilizes field data to better understand changes in elevation, soil structure, temperature, and other factors that can influence grape quality.

One of Schwebs’ initial projects was the replanting of To Kalon’s U Block, located just south of the winery on Highway 29.



Constant ADVANCEMENT

story by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

To ensure that the new planting would be designed to better suit the terrain, he collected all of the data available on the site to fully understand the life cycle of the block's vines. In addition to using Napa County aerial maps dating back to 1945 to evaluate the location of old creeks, tree lines, cattle troughs, drainage patterns, and old roads, Schwebs studied county maps that demonstrated changes in elevation to understand the flow of run-off; soil mapping that revealed structure variability and



Senior viticulturist Seth Schwebs tends to the new planting in To Kalon Vineyard's U Block.

BALANCING INNOVATION WITH EXPERIENCE AT ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY'S TO KALON VINEYARD

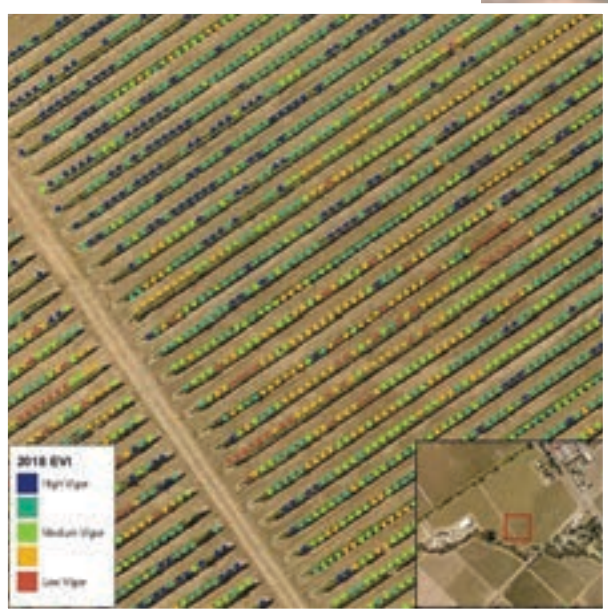
the reach of the vines' root systems; and technology that showed the vigor of each individual vine.

The latter resource, referred to as the Enhanced Vegetation Index (EVI), was originally developed by longtime Robert Mondavi Winery viticulturist Daniel Bosch in partnership with NASA. Using airborne remote sensing, the project aimed to better predict and contain the spread of disease, but its creators later realized it could also be used to evaluate a vine's overall health based on the density of its foliage.

"You have to do your homework before you plant—there's no excuse," said Schweps, adding that they're "tuning the [sub-blocks] to the soils" so that, years from now, they're not left wondering why one parcel is struggling compared to one a few rows over. The block is now divided into six sections so that each portion develops with greater uniformity; this helps reinforce picking decisions so that when the winemaker walks the rows within a block during harvest, their judgment call accurately applies to the entirety of that plot.

The new U Block planting consists of a small amount of Petit Verdot and Malbec as well as various clones of Cabernet Sauvignon, including the Mondavi Heritage clone (aka FPS Clone 31). The cuttings

Gnarled Sauvignon Blanc vines grow in the historic To Kalon Vineyard in Napa Valley.



The Enhanced Vegetation Index (EVI) analysis from the original site shows a variation of vigor in the individual vines.



The newly released 2016 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon from To Kalon Vineyard in Napa Valley's Oakville District.

A New Expression of To Kalon

To Kalon, which translates to “the highest beauty” in ancient Greek, was originally planted in 1868; recognized as the Vineyard of the Year by the California Farm Bureau Federation in 2011, it continues to demonstrate excellence year after year. “We need to understand why a vineyard is so known and why we call it a first growth or a Grand Cru of Napa Valley,” says Janssens. “It’s because that vineyard is very resilient: We can have heat, we can have cold, we can have a lot of difficult weather, and the wine is always excellent. The recently released 2016 To Kalon Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$175) is produced from select blocks on the estate and continues to be made in the style that Mondavi intended. “He never wanted a muscle wine, but one that was

approachable, with class and elegance,” explains Janssens, who models her own winemaking style on this quote from Mondavi: “This is the kind of wine I want to make: one that has grace and style, harmony and balance.”

The new release is a brilliant, deep ruby hue with generous aromas of black cherry, sweet rose petal, and blond tobacco mingled with a touch of dried sage. Grippy up front, the tannins open to an ample berry core with fleshy blackberries, cassis, anise, and a firm mineral frame. Despite its youth, the full-bodied wine is friendly and supple with a resolved tannin structure that still allows the fruit to shine through. “Firm[ness] is the beauty of To Kalon, but [the wines are] approachable and drinkable at release—that’s Mr. Mondavi’s style and the vintage,” Janssens says. *SJ*

were originally selected from one of To Kalon’s old blocks in the 1990s—prior to the phylloxera outbreak that devastated much of Napa Valley—and successfully cultivated for commercial distribution through the Foundation Plant Services at the University of California, Davis.

While Schwebs’ research was extensive and highly technical, he’s careful to underscore that the data he gathered is just another tool. “We’re not throwing away what everyone has done for the last 100 years on this ranch,” he explains. “Technology does not replace walking the vines. This is all done both to innovate and to be respectful of this property.” To that point, Schwebs spent his first week on the job walking the entirety of To Kalon; as he increased his familiarity, he stumbled on old blocks he didn’t know existed. “I still feel like I’m absorbing the history and the knowledge of this place,” he says reverently.

As detailed and methodical as Schwebs’ approach can be, it’s hard to quantify grape quality with numbers and data. So how will he measure success? “When we talk to Geneviève, is she happy? What block did she not like that she likes now?” Schwebs responds. “Because the wine-makers are my customers, how happy are my customers?”

Exploring To Kalon’s I Block

Driving west down the dusty road toward the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains, a steady incline in elevation that’s all but hidden from the highway becomes increasingly apparent. This route leads to To Kalon’s historic I Block, which was first planted in 1945 and is believed to be the oldest Sauvignon Blanc vineyard in North America. The head-trained, dry-farmed vines, some of which measure 18 inches thick at their base, are healthy and vibrant, producing luscious berries with concentrated and complex flavors.

When asked about the difficulties in managing these old vines, Schweb replies, “I worry about these blocks very little. I figure if they’ve done this well for this long, if I got too busy with them, I’d probably just screw them up.”

The majority of this block is destined for the exclusive I Block To Kalon Vineyard Fumé Blanc (\$90), yet a small amount also makes its way into the Reserve To Kalon Vineyard Fumé Blanc (\$55). The remaining grapes in the latter bottling were first planted in 1960 in a portion of the vineyard known historically as Robert’s Block; now named T Block, its vines are also head-trained and dry-farmed in well-drained, low-vigor soils that contribute to the intensity of the grapes. Blended with a small percentage of Sémillon, this impressive Sauvignon Blanc serves as a beautiful homage to what Robert Mondavi started over 50 years ago.



Robert Mondavi Winery 2016 Reserve To Kalon Vineyard Fumé Blanc (\$55)

Lively aromas with layers of fresh Thai basil, lemongrass, kumquat, and a hint of brioche. This is a sumptuous wine with concentrated flavors of Asian pear, white grapefruit peel, loquat, and saline that continue to build in intensity toward a long, mouthwatering finish.

VINOSUMMIT

PRESENTED BY FLORIDA WINE ACADEMY



THE **SOMM** JOURNAL

THE **tastingpanel**
MAGAZINE

WELCOME YOU TO THE
2ND ANNUAL **VINOSUMMIT**

MIAMI BILTMORE HOTEL
MARCH 8TH & 9TH, 2020

More information at floridawineacademy.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF B SIDE



climbing the
charts

HOW CALIFORNIA'S B SIDE WINES BOLSTERED
ITS GROWTH BY HITTING RESET **by Eric Marsh**

The sun sets on Napa Valley, where B Side got its start.

b-sides

are the songs on the flip side of, well, A-sides, which is where an intended hit single resides on a 7-inch record. But there are cases where—as passionate music fans will posit—the quality of the B-side far surpasses that of the A-side. There's a chance these songs may become a hit when, say, the record resurfaces as part of a box set, but in order to make the cut, they must be unearthed by the musician(s) who created them or the record label that released them—in short, by someone who knows the music well.

A similar scenario can be applied to winemaking and AVAs. Fourth-generation vintner Donny Sebastiani recalls that, 20 years ago, it was common knowledge that Napa's "more famous, heralded vineyards and wineries were on the west side of Highway 29," yet "some of the best batches of wines [he and his team] were making happened to come from eastside vineyards." These grapes also carried a lower price tag, enabling Sebastiani and his crew to bottle and sell a quality Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon for an affordable

price. Thus, in 2005, the reputable wine veteran launched B Side Wines.

The brand grew in popularity for nearly a decade, but as it flourished, the price of Napa grapes—from both the east and west sides—continued to rise. In 2016, B Side finally saw its sales slightly wane, spurring Sebastiani and company to get creative again. "Napa grapes had become so ridiculously expensive," he says. "We found that we could make wines just as good from some more sanely priced appellations like Carneros, Sonoma, Lodi, and even Mendocino and Monterey."

Starting with its 2016 vintage, B Side began blending in Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from other North Coast regions, with the lion's share still coming from Napa, specifically Pope Valley and Gordon Valley. According to Vice President of Marketing Cynthia Gomez, these regions "deliver a strong foundation for the wine through big, round tannins, due to higher elevations and diverse red soils. To supplement this, grapes from Alexander Valley and Mendocino are also blended in to bring depth and layers."

That same year, B Side started making North Coast Pinot Noir as well as a Char-



PHOTO: ALEXANDER RUBIN

Fourth-generation vintner Donny Sebastiani at his Watmaugh Ranch property.

donnay made chiefly from Hyde-Wente clone grapes sourced from Sebastiani's Watmaugh Ranch vineyard in Sonoma County. The property is "cool and breezy in the south end [of the county] near Carneros," says Sebastiani, and on its west side, "you get some influence from the northernmost part of the San Pablo Bay,

The Watmaugh Ranch vineyard in Sonoma County provides the lion's share of grapes for B Side's Chardonnay.



and fog and wind from the Petaluma Gap. Hard clay soils make the vines work and limit yields."The clone's characteristically small berries and the long growing season, meanwhile, increase skin contact while also allowing for extra hang time.

After the juice undergoes 80% malolactic fermentation, it ages 12 months on the

lees in 100% French oak (20% new) before resting an additional six months in stainless steel. The resulting wine has a complex bouquet, a palate abundant in ripe fruit and vivacious acidity, and a creamy mouthfeel that leads to a silky finish.

A multifaceted wine such as this pairs well with a wide array of dishes, according to William Lewis, a managing partner and sommelier at Southern California's The Winery Restaurant & Wine Bar. Its three locations in La Jolla, Tustin, and Newport Beach offer regional contemporary cuisine, and the menus can be venturesome, featuring dishes made with wild game like elk, buffalo, boar, ostrich, and alligator; fresh opah and ono, meanwhile, is flown in from Hawaii.

Lewis has had B Side wines on his lists for over three years now, and of the many dishes he pairs with them, he finds that B Side's Chardonnay best complements The Winery's mahi-mahi, served with Gewürztraminer butter and fruit chutney, as well as the lobster risotto special with grilled fresh corn and sun-dried tomatoes. "The wine's richness pairs well with both but has acidity to stay with the chutney and cuts through the heaviness of the risotto," he explains.

While they trend toward adventurous, B Side's tactics have proven auspicious: The brand appeases not only consumers' palates but also their pocketbooks by offering all three of its selections at price points just shy of \$20. B Side has seen 74% growth in depletions in California this year to date, compared with 59% in Florida, and in the past six months, it's experienced 36% growth in overall sales.

"The velocity is proving that consumers are repeat purchasing the brand," says Gomez, adding that B Side also expanded distribution and "got a lot of great authorization in California with Safeway/Albertsons and Ralphs and in Florida with Publix, [which] have been big supporters." Meanwhile, to boost its social-media presence, B Side has teamed up with influencers in music and wine, bringing the two spheres together to introduce music aficionados to its portfolio.

They satiate different kinds of thirsts, but good wine and good music share an ability to invoke deeply felt emotions: It could be said that in pairing the two, one heightens the effect of the other. There's that old adage about music being food for the soul—now you can give it a drink, too. **SJ**



William Lewis is a managing partner and sommelier at Southern California's The Winery Restaurant & Wine Bar.

Le Comptoir owners Stephen Bouillez and Susannah Dempsey at their restaurant in San Rafael, CA. Rhône Valley Vineyards Restaurant Weeks in San Francisco culminated in a well-attended party in Le Comptoir's épicerie.



The Rhône Parade

TOP INDUSTRY TALENTS PARTICIPATE IN **RHÔNE VALLEY VINEYARDS RESTAURANT WEEKS** IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Alexander Rubin



Tara Patrick, Wine Director at Mourad in San Francisco.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, enophiles in San Francisco were treated to a series of happy hours featuring a fascinating array of wines from the Rhône Valley. All over the city, the two-week series ushered in a wave of consumer interest in the French region, culminating in a closing fête across the Golden Gate Bridge at Le Comptoir—an authentic French bistro in San Rafael that's owned by husband-and-wife team Stephen Bouillez and Susannah Dempsey.

Highlights throughout the series included a pairing menu at Michelin-starred Coi featuring the savory and spicy **Alain Graillet 2016 Crozes-Hermitage**; the floral, mineral-driven **Philippe Pacalet 2016 Cornas**; and the **Paul Jaboulet-Aîné 2006 Domaine de Saint Pierre Cornas**. At The Morris, owner Paul Einbund showcased a stunning lineup that included the **Julien Cécillon 2015 Crozes-Hermitage**, the **Domaine Louis Chêze 2013 Saint-**

Joseph, and the **Domaine Champet 2017 La Viallière Côte-Rôtie**. And Laura Magu, owner of popular Lafayette spot Rêve Bistro, served up a flight of six wines that included one of my all-time favorites: the juicy and spicy **Domaine Lavau 2017 Tavel Rosé**.

Consumers and trade members alike agree that the Rhône Valley is a gold mine when it comes to quality and value, but it still takes dedicated sommeliers and beverage directors to actively highlight the region's diversity. Most are up for the task given that the Bay Area is experiencing an apogee of American culinary achievement—more than 60 restaurants here have Michelin stars—and that diners are increasingly open to discovery.

"When we started, about half of our list was American wine," said Bouillez, "but that's down to maybe 18% because of the demand for European wines; most of

that is French, with plenty of Rhône. It's very rewarding to introduce someone to something new."

Fortunately, that's not too difficult. On average, the Rhône annually produces the equivalent of 100 Olympic-size pools of wine, and at least 20 of those are full of cru-level offerings from the Southern and Northern Rhône Valley. Needless to say, that's a lot of delicious wine.

North to South at Mourad

Tara Patrick, Wine Director at the Michelin-starred Mourad in San Francisco, recently returned from a trip to the Rhône, where one visit made quite the impression. "**Domaine de L'Oratoire Saint Martin**, a producer in Cairanne, a newer AOC in the Southern Rhône, is an advocate of organic viticulture," she explained. "They adhere to traditional methods of winemaking in a region where many were racing to embrace the latest trends of vinification and viticulture."

During Mourad's happy hour, Patrick featured the 2014 vintage of the winery's Grenache-based blend **Réserve des Seigneurs**. "It incorporates Syrah and

fan of the region's wines because of "how incredibly versatile, food-friendly, and approachably priced" they can be—especially Northern Rhône whites, she said. As for the reds, "our cuisine incorporates lots of Middle Eastern and North African spice blends with lots of dried fruits, the desiccated nature of which pairs well with the ripe flavors of spicy, full-fruited Southern Rhône reds," she added.

"The Magic of the Rhône"

The closing party at Le Comptoir was a lively one, with roughly 75 guests packing into the restaurant's épicerie. There, they eyed the rare wheels of imported French Comté, gourmet mustards, and sea salts while sampling bites from passed plates and sipping five show-stopping Rhône wines: the vivid, bright, and floral-driven **Domaine du Séminaire 2017 Fleur du Viognier Côtes du Rhône**; the dark-berried **Domaine Santa Duc 2015 Les Vieilles Vignes**; the **Domaine de la Tauverelle 2017 La Truffière**, a Grenache from 70-year-old vines with warm red plum, raspberry compote, and good acidity; and two powerhouse closers—the mouth-fill-



*The lineup of Côte du Rhône wines featured during the Mourad happy hour, including the standout **Domaine de L'Oratoire Saint Martin** from Cairanne.*



Côte du Rhône wines on display in Le Comptoir's épicerie.

Mourvèdre from two single-vineyard sites and is an incredibly expressive Côte du Rhône red—it's also a total steal," she said, adding that it's offered for \$66 a bottle at the restaurant.

Patrick, who features 40–50 Rhône selections on Mourad's list, is an outspoken

ing **Château Pégau 2015 Cuvée Maclura Côte du Rhône**, infused with notes of cherry, pepper, and herbs, and the super-complex, smoky, mineral-tinged **Domaine des Bosquets 2015 Gigondas**.

Bouillez and Dempsey opened Le Comptoir three years ago, a decade after

they established Gamine in San Francisco's Marina/Cow Hollow neighborhood. "Most of our customers have never looked at our wine list," said Bouillez. "They trust us to choose for them," added Dempsey. The two are perfect complements: The fiercely opinionated Bouillez, full of stories with great punchlines, is balanced by Dempsey's quiet, astute gaze.

Bouillez grew up 40 minutes south of the Rhône and touts the region's versatility: "You go from GSM blends to fat, jammy Syrah and lean, precise Viognier," he says, adding that both he and Dempsey are big believers in the hand sell. "With Rhône, people get stuck on GSM, but there's so much more—just taste the [expletive] wine!"

Considering Bouillez is pals with leading Rhône winemaker Jean-Luc Colombo and friendly with producers throughout the Rhône, I've learned to pay attention to any wine he puts in front of me—from big-name appellations to under-\$15 jewels, many of which he stocks in the épicerie.

Among the guests at Le Comptoir was Jennifer Estevez, owner and founder of local marketing agency OMvino. She said Rhône wines have a strong presence on her wine-club app Palate Club "because of the amount of diversity they bring to the table," but as usual, Bouillez got the last word: "The magic of the Rhône," he said, "is the simplicity of it—and the complexity of it." S|

{ chile }

Meet Mr. Carménère

**VIÑA CONCHA Y
TORO WINEMAKER
MARCIO RAMÍREZ HAS
A WAY WITH CHILE'S
SIGNATURE GRAPE**

"Getting Carménère right is tricky," said Evan Goldstein, MS, during a seminar on the grape at the Chile Uncorked conference, held last June in New Orleans by Wines of Chile: Revealing its purity at peak ripeness while honoring its herbal character requires experience and sensitivity. "But when you do, Chile is probably the best place in the world for it." Doubtless nobody knew that better than the winemakers joining him on the panel—including Marcio Ramírez, familiarly known as "Mr. Carménère."

While overseeing Viña Concha y Toro's second-oldest cellar, located in the Peumo Vineyard of the Cachapoal Valley, Ramírez also happens to maintain quite a robust Instagram account (@marcio.ramirez.winemaker) detailing his work from vine to bottle. And anyone in the international wine community who remains on the fence about Chile's oft-misunderstood signature red grape would do well to follow him and see it through the loving eyes that earned him his nickname.

Winemaker Marcio Ramírez, aka "Mr. Carménère," oversees Viña Concha y Toro's Cachapoal Valley facility.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FETZER VINEYARDS

"I laughed when I heard it the first time, and it still makes me smile," he recalls. "About seven years ago, some visitors were meeting my winemaking team in Peumo. I was introduced as 'Mr. Carménère' as a way to describe my role within Viña Concha y Toro, where we have many winemakers. The name stayed with me because I have been working with Carménère for nearly 18 years . . . Around 70% of the wines I am responsible for are Carménère."

As someone with "a natural affinity" for the wine it produces—"I love to drink it," he admits—Ramírez considers himself lucky to work with Peumo fruit in particular, noting that "the Peumo Vineyard seems to be an ideal home for Carménère." Of its 1,600 planted acres, about 850 are devoted to the variety, which grows in deep alluvial soils on vines (about 25% of them own-rooted) that are buffered from winds off the Andes and off the Pacific by hills to the east and west, respectively. "These beneficial conditions mean the dry season is long enough and warm enough for Carménère to reach full ripeness" by May, "the equivalent of November in North America," Ramírez explains. But conditions aside, "the Carménère vines in Peumo are old enough that we know them very well, and we can manage the canopy precisely during the growing season for an excellent harvest."

It's then that he crafts his varietal wines under various labels, including Carmín de Peumo, Gran Reserva Serie Riberas, Marques de Casa Concha, and Terrunyo, which differ mainly in the amount of Carménère they contain (at least 85% by law) and the parcels within Peumo from which the fruit is sourced. The Cachapoal facility was itself renovated in the mid-2000s with increased production of the variety in mind: Set close to the vineyard so "the grapes go from the vine to the tank in almost no time," in Ramírez's words, it's outfitted with an elevator to take the bins up to a mezzanine constructed from used cask wood and handmade wooden nails before the "quick and accurate" selection of clusters is fed into the gravity-flow system.

The ultimate goal, says Ramírez, is to obtain "very good color, then flavors including many red fruits and some blueberries and spices, and finally tannins that are soft and round. Vegetal notes—which were common in the past when Carménère was treated like Merlot in the vineyard—should be subtle and integrated, if detected at all. At Viña Concha y Toro, we recognize that Carménère loves the sun, dislikes the cold, and wants to be farmed in a way that minimizes the green-tasting pyrazines that are common to Bordeaux varieties."

That said, the somms and buyers attending Chile Uncorked enjoyed a spirited debate about those pyrazines, with many defending them as the grape's inimitable calling card. It's a conversation that will no doubt continue throughout the year—2019 being the 25th anniversary of the discovery by French ampelographer Jean-Michel Boursiquot that Chilean "Merlot" was actually Carménère—and culminate on November 24, which Wines of Chile has declared World Carménère Day. Concha y Toro's plans for celebration remain under wraps, though its communication team guarantees they "plan to make a big splash." No doubt Mr. Carménère himself will be capturing all the action on Instagram. 

Two to Try

Serie Riberas 2017 Carménère Gran Reserva, DO Peumo, Ribera del Cachapoal, Chile (\$17)

On the nose, earth, dusty herbs, and the slightest (delightful) hint of smoky jalapeño mingle with the blueberry compote that also glosses the palate. It's mixed with sun-warmed raspberry and all sorts of curry-bright spice, plus a touch of oregano and well-integrated oak. The lively acid calls out for a robust lamb stew.

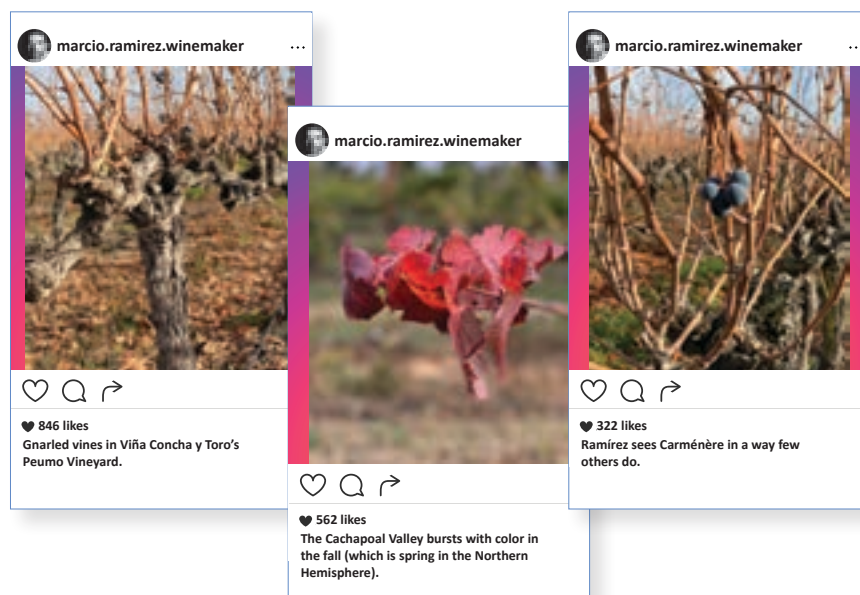


Terrunyo 2017 Carménère Block 17, DO Peumo, Cachapoal Valley, Chile (\$40)

According to winemaker Marcio Ramírez, this dry-farmed wine has been "made from the same block for 20 years," with "very French, very clear results." Indeed, the Bordelaise character is unmistakable, with darker fruit abounding on the nose and palate, where the balance between plush tannins and juicy acid seems effortless through a finish that allows for a smattering of cedar and mixed-pepper spice.



A trio of Instagram images from Ramírez, whose handle is @marcio.ramirez.winemaker.





Cranking Cava to Another Level

SPAIN'S **PERE VENTURA** OFFERS BUBBLIES THAT CAN COMPETE WITH CHAMPAGNE *by Lars Leicht*

THESE DAYS, BUBBLY means much more than just Champagne and Prosecco. Enter Cava, Spain's signature sparkling wine: Thanks to recent regulation changes, this world-class appellation has become more prestigious than ever.

A royal decree from King Felipe VI set off the 2017 establishment of a new prestige category for Spanish bubbly known as Cava de Paraje Calificado. This designation identifies "qualified" small parcels with exacting criteria (see sidebar on page 85) to produce wines that must meet the approval of a tasting committee. Currently, only nine Cava de Paraje Calificado from just six wineries bear the designation's seal of approval. Arguably, these producers and their strictly managed "grower Cavas" have leveled the playing field with Champagne, and among them, Pere Ventura could be considered Cava's center forward.

"I believe that Cava made well—with respect for the vines, land, and people—has limitless potential," Ventura says.

"As a member of the fourth generation of Cava producers, I consider myself responsible for continuing the family tradition, preserving it, and improving upon it for future generations."

Ventura founded his eponymous winery (Pere is the Catalan equivalent of Peter) in 1992 in the heartland of Cava: Sant Sadurní d'Anoia in Catalonia, just west of Barcelona. "My goal has always been to craft Cava that people would drink to celebrate the important moments in their lives," says Ventura. "Being a part of these special moments is a privilege that we take very seriously. We work every day to ensure the quality of our Cava exceeds the expectations of our consumers."

The crown jewel of the Pere Ventura line, of course, is among those that have earned the distinguished Paraje Calificado designation: Can Bas, which hails from a venerable estate that Ventura acquired in 2011. The category specifies that vines must be a minimum of ten years old and

planted on a single estate with an extraction yield of no more than 48 hectoliters of must per hectare (1.4 kilos of grapes per vine); harvest, meanwhile, must be performed exclusively by hand. The wine is required to be vinified on site and must always be vintage-dated.

Ventura, however, holds Can Bas to even higher standards. The vineyard yield is 3,500 kilograms per hectare—less than half of the maximum yield of 8,000—and the wine ages for a minimum of 42 months in bottle, at least half a year more than the requisite 36 months. It's also almost a third drier than the required Brut maximum of 12 grams per liter of residual sugar; at 4.5 grams per liter, Can Bas actually qualifies as an Extra Brut. And although Cava allows for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to be used alongside indigenous grapes, Pere Ventura's Paraje Calificado estate is planted exclusively to native Macabeo and Xarel·lo in equal proportions.

The Pere Ventura 2014 Gran Vintage Paraje Calificado Can Bas, the first vintage to bear the designation, will be released in the U.S. in early 2020. It joins two other vintage-dated prestige Cavas in the winery's lineup: the Pere Ventura 2014 Vintage Rosé Gran Reserva Brut and the Pere Ventura 2014 Vintage Gran Reserva Brut.

Ventura's propensity for going above and beyond applies to more than his prestige wines. In addition to maintaining overall lower yields and generally lengthier bottle-aging times across the Pere Ventura range, he farms all of his grapes organically and uses indigenous yeast whenever possible. His flagship collection, Tresor, represents the essence of the Penedès region and includes a Rosé and a Reserva Brut, now vintage-dated beginning with 2016.

The Tresor line emphasizes sustainability in both the vineyard—where the traditional Penedès grapes are hand-harvested—and the winery. The Tresor Reserva Brut, the foundation of Pere Ventura's U.S. portfolio, is endowed with freshness from the Parellada grape, which is added to a base of Xarel·lo and Macabeo. Finally, the Tresor Rosé Brut is made exclusively with Trepat—imparting a lively fruitiness—using the saignée technique, drawing a portion of the must off the skins after 12–18 hours of low-temperature maceration.

Furthering the winery's ties to the region it calls home, Ventura appointed Catalanian native Marta Sanvicente as his deputy winemaker. "As a native winemaker, I feel very privileged to share our indigenous grapes and unique terroir with the world," says Sanvicente. "Catalonia is an economic powerhouse. Our capital, Barcelona, is a true cosmopolitan center of commerce and trendsetting, but what I'm most proud of is our land. Blessed by high elevations and kissed by the Mediterranean sun, it offers the perfect conditions to craft world-class wines. At Pere Ventura, we have made it our mission to raise the bar of quality and sophistication in the Cava segment, and we've only just begun!"

Located near the banks of the Anoia River, the winery is outfitted with contemporary equipment despite resembling a country hacienda. Three levels of chambered cellars, or cavas, extend seven stories beneath the facility.

Ventura has his own deep roots in Catalonia's tradition and terroir: His great-grandfather, Manuel Montserrat Font, helped produce the first bottles of Cava. Ventura firmly believes that wines of quality and elegance best reflect the essence of his native region. "Heritage is not just what you can receive," he says, "but above all else, what you can share." SJ



The wine from this "qualified parcel" within the Can Bas estate is now designated as Cava de Paraje Calificado.

The Parameters of the Cava Paraje Calificado DO

- Qualified small area (single parcel)
- Maximum yield of 8,000 kilograms per hectare (must yield of 48 hectoliters per hectare)
- Vines older than ten years
- Estate-bottled
- Minimum of 36 months aging on the lees
- Single-vintage
- Dry style (Brut, Extra Brut, or Brut Nature)
- Subject to blind tasting by a panel of experts, with an eye toward the expression of the singular characteristics of each paraje

Tasting Notes by Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Meridith May

Pere Ventura 2016 Tresor Reserva Brut (\$18) A perfume of brioche and lemon oil. Dry on the palate, the bubbles quickly dissipate and leave traces of chamomile flowers and barely ripened pineapple. Complex with gravitas. **92**



Pere Ventura Tresor Rosé Brut (\$18) An orange twist on the nose joins white flowers and a hint of melon. The bubbles are light on the tongue, reinforcing notes of persimmon and tangerine, with a savory turn on sweet basil. **92**



Pere Ventura 2014 Vintage Gran Reserva Brut (\$62) An elegant nose of honeysuckle, buttery bread dough, and poached pear. The palate gleams with lemon-lime, butterscotch, and salted stone fruit. Gorgeous from start to finish. **94**



Pere Ventura 2014 Vintage Rosé Gran Reserva Brut (\$62) Alerts the nose with a perfumed flintiness guided by biscuit and peach pit. On the palate, the peach comes alive alongside underlying earthiness and minerality. **94**



Pere Ventura 2014 Gran Vintage Paraje Calificado Can Bas (\$87) A blend of Macabeo and Xarel·lo from five plots of old vines. Aromas of cashew, fennel, and peach are accented by grassy herbs. The fine beads are lithe and soft, melting instantaneously with a release of salty lime and Golden Delicious apple. **96**



{ climatic effects }

the
zen
of SLH Winemaking

**HAHN FAMILY WINES' PINOT NOIR IS THE
PRODUCT OF UNIQUE TERROIR AND AN
ENLIGHTENED WINEMAKING APPROACH**

*Hahn Family Wines' Smith and
Hook vineyards in the Santa
Lucia Highlands AVA.*



Director of Winemaking Paul Clifton, who joined Hahn Family Wines 17 years ago, is known for his broad-minded approach to expressing the terroir of the Santa Lucia Highlands.

story by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Michelle Alexandra

Starting in late September and lasting well into October—right around the time the Pinot Noir in the Santa Lucia Highlands (SLH) AVA is reaching its full potential and phenolic ripeness—Hahn Family Wines Director of Winemaking Paul Clifton is also thinking about surfing. “As the days get shorter, we experience the reverse of what normally happens in the valley,” he says. “You’ll have this offshore flow, which creates cooler vineyard conditions and better surf.”

Thanks to this passion, which relies so heavily on a relationship to changing conditions in his environment, Clifton is perhaps a bit more in tune with the weather than other winemakers are—and in the SLH, the atmospheric conditions are impossible not to notice. Around noon each day, wind

blows in from Monterey Bay and charges south at an average maximum speed of 15 miles per hour through the region, creating a funnel effect. (Gusts often reach speeds up to 25 miles per hour.) The further south you are in the 18-mile strip along the Santa Lucia mountain range, the windier it gets.

“How that plays a role in the vines—and, ultimately, the wine—is that we get a lot of evaporation with higher wind speed off of the leaves,” Clifton explains. “It stops photosynthesis so there’s no more sugar being pumped into the grapes, and they’re hanging there in the sun, building up a thicker layer of skin as result.” This thicker skin in turn yields a wine with deep color and structure, accounting for one of the reasons SLH Pinot Noirs stand out as vari-

etally expressive, complex, and balanced.

Upon a recent visit to the winery, Clifton and I stood high on a hill in the Smith Vineyard, facing east as we looked down onto the Salinas Valley. This very spot won over Nicky Hahn in the late 1970s, leading him to become one of the pioneers of the area. He had the money to invest anywhere he wanted, but according to Clifton, Hahn wanted to start from scratch. After he purchased the property in 1979, he launched Smith & Hook in 1980 before opening Hahn Family Wines a decade later. The following year, in an effort to set the area apart from the rest of Monterey County, Hahn led a coalition of fellow family growers in the area to establish the SLH AVA.

Hahn had a definitive vision for what the Santa Lucia Highlands could be. As seen on the hill, the pattern of green agricultural plots and scattered, temporarily brown vacant lots in the valley below

resembles a mighty river, with the fertile soil underneath its surface making all of this growth possible. On the way up to what Clifton called “the money spot,” we stopped at a narrow pass, where he pointed out the large number of rocks in the lighter-colored, gritty-looking wall that cuts from the hill. “Up here, it’s granulated and sandy,” said Clifton of the Chualar loam. Formally defined as “deep sandy loams occurring on alluvial fans and stream terraces at elevations of 50–2,000 feet,” it provides excellent drainage for the notoriously fussy Pinot Noir grapes.

Reaching 1,280 feet above sea level,

the Smith Vineyard is the highest of Hahn Family Wines’ estate properties. Just below it is the neighboring Hook Vineyard; another site, Doctor’s Vineyard, lies a mile north, and even further in that direction is the Lone Oak estate vineyard. In total, the winery sustainably farms over 650 acres—an impressive and commanding 10% of the appellation—400 acres of which is Pinot Noir, with 20 different clones planted. One could argue that the Hahn Estate SLH Pinot Noir, a blend of fruit from these properties, is the most accurate reflection of the AVA that can be found in the entire valley.

As we descended from the money spot in the Smith Vineyard, conversation drifted from the benefits of targeted irrigation (greater control of vigor and berry size); Clifton’s 17-year tenure as winemaker and the genuine love he expresses for the Hahn family (he describes the late Nicky Hahn as a father figure); and his heartfelt belief in the SLH AVA as a Salinas Valley native. He also expressed the deep appreciation he has for his team and his commitment to honoring Hahn’s mission to overdeliver.

One might think that after spending nearly two decades making the same wine in the place where he was born,

“As the days get shorter, we experience the reverse of what normally happens in the valley. You’ll have this offshore flow, which creates cooler vineyard conditions.”

—Paul Clifton, Hahn Family Wines Director of Winemaking



Clifton would have his opinions and process locked down, but the thing I found as refreshing as the cold waters of Monterey Bay is how open-minded he remains. Perhaps these are attributes he can credit to his love of surfing: a clear mind and all the advantages that come with it, as well as a heightened sense of energy and presence. For him, it's almost all about the mental clarity. "Being very keyed in in terms of the weather, I think that's the linking factor," Clifton responded when asked how winemaking resembles his favorite pastime. "It's simply the best place to let my mind convene with the sense of place." SJ

The view from the Hahn Estate private tasting room high above the Salinas Valley.

In addition to the Hahn SLH Pinot Noir, the winery offers single-vineyard-selection Lucienne Pinot Noirs from its Smith, Doctor's, and Lone Oak estate properties.



Tuned-In Winemaking

Tasting Notes by Managing Editor Jessie Birschbach

The SLH may be known for producing rich Pinots, but Hahn Family Wines' Lucienne expressions purposefully show a more restrained side that seeks harmony and elegance. Director of Winemaking Paul Clifton believes the key lies in finding the perfect balance of hang time. "We're farming a lot of acreage, [which is] very complicated, but if you wait too long, you'll probably get too extracted [and] too much dehydration," he says, adding that getting the fruit off the vine at the ideal time is his "main concentration."

The wines are produced using identical methods: The grapes are all destemmed and cold-soaked for several days, and the free-run juice is inoculated with commercial yeast before it spends up to 16 months in 40% new French oak barrels.

2017 Lucienne Lone Oak Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands Über bright with briary spice, this expression from Hahn Estate's northernmost vineyard in the SLH mingles sharp notes of cherry and raspberry with wild roses, clove, allspice, and a savory thread of tangy mustard seed.

2017 Lucienne Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands The bright red-fruit core is surrounded by ripe plum, fresh pine, earthy mushroom, and candied orange peel. The Doctor's Vineyard is a bit more substantial in body compared to the other single-vineyard Lucienne bottlings. This site is centrally located in the SLH AVA, with 11-by-7-foot spacing between rows providing more sun exposure.

2017 Lucienne Smith Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands A mélange of red, blue, and purple fruits: ripe raspberries, plums, and blueberries plus soft sandalwood against a citrusy, slightly resinous background that finishes with plum-skin tartness. Planted in well-drained, rocky alluvial soils, this 131-acre property varies from 590 to 1,280 feet in elevation. A few offbeat Pinot Noir clones are planted here, among them Calera and Mt. Eden.

2017 Hahn SLH Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands Sapid and addictive, this Pinot Noir is a blend of three of Hahn Family Wines' estate vineyards from the northern, central, and southern areas of the SLH. Dark cherry and cranberry are tinged with dried, sweet marjoram and wisps of soft eucalyptus. I'm not sure there's a better Pinot Noir for the price.

Schooled in Sonoma

SHARING THE HIGHLIGHTS FROM WSET WINE EDUCATION WEEK

THE SOMM JOURNAL'S Global Wine Editor, Deborah Parker Wong, DWSET ('09), recently hosted three professional mixers marking the 50th anniversary of the London-based Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET). Parker Wong teamed up with three Sonoma wineries—Balletto Vineyards, Sangiacomo Wines, and McEvoy Ranch—in welcoming WSET alumni and students as well as members of the trade to taste and network during Wine Education Week, held September 9–15. Three lucky attendees were awarded access to a Level 2 online certification course.

The world's largest wine educator, WSET has more than 700 approved program providers that deliver its wine, spirits, and saké certification programs in 70 countries and 15 languages. Parker Wong offers both instructor-led and online Level 2 and Level 3 certification courses and specializes in bringing WSET training to winery staff on site. 



Pictured from left to right at Balletto Vineyards are vintner Jacqueline Balletto and winemaker Anthony Beckman with raffle winner Julie Pedroncelli St. John, herself a third-generation vintner.



Raffle winner Regina Baker (left) accepts her Level 2 study pack from McEvoy Ranch Event Manager Shannon Frances, who earned her Level 2 certification this year.



Deborah Parker Wong, DWSET ('09), offers WSET's Level 2 and Level 3 certifications in wine both as instructor-led and online classes.



Raffle winner Suzanne Martin with winegrower and vintner Steve Sangiacomo and Meghan Delzell, Director of Sales and Hospitality for Sangiacomo Wines. The Sangiacomo family celebrates 50 years of winegrowing this year.



Pictured from left to right at McEvoy Ranch are WSET alumni Camille Wong; Kimberly Charles, DWSET ('09); Carol LaBranche (L2 '19); Bill LaBranche; and Regina Baker.



Winegrower and vintner John Balletto shares his family's journey from tending vegetables to growing over 800 acres of wine grapes.

PHOTOS: DEBORAH PARKER WONG

DISCOVER EUROPEAN QUALITY WINES: GARNACHA & GRENACHE IS ALWAYS THE PERFECT PAIRING

In European culture, wine isn't just for sipping—it's for sharing. No other wine begs to be shared among friends and family at the dinner table as European Garnacha (a.k.a. Grenache), a grape that commands attention for its wide range of food-friendly

With red, white, and grey variants, Garnacha is a remarkably diverse grape. Some of the the best European Garnacha are included under the PDO and PGI quality schemes of the EU, that includes a remarkable variety of fine wines that range from light to full, dry to sweet, still to sparkling, white, red, or rosé. An expressive grape, Grenache's aromas, flavors, and textures are wide - ranging, particularly when the grape is grown in the schist, limestone, and clay soils of its European birthplace in northeastern Spain and France's Roussillon. The pairing possibilities are endless.

The moderate tannins of bold, red Garnacha wines, Europe's most prominent style, classically match with rich dishes like braised meats and hearty stews, while lighter reds work well with summer barbecue or roasted chicken. Sparkling Grenache is an intriguing and delicious option to welcome guests for a dinner party, pairing well with light bites and appetizers. Dry rosés and light whites are also excellent dinner party wines, transitioning from easy-drinking, pre-meal aperitifs to versatile matches for fresh salads, white fish, or even spicy tacos. Try structured Garnacha whites or the oxidative style of dry rancio with umami - laden foods like morel mushrooms or salty cheeses.

Grenache's fortified wines can make for some of the most exciting food pairings, working with sweet and savory dishes alike. Sweet white Garnacha cools down the palate from spicy international cuisines like Szechuan or Thai, while fortified sweet red Grenache is a unique pairing for rich, dark chocolate desserts.

No matter what's on the table, European Garnacha is the wine to pair with it — from start to finish.



The content of this advertisement represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission and the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (CHAFAEA) do not accept any responsibility for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

SPARKLING WINES



FRESH AND YOUTHFUL
Fruity and flowery notes
Desserts, Sushi

LIGHT BODIED WHITES



LIGHT, CRISP, MINERAL
Apple, Peach, Lemon, Quince, Saline



Raw Shellfish, Summer Salads, Scallop Risotto

FULL BODIED WHITES



PLUMP, RICH, ROUNDED
Citrus, Oils, Honey, Flowers, Currants, Melon



Fried Chicken Basque Style, Glazed Ham, Fried Seafood and Aioli

ROSÉ WINES



DELICIOUS, FRUITY, REFRESHING
Strawberry, Watermelon, Rhubarb, Roses



Grilled Tuna, Chicken Salad, Charcuterie

LIGHT BODIED REDS



FRESH, FRUITY, BRIGHT
Strawberry, Raspberry, Cherry, Pepper



Indian Curries, Burgers with Smoked Gouda, Chorizo in Red Wine

FULL BODIED REDS



FULL, ROBUST, CONCENTRATED
Blackberry, Currant, Allspice, Anise, Tobacco



BBQ Ribs, Grilled Sausages, Lamb Chops

FORTIFIED SWEET WINES



FRUITY, GENEROUS, SWEET
Dried Fruits, Jams, Leather, Coffee, Cocoa



Chocolate, Desserts, Fruits, Cigars



CAMPAIGN FINANCED WITH AID FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS CAMPAIGNS THAT PROMOTE HIGH QUALITY AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS



Fifth-generation vintner and viticulturist Niki Wentz sits in front of the wine wall at Wentz Vineyards' newly designed Vineyard Table & Tasting Lounge in Livermore, CA.

DEBUTING A NEW LOOK
AND MENU,

WENTE VINEYARDS'

IN-HOUSE RESTAURANT
OVERHAULS ITS WINE AND
FOOD EXPERIENCE AS A
TASTING LOUNGE

A FRESH FACE

story by Michelle Ball
photos by Jeremy Ball



Wine flights offered in the new lounge include a full lineup of Wente Chardonnays.

Contemporary dining can now be found in Livermore, the Bay Area's backyard wine country. The former Restaurant at Wente Vineyards has shed its formal decor, broadening its appeal to younger patrons who are seeking something different than the classic fine-dining experience.

Leading the effort to launch the new Vineyard Table & Tasting Lounge was fifth-generation vintner and viticulturist Niki Wente: "I was the advocate for a younger generation," she says. "When I go out to dinner with my girlfriends, we don't go to a white-tablecloth restaurant. That's just not the vibe you want on a casual weekday."

The space, whose new name evokes the sharing of food and wine in a relaxed, communal setting, has been completely transformed, with the ceiling raised to reveal dark wooden beams and the walls refinished in smooth white plaster. At the center of the main dining room, a custom-built metal wine wall towering 9.5 feet high boldly displays more than 700 bottles. The lounge itself is fresh

and modern, yet it pays homage to the Wente family's history with large-format prints of old labels such as the 1945 Grey Riesling as well as a display of mature Petite Sirah vines that were pulled after a recent replanting.

The changes venture beyond the cosmetic: The new tasting lounge has tailored its menu and interior design to offer multiple guest experiences. Because the property is technically a tasting room, visitors can order flights of Wente Vineyards wines and share small bites before procuring bottles to take home. Diners can also enjoy retail pricing for the winery's expressions "by the bottle," avoiding the typical restaurant markup. "We don't want people to come just to have full meals," Wente says. "We want them to come for appetizers, wine, cocktails, post-golf—we want everyone to relax and enjoy themselves."

Seasoned sommelier Jorge Tinoco, who joined the restaurant in 1996, believes it was ready for a change. "I think times were different [then]. We're going through generations at this point, but we still have great food and wine—I think that's universal," Tinoco explains, adding that his role will remain focused on finding the right wine to suit both the dish and the customer's palate. Although Wente Vineyards is an estate-driven winery first, the property still boasts a cellar with over 1,000 domestic and imported offerings for patrons looking for alternative options.

The new menu was designed by chef de cuisine Joshua Leidreiter, who worked with Tinoco to ensure the offerings were consistently wine-friendly. Hired in 2010, Leidreiter has served as the righthand man to many former chefs, learning techniques and ideas from each. He and Tinoco were also roommates at one point, which gave them the opportunity to learn from one another. "We've had many long nights of tasting food and wine together, so I feel like we're pretty calibrated [to one another], even more so than some of the chefs that we've had in the past," says Tinoco. "We can sit down and talk about the bitterness, the acidity, the sweetness of a dish, and he is willing to modify if needed, which I think is very important."

The menu is divided into small bites such as fresh mozzarella and olives for



Sommelier Jorge Tinoco of the new Vineyard Table & Tasting Lounge at Wente Vineyards.

those looking for a snack with their flight; shared plates such as heirloom tomato salad and smoked pork tenderloin; and desserts including peach ice pops served with Wente Vineyards Sparkling Brut. A large proportion of the seasonal fruits, vegetables, and herbs used are grown in the winery's organic garden; they're tended by longtime Master Gardener Diane Dovholuk, who works closely with Leidreiter and Tinoco to create inspired recipes.

Every facet of the new restaurant is working toward the same ultimate goal: helping patrons easily customize their culinary experience while showcasing Wente Vineyards' expansive portfolio. "At the end of the day, we are a wine company first," says Wente's older sister Aly, who serves as the winery's Senior Brand Manager. "So what we really want to do is focus on the wines and how they pair with food, because that's all part of the wine-country experience." SJ

A PAIRING PRIMER



Tomato Salad with the 2018 Niki's Small Lot Pinot Noir Rosé from Arroyo Seco (\$30)

Colorful heirloom tomatoes and spicy arugula with gypsy pepper romesco, saba vinegar, and pan-seared halloumi are a stunning complement to this light, aromatic rosé. The crunchy, sweet tomatoes and salty, caramelized cheese accentuate the ripe raspberry notes in the wine while sharing a common thread of acidity. The resinous character of the pine nuts and fresh garden herbs add additional accents to the rosé's flavor profile.

Roasted Waluwu with the 2017 Riva Ranch Chardonnay from Arroyo Seco (\$22)

"The Riva Ranch is very Hawaiian with lots of tropical fruit notes," explains Wente Vineyards sommelier Jorge Tinoco of the synergistic pairing for the roasted Hawaiian waluwu, a buttery white fish. "This wine gives you the creaminess and texture to pair with it. It's just beautiful." Aged sur lie, the Chardonnay works in harmony with the nutty flavors found in the dish, while the creamy avocado puree and the texture of the fish mimic the wine's richness. The tomato potage adds a pleasant contrast and increases the overall brightness of the pairing.

Pork Belly with the 2017 Small Lot GSM (Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre) from Livermore Valley (\$55)

Tinoco says they decided to pair the crispy and succulent pork belly with the GSM blend because of its "beautiful red-fruit aromatics from the Grenache and texture from the Syrah and Mourvèdre." Served with a sweet and tangy pluto gastrique, the rich meat beckons for the dark, fleshy berry flavors found in this opulent expression, which leads with flavors of blackberries and mulling spices. The blistered shishito peppers add a pleasant herbaceous quality that contrasts well with the wine's jammy profile.

Good Fortune and GUERRILLA WARFARE

PEDRO GARCIA, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF U.S. AND CANADA FOR **FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS**, TALKS TENACITY AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE WORLD OF WINE

by Amanda M. Faison



Félix Solís Avantis' FYI wine is a modern nod to Spanish red blends. Note the non-traditional label.

PEDRO GARCIA IS on a mission to be the best: Ever since he took a job as a liquor-store stocker at the age of 20, he's been steadily making his mark on the industry. Now 18 years into his career, he's focused on getting more Americans to drink Spanish wine in his role as the Managing Director of U.S. and Canada for Félix Solís Avantis.

The SOMM Journal: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Pedro Garcia: I am originally from Miami, Florida. I'm a first-generation American from Cuban roots and happily married to the love of my life, Monica. We have a 2-year-old son named Benjamin who has overnight become the center of the universe for my entire family. I feel very blessed for all the opportunities, shortcomings, and mentors I've had thus far in my life and career. If it wasn't for all of them combined, I would not be the person I am today. Improving oneself in life only requires one mandatory ingredient: a genuine desire to be a better version of yourself every day. That's how I approach each day on a personal and professional level. My family always tells me I'm so fortunate to land in a profession that is travel, people, geography, and food all in one. I love everything about the adult-beverage industry.

How did you find your way into the wine business?

I was a stock boy at a fine wine shop in Pinecrest, Florida Vintage Liquors. I did that for three years and then got hired by [Republic National Distributing Company] into a grocery route. That's the boot camp of the business—you get up early to service, clean your shelves, and pack out. It's the best division for anyone new to get experience. You need to be on top of your game and develop a good work ethic. I spent two years in grocery and then I was promoted to the fine-wine side.

What was the learning curve like when you transitioned from grocery to fine wine?

I went from solely being focused on execution and manual labor on the grocery side to selling fine wine to accounts. I really had to talk about winemakers, terroir, the history, the region—it was extremely challenging,



Pictured from left to right at the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, CO: Pedro Garcia, Managing Director of U.S. and Canada for Félix Solís Avantis; Bruno Fernández Scrimieri, Senior Trade Commissioner for the Trade Commission of Spain in New York; Katrin Naelapaa, Director of Wines from Spain; Barclay Dodge, chef at Bosq; and Loli Moreno Navarro, Head of Sector-Food Department for the Trade Commission of Spain.

intimidating, and exciting all in one. There was no one under 40 and I was in my 20s. I had to step up and learn fast because of who I was calling on. That, in short, is the story of my life: getting thrown to the wolves and learning on my feet via a tenacious attitude. It was guerrilla warfare.

After that, you worked your way into the on-premise side, servicing hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. How did you eventually find your way to Félix Solís Avantis?

It's unusual for someone to have experience though every facet of the business. I had a very unique 360-degree perspective. I met Art Massolo, an industry veteran, and he introduced to me to my first supplier opportunity with Pampa Beverages. I went from a wholesale position to a role as a national sales manager overnight. I spent four and a half years with Pampa Beverages developing and structuring the business plus building distributor relationships. Then I went to work for a Chilean family called Sur-Valles. Ten months into my employment, Art put me in touch with Félix Solís. He and Félix [owner of Félix Solís Avantis] had run into each other at ProWein, and Félix was asking Art if he knew of anyone

to spearhead and develop the U.S. market. If it wasn't for every single position I had held, I wouldn't have been ready.

In June, you hosted a Félix Solís tasting during the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen. How did that come to fruition?

This was my second year at Food & Wine. My first year I was blown away by how prestigious and well attended it was. There are wholesalers, consumers, and retailers to engage with, and media is there too. By the end of second day, I noticed that all these suppliers for wines, spirits, and beer were hosting side parties and tastings to capture new consumers and meet with and educate distributor partners. I knew then that I wanted to invest and come back. [This year] we wanted the event to be very focused—a tasting that highlighted our core portfolio [Editor's note: see sidebar]. It was a sprinkling of Félix Solís from all regions where we're active, paired with the amazing food at [Aspen restaurant] Bosq.

You've been with Félix Solís for about three years. It's the number-one producer of still wine in Spain, the sixth-largest winery by volume in the world, and second-largest family-owned wine

company next to Gallo. What do you see as the future of Spanish wine?

Spain is poised for growth. The reality is that the Spanish wine category is driven by sangrias and sparkling wines and extremely underdeveloped for still wines. Some of the best quality in the world is in Spain. We think consumers are going to continue to look for the best values in the world. A lot of sommeliers and buyers know the hidden gem is Spanish still wines. That's what we're trying to cultivate, instigate, and educate. *SJ*



Félix Solís Selections

The following wines were presented at the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen, Colorado:

- 2015 Arnegui Crianza, Rioja
- 2018 Arnegui Rosé, Rioja
- 2018 Blume Verdejo, Rueda
- 2013 Condado de Oriza Gran Reserva, Ribera del Duero
- 2014 Condado de Oriza Gran Reserva, Ribera del Duero
- 2017 FYI Red Blend
- Frissé Red, Castilla-La Mancha
- Frissé Rosé, Castilla-La Mancha
- 2012 Gran Bajoz, Zamora
- 2018 Pulpo, Rías Baixas
- Viña Albali Brut, Castilla-La Mancha
- 2011 Viña Albali Gran Reserva Selección Privada, Valdepeñas
- 2018 Viña San Juan Red, Castilla-La Mancha

WINE SPEAK PASO ROBLES

Schedule Revealed for January 2020



Wine Speak Paso Robles is set to return for a third annual campaign on January 14-16, 2020, advancing its momentum as a premier trade event featuring an all-star cast of Master Sommeliers, wine industry leaders and hospitality professionals. Wine Speak 2020 spans three days in the Paso Robles wine country, starting with two days of winemaker-sommelier panels and concluding with professional development seminars and workshops.

"Wine Speak is all about gathering luminaries from around the world to share their knowledge, wisdom and experience, so that everyone attending can have an opportunity to learn," said Master Sommelier Chuck Furuya, who co-founded Wine Speak with Amanda Wittstrom-Higgins.

SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

"Wines of The World" on January 14
At this public grand tasting, local chefs will present wine-friendly small plates and an international cast of winemakers will showcase some of their finest reserve and library bottlings. The aim is to give guests a sense of wonderment as they taste wines from Paso Robles, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Argentina, France and beyond.

"BYOB Dinner" on January 15
BYOB Dinner is an opportunity to gather with wine friends from near and far. The casual setting is ideal for mingling and meeting winemakers, sommeliers, wine professionals and other real wine lovers. Attendees bring bottles of their favorite wines to share—and everyone is always amazed at what they get to taste.

WINEMAKER & SOMMELIER HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 14

"Sense of Place" with Tegan Passalacqua (Turley Wine Cellars, Paso Robles) & Laura Catena (Bodega Catena Zapata, Argentina)

"Paso Robles Overview" with Jason Haas (Tablas Creek), Jordan Fiorentini (Epoch); Steve Peck (J. Lohr) and Mike Sinor (Ancient Peaks), moderated by Amanda Wittstrom Higgins (co-founder of Wine Speak / VP of Ancient Peaks)

"Talk Story" with Bruce Neyers (Neyers Vineyards), the Wine Yoda

"Talk Story" with Lionel Faury (Domaine Faury, Northern Rhône Valley, France)

JANUARY 15

"Inside/Outside—From the Wine Journalists' Point of View" with Matt Kettmann (Wine Enthusiast) and Randy Caparoso (The SOMM Journal), moderated by

Amanda Wittstrom Higgins (co-founder of Wine Speak / VP of Ancient Peaks)

"Dream Big, Darling—Wine from a Different Perspective" with Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon, moderated by Amanda Wittstrom Higgins (co-founder of Wine Speak / VP of Ancient Peaks / President and Founder of Dream Big Darling)

"Inside/Outside—Crazy Red Blends" with Stephan Asseo (L'Aventure, Paso Robles) and Emanuel Kemiji, Master Sommelier (Clos Pissarra, Priorat, Spain)

"Inside/Outside—Cabernet Sauvignon" with Thomas Brown (Rivers Marie, Napa Valley) and Fred Dame, Master Sommelier (DAOU, Paso Robles)

"Wine Speak is essential for anyone in the wine business or anyone who wants a peek behind the scenes. Listening to the combined wealth of knowledge of the professionals who share their stories gives great insight to today's relevant wine topics."

-MERIDITH MAY, SOMM JOURNAL & TASTING PANEL

JANUARY 14-16TH

FOR TICKETS AND COMPLETE EVENT DETAILS, VISIT WINESPEAKPASO.COM



A portion of the proceeds benefit the Dream Big Darling Foundation a non-profit 501C3 and all of the community charities it serves. The Dream Big Darling Foundation will be responsible in collecting all donations and ticket sales.



Precision and Nuance



Kristina Sazama, Wine Educator for Santa Margherita USA, reviews the Kettmeir pairings at Misirizzi in New York, NY.

A LUNCHEON AT MISIRIZZI IN NEW YORK CELEBRATES A KETTMEIR MILESTONE

story by David Ransom / photos by Doug Young

K

ettmeir Wines, one of northern Italy's most recognized brands, recently celebrated its 100th anniversary by holding an intimate luncheon for a lucky group of New York City's top sommeliers. The event, held at Misirizzi in the East Village, featured an array of wines from Kettmeir's portfolio paired with Tyrolean-inspired dishes representative of the brand's home region of Alto Adige.

Kettmeir, founded in Calders in 1919 by Giuseppe Kettmeir, has long been a leader in the production of quality wines from the verdant hills of Alto Adige, with a particular focus on the region's signature white varieties: Pinot Grigio, Pinot Bianco, and Müller Thurgau. These three wines were featured at the luncheon—as were a few special bottles from Kettmeir's Italian portfolio that are not currently being imported. Remarks on the wines were given by Kristina Sazama, Wine Educator for national importer Santa Margherita USA.



New York wine consultant Vincent Haywood Howell recently opened Lamia's Fish Market, which features an all-sustainable wine list.

Somm *Talk*

Lunch attendee Vincent Haywood Howell serves as a wine consultant for various New York restaurants, including the recently opened Lamia's Fish Market, which features an all-sustainable list. "I'm actually half-German, so for me Kettmeir wines speak to that classic German precision while being very nuanced at the same time," he said at the event. "The Pinot Bianco, while presenting residual sugar content, actually was dry. It had a great mouthfeel, density, and nice spice notes in the finish. The Müller Thurgau, while I don't have a lot of experience with the variety, was spicy, bright, and vibrant."

Regarding pairings, Howell added, "With Alto Adige being a cooler climate, the wines' acidity plays a big role in the decision on what to pair. These wines all show body as well as acidity. For me, richer fish

like prawns, lobster, barbounia (red mullet), and today's salmon all work well to highlight the richness of these wines."

Cheron Cowan, head sommelier at chef David Pasternack's fish-centric Italian eatery, Esca, noted: "Alto Adige has so many different grapes, like Müller Thurgau and Pinot Bianco, for instance, that you just don't encounter in other regions of Italy, [let alone] at amenable price points. Our clientele is very wine savvy and we hand sell a lot; on any given night, 30–40% of our sales are wine. As chef Pasternack is very focused on crudo and ultra-fresh fish dishes, these wines work beautifully with our menu."

She described the Müller Thurgau with the endive and walnut salad as "a great pairing, adding, "The Riesling character in the wine tamed the bitterness of the en-

Kettmeir Trio

Because only 6,000 cases of Kettmeir wines are imported annually into the U.S., the winery's expressions are primarily geared toward the on-premise sector. The wines listed at right are current releases.



Kettmeir 2018 Müller Thurgau, Alto Adige (\$22) This vinifera cross of Riesling and Madeleine Royale originated from a Swiss researcher in Germany and was made famous (or more likely infamous) for its use in Liebfraumilch wines. In Alto Adige, Kettmeir's single-vineyard Müller Thurgau is given the star treatment, showing the true potential of this delightfully aromatic variety. The color of pale straw, it features hints of nutmeg and peach wrapped inside a wonderful acidity.

Kettmeir 2018 Pinot Bianco, Alto Adige (\$22) Technically a mutation of Pinot Noir, Pinot Bianco is maybe most famous in Alsace (where it's known as Pinot Blanc), but it's also well planted in Alto Adige. Yellow with a greenish tint and floral and green-apple characteristics, Kettmeir's version shows great minerality and body, making it a wonderful complement to food.

Kettmeir 2018 Pinot Grigio, Alto Adige (\$22) Pinot Grigio is Italy's most famous—and at times most misunderstood—white wine. The bright-gold Kettmeir Pinot Grigio is a wonderful example, showing lovely notes of apple, a great mouthfeel, and abundant acidity. It can be poured at home with food or served as an apéritif. *SJ*

dive and bite of the walnuts perfectly. Also, the Maso Reiner Pinot Nero [*Editor's note: The wine was special to this event and is not currently imported*] had a buttery character that matched well with the nuttiness of the salmon and Brussels sprouts."

Another attendee, Dean Fuerth, is the Beverage Director at Sushi Nakazawa (which has locations in New York and Washington, D.C.) and Chumley's. "I find that, stylistically, the wines of Alto Adige lie somewhere between the wines of Austria—precise, floral, elegant—and the more rustic, creative wines of Italy," he said. "Also, the region itself tends to offer quality wines at great value, especially the Müller Thurgau, a wine oftentimes mass produced in other countries. Kettmeir shows that quality control and lower yields can make a huge difference."

Of the pairings, Fuerth remarked, "I think the sweetness and fruit in the Pinot Bianco played perfectly off the pleasant bitterness in the spinach gnocchi. Also,



Lisa Friedman, Public Relations Manager for Santa Margherita USA, with Kristina Sazama.

the Müller Thurgau, while not actually paired with the charcuterie plate, showed its versatility beautifully by balancing the slight residual sugar from the wine with



Sushi Nakazawa Beverage Director Dean Fuerth believes that the wines of Alto Adige lie stylistically between Austria and Italy.

the saltiness of the spöck and sharpness of the cheeses." *SJ*

Kettmeir wines are imported by Santa Margherita USA.

{ vin de liqueur }

Guests attending a recent San Francisco tasting seminar were greeted with a refreshing play on the classic Gin and Tonic: the P&T with young Pineau des Charentes Blanc, thyme, and Fever-Tree tonic with a grapefruit-peel garnish.

Here's What They're
Really Drinking in

Cognac

INTRODUCING
Pineau des Charentes
TO AMERICAN CONSUMERS

story by Richard Carleton Hacker / photos by Alexander Rubin



Thirty different brands of Pineau des Charentes, including the 18-month David Ramnoux, are now being exported to the United States.

F or a beverage professional, there's nothing like keeping an entire table of restaurant guests entranced. Here's one way to do it: The next time you're asked what you have that's new, be sure to offer them one of France's most beloved pours. "It's from Cognac," you can say, "but it's not a Cognac. In fact, it's probably something you've never had before." Once you've commanded their attention, you can reveal the name of this mysterious elixir—Pineau des Charentes—before politely asking them to spell it. Chances are they'll start out with "P-I-N-O-T . . ."

That, of course, would be wrong, but as you diplomatically divulge the proper spelling, you'll open the door to further discussion—and, inevitably, to sales. Such is the magical allure of this versatile fortified wine from the Charente and Charente-Maritime departments of Cognac in southwestern France, whose popularity has given rise to a local saying: "We export Cognac, but we drink Pineau des Charentes."

Indeed, 75% of the 11 million bottles produced annually never leave the country, where they're enjoyed as both an apéritif and a digestif. That may soon change, thanks in large part to the efforts of SWE Certified Spirits Educator Hoke Harden, who also




Hoke Harden, a Cognac Educator certified by the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC) and a Master Instructor with the French Wine Academy, speaks to the group of esteemed beverage professionals during a Pineau des Charentes seminar and tasting at Rambler in San Francisco's Hotel Zeppelin.

happens to be one of only two Certified Pineau des Charentes Ambassadors in the U.S. (the other being Franky Marshall). But in the meantime, Harden observes, “It’s taken a little more than 400 years of development to make one of the least-known fortified wines in existence.”

To be sure, this vin de liqueur had its beginnings in 1589, when, legend has it, a Charentes winemaker filled what he thought was an empty Cognac barrel with grape must. As it turned out, however, there was still a fair amount of eau de vie sloshing around the bottom. A few years later, when the barrel was opened, its contents were unlike anything the French had ever tasted. Thus Pineau des Charentes was born, although it wasn’t officially recognized as a Denomination of Origin until 1935 and didn’t achieve AOC status until 1945.

Today, Pineau des Charentes must be made at the estate that produced the eau de vie it contains; consequently, anyone who makes it must also be a Cognac distiller. There are three types: Blanc; Rouge/Rosé (the terms are often used interchangeably); and the comparatively rare Vieux and Très Vieux. Blanc is generally made from the same grapes as Cognac—Ugni Blanc, Colombard, and Folle Blanche—while the Rouge/Rosé is primarily made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc.

No matter the style, all Pineau des Charentes begins as a blend of two-thirds unfermented French grape juice or fermented grape must to one-third Cognac. It undergoes various macerations and pressings before aging for anywhere from a minimum of 12 months for the Blanc (eight of them in oak) to a minimum of 12 years in oak for the Très Vieux (which can be aged as long

A photograph showing a hand pouring cognac from a bottle into several glasses on a tray. The tray is set on a wooden surface. In the background, more glasses and a bottle are visible, suggesting a tasting event. The lighting is warm and focused on the glasses and the pouring action.

Among the expressions tasted was the ten-year-plus-old Bache Gabrielsen, a rarity that until recently had been sold out for several years.

“It’s taken a little more than 400 years of development to make one of the least-known fortified wines in existence.” — *Cognac Educator Hoke Harden*

as 40 years); it's then melded with other select blends before bottling. Depending on the regimen, Pineau des Charentes ranges in color from pale yellow to a rich, leathery brown (no sugar, caramel, or other additives are allowed). "You could drink a different Pineau every day for over a month and barely make a dent in the number of varieties there are," says Harden.

Until recently, exports were limited to Belgium and Canada, but as of now, 30 different brands of Pineau des Charentes are available in the United States. The timing could not be more fortuitous: At 15–21% ABV, Pineau des Charentes is right in line with the trend toward refreshing, lower-alcohol pours, whether in cocktails or by itself either chilled or on the rocks. Priced from \$17 to \$50 (or more for some Très Vieux), it's also surprisingly versatile with a variety of foods, including oysters, salads, meats, cheeses, and desserts.

A few months ago, 35 top mixologists, sommeliers, and wine and spirits buyers from Northern California gathered at the Rambler in San Francisco's Union Square to discover the secrets of Pineau des Charentes for themselves. After a reception featuring cocktails made with young White Pineau des Charentes, Harden led a seminar that took guests through a tasting of eight wines.

Among them were the crisp and vibrant 18-month-old David Ramnoux (\$46), the cider-like five-year-old Réviseur (\$30), and the ten-year-plus-old Bache Gabrielsen (\$40), which was recently brought back after being sold out for several years. A post-tasting luncheon of quinoa salad with roasted carrots, smoked-salmon toasts, and housemade ravioli proved just how adaptable Pineau des Charentes is to food. No wonder the French wanted to keep it for themselves. *SN*



More than 11 million bottles of Pineau des Charentes are produced annually in the Charente and Charente-Maritime zones of Cognac. Réviseur is a Blanc typically made from the same grapes as Cognac.



San Francisco beverage professionals Maritza Rocah-Alvarez from Whitechapel, Davit Evans from Foreign Cinema, and Ben Jeffers from ABV enjoy the refreshing P&T cocktail before the tasting seminar.

A view of the Alloro Vineyard property in Oregon.

IN THE

Driver's Seat

In his wheelhouse: Alloro Vineyard proprietor David Nemarnik founded his property in the Chehalem Mountains AVA in 1999. The vineyards have been dry-farmed since 2001.



THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY CARVES A SPECIAL PLACE IN ITS DIVERSE TERROIR FOR PINOT NOIR
BY MERIDITH MAY

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ALLORO VINEYARD

"the

demand for Oregon wine is unprecedented," said Tom Danowski, CEO of the Oregon Winegrowers Association, in a recent article in the *Yamhill Valley News-Register*. That's good news for a state that boasts 769 wineries and over 1,000 vineyards; according to the article, Oregon's wine industry "generated \$5.6 billion in statewide economic impact in 2017, an increase of 67% over the last three years."

But it's the Willamette Valley in particular that is the focal point for world-class Pinot Noir and high-toned, constantly evolving Chardonnay. Over two-thirds of Oregon's vineyard acres are in this fertile valley, and the state's high standards for wine production make this 100-mile-long-by-60-mile-wide growing region worthy of constant rediscovery.

The Willamette Valley is home to 550 wineries within its eight sub-AVAs: Chehalem Mountains, Dundee Hills, Eola-Amity Hills, McMinnville, Ribbon Ridge, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, and new coastal AVA Van Duzer. The TTB is now exploring approval of a ninth sub-AVA, Laurelwood, nestled inside the Chehalem Mountains.

On a recent trip to the Willamette, I visited just a handful of wineries, specifically choosing properties that I had never been to nor covered in our publication before and whose wines I had not tasted. All produce 5,000 cases or a bit less, and all are looking to expand their national distribution. Here are the four that made a particularly lasting impression.

Alloro Vineyard

CHEHALEM MOUNTAINS AVA

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLORO VINEYARD



Tom Fitzpatrick is the winemaker for Alloro Vineyard. He has been making wine in Oregon since 2007 and has been at this estate for the past ten years.

Alloro Vineyard's 110-acre property (with 34 under vine) is located in Sherwood within the Chehalem Mountains AVA. Sustainably farmed, it's tended by proprietor David Nemarnik, who also grows figs, chestnuts, olives, and an assortment of vegetables while raising Hereford cattle and sheep.

In this region, the well-draining, 10-foot-deep silty loam called Laurelwood soil reigns—in fact, Alloro is Italian for "laurel," an evergreen plant that symbolizes immortality and peace. The roads of the estate are lined with laurel as well as cypress trees, leading to a breathtaking Mediterranean-style villa.

Nemarnik walks his property every day, looking after his Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vines. "I know the idiosyncrasies of each block," he told *The SOMM Journal*. "But the vintages are all varying enough that it's an active process of decision making on pruning and picking."

Alloro Vineyard 2017 Chardonnay, Chehalem Mountains (\$30) Edgy with flinty minerality; savory tones light up the palate, along with lemon blossom and crisp Asian pear. Bright acidity is sunshine in the glass. This vineyard's unique east-west exposure makes for a later harvest. **94**

Alloro Vineyard 2016 Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains (\$40) The estate's flagship wine, it's expressive and spicy with notes of cedar and cranberry. A glorious satin texture washes across the palate, where juicy red fruit combines with salted meats and sweet tobacco. **93**

Alloro Vineyard 2016 Riservata Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains (\$50) This has all the elements of the estate Pinot but is more complex, with deeper shadows and a core of chocolate. The mouthfeel is memorable. Winemaker Tom Fitzpatrick focuses on weight and fullness for the palate: "I pull more new oak for the darker flavors," he told me. The wood is all French, and he works with various coopers to obtain different levels of grain tightness—from low to considerably high. **95**



The Alloro Vineyard 2016 Riservata.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLORO VINEYARD



Lenné Estate owner Steve Lutz.

Lenné Estate

YAMHILL-CARLTON AVA

In naming his winery after his father-in-law, Lenny, owner Steve Lutz thought that it would be a marketing coup to add a French twist—hence Lenné. He also played on *le nez*, which means “the nose” in French, for his label graphics. (Let the record show that we got the pun—and we appreciated it.)

The south-facing hillsides of his 20.9-acre vineyard, which sits at an elevation of 420–575 feet, are home to dry-farmed fruit. “These are the poorest soils in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA,” noted Lutz, who planted his first vines on the site in 2001. “The nutrient-poor, sedimentary Peavine soil limits vine vigor and forces the plants to struggle. Thousands have died, but the carnage was worth it.”

Lenné 2017 Chardonnay, Yamhill-Carlton (\$48) Aged in one-year-old puncheons, this lighthearted, floral white is crystal clear and stunning in its purity. White-peppered peach and pear lead to white flowers, and tangerine has angel wings on the mid-palate. “Drew Voit is an adept winemaker. I am adept farmer,” Lutz explained. **94**

Lenné 2016 Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton (\$40) Pillow-light in weight, graceful, and spiced with cinnamon and tobacco leaf. Coffee and cranberry make delicious partners. Candied lavender plays a role as mocha finishes with a cedar bow. **93**

Lenné 2016 Jill’s 115 Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton (\$58) A single-clone red with a mocha nose and fine-grained tannins. High acid and white pepper add balance to this deep, dark, ageworthy Pinot Noir. **94**



Le Cadeau Vineyard

CHEHALEM MOUNTAINS AVA

“I’m a clone junkie,” admitted Tom Mortimer, proprietor of Le Cadeau Vineyard. Although all of our winery visits centered on the subject of clones, Mortimer expounded on the topic; while we were listening closely to his discussion of heritage clones versus Pommard versus 115, et cetera, what really opened our eyes at Le Cadeau were the rocks.

“I call them cobbles,” Mortimer noted, showing their variation from softball-, football-, and soccer ball-sized basalt stones to the occasional cluster of “bricks.” He cut down a virtual forest of uncultivated land in the late 1990s with the help of a Caterpillar tractor—which sported 15-inch tooth blades to dig through the never-ending array of stones and rocks—before planting his Parrett Mountain vineyard. Volcanic red clay and a light topsoil are also identified on his contiguous 28-acre site (16 acres of which are planted).

As President of the Chehalem Mountains Winegrowers, Mortimer observed that “an AVA is a multigenerational direction. As climate change . . . comes into play, AVAs also mature on their platform to gain recognition. The 100-square-mile Chehalem Mountains AVA’s diverse topography shows Pinot Noir in a wide variety of expressions.”

To showcase that stylistic range, Mortimer has two wine-makers and a consultant overseeing his stable of rock-grown Pinot Noirs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LE CADEAU VINEYARD

Microclimates and variably shaped “cobbles” define Le Cadeau’s property.

Le Cadeau Vineyard 2017 Rocheaux Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains (\$50) From winemaker Jim Sander, it offers up a woody nose of tree sap, coriander, raspberry, and cherry. **90**

Le Cadeau 2017 Côte Est Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains (\$50) An expression delivering earth, spice, and cherry-cedar underbrush from winemaker Steve Ryan. Vibrancy is key to the weighty palate, which presents salted mocha and bright fruit. **93**

Le Cadeau 2017 Diversité Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains (\$50) Made by Sander, it shows redder fruit along with roses and mushroom. Sharp, tart, and edgy, with spiced flowers, cinnamon stick, and cherry. **93**

Le Cadeau 2016 Trajet Reserve, Chehalem Mountains (\$80) A whole-cluster Pinot Noir from Ryan with a spice-box nose and palate. Sassafras, green tea, fennel, and plum skin make this Mortimer’s most ageworthy wine. **94**

Youngberg Hill

McMINNVILLE AVA

A coastal breeze was cooling down the 85-degree afternoon in mid-August when I visited Youngberg Hill to find proprietor Wayne Bailey standing on the veranda of his popular inn, which overlooks his 50-acre estate. There, 20 acres of sustainably farmed vineyards cover a steep mountain slope, while Highland cattle line the pastures.

The McMinnville AVA is home to the Willamette Valley’s westernmost vineyards, which experience a maritime influence. The Bailey family’s vineyard blocks produce four distinct Pinot Noirs as well as Pinot Gris and Chardonnay. Taking a holistic approach to farming, the estate has been converted to Biodynamic viticulture, which Bailey says promotes healthier vines and high-quality fruit. The Iowa native even went so far as to say that he hopes that this “responsible” grape growing could stave off some of the phylloxera that has threatened his oldest and most prized vines.

Though south-facing vines have been the norm throughout the Willamette Valley, Bailey added that, because of climate change, east is becoming the new south. “Twenty years ago, if the vines were sloped too much to the east, you’d have a tough time ripening fruit,” he explained. “Now, summers are so warm, they need protection from the hot afternoon sun. But I still hope we have a couple of cool years left.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUNGBERG HILL

Youngberg Hill founder Wayne Bailey.

Youngberg Hill 2015 Jordan Pinot Noir, McMinnville (\$50) Sourced from a block named for Bailey’s eldest daughter that sits 800 feet high on volcanic rock, where the grapes see a longer hang time than those on lower sites. As a result, the wine shows off a broad-shouldered depth with plum-brandy notes that I hadn’t encountered in the Pinot Noirs of the other wineries I visited. Here, cedar interplays with tightly wound tannins, and molasses, Worcestershire, and black-peppered roses run the length of the palate. There’s no doubt in my mind that Youngberg’s Pinots will perform even better in the years to come. **92**

Youngberg Hill 2016 Aspen Block Chardonnay, McMinnville (\$40) Produced with four cool-climate clones, with malolactic fermentation unfolding in 50% single-use and 50% neutral oak barrels. This bone-dry white delivers crisp flavors of green apple and lemon-lime. “Montrachet is my target,” admitted Bailey. **92**



PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUNGBERG HILL

Youngberg Hill Jordan Pinot Noir is sourced from a block that sits on volcanic rock at an elevation of 800 feet.

{ in memoriam }

*Stefano Riboli died in
July at the age of 97.*

SEMPRE *Avanti*

THE LASTING LEGACY OF **STEFANO RIBOLI**,
PATRIARCH OF L.A.'S
SAN ANTONIO WINERY

by Amanda M. Faison

Ask Dante Colombatti to tell a story about his late grandfather—the vintner Stefano Riboli, who died in July at the age of 97—and he's quick to mention a childhood memory of Riboli teaching him how to fold a wine box. "It was a small thing, folding a box—right lid, left lid, and so on—but it was a metaphor," says Colombatti, who heads up marketing for the venerable Riboli Family of San Antonio Winery in downtown Los Angeles. "It's like tying your shoes—you can't overlook the little things. If you don't take the time to do it right, it can be broken."

That lesson represents the very essence of Riboli and his approach to the 102-year-old winery, which became his life's work in the truest sense. Riboli was born in L.A. on September 8, 1921, but at the age of 3, he moved with his family to the small Italian village of Berzo San Fermo, about an hour northwest of Milan.

While living in the bucolic foothills of the Penine Alps, the mountains that form the border between Switzerland and Italy, Riboli was on the path to becoming a shepherd when his life took a different turn. In 1936, amid rumblings of war, Riboli's parents sought to keep him safe by sending him back to California. His uncle Santo Cambianica, who lived in L.A. and had founded San Antonio Winery two decades prior, offered to sponsor him. "He left everything and thought the roads were paved with gold," Colombatti says.



Stefano Riboli met his wife, Maddalena (née Satragni), in 1946.



Stefano Riboli shows off the Riboli Family Vineyards Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon, the Ribolis' first wine from Napa Valley.

He didn't find such riches upon arrival, but the move to the United States was still one of tremendous opportunity. After Riboli arrived, he immediately began apprenticing under Cambianica, learning the wine business from the inside out. He quickly discovered that the hard work, humility, and patience required of a successful shepherd paralleled that of a successful vintner:

While on a vineyard visit in 1946, Riboli met Maddalena Satragni. The pair soon married and had three children—Santo, Cathy, and Steve—and when Cambianica died in 1956, he left the winery to Riboli.

San Antonio was the anchor of Los Angeles' Lincoln Heights neighborhood, an area then dubbed Little Italy. Its prime location just down the street from a busy railroad hub ensured that it remained at

the center of community activity. "We're America's original urban winery," says Colombatti. The ever-present Riboli took great pride in his work, even sweeping the sidewalks and watering the plants on the few days the business was closed each year.

In 1972, Maddalena deepened their involvement even further by opening a restaurant inside the winery to serve as a gathering place for their patrons. "How do you get people to come? Give them an escape and give them some fun in a space that's not necessarily a bar," says fourth-generation winemaker Anthony Riboli of his grandmother's keen sense of hospitality.

In the subsequent decades, Riboli built his empire upon a single axiom: Listen to your guests and innovate along those lines. "The good thing about being an urban winery is there's such an array of people. When people ask for this or that, it becomes a no-brainer," Colombatti says. "My grandpa said, 'Let's tailor the product to what the people want, not what we want.'" That philosophy gave rise to a vast array of San Antonio brands, among them Stella Rosa, Riboli Family Estates, San Simeon Estate Reserve, Bodega Sangria, Opaque, Maddalena, and Windstream.

Underscoring the winery's guiding principle, Anthony adds, "I think a lot of people impose their tastes on the customer. If you do that, you're going to limit [who] your consumer [is]." That everyone-is-welcome-here attitude—something that was knit into Riboli and Maddalena's DNA—has allowed San Antonio to continue to blossom, even as Los Angeles' seemingly unstoppable growth has overtaken the surrounding vineyards and irrevocably changed the neighborhood around it.

There are many challenges that come with running a winery in the middle of a metropolis. Beyond logistical concerns like wastewater restrictions and having space to process grapes, there's also the question of public perception. "Being an urban winery can be a knock against you. 'It's urban: How can it be good?'" Anthony says. "[At one point] we considered putting Lincoln Heights on the label so people didn't know it was L.A."

Such a decision, however, would disregard the legacy that Cambianica created



Pictured at the winery are Stefano and Maddalena Riboli (seated) with family members (standing from left to right) Anthony Riboli, Lisa Riboli-Elzholtz, Steve Riboli, Cathy Riboli, Santo Riboli, Chris Riboli, and Dante Colombatti.

and Riboli nurtured, and after 100-plus years of serving the community with sustained effort, humility, and grace, San Antonio Winery has earned the deep-seated respect not only of its neighbors but of the broader industry. “Business is up for us,” Anthony says of the company’s ability to attract local visitors.

Riboli, who was known around the winery as Papa Steve, had a saying: *sempre avanti*, which translates to “always forward.” These days, San Antonio’s vineyards lie to the north in Napa Valley, Monterey County, and Paso Robles, where the family planted two legacy vineyards, fittingly named Stefano and Maddalena, in 2012 (the properties also include a new state-of-the-art winery facility and an event center). “It’s not repeating what’s in L.A. but taking a template and evolving it,” Anthony says.

And in this family business, following Riboli’s mantra means facing the future while never overlooking what really mat-

ters—the foundation, the careful folding of the wine box, the hard work, and the quiet and understated respect with which Riboli treated everyone he crossed paths with.

Colombatti shares one last story about Papa Steve: “There was a pretty big winery up the street,” he recalls. “One day [my grandfather] met the owner and the guy said, ‘You’re that little winery making junk wine.’” Riboli was angry and hurt, but he went back and started sweeping the fermentation room, determined to keep working hard on behalf of the winery’s devoted customers. “And you know what? My grandfather kept moving forward, and that other winery is no longer in business,” says Colombatti. “No one even remembers it.” It’s because of his grandfather’s motto to always move forward that this famed winery has persevered—and, as it honors Papa Steve’s indelible legacy, it seems it will continue to do so for generations to come. *SJ*



Stefano Riboli always taught his family that you can’t overlook the little things.

Defining the Movement

TWO **PASO ROBLES** PRODUCERS REVEAL HOW THE REGION IS PIONEERING TERROIR-DRIVEN IDENTITY

story and photos by Randy Caparoso

INTERESTINGLY, PASO ROBLES' new wave of Rhône-grape specialists evolved out of a response to conditions dictated by terroir rather than out of the usual California style, which involves deciding which grapes to plant first before finding a suitable place for them. Here, in honor of the Rhône Camp *The SOMM Journal* recently held in the region, we examine two of Paso Robles' premier producers of Rhône varieties.



Owners Carl and Pam Bowker are pictured above at Caliza's hillside estate, which is shaped like a natural amphitheater. At right is the Caliza Pink rosé blend, which finishes with flinty minerality.

Caliza Winery: *The Pursuit of Minerality*

Owners/growers Carl and Pam Bowker planted their 22-acre estate in 2006 on a site shaped like a natural amphitheater. Ranging from 1,100 to 1,400 feet in elevation, the steep slopes screamed "Rhône," so they planted six selections of Syrah (10 acres), plus Grenache, Mourvèdre, Viognier, Roussanne, and Petite Sirah.

"We settled on [the name] Caliza because it means 'limestone' in Spanish, and it's the limestone as well as siliceous shale found on our property that allows for the beautiful minerality coming through in our wines," Carl Bowker says. To make his case, he presents estate-grown wines like the Caliza 2018 Pink, a rosé blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre that exudes strawberry-tinged freshness and flinty minerality. The Caliza 2016 Azimuth (another GSM blend) is floral and peppery on the nose before it takes on a chunky, meaty feel on the palate, while the Caliza 2017 Syrah is redolent with violet and pepper as well as a distinctive brininess on both the nose and palate.

To Bowker, this perceived minerality is clearly the byproduct of the estate's soft, porous, water-retentive sedimentary rock, which comprises calcium carbonate derived from the skeletal remains of long-dead marine organisms. One of the wine world's classic soil types, it's found in a thin band running through the Santa Lucia mountain range on the California coast.

In Paso Robles, a heightened perception of minerality in wines grown in calcareous sites with high pH has not been lost on growers, and the pursuit of mineral-driven complexity has become a signature of the Rhône varieties and blends grown in the appellation. "No question," remarks Bowker, "it is our site that gives our wines their distinct personality."



Caliza Azimuth is a floral yet meaty GSM.





Tablas Creek Vineyard GM/partner Jason Haas holds up a chunk of limestone, which he says “soaks up water like a sponge.”

Tablas Creek Winery: A Rhône Master’s Plan Comes to Fruition

Paso Robles’ reputation as California’s leading producer of Rhône-inspired wines has been “a long time coming,” says Jason Haas, GM/partner of Tablas Creek Vineyard. “We helped kick off the Rhône movement 30 years ago, yet I still think of us as a start-up.” That’s because many of the original ideas that motivated Haas’ now-retired father, Robert, to establish Tablas Creek in 1985 in partnership with Château de Beaucastel are just now coming to fruition.

Explains Haas, “We originally brought in eight grapes to plant on our estate, and it wasn’t until 2003 that we started to bring in the rest of the Southern Rhône grapes.

Then it took a few years for cuttings to come out of quarantine and sites to be cleared for planting or replanting.”

According to Haas, three things about the region proved immediately appealing: the climate, “which is actually cooler and has much bigger diurnal shifts than the Southern Rhône”; the amount of rainfall, which averages 26 inches each winter but largely ceases during the growing season, allowing for dry-farming; and the presence of limestone, which “soaks up water like a sponge.” “This is important to us because Beaucastel has been fully organic since the ‘60s,” he adds.

Given Tablas Creek’s minimal-intervention approach in the winery, a tasting of its current lineup makes for a fascinating sensory study of Rhône varieties. See the sidebar for notes from our recent tasting of estate-grown releases from the Adelaida District AVA.

Tablas Creek produces a single-varietal version of Picardan, one of the 13 grapes permitted in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

Look for the full Rhône Camp story in the December 2019/January 2020 issue.



Tablas Creek 2017 Mourvèdre (\$40)

Fleshy qualities are beefed up by solid tannins. The restrained profile of red and black fruit shows more grip on the palate than intensity on the nose.

Tablas Creek 2017 Syrah (\$40) Bright, flowery perfume with fennel/pepper/sausage spice; firm, structured tannins give a meaty, dense feel.

Tablas Creek 2017 Grenache Blanc (\$30) Minerals and fleshy fruit appear in the aroma. The medium-bodied palate is defined by the crispness of fresh apple and pear.

Tablas Creek 2018 Picardan (\$30) A creamy perfume veers toward tropical fruit; lemony-tart and silky with freshness and a light body.

Tablas Creek 2018 Clairette Blanche (\$30) Citrus and flinty minerality dominate the aromas and flavors; a zesty edge becomes almost briny.

Tablas Creek 2018 Viognier (\$35) Pronounced violet scent with white-pepper spice; lightly tart and moderately weighted.

Tablas Creek 2017 Marsanne (\$35) Golden peach color with suggestions of lush stone fruit on the nose; rounded feel of moderate acidity and mineral-influenced sensations in a light-medium (12.2% ABV) body.

Tablas Creek 2015 Roussanne (\$40) Classic fleshiness combines with distinct minerality; the palate is restrained despite a feeling of opulence and density.

Tablas Creek 2015 Terret Noir (\$40) The lightest-colored (brick red) and spiciest (pepper/clove) of Tablas Creek’s varietal reds, with rose petal/floral notes, a medium body, and moderate yet edgy tannins cut by zesty acidity.

Tablas Creek 2017 Counoise (\$40) Described by Haas as “the Rhône’s answer to Beaujolais,” with soft tannins, tinges of strawberry, and an easy feel enhanced by relatively low alcohol.

Tablas Creek 2017 Grenache (\$40) Understated peppery spice with gentle, rounded fruit sensations driven primarily by notes of red berry and rose petal. *sj*



Grenache was one of the eight original Southern Rhône grapes planted at Tablas Creek.



THE SOMM Jury

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

Crus from the Castle

RICASOLI'S ZONING RESEARCH MAPS SANGIOVESE SOILS IN CHIANTI CLASSICO

Located north of Siena, Italy, the Ricasoli estate extends over 3,000 acres, of which 580 are predominantly planted to Sangiovese. The Castello di Brolio is an idyllic destination, offering a museum, wine shop, restaurant (Osteria del Castello), and Tuscan guesthouse.

CHIANTI CLASSICO PRODUCER Ricasoli has been at the forefront of innovation since Baron Bettino Ricasoli of Castello di Brolio brought the winery to fame in 1872, creating the formula for Chianti wine after 30 years of research. Today, Francesco Ricasoli—the 32nd baron of Brolio—aims to constantly improve the quality and character of Ricasoli's great wines by developing new concepts centered around sustainability.

More recently, Francesco and his team have been studying how various clones of Brolio Sangiovese fare in differing soil types while completing vineyard mapping. A wide variety of soils typical of the Brolio vineyards is evident even to the naked eye, but the research has delved deeper, identifying 19 different soil types and five principal soil substrates. Plot-by-plot vinification, meanwhile, has helped uncover which areas are capable of producing crus of exceptional quality, resulting in the Raritas Collection. See the sidebar for current vintages.

Ricasoli 2015 Colledilà Chianti Classico Gran Selezione DOCG (\$70)

Aged 18 months in 500-liter tonneaux (30% new and 70% second passage), this wine is made from a cru of Sangiovese grown in Monte Morello soil. The wine exhibits a lean, chalky minerality with notes of undergrowth and tart cherry. Tobacco leaf lingers on the tongue long after the last sip. **93**



Ricasoli 2015 CeniPrimo Chianti Classico Gran Selezione DOCG (\$85)

This Sangiovese wine undergoes the same aging regimen as the Colledilà expression; the fruit is grown on an ancient fluvial terrace. Aromas of parmesan and cherry speak the language of the Old World as jasmine and peach join forces with rhubarb. Baked pears, spice, and dry, silky tannins weave a beautiful story. **95**



*Ricasoli is imported by
Folio Fine Wine Partners.*



McNab Ranch is one of the original Biodynamic vineyards planted in the United States.

THIS MENDOCINO COUNTY ICON HELPED RAISE THE FLAG FOR **BIODYNAMIC FARMING STATESIDE**

In Rhythm with Bonterra

WHEN WE THINK of Mendocino County's McNab Ranch, it's typically to praise its status as one of the most celebrated Biodynamic vineyards in the United States. Organic-farming pioneer Jim Fetzer is the man responsible for bringing this site—which originally served as a sheep ranch—to life for grape growing, but McNab Ranch can partially trace its roots to yet another innovator: Rudolf Steiner.

Steiner, an Austrian philosopher and educator, first lectured on the subject of Biodynamic farming in 1924—solely in reference to fruits and vegetables, however, as he was not a wine drinker. Although Biodynamic grape farming soon spread throughout Europe, it wasn't until the late 1960s and '70s that producers started adopting it in the U.S.

Alan Chadwick—a master gardener and Steiner's student—played a pivotal role in this movement, leading the Round Valley Garden Project in Covelo, California, with a student of his own, Alan York. York soon became synonymous with Biodynamics and became a go-to consultant for winery owners and viticulturists. In fact, York's first wine project was a collaboration with Fetzer himself in 1993.

Eight years later, Bonterra Organic Vineyards

acquired the property now known as McNab Ranch. Demeter certified in 2000 and situated on the eastern edge of the California Coastal Range, its 371 acres benefit from the surrounding biodiversity of both flora and fauna, including an abundance of sheep (nearby McNab Creek, a tributary of the Russian River, is also a spawning ground for steelhead trout). The coastal-desert microclimate and large diurnal swings in the summer and fall further contribute to the character of the Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petite Sirah, and Malbec grown there. We tasted the latest release of The McNab, a blend of some of these Bordeaux varieties from the 2016 vintage; in addition to following the cadence of its natural habitat, this single-vineyard cuvée has a rhythm all its own.



Bonterra 2016 The McNab, McNab Ranch Vineyard, Mendocino County (\$50)

This Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant red (with 3% Petit Verdot) offers up a nose of spiced earth and cassis. Red fruit enters with verve alongside supple coffee-bean tannins before the wine becomes rounder on the palate; as it opens up, it zeroes in on explosive flavors of blackcurrant, white-peppered cherry, and cedar. Minerality shows itself with flinty graphite and finishes with dusty dark chocolate. **95**

Bonterra 2017 Zinfandel, Mendocino County (\$16)

Showcasing the potential of organic fruit for this variety, this expression manifests ripe, sweet boysenberry and dark chocolate through its aromatics. Both juicy and chewy, the palate features grainy tannins and rich, perfumed blue fruit; mocha sets in passionately on the mid-palate. Satin-textured and elegant, the finish sends back scents and flavors of black pepper, vanilla, and toast. **92**



A barn made from reclaimed material on Bonterra's McNab Ranch property.

On Sun-Drenched Hills

GOOSE RIDGE VINEYARDS OWES ITS SUCCESS TO THE “FATHER” OF THE WASHINGTON WINE INDUSTRY

THE OWNER OF the largest contiguous vineyard in Washington is Goose Ridge, which encompasses more than 2,000 acres of planted vines. The Monson family, who originally focused on cattle and orchards, relied upon the advice of Dr. Walter Clore—the man who put the state on the world wine map.

When the family decided to plant grapes in the spring of 1998, they heeded the advice of Dr. Clore that the vines should be planted north to south, as the site's south-facing slope absorbed the heat of the penetrating sun characteristic of the Columbia Valley's warm climate. Clore also encouraged them to plant in small blocks to produce low-yield estate wines.

The Monsons have farmed in this region for four decades and are known for their commitment to quality. Still under their ownership, Goose Ridge operates one of the largest and most state-of-the-art wineries in Washington, producing 60,000 cases of wine for its own brands while also vinifying for some well-known Northwestern wine companies.

Of their approach, President Bill Monson says, “My sisters and I grew up with the understanding that you don't farm for this generation—you farm for the next one.”



The Monson family has farmed in the Columbia Valley for four decades. Bill Monson, Valerie Monson, and Molly Monson Stutesman, pictured here with their parents Suzanne and Arvid (third and fourth from left), currently manage Goose Ridge.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOSE RIDGE VINEYARDS

Goose Ridge 2015 Syrah, Columbia Valley (\$38) This expression has its nose in the Northern Rhône, with alluring scents of grilled lamb, heather, and white pepper. The satin entry is pleasurable, with notes of chocolate blueberry, and ripe plum. The tannins are so supple they caress. Vanilla bean latches onto a mineral finish in this blend of 77% Syrah, 17% Grenache, and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 16 months in 70% French and 30% American oak. **95**



A view of the Monson family's Goose Ridge vineyard, with Red Mountain in the distance.

The Spottswoode Effect

PRAISED FOR ITS FIRST GROWTH STATUS, THIS NAPA VALLEY WINERY CONTINUES TO HOLD COURT

NAPA VALLEY ICON Spottswoode Winery has been granted Grand Cru status by its peers and the wine media alike. But how does an American winery fit into this European category?

It can be evaluated in part by its history. The first wine grapes were planted on this St. Helena property in 1882—but it wasn't until 1972, when Mary and Jack Novak changed their life path and moved from San Diego to Napa Valley, that the 31-acre



PHOTO: ROBB MCDONOUGH

Spottswoode winemaker and Vineyard Manager Aron Weinkauf with cellar assistants Panda and Cachou.

Mary once referred to founding winemaker Tony Soter as a philosopher, noting, "He thought deeply about everything, asked questions, and embraced new ideas." It was he who was responsible for introducing organic farming to the property in 1985. When Beth Novak Milliken, Mary's daughter, joined the operation in 1987, another major change occurred: the acquisition of a pre-Prohibition Victorian home that was renovated into office space for the winery. They also stewarded the replanting of the Spottswoode Estate Vineyard, its regal heritage underscoring what the Novaks call "tradition, terroir, and track record."

"Our link to first-growth status comes from the outside," said Aron Weinkauf when he and Novak Milliken came to taste at the magazine office in mid-August. Joining the team as an assistant winemaker in 2006, Weinkauf became Vineyard Manager in 2008, a role that expanded to winemaker in 2011. "France and Italy have been put on pedestals when it comes to winemaking, regions, and certainly terroir," he pointed out. "But every appellation has its best of class: Terroir-driven wines are made all over the world."

Although the estate Cabernet Sauvignon stays true to the land on which it's grown, Weinkauf and Milliken have expanded their sourcing for their Lydenhurst Cabernet Sauvignon and Spottswoode Sauvignon Blanc. "'Estate-grown' doesn't necessarily have a strong definition in California," Weinkauf noted. "Sourcing . . . can be a statement for who you are as well as for the actual art of winemaking. We can control a vineyard anywhere with the right grower relationships. It's about being in charge and how the vineyards are farmed."

Spottswoode estate was truly discovered. The couple acquired an additional 15 acres of bordering land and replanted them to Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc; sadly, Jack died in 1977, but Mary was determined to keep realizing their vision. Coincidence or not, the first vintage of Spottswoode Cabernet Sauvignon was 1982, exactly 100 years after the original planting.



PHOTO: BILL TUCKER

Spottswoode President and CEO Beth Novak Milliken.

Spottswoode 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$42) The fruit is sourced from Sonoma Mountain (Farina Vineyard & Murray Vineyard), Carneros (Hyde Vineyard), Knights Valley (Pelkan Ranch Vineyard), and Atlas Peak (Stagecoach Vineyard) as well as from the estate. Focused aromas of lime and flint are attention-grabbing. Flint also lines the upper palate as delicate notes of white peach gently sweeten the mouth. The striking acidity is accompanied by a note of pink grapefruit that appears mid-palate. A bright light glows from within. **94**



Spottswoode 2016 Lydenhurst Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$85) This wine combines estate fruit with grapes from many of Napa Valley's high-profile sites. "Lydenhurst" was the former name of the Spottswoode property, where linden trees still stand tall; their notable aromas are easily recognized in this wine, whose notes of melted chocolate, white pepper, cherry, and blueberry are joyful in its youth. Juicy and opulent, it defines balance of power. "The phrase 'balance of power' is a juxtaposed ideology," noted Weinkauf. "But that's the fine line we want to achieve." The oak is integrated so subtly it translates more as sandalwood and vanilla bean, curving and meandering through blue and red fruit. **96**

Spottswoode 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$225) Released in early September, it's the winery's 35th estate Cab; as Weinkauf explained, "Spottswoode is more than a name—it is a place. And some Cabernets are dynamic and strong, while I see some, like ours, that are as attuned as a Zen yoga master." From its perfume of dark plum, deep espresso, and chocolate, the young and exuberant palate starts with a lushness and then energizes with a zing of peppered blackberries, slate, and soil. It's texturally luxurious but tense, thanks to its acidity and inherent minerality, with a saturation and intensity that's destined to evolve. Sweet herbs and a noticeable freshness set its tone. **98**



The Craft Behind **ITALIAN WINE**

**A SOMMCON D.C. PANEL
DEBATES WHETHER THE
COUNTRY'S DIVERSE WINES
ARE BORN OR MADE**

story by Courtney Schiessl
photos by Nick Klein

The “Wines of Italy: Technique or Terroir” panel from left to right: John Irwin of Lux Wines; Donald Hackett of Maisons Marques & Domaines; Sara Maule of Frederick Wildman & Sons; moderator Lars Leicht of The SOMM Journal; Jacob Gragg of Ca’ del Bosco/Santa Margherita USA; and Alessandro Boga of Wilson Daniels.



ITALY

is arguably home to a more diverse range of wines than any other country in the world. With long-standing traditions of grape growing, hundreds of native varieties, and varying climatic influences, the most passionate enophile could spend decades studying Italian wine and still have more to discover.

“Italy is 20 regions in search of a country,” said Lars Leicht, VP/Communications & Trade Relations for *The SOMM Journal*, as he commenced an Italian-focused seminar at SommCon D.C., held at The Westin Georgetown June 23–25. But considering both the number of unique mesoclimates and the many deeply held cultural identities maintained in Italy’s wine regions, the panel, titled “The Wines of Italy: Technique or Terroir,” sought to explore whether the quality and character of the country’s expressions stems more so from natural influences or from human-made ones.

As SommCon attendees tasted wines from Piedmont to Sicily, panelists described the geographic influences and winemaking techniques that created each label’s character. And in the end, everyone concluded, perhaps it’s not a question of one influence or the other but a combination of both. “It was a trick question,” concluded Leicht. “One of the definitions of terroir includes tradition and technique.” Read on for a breakdown of the wines presented to illustrate the breadth of Italy’s diversity.



Tornatore 2016 Etna Rosso Pietrarizzo

Though the Tornatore winery was established in 2010, its founding family has long been intertwined with the agricultural industry in Castiglione di Sicilia: The Tornatores began growing grapes here on the northern slopes of Mount Etna in 1865, long before the Etna DOC was known for making high-quality wine.

"We are growing vines at the absolute limit of where it's possible to grow vines," said John Irwin, a wine sales professional at Lux Wine, which imports the brand. The Tornatore 2016 Etna Rosso Pietrarizzo hails from a site where the hot Sicilian sun is tempered by the altitude (2,200 feet above sea level) and cooling breezes from the nearby ocean. Combined with Mount Etna's fertile volcanic soil, which drains extremely quickly and encourages the vine to delve deep into the earth, this distinctive location creates a wine that sings of terroir.

One of the voices in that chorus is the native Nerello Mascalese variety. "It's not just a grape in a place," said Irwin, "but the way that grape has interacted with the environment over millennia." In the Pietrarizzo, the variety shows its vibrant, youthful side; aged for 12 months in cement and large wooden barrels, it melds crunchy tones of fresh berries with soft herbs and a tangy, acid-driven finish.

Tornatore is imported by Lux Wines.

Nino Negri 2015 Sfurat della Valtellina Carlo Negri

Warm air from Lake Como funnels through Valtellina, one of just two east-west-oriented valleys in Italy. Combined with the terraces cut into the south-facing slopes, that orientation proves essential to the production of wine in Alpine Valtellina, the country's northernmost area for Nebbiolo (locally known as Chiavennasca) cultivation, as it's "the only way [Nino Negri] can plant vines," said Sara Maule, the Italian brand manager for Frederick Wildman & Sons. Maule's father, Casimiro, joined the pioneering estate right out of school, since owner Carlo Negri's children didn't have an interest in succeeding him as winemaker. Under Casimiro's tenure, the winery flourished and became a standard-bearer in the region.

Though terroir is important here, so too is technique; until recent decades, it was still too cold to regularly ripen grapes to desired levels, so growers created the Sfurat della Valtellina technique to yield stronger expressions. As part of this method, early-harvested Chiavennasca grapes dry in small crates for 100 days to concentrate flavor and sugar before undergoing fermentation and aging in French oak barrels. The result is a wild, raisin-like wine; with notes of prosciutto and thyme, it's full-bodied, tannic, and highly acidic on the palate. Intriguing and offbeat, the 2015 Carlo Negri Sfurat della Valtellina is structured and built for long aging.

At what point, though, does technique overwhelm terroir? "Drying the grapes, you actually lose a bit of terroir," said Maule. "I don't know if you would know it was Nebbiolo." The process, however, is essential not only to the wine itself but also to the region's viticultural history.

Nino Negri is imported by Frederick Wildman & Sons.



Villa Antinori 2015 Chianti Classico DOCG Riserva



Tradition and evolution are equally integral to the Antinori family's core winemaking philosophy, and the balance of terroir and technique plays a similarly vital role in their wines. "It's a combination of both," said Fran "Pineapple" Schmitz, the Business Development Manager for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, which distributes Antinori in the U.S.

The Antinoris' roots are in Chianti Classico: Their company, now in its 26th generation of family ownership, dates back to 1385, when Giovanni di Piero joined the Florentine Winemakers' Guild. Another momentous occasion arrived in 1716, when Antonio Antinori became a member of the commission tasked by Cosimo III de' Medici to define the geographical boundaries of the world's first wine appellation. This forever linked Chianti Classico to the Antinori family, and throughout the centuries, generations of them have left indelible marks on this iconic region.

Take the Villa Antinori Chianti Classico Riserva: Launched in 1928 by Niccolò Antinori, this bottling represented the winery's attempt to reinterpret a Tuscan classic by creating a long-lived riserva version that incorporated 10% Cabernet Sauvignon into the blend. "It was a pretty bold move to begin working with these international varieties," said Schmitz.

Nearly a century later, the Chianti Classico Riserva's complex, structured style stands the test of time in the 2015 vintage, with bright red fruit and notes of balsamic and spice that define this as a serious wine.

Villa Antinori is imported by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates.



Fran "Pineapple" Schmitz of Ste. Michelle Wine Estates.

Pio Cesare 2016 Barbera d'Alba Fides

"We're tasting history right now," said Donald Hackett, Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager for Maisons Marques & Domaines, as he swirled the Pio Cesare Fides. This Piedmontese winery, now in its fourth generation of family ownership, encompasses 74 hectares of vineyards in Alba and in the prestigious appellations of Barolo and Barbaresco. In 1996, winemaker Pio Boffa made a bold move in the family's Colombaro vineyard in Serralunga d'Alba, ripping out vines of profitable Nebbiolo to instead plant Barbera, which was largely considered to be a table grape.

This was the genesis of Fides, which means "trust and faith" in Latin. The risk paid off, and now this east-facing, limestone-laden vineyard yields Barbera d'Alba that, with its prominent acidity and tannins, is far more structured than the average Barbera. Aged for 20 months in used French oak casks, the wine is mouth-filling and layered, with juicy bramble fruit and toasted wood notes arising alongside savory, umami-driven tones.

"Barbera has Barolo-like tendencies," noted Leicht, while Hackett added that "this wine is all about the terroir." Soon, however, this piece of history will be relegated to the past; after the 2016 vintage, Fides will be made with fruit from a different vineyard block in Monforte d'Alba—Mosconi, already known for its excellent Barbera. Even as the label embarks on a new chapter, the Colombaro vineyard's legacy will live on in this final bottling.

Pio Cesare is imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines.





Feudo Montoni 2017 Lagnusa Nero d'Avola

"You won't find Nero d'Avola in the national registry of Italy," said Alessandro Boga, the Italian portfolio specialist for importer Wilson Daniels, noting that the variety is instead registered as Calabrese. Yet this grape is indeed native to the town of Avola on Sicily's southeastern coast, and because it can stand up to the island's heat without drastically dropping its acidity levels, Nero d'Avola is planted rather widely there—it ranks second among Sicily's most-planted grapes.

Nero d'Avola wines are hardly homogenous, and in the high-elevation vineyards of Feudo Montoni southeast of Palermo, the grape achieves a special balance. Durum wheat fields isolate the vines from the surrounding areas, and those that yield fruit for the winery's Lagnusa expression have been specifically grafted from Feudo Montoni's pre-phyloxera "mother" vines into sandy clay soils.

The result is a plummy, blue-fruited wine with fragrant violet aromas. Though the palate is round and juicy, it has a fine thread of acidity accompanied by excellent structure and hints of crushed rock.

Feudo Montoni is imported by Wilson Daniels.

Val di Suga 2013 Spuntali Brunello di Montalcino

In the Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, home to one of Italy's finest expressions of Sangiovese, climate and soil types change from one part of the region to another. While all Brunello di Montalcino wines must age for at least five years before release (including two in oak), the decision to use old, new, large, or small barrels can greatly affect the finished wine. "There's always a percentage of technique that expresses terroir," said Boga.

Rather than making an estate Brunello di Montalcino, Val di Suga started producing single-vineyard Brunellos in 1988, starting with the Vigna Spuntali. Today, the winery makes three distinct single-vineyard Brunello di Montalcino wines, with the Spuntali representing the southernmost site of the trio.

In the vineyard, sandy limestone soils with volcanic residue and direct Mediterranean influence yield ripe Sangiovese Grosso grapes with soft, strong tannins. Aged in barriques (20% new), the 2013 Spuntali Brunello di Montalcino takes on a lovely rust color, with ripe cherry melding with classic notes of iron, savory herbs, mushrooms, and turned earth.



Val di Suga is imported by Wilson Daniels.

Ca' del Bosco

"Franciacorta is a young region, and Ca' del Bosco is one of the older producers in the region," said brand ambassador Jacob Gragg. Winery matriarch Annamaria Clementi purchased a small house in the hills of Lombardy as a family retreat in the 1960s, and by 1972, the family had begun making wine there.

But while that first expression, dubbed Pinot di Franciacorta Bianco, was a still wine, the name "Franciacorta" now represents a place, a wine, and a technique all at once. Products that carry this title not only must come from the land south of Lake Iseo in Lombardy but also must be a sparkling wine vinified using the traditional method, in which secondary fermentation occurs inside the bottle. They also must age on the lees for at least 18 months; riserva or vintage bottlings must age even longer.

"Franciacorta is both terroir and technique, and I would argue that technique is slightly more important," said Gragg. "But it's also the kind of region where innovation is allowed and accepted." Over the years, Ca' del Bosco has encouraged exploration and experimentation from its winemakers, leading to the adoption of some of the winery's signature techniques, such as washing grapes before vinification.



The Ca' del Bosco Cuvée Prestige.



Though the Ca' del Bosco Cuvée Prestige is the winery's entry-level Franciacorta, it isn't a simple wine to make. "To bring high-quality, consistent multi-vintage wine to people around the world, that blending is the hardest thing we do," said Gragg. A mix of 75% Chardonnay, 15% Pinot Nero, and 10% Pinot Bianco, the Cuvée Prestige uses 20–30% reserve wine and ages on the lees for 25 months to heighten the complexity of the finished product. Though the amount of Pinot Bianco may seem insignificant, it proves essential to the wine's sense of balance, resulting in a fresh, fruit-driven expression with salty minerality and prickly acidity on the palate.

But if the Cuvée Prestige serves as an introduction to Ca' del Bosco, the 2009 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi Riserva represents the pinnacle of the portfolio. Made only in the best years in Clementi's honor, the wine is vinified in small neutral barrels and aged for 100 months on the lees. It sees no dosage, maintaining its luxurious, elegant essence. Heady layers of brioche and almond are lifted by focused, citrusy acidity, creating a lovely texture on the palate. *sj*

Ca' del Bosco is imported by Santa Margherita USA.



SOMMICON

Broaden Your Palate. Shape Your Future.

www.sommiconusa.com



Photo Credit: Josue Castro



Wednesday, November 13

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

Seminars:

9:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Burgogne Wines: The First Step to the Notion of Terroir

Southern California Versus Italy: A Blind Comparison of Six Italian Varieties from Two Wildly Different Regions

Roger Bohmrich, MW

11:15 a.m. – 1:00 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. – 3:45 p.m.

Village Appellations: The Heart of the Range

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

Toshio Ueno, MSS, Sake School of America

Syrah Smackdown

Thomas Price, MS, Jackson Family Fine Wines

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

Gretchen Thomas, CSW, CMS, WSET, Del Frisco's Restaurant Group

Eugenio Jardim, Wines of Portugal

Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler Vineyards

Constantin Alexander, US Hakkasan Group

Haley Moore, Town Hall, Salt House, Anchor & Hope

Tasting Break hosted by WhyNot

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

WSET Fireside Chat: Enter the Z

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Seminars:

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

All Cognac is Brandy, but Not All Brandy is Cognac!

Christian Esser, Wineschool3

Bordeaux and Germany's Best Kept Secrets

Lindsay Pomeroy, MW, Wine Smarties

Deconstructing Spirits

Bill 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, WineAlpha

Winning at Beverage Programs! Part 2: Expenses

Erik Segelbaum, SOMLYAY LLC

Gretchen Thomas, CSW, CMS, WSET, Del Frisco's Restaurant Group

Eugenio Jardim, Wines of Portugal

Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler Vineyards

Constantin Alexander, US Hakkasan Group

Haley Moore, Town Hall, Salt House, Anchor & Hope

Lunch hosted by DO Cava *Additional fee to attend. Limited space available!

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: It's Not a Flavor... It's a Feeling

Nick Hetzler, 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, and Bodegas Ramon Bilbao

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

WSET Fireside Chat: WSET's New Look

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Seminars:

4:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

It's Willamette Damnit! A Deep Dive Into Oregon's Willamette Valley

Bree Stock, MW, Constant Crush Advisors

Mead: What is all the Buzz About?

Gillian Balance, MS, Treasury Wine Estates

Traci Dutton, CIA

Peter Bakulic, American Meadmakers Association Board

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

Erik Segelbaum, SOMLYAY LLC

Tempranillo Master Class

Nicole Andrus, Trincherro Family Estates

Eugenio Jardim, Wines of Portugal

Wines of Israel: Wellknown Side of the Mediterranean

Sandy Block, MW, Legal Sea Foods

Medi-Tasting with Maisons & 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.

Champagne Lees Aging: Parameters, Conditions, & Effects

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 Chardonnay: A Regional Overview and Tasting

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.

Va Va Voom for Valpolicella

Lars Leicht, The Sommm Journal

Tasting Break hosted by WhyNot & Diniz Cellars

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

Faith Fulginiti, Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse

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

Will Costello, MS, Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills Estates

Heroic Harvests: Extreme Viticulture in Challenging Spanish Sites

Joseph Spellman, MS, JUSTIN Vineyards & Landmark Vineyards

Master Class on Tasting Whiskey for Quality

David Rudman, WSET Americas

The World's Many Styles of Chenin Blanc

Geoff Labitzke, MW, Kistler Vineyards

Brian Lynch, Kermit Lynch

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, WSET Advanced, Forbes

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

Lars Leicht, Vino Viaggio

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*

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Grand Decant Tasting

Schedule at a Glance

Produced by:



FAST FORWARD
Events, PR, Joy.



Attendees bask in the sun at the recent Riesling Revival event in Oregon's Willamette Valley.



PHOTO: ANNA CAMPBELL, ELK COVE VINEYARDS

Creative Leeway

RIESLING SURPRISES AT OREGON PINOT CAMP

by Simi Grewal



A sparkling Riesling from Brooks Wines was just one of the stunners poured during "Riesling Revival" at this year's Oregon Pinot Camp.

PHOTO: ANNA CAMPBELL, ELK COVE VINEYARDS

ON MAY 1 of this year, I opened a business. My friend and co-founder Cara Patricia and I had been trying to launch DECANTsf (decantsf.com), a hybrid wine bar and retail shop in San Francisco, for well over two years. While we were in the midst of construction, Cara sent me a link to apply for SommFoundation's scholarship to Oregon Pinot Camp (OPC) in June. The timing was cutting it close to our opening date, but my pessimistic side didn't think I would win the scholarship, so I applied. Amazingly, just two weeks before opening DECANTsf, I received an email that I had won!

Being away from my new business in its second month of operations did stir some paranoia, but the gift of SommFoundation's scholarship actually helped cement important relationships

that partially enabled us to launch some strong initiatives in our shop later in the summer. The goal of SommFoundation is to enrich our worlds as sommeliers, and this particular scholarship to Oregon Pinot Camp did that and more for me. First, it granted me a much firmer grasp on the Oregon wine industry. Second, this trip opened up new pathways to connect directly with folks who are on the ground every day in the Willamette Valley, offering them as resources and allowing me to be a better sommelier for my guests.

One benefit of this scholarship was an exposure to the deeper layers of what Oregon has to offer. As sommeliers, we almost universally recognize the greatness of Riesling. We have annual festivals praising its versatile, thirst-quenching abilities; sometimes we even use it to help us wake up

in the morning! Admittedly, we often steer ourselves (and our guests) solely toward the classic regions of Germany and Austria to imbibe this great grape. I honestly cannot recall the last time I was with fellow sommeliers and said, "Let's open some Oregon Riesling!" So imagine my surprise and delight when, after a weekend at OPC, I came back mostly talking about just that.

Contrary to popular belief, OPC is not only about Pinot Noir. My weekend in the Willamette Valley kicked off with a delightful celebration of all things Riesling; held at the home of Adam Campbell, Elk Cove's second-generation owner and winemaker, Riesling Revival welcomes wine folk from across the country, but more importantly, the occasion sends a clear message that while Pinot Noir is the state's economic darling, Riesling is its sassy, hedonistic counter.

A presence in Oregon for well over 150 years, white grapes were first planted in the 1840s near Forest Grove, about 30 miles west of Portland, by retired French-Canadian fur trappers. The latter part of the 19th century saw the arrival of more German immigrants, who quickly planted Riesling alongside other white varieties they'd brought with them. Southern Oregon, which was more influenced by California's burgeoning wine industry, was introduced to Riesling by way of the Beringer brothers, who shared cuttings with Adam Doerner—a pioneer of winegrowing in the Umpqua Valley—in the 1890s. Doerner then planted these



A pair of Rieslings from Elk Cove Vineyards.

cuttings near Roseburg, about 120 miles north of the California border.

It was in this area that Oregon rekindled its relationship with Riesling after Prohibition, when Richard Sommer planted the grape in Hillcrest Vineyard in 1961. Despite this long history, today Riesling is only the third-most-planted white grape in the state behind Pinot Gris and Chardonnay, underscoring why the organizers of Riesling Revival are striving to revive this beloved variety.

Elk Cove, Ponzi, Brooks, Trisaetum, Rex Hill, Alexana, and many more wineries came together on a warm June afternoon to share their best bottlings at Riesling Revival. The most intriguing aspect of tasting so many Oregon Rieslings at once was experiencing the diversity of styles; the state isn't tied to any particular approach, so anything from dry to sparkling to sweet can be found.

Riesling also doesn't fetch nearly as much money per ton as Pinot Noir, so it can sometimes seem like an afterthought to many winemakers. Yet the wineries represented at Riesling Revival all have a significant stake in keeping the variety alive in Oregon; they maintain their plantings despite a higher potential economic return from other grapes because Riesling obviously thrives in the state's diverse, cool terroirs, as demonstrated by the array of wines showcased.

Many, like Triseatum's 2018 Coast Range Estate Riesling, were fresh, austere, and wound up with enough acidity to make you want to call the dentist. Others showed excellent potential for aging, including Elk Cove's dry but textural 1999 Willamette Valley Riesling, which brimmed with earthy,

honeyed petrol notes. (In fact, most of the aged Rieslings sampled through the weekend were incredibly food-friendly, taking on an almost savory element that begged to be coaxed out by umami-driven flavors.) A major highlight was Brooks Winery's 2015 Sparkling Riesling, which was light, dry, and sharply effervescent on the palate, bursting with green-apple skins and freshly squeezed mandarin citrus.

When asked why there isn't more investment in the marketing of Oregon Rieslings, Brooks' assistant winemaker, Clare Jarreau, noted that it's ultimately an economic decision: As previously mentioned, growers aren't eager to plant Riesling when they can get far more return on Pinot Noir grapes. When further questioned if she thought Oregon winemakers would ever push to create something resembling Germany's Prädikat classification system, she hypothesized that as long as the price and production of Riesling grapes remained low, there wasn't an incentive to do so.

While the thought of these fantastic Rieslings permanently living in the shadow of Pinot Noir momentarily saddened me, Jarreau noted that this lack of attention also means that Oregon winemakers have a lot of creative leeway to produce the aforementioned range of styles. I got the sense from her and other winemakers that day that perhaps this was exactly why they revered the grape—there wasn't so much expectation wrapped into it. Ultimately, this might have been the exact reason I enjoyed Oregon Riesling so much during my time at OPC: It was unexpected, free-wheeling, and made with intention, which are all the trappings of a delicious wine. **SJ**

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIMI GREWAL



Author Simi Grewal is the co-founder of DECANTsf, a hybrid wine bar and retail shop in San Francisco, CA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN MACNEIL

A Never-Ending Story

KAREN MACNEIL EMBARKS ON WRITING THE THIRD EDITION OF HER BESTSELLING BOOK *THE WINE BIBLE*

WHEN KAREN MACNEIL first sat down to write what's now the number-one bestselling wine book in the United States, she had no idea how successful it—and, in turn, she—would become. Today, having won a multitude of prestigious awards, MacNeil is by far one of the most influential people in the industry. The first edition of *The Wine Bible* took eight years to complete, and now the third, set for release in 2022, will take her and her team about three. Read on for an abridged version of an insightful Q&A with the author as she embarks on this process (to read the full-length version, visit sommjournal.com).

Q: SOMM Journal Managing Editor Jessie Birschbach: Why does *The Wine Bible* need a third edition?

Karen MacNeil: The book that I'm working on right now will have chapters on Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and places that, even ten years ago, people who were really knowledgeable about wine had maybe only ever tasted one wine from. So part of the answer is that the world of good wine is getting bigger, but the other part is that the number of people who are really studying wine and have a voracious appetite for wine is also bigger.

Q: I relied heavily on this book when studying for my somm certification, and I continue to recall its information to this day. Why do think that's true for me and so many others?

When I started writing *The Wine Bible* in the 1990s, the MS and the MW programs were not even in the United States. It wasn't intended to make studying easy, but it kind of turned out that way. Historically, wine books had been written by people who were experts on wine but were not necessarily very good writers. I work at least as hard at being a good writer as I do at knowing about wine, and the better something is written, the easier it is to read and retain.

Q: What are the biggest challenges of writing a comprehensive volume on such a broad topic?

My office always does primary research. If you're a good journalist in addition to being a writer, you're always afraid that you might not get the story right—and not just the facts, but the emotion, too. On both sides, you want to have spent the time to figure out those nuances. We had something we were trying to figure out the other day for [MacNeil's newsletter] Wine-

Speed . . . and I said to one of the people who works for me, "OK, you've got to call the European Union," and she laughed and said, "Call the E.U.?" I said, "Yes! They have a phone. Someone is there!" I started out in newspapers, and in newspapers you called every possible source. So I think I bring that kind of intensity to *The Wine Bible*, and that's why maybe a lot of people consider it a very reliable source of information.

Q: What is it that you will continue to do in this third edition?

One of the things I think stylistically that I did early on that I'm going to continue is to write as if I were telling the story aloud. With the first *Wine Bible*, I imagined telling a person—a smart 35-year-old woman—the story of wine, chapter by chapter. I still imagine that person, and when I sit down to write, I talk to them, which helps wine writing be conversational as opposed to Oxford English. We usually speak in pretty short sentences, but if you take out any of the great, historic wine books, the sentence structures are really very long, and I think that makes wine very hard to comprehend. You have to have an almost Hemingway-like approach to sentence structure. **»**



The Man Behind the Brands



CERTIFIED
Organic

★ EL ★
LUCHADOR



**ORGANIC
TEQUILA**
100% de AGAVE



123
®
TEQUILA
100% de AGAVE

**MEZCAL
CRÁNEO**



**ORGANIC
MEZCAL ARTESANAL**
100% AGAVE
OAXACA



123spirits.com



i i c h i k o

SHOCHU

Japan's #1 Shochu Brand



Introducing

iichiko

SAITEN

彩天

Made specifically for the modern bartender, *iichiko Saiten* is a full-flavored expression of *shochu* that is perfect for cocktails at 43% ABV.

Crafted from 100% two-row barley and distilled only once for rich character and flavor. Blended with exceptionally soft, pristine iron-free spring water that is naturally filtered through 300 meters of volcanic rock.

Learn more at
iichiko.com

