



Wander + Ivy Founder and CEO Dana Spaulding at the Oxford Hotel in Denver, CO.

small **WONDER**

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Okanagan Valley, B.C., Canada

MISSION HILL FAMILY ESTATE
2018 Oculus
Okanagan Valley, B.C., Canada

MARTIN'S LANE WINERY
Simes Vineyard
2018 Pinot Noir
Okanagan Valley, B.C., Canada

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Meridith May
mmay@sommjournal.com

MANAGING EDITOR Ruth Tobias

rtobias@sommjournal.com

SENIOR STAFF EDITOR Kate Newton

knewton@sommjournal.com

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR Michael Viggiano

COO/MARKETING & SALES Bill Brandel, CSW
818-322-5050 • bill@sommjournal.com

VP/FINANCE DIRECTOR Anna Russell

arussell@tastingpanelmag.com

SENIOR WINE & BEER EDITOR Jessie Birschbach

VP OF EDUCATION Lars Leicht
lars@sommjournal.com

GLOBAL WINE EDITOR Deborah Parker Wong

FEATURES EDITOR Michelle Ball

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Jonathan Cristaldi

EAST COAST EDITOR Wanda Mann

NEW YORK EDITOR-AT-LARGE Stefanie Schwalb

EVENT MANAGER Dawn Verdone
dverdone@tastingpanelmag.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Vince Anter; Virginie Boone; Jillian Dara; Vanessa Da Silva; Stephanie Fassler; Doug Frost, MS, MW; Kim Haasarud; Emily Johnston Collins; Loris Jones-Randolph; Allison Jordan; Allison Levine; Kate Nowell-Smith; Kami Lee Robb; Alexander Rubin

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jeremy Ball; Christina Barrueta; Randy Caparoso; Wes Hagen; Karen MacNeil; David Ransom; Allyson Reedy; Erik Segelbaum; Marci Symington; Liz Thach, MW

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To be an enophile

is to be an explorer. That much is evident in any edition of *The SOMM Journal*, and this one is no exception as it takes readers to regions as far flung as Argentina (pages 4 and 60), Burgundy (insert), and New Zealand (pages 44 and 92). Of course, no issue is complete without a trip to California wine country; the following pages are particularly devoted to Sonoma County, which we criss-cross from the Alexander Valley (page 38) to the Russian River Valley (page 72) to Sonoma Valley (page 54) and beyond (page 42). But our stateside trek doesn't end there: In our continuing effort to report on the U.S. hospitality industry at large, we've traveled from coast to coast to introduce you to some of the faces and places defining the dining scenes in Sedona, Arizona (page 84); Denver (page 20); Boston (page 68); Atlanta (page 94); and, of course, New York (page 14).

It's only fitting, then, that our cover story should be on a wine brand called Wander + Ivy. The name is indeed an allusion to founder Dana Spaulding's search for sustainable growers around the globe, one that led her to Languedoc, Valencia, and the Veneto, among other places; you'll find her story on page 46.

Let the journey begin! SJ

Ruth Tobias





Viña Cobos founder Paul Hobbs.

A
NOBLE
ENDEAVOR

**HOW VIÑA
COBOS QUIETLY
HELPED TO PUT
ARGENTINA ON
THE WORLD
WINE MAP**

BY RUTH TOBIAS



Hobbs says that his mission at Viña Cobos has been to showcase Malbec's nobility.

The Viña Cobos winery in the Luján de Cuyo subzone of Peridriel in Mendoza, Argentina.

Before potential can be realized, it has to be recognized. Case in point: Argentina. The raw materials on which major wine regions are built were always there, but it's only been in the past 30 or so years that visionary producers have paid them the sufficient attention and respect required to transform the country's industry into a world-class powerhouse. Among those pioneers is Paul Hobbs, founder of Viña Cobos.

In the spring of 1988, on a foray that in his words "wasn't entirely intentional," Hobbs found himself in Argentina after several days in Chile. He wasn't expecting much: "The reputation of the country was so poor, and people that I respected, professors and industry people, said, 'There's really no point going to Argentina because all it can do is produce plonk! It was too warm and the soils weren't really good for making good wine,'" he recalls. But driving over the Andes from Santiago into Mendoza, he adds, "I was confused and a bit surprised: These good-looking vineyards . . . were superior in the way they were planted and the soils in which they were planted."

His suspicion: that the country's outside detractors "had probably flown into

Mendoza; they'd seen the eastern part of Mendoza, which is very hot and very sandy." To the west, where the mountains "taper off nice and gradually into a plain, it seemed to me to allow you to go [to a] higher elevation if heat was a problem." In short, Hobbs continues, "I saw all this enormous possibility. The farming wasn't good: They were overirrigating, they were fertilizing. They didn't have a mentality for quality and they didn't have the equipment to make quality—it was very antiquated. But I just reasoned that if you could grow high-quality grapes, you could figure out the rest."

First and foremost, what he figured out was that Malbec would be Argentina's signature variety. "Our mission at Viña Cobos has been . . . to show the grape's nobility," he explains. "I think there were a lot of questions, particularly in Argentina [where it] was considered a low-end blending variety, but it made up a major component in the Classification of 1855 in Bordeaux: A number of the Grands Crus had very high percentages of Malbec in the blend, in some cases over 50%. . . . So I just had confidence that if it was grown correctly, we could make an extremely high-quality wine."

Of course, in order to do that, "I felt it was essential to study the terroir," says

Hobbs. "If Malbec could reflect the difference between one site and another, then you could confer nobility on it." Thus began an exploration of Mendoza, particularly the subregions of Luján de Cuyo and the Valle de Uco, that continues to this day and that is indeed reflected in Viña Cobos' luxury-tier offerings.

For starters, there's Vinculum, which represents "some of the very best fruit we have from [growers in] those regions," in Hobbs' words. As Viña Cobos director of international sales Carlos de Carlos explains it, "When Paul arrived in Mendoza, he started to work with different people to explore places, but we didn't have money to buy all the properties, so the natural thing was partnering with growers, and in time, he became consultant to those people. They loved to work with Paul because he gave them such good advice, and then they became part of Viña Cobos." He clearly loves to work with them in turn: "Some of our growers we've had for the history of our company—they're very loyal, and they bought into what we've been trying to do, and so they made sacrifices," says Hobbs. Consisting of a Chardonnay (\$50) and a Malbec (\$70), Vinculum "was kind of built with them in mind—in a sense to honor them."

Eventually, Viña Cobos was able to purchase several properties, which are showcased in the next tier: Vineyard Designate. This includes three Malbecs (\$100), through which “of course our goal is to reflect . . . those nuanced distinctions between one place and another,” says Hobbs. From the Marchiori Estate in the Luján de Cuyo subzone of Perdriel comes what de Carlos calls “the classic Malbec from Argentina—a little rounder tannins, sweeter, [and] a bit richer in the mouth.” Then there’s the Zingaretti Estate in the Villa Bastías district of Tupungato in the Valle de Uco, home to vines as old as 100 years. “Even though it’s small, we produce two wines [from Zingaretti]: one from the stony part and one from the more clayey part, and then at the end we combine them to give identity to the whole place,” says de Carlos, according to whom Uco Malbec “is all about texture—it’s about linear and more textured wines.” A second Valle de Uco Malbec hails from the 20-hectare Chañares Estate in the Los Árboles district of Tunuyán, described by Hobbs as “a wild natural site” of which 10% is left to native flora and fauna, including the chañar tree for which it’s named. Here as on the other

estate properties, no-till viticulture is practiced as much as possible, and herbicides are eschewed entirely; as Hobbs puts it, “From erosion control to soil preservation and maintaining the microbiome, part of what we’re doing is an experiment. If [it] shows it can really make better wine and the press appreciates it and customers appreciate it, well, we’re hopeful that even though it’s more expensive, more people will farm that way. It’s better for the planet.”

Interestingly, Viña Cobos’ top tier, which consists of two wines—the Cabernet Sauvignon–dominant Volturno (\$250) and Cobos Malbec (\$400)—isn’t site-specific; rather, says Hobbs, the Mendoza-appellated wines simply epitomize “the very, very best we can do in any given vintage.” Their success in that regard can be measured in myriad ways, but one of the most obvious is that, in 2014, the 2011 Cobos Malbec became the first South American wine ever to receive a 100-point score from the mainstream press. (The label has since garnered several.) As de Carlos points out, “That was huge for Argentina but also for [South America] because people looked at [it] in a different way from that time onwards. . . . Being the first has to change a lot



of mentalities, a lot of paradigms. It’s a lot of convincing and challenging perceptions, and this is the ethos of Viña Cobos.”

Indeed, “facing the headwinds of a region that doesn’t have a reputation . . . is not an uncommon problem, and I actually love that problem,” says Hobbs, who recalls calling distributors in New York to sell them on Viña Cobos: “When I ran my whole spiel and told them what I was doing, at the end of that, they’d say, ‘What part of Chile did you say that’s from?’ That’s how poorly known Argentina was—but then it just kind of grew, almost by word of mouth. And that’s always inspired me. . . . That’s part of my mission,

TASTING NOTES

Viña Cobos 2019 Bramare Malbec, Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50)

Forming a luxurious wrap around the palate, this red delivers waves of creamy boysenberry and melted dark chocolate as a garden of violets blooms with the support of sweet soil and coffee. It’s well structured, with rounded tannins and a white-peppered finish of Luxardo cherry. **95** —*Meridith May*



Viña Cobos Bramare 2020 Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50)

High-elevation vineyards sitting at over 3,200 feet contribute to the concentration and beauty of this inky carmine-hued wine, a product of the earliest harvest in Mendoza’s history. Austere and clean on first sip, it boasts a chalky, minerality-forward personality as dried violets and blueberry thread through licorice, balsamic, and espresso. Showing some youth yet highly structured, it aged for 18 months in (22% new) French oak. **94** —*M.M.*



Viña Cobos Vinculum 2021 Chardonnay, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50)

At once creamy and electric, this striking Chardonnay—fermented and aged in French oak with 50% spontaneous malolactic—is lit from within, its brightness showing through crisp pear, green apple, honey, and fresh cream. While not quite steely, it exhibits racy acidity and minerality as it tilts toward a floral finish of jasmine and white lilies. **95** —*M.M.*



Viña Cobos 2018 Vinculum Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina (\$70)

From vineyards located at almost 3,900 feet in elevation in the semidesert climates of two key Mendoza appellations, this red aged 18 months in French oak is decidedly luscious. Offering red tea and exotic spice—cardamom, ginger, dried chili, and paprika—it’s juicy and vibrant, finishing with an explosion of ripe strawberry. **95** —*M.M.*

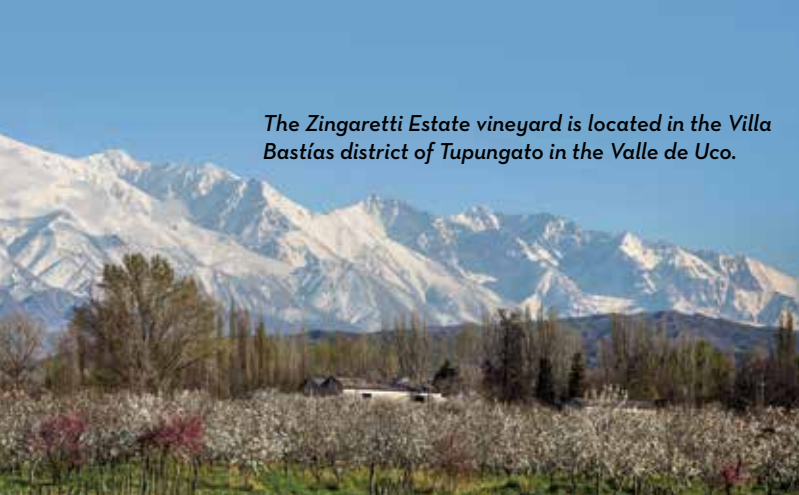


Viña Cobos Zingaretti Estate 2021 Chardonnay, Villa Bastías, Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina (\$70)

From 100-year-old vines, this white aged ten months in French oak is fresh and crisp with salted pear, cashew, and a hint of yellow apple. A striking mouthfeel joins a flash of brightness that illuminates the white flowers settling on the palate with a dusting of vanilla wafer. **96** —*M.M.*



The Zingaretti Estate vineyard is located in the Villa Bastías district of Tupungato in the Valle de Uco.



if you will, or part of what gives me pleasure: How can you make a difference in your life? I mean, if I wanted to just make a lot of money, I'd probably stay in Napa and consult for a lot of wineries, but it was more the opportunity to go into places and help. . . . But first, of course, you've got to make really good wine and then get it introduced to the world."

Which brings us to another mark of Viña Cobos' success: participation in famed French distribution network La Place de Bordeaux. "I told Paul before he hired me, 'Argentina needs to be sold among the best wines of the world—and the place where you trade the best wines of the

world is La Place de Bordeaux,'" explains de Carlos, who had had experience with the process of placing wines in the marketplace during his tenure at Chilean producer Seña. In 2022, he continues, Cobos Malbec "became the most expensive Argentina wine in La Place. And that is a huge change, because in just one release [of] 2,800 bottles, we opened seven négociants, and through [them], we opened 140 new distributors around the world and 40 new countries just in one shot. . . . I can tell you as director of international sales that the amount of calls that I receive now offering distribution in unknown places just because Cobos is in La Place is enormous—be-

The Chañares Estate vineyard in the Los Árboles district of Tunuyán in the Valle de Uco.

cause they now see Cobos when they never saw Cobos before."

For Hobbs, the road to La Place "has been thrilling—it's a learning curve for me, but it's been very enjoyable," he says. "[While] we'd like to see Viña Cobos become an internationally recognized brand, it's not only for [us], it's for Argentina. Because I have a strong feeling people know that Argentina has all the requisites to compete with the very best the world has to offer—but this helps get that message out to the world." SJ

Viña Cobos Zingaretti Estate 2019 Malbec, Villa Bastías, Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina



(\$100) The Zingaretti Estate vineyard is home to century-old vines at 3,772 feet above sea level. Aged 18 months in (50% new) French oak barrels, this inky purple Malbec displays aromas and flavors that are preternaturally profound as its satin texture meets diamond clarity. Its balsamic, heather, and umami flavors lead to a tense orange peel—and-graphite middle that's both sinewy and concentrated. **98** —M.M.

Viña Cobos Marchiori Estate 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Perdriel, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina



(\$100) High-elevation vineyards tower at over 3,000 feet, creating an intense red. A perfume of mocha, violets, and boysenberry precedes a plush, elegant mouthfeel. The fruit is fresh and dynamic, with dark chocolate parting a sea of blueberry and lavender. A midpalate seasoned with white pepper and espresso gives way to a rich and round finish. **98** —M.M.

Viña Cobos Marchiori Estate 2019 Malbec, Perdriel, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina



(\$100) Melt-in-your-mouth licorice gains momentum as flavors burst forth: graphite, black tea, walnut, and black olive. Higher-toned notes of orange peel and just-ripened blackberry surround a streamlined, oak-inspired finish. **95** —M.M.

Viña Cobos Chañares Estate 2019 Malbec, Los Árboles, Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina



(\$100) Grown in rocky soils with calcareous sediments at altitudes of over 3,800 feet, this is a Malbec with a generous spice rack, adding zing to its sturdy foundation of sandalwood and tobacco. Blueberry meets boysenberry and mocha to further perk up the well-integrated tannins. **96** —M.M.

Viña Cobos Chañares Estate 2019 Cabernet Franc, Los Árboles, Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina



(\$100) Crushed stone and dried violets define this spirited red, while peppercorn, baking spices, mint, and star anise take strides with oaky vanilla and cardamom on the finish. Aged 18 months in (50% new) French oak. **95** —M.M.

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PHOTO: CHRISTINA BARRUETA

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Quintessential Marks Its 20th Anniversary With a Grand Tasting

LEADING WINE IMPORTER, marketer, and sales company Quintessential is celebrating 20 years in business, during which it has aimed to serve as a champion of the family-owned wineries it exclusively represents. Launched in 2003 by two generations of the Kreps family, Quintessential focuses on multigenerational producers with rich stories and deeply expressive wines.

To commemorate this milestone, the company hosted a 20th Anniversary Grand Tasting in Napa, California, where it is headquartered. The event welcomed wine trade and media professionals, presenting the labels of more than 30 family-owned wineries from all over the world. *sj*



Geyser Peak assistant winemaker Jessica Saghafi was among the winery representatives in attendance at Quintessential's 20th Anniversary Grand Tasting in Napa, CA.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF QUINTESSENTIAL



Quintessential's family founders: Dennis Kreps, Steve Kreps Sr., and Steve Kreps Jr.



Champagne Palmer global commercial director Raymond Ringeval engages with attendees at the Grand Tasting.



The tasting featured bottlings from more than 30 family-owned producers.



Since its founding in 2003, Quintessential has aimed to serve as a champion of multigenerational producers by exclusively representing family-owned wineries.



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Koloman's salmon en croûte with pickled cucumber, sunchoke, and beetroot beurre rouge.

Fine-Dining Feat

KOLOMAN FOCUSES ON FINESSE, NOT FUSS

IN A CITY chock-full of buzzworthy restaurants, Koloman is generating an impressive frenzy and intense FOMO among New York City's wine and food lovers. "How was it?" breathlessly asked several friends who had been clamoring for reservations.

The answer is that Koloman is more than dazzling decor and picture-perfect plates—it is a serious restaurant with a reverence for fine dining, minus the snootiness. "Finesse without fuss" is how executive chef/partner Markus Glocker describes the cuisine: "It's my own style of cooking that I've perfected over the years and [that] represents my journey of the last 20 years of working in the kitchen for incredible chefs."

Glocker honed his skills at Bâtard and Augustine in New York, Gordon Ramsay in London and New York, and Steirereck in Vienna. During his tenure as executive chef/owner of Bâtard, the restaurant earned a Michelin star, three stars from *The New York Times*, and the 2015 Best New Restaurant in America award from the James Beard Foundation.

Known for his impeccable technique, Glocker prepares contemporary interpretations of French classics with accents from his native Austria. Signature dishes include salmon en croûte with pickled cucumber, sunchoke, and beetroot beurre rouge; schnitzel Viennoise with potato salad, cucumber, lingonberries, and sea buckthorn; and a lobster burger served with caviar-topped fried potatoes. "When thinking of Koloman's concept, we wanted to first create the wine list and have the menu come after," says Glocker. "Here at Koloman, we cook for the wines, [which is] something I learned from my time working at Charlie Trotter's."

Formerly chief sommelier at the storied Le Bernardin, Austrian-born Katja Scharnagl is Koloman's beverage direc-



PHOTOS: NICK JOHNSON

Koloman beverage director Katja Scharnagl and chef/partner Markus Glocker.

tor; Glocker enthuses that she "understands the vision of the restaurant and has great taste." To that end, "the wine list is composed of wines from France, Austria, and a little from the United States, which complements our menu as we have dishes with French and Austrian influence," says Scharnagl, adding that "Champagne and gougères [cheese puffs] are the perfect way to start your meal here . . . while you're looking over the dinner menu" and that the aforementioned salmon dish is superb with Fanny Sabre Burgundy. And while Glocker suggests pairing the dessert soufflé for two with a glass of Kracher 2019 Beerenauslese from Austria, Scharnagl points out that "we've cultivated a unique and rare collection of eaux de vie and schnapps from brands including Reisetbauer, Rochelt, Capreolus, and more" for those who'd rather cap off their meal with a digestif.

Koloman is named for the influential artist Koloman Moser, a leader of the Vienna Secession movement; its off black- and cream-toned dining room pays hom-

age to Moser's vibrant and complex style with stylized touches such as custom wallpaper in geometric patterns and 52 light fixtures designed in Vienna. "Good food and good wine is hard enough to achieve, but if you add in the third element and achieve an amazing interior, it just brings the dining experience to the next level," says Glocker.

It's an even harder feat to create a fine-dining restaurant that also feels like a comfortable neighborhood spot—a place where you can drop in any time of day, whether you're craving a quick nosh or an extravagant feast. But Koloman, which seats 110 guests and serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner, has succeeded. The full menu is available at the main bar, which seats 20. If you see me there sipping one of the 20 wines offered by the glass, do say hello. **SJ**

Wanda Mann is a Certified Specialist of Wine, the founder of winewithwanda.com, and a Manhattan native. Follow her on Instagram @winedinewanda.



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Worth the Trouble

PRIORITIZE TERROIR TO SET YOUR WINE LIST APART

WE ALL KNOW that wine is made in the vineyard. So why is it so hard to run wine programs that reflect this fundamental truth?

As sommeliers, we're aware of the key differentiating factors of place; they guide us in blind tasting. We may start by identifying grapes, but it's the sensory attributes resulting from terroir that lead us to our logical conclusions.

The rubber meets the road, however, when we are choosing bottles to put on our lists while sitting at tables that, for many of us, are hundreds or thousands of miles from the nearest vineyard. This is when an evaluation of wines on the basis of origin becomes difficult or nearly impossible for the vast majority of wine professionals.

Let me give you an example: Not too long ago, I sat down to a blind tasting of Chardonnays from the Santa Cruz Mountains with some of the most respected wine journalists in the business. Virtually

all of the panelists expressed a preference for wines that tasted the way Chardonnays are "supposed" to taste, exhibiting a sense of richness and fullness, balanced acidity, proportionate oak, and so on.

After a few minutes I realized the absurdity of it all. Not one of these experienced professionals were singling out wines for attributes typical of Chardonnay grown in the Santa Cruz Mountains: minerality, lightness, elevated acidity, and a prudent use of oak. They were giving the highest scores to wines that tasted most like Chardonnays grown in other places, such as the Sonoma Coast, Carneros, the Côte de Beaune, and the Hunter Valley—anywhere but from the high-elevation vineyards of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Not that I blame them. The entire industry is, seemingly, engrossed by varietal correctness, among other standards of quality unrelated to sense of place. A typical restaurant list may include wines from many regions of the world,

but most of these wines are chosen for their balance in terms of oak, fruit, tannin, acidity, and so forth; for their intensity; and/or for their adherence to favored styles—in short, for everything but terroir.

Why go to the trouble to prioritize terroir as a criterion for list inclusion? For one reason, because we know it's right. Sensory qualities expressing origins are what distinguish the finest wines of the world. Number two, when we go to the trouble, we have a better chance of getting our guests to appreciate authentic wines. Think of it: If chefs are judged by how well they source authentic ingredients, why not sommeliers?

Good question. It is true that much of the restaurant industry does not operate by such lofty standards. The vast majority of guests might not recognize an authenticity-based wine list if it hit them upside the head. But as with cuisine, they can taste it, and that's why it matters. **SJ**



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Good Things Come in Small Packages

ON THE SINGLE-SERVE WINE TREND

REPEAT AFTER ME: "Format does not dictate quality." No truer is this mantra than in the wine business, where times have changed. Though the 750-milliliter glass bottle is in no danger of being unseated from its throne at the apex of wine production, it has increasing competition. A slew of alternative formats has already made necessary waves in the industry, including 3-liter bag-in-boxes, kegs, and Tetra Paks. They all provide incredible value for a variety of reasons, chief among them lower environmental impact and cost reduction. Now another format is on the rise: single-serve packaging appropriate for airlines, minibars, tasting menus, retail packs, study samples, sports and entertainment venues, catering operations, and more.

Enter Verre Wine (verrewine.com), a recently launched start-up that is poised to change the single-serve wine game for the better. Through a proprietary process, test tube-like vials are filled with single servings. Each vial is screen-printed with the winery's name and that of the wine, the appellation, and the vintage as well as all the requisite legalese—everything one would find on a wine label, in short. Additionally, they display a QR code that links consumers to the producer's website, tasting notes, and other information. These vials are available in multiple sizes in both glass and plastic.

I spend a significant part of my year at 40,000 feet, often craving wine. Barring occasional forays into international business class, I find that my wine choices as an air passenger are barely tolerable at best and insultingly terrible at worst. I—and most of my fellow wine lovers, I'd wager—would happily pay a little more for a glass of Premier Cru Chablis, Barolo, or Napa Cabernet rather than less for

PHOTO COURTESY OF VERRE WINE



what is presently offered on planes. Airlines should heed the call by partnering with prestigious wineries that can package single-serve wines to be purchased and served aboard flights.


Plenty of terrestrial applications exist for these products too. Apart from luxury hotels that could offer esteemed wines in minibars, restaurants perhaps stand to gain the most with higher-end by-the-glass pours that could otherwise not be offered due to risk of oxidation and spoilage. (Unlike expensive wine-preservation systems that require specialized training, vials aren't susceptible to failure caused

These single-serve formats could revolutionize tasting menu pairings, providing sommeliers with a myriad of options that would otherwise not be financially feasible.

by user error.) These single-serve formats could revolutionize tasting menu pairings, providing sommeliers with a myriad of options that would otherwise not be financially feasible; the same goes for tables that have ordered dishes calling for different wines.

The applications don't end on-premise. Retailers could package themed flights

such as "Date Night in a Box" or "Pinot Noir Around the World." Wineries could also more easily offer flights in their tasting rooms or for take-home purchase. Other beneficiaries include distributors and suppliers who could provide sample vials rather than costly full bottles to potential buyers.

There are countless other possible uses for this new single-serve format. With wine in vials, the sky is the limit! 

Editor's note: For more on the single-serve wine movement, see our cover story on Wander + Ivy on page 46.

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All in Good Fun

A LOOK AT THE LABEL-DEFYING HEY KIDDO

THEY MAY NOT be able to put it in a nutshell, but Denver diners know an Id Est Hospitality Group restaurant when they see it. It involves breads and pastas made from house-milled heritage grains. Fermented products of all sorts, devised by the group's own director of fermentation. A wide range of influences, from Italian to Mexican to Japanese. And a firm ethos of zero-waste sustainability. In the case of Hey Kiddo, which opened in January in a snug third-floor space in the Berkeley neighborhood, that all adds up to a specials-heavy menu where Korean-style fried chicken might at any given time coexist with Caesar salad, okonomiyaki, crab agnolotti, and caviar service; adjoining bar OKYeah, for its part, specializes in bespoke cocktails and handrolls, while The Rooftop serves snacks crafted from upcycled ingredients. If putting the place in a nutshell is absolutely necessary, you may as well stick with the one provided by Id Est, founded by 2023 James Beard Award nominee Kelly Whitaker; in its Instagram bio: Hey Kiddo is "a good + fun restaurant," designed to elicit maximum freewheeling creativity from its kitchen and beverage team.

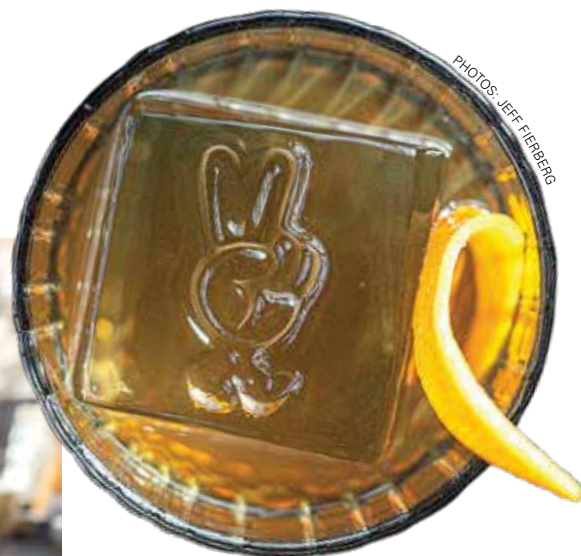
That team includes beverage director and sommelier Caroline Clark, whose wine list is as exploration-worthy as they come—complete with tasting notes that, in her words, "add a layer of approachability, because so often people are intimidated by a selection that they don't recognize. . . . These are tasting notes that aren't meant for professionals and geeks; they're meant for anybody to take a bite out of and decide if [a given wine] is a fit for them." In addition to Champagne, her selection of sparkling wine ranges from Croatian pét-nat to Hungarian brut nature to Sekt from the Mosel. From there, she offers up the likes of Hiyu Tzum Stavus VII, a skin-contact



Hey Kiddo's Korean-style fried chicken.

blend of Gewürztraminer and Pinot Noir from Oregon with notes of "bergamot, rosehip, [and] walnut"; Tisso La Vasée Vin Jaune from the Arbois, a "cult, oxidative expression . . . [that's] savory, spicy, nutty"; and Vini Lectores Pomagrana Trepas from Conca de Barberà, suggesting "cranberry, nectarine, and of course pomegranate."

It's all meant, obviously, to pair with plates as eclectic as chicken-liver mousse on Texas toast and bucatini with fermented black beans. That's the fun part. "But the good part," says Clark, "is a pretty serious vetting process [with respect to] viticulture and land stewardship. Every bottle on there is chosen because of a clear, conscious approach to how [the producers] treat the soil, whether that



PHOTOS: JEFF FIERBERG

The Sociable cocktail with rye, Calvados, sweet vermouth, Drambuie, and China-China Amer.

means refraining from chemical use or [increasing] biodiversity in the vineyards [or] working with older vines and native yeasts and making these types of choices that [help] leave a better footprint on the planet."

Clark credits bar manager Davey Anderson, meanwhile, with an equally charming and thoughtful cocktail program. "One of the things I love most about his style is how much he's driven by hospitality," she explains, "so he's always looking to have something for everyone—he's very inclusive even if the spirits can lean toward the geekier, more historic side." Examples on the Hey Kiddo drink list include the Daisugi with saké-based Japanese vermouth, mezcal, Bénédictine, and Douglas fir liqueur and the Tragic Kingdom with blanco tequila, fennel liqueur, jalapeño, muskmelon, coconut, and lime; as for OKYeah, "it's a conversation-based bar, so there's no menu [at all]"—rather, the bar crew chats up the guests as to their likes and dislikes and creates custom cocktails accordingly. Admits Clark, "We're not the first people to do that; most bartenders know how to make a dealer's choice—but to just commit to that being the whole experience is new to Denver and very exciting."

Not to mention good and fun. *ST*

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A Slice of Baan Sanmaket

IN PHOENIX, AZ, **LOM WONG** TRANSPORTS ITS GUESTS TO THE VILLAGES OF THAILAND

“IN THAI, **LOM WONG** means ‘to come together,’” said Alex Martin as he welcomed us to a pop-up dinner back in 2019. “It’s that feeling at the end of the day when you gather together with friends and family for good food and drink.” Alex and his wife, Yotaka “Sunny” Promptum-Martin, had assembled an intimate group of friends at their home for a culinary introduction to Thailand, where the couple had met. On the menu were family recipes from Yotaka’s village of Baan Sanmaket in the northern part of the country: We swooned over eight courses of revelatory dishes such as *gai haw bai tuy* (marinated chicken cooked in pandan leaves) and *sai ua* (charcoal-grilled sausage), paired with inventive cocktails like the Nam Jim, combining bird’s eye chili–infused rum with lime, Thai basil, and coconut. Other pop-ups followed as the couple continued to showcase Thailand’s diversity via recipes taught to them by Won Pen, Alex’s “Thai grandmother” whom he met during a homestay in Baan Tahm Phratat, and the dishes of southern village Baan Tap Tawan shared with them by the Moklen, a seafaring people who live along the Andaman coast.

In 2022, the Martins realized their dream of operating a restaurant when they opened Lom Wong in a charming 1919 bungalow in Phoenix. Within a year, the couple had been named Best Chef: Southwest semifinalists by the James Beard Foundation. Signature dishes include Won Pen’s *gai tawt won pen*, or crispy marinated chicken wings; *yam mamuang boran*, a refreshing salad of shredded green mango, shrimp, peanut, and coconut dressed with lime, fish sauce, and hand-squeezed coconut cream; and *laap mu muang*—minced pork seasoned with hand-pounded spices and fresh herbs, then festooned with a

tumble of pork cracklings and crispy shallots. “It has so much flavor because of the unique spices we use,” notes Yotaka. “I can’t find them here, so my mom sends them from Thailand.”

“Our cocktails are another way to apply the ingredients of Thai cuisine,” adds Alex. Overseen by Nuthapong “Thunder” Vance, the bar program showcases such masterful libations as Thunder’s Piña Cola-



da, featuring a tom yum syrup made with makrut lime, galangal, and lemongrass, and Eleven Tigers, made with bourbon and *ya dong*, a Thai amaro. As for the all-natural wine list, Alex encourages pairings like Cantina Indigeno Montepulciano with the mango salad or Banyan Gewürztraminer with beef curry. “You don’t have to drink red wine with meat or white wine with



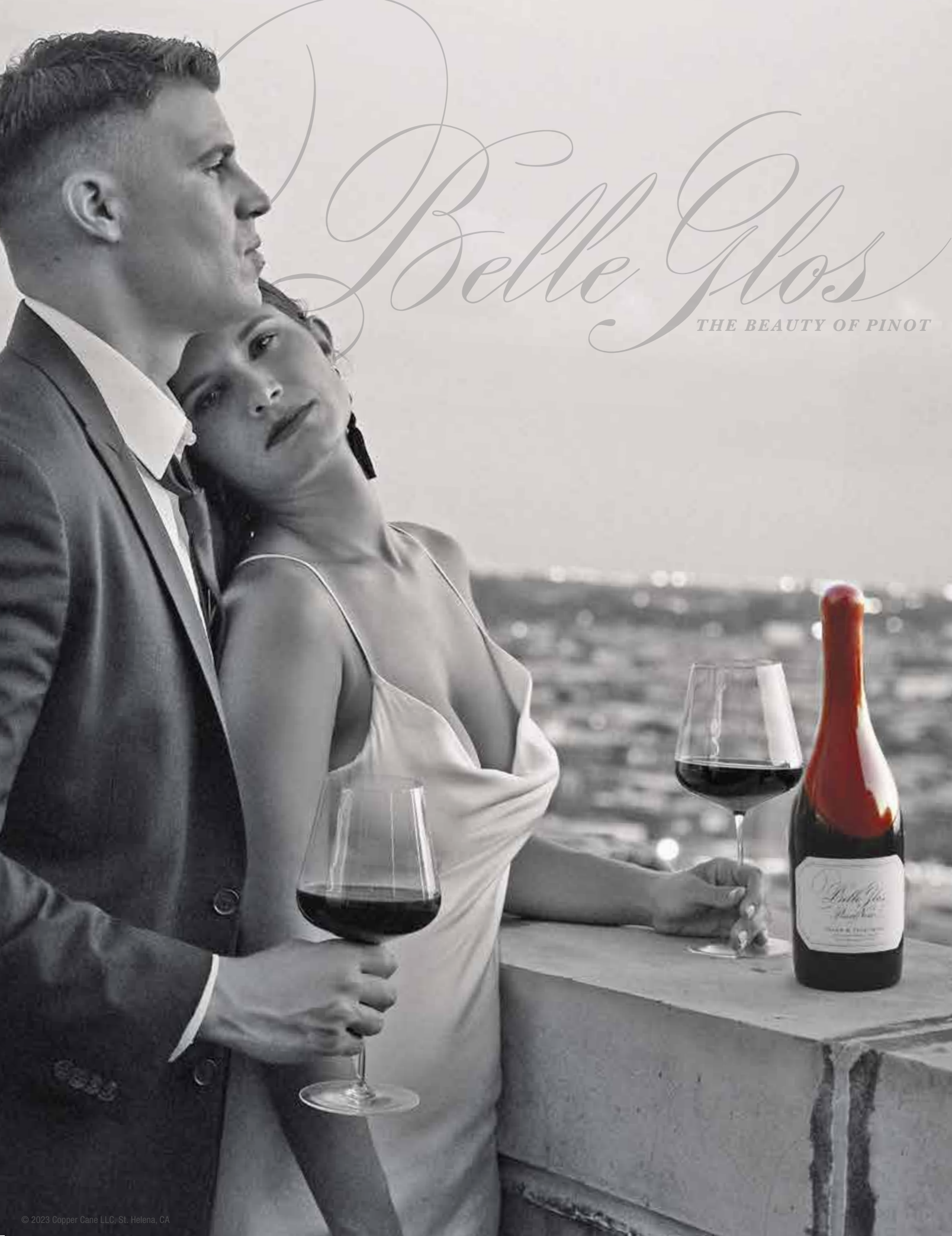
PHOTOS: CHRISTINA BARRUETA

▲ Yotaka “Sunny” Promptum-Martin and Alex Martin.

◀ Lom Wong’s laap (front) and mango salad.

fish. We can create our own rules by pairing wines with the spices instead of the proteins,” he points out.

Ultimately, says Yotaka, “We love for everyone to get the full experience of Thai food and culture and learn something new.” Alex agrees: “We want our guests to feel like they’re entering a new world, one they want to keep returning to.” ❧



Belle Glos

THE BEAUTY OF PINOT

A Fling With Riesling

CASSIA GM/WINE DIRECTOR **MARIANNA CALDWELL** ON DESIGNING A CREATIVE WINE LIST by Emily Johnston Collins



PHOTO: CAROL BAX

RIESLING IS THE WORKHORSE that powers general manager/wine director Marianna Caldwell's wine program at Cassia, the Rustic Canyon Family restaurant group's Southeast Asian-inspired brasserie in Santa Monica, California. Caldwell likes to pair Riesling with everything on the menu from Vietnamese prawns with Fresno chiles and garlic to steak frites with Phú Quốc Island peppercorn sauce, and her recommendations carry influence. While the variety was available at the restaurant prior to her arrival, she says, guests were largely uninterested in it; now, about 30% of the bottles she opens are Riesling. But it's not only Caldwell's tableside enthusiasm for Riesling that converts guests into fans: It's also her creatively organized wine list.

Her idea for the format came early on in the pandemic, when she put together a cellar list to promote to-go wine sales. Once dining-room service recommenced, she converted it into a category on her regular list titled "What I'm Drinking Now" and put it on the front page. After it gained traction, she decided to move her entire Riesling selection onto the first page as well under the heading "What I'm Always Drinking." This was when she noticed an increased interest in her beloved wine.

That said, "the comment I get the most is 'I don't recognize any wines on this list,'" Caldwell acknowledges before pointing out that "[the wine list] is different because the food is also different," ranging from grilled pig's tail with fish sauce to dan dan noodles with minced duck. To help guests leave their comfort zone, she uses humor—for instance, the sparkling wine section is titled "Bubbles . . . For Celebrations or Just Because It's Tuesday"—as well as helpful category descriptions, as with "White . . . Crisp, Dry & Mineral-Driven" or "Red . . . Medium-Bodied, Lush & Earthy." What you won't find on her list are wines that are high in alcohol or tannin, which would clash with the spices in the food; she isn't afraid to steer fans of big red wines toward more comfortable options like beer or cocktails.

In 2022, Rustic Canyon Family opened another Southeast Asian restaurant: The Dutchess in Ojai, where I am wine director. The Dutchess serves Burmese cuisine, for which my wine pairing of choice is Grüner Veltliner instead of Riesling. But I still look to Caldwell's wine list as an estimable reference, inspired by her concept, selections, and playful tone. SJ



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Trends and Traditions

HOW ONE NEW YORK WINE DIRECTOR BUILDS WELL-ROUNDED WINE PROGRAMS

by Emily Johnston Collins

DAVE LOFSTROM has found his niche in building and revamping wine programs for luxury companies. Since 2020, he has helped develop the programs at WS New York (*Wine Spectator's* now-closed private club and restaurant in New York City); Brush Creek Ranch in Wyoming (a working wagyu ranch with a lodge, a spa, dining, and an extensive wine cellar); and Restoration Hardware's new RH Guesthouse also in New York City, which houses a fine-dining restaurant and an upcoming Champagne and caviar bar. While Lofstrom stays abreast of trends, he isn't unduly influenced by them when it comes to making wine selections. More important to him is designing a program that meets both the desires of the guests and the needs of the restaurant.

For instance, at RH Guesthouse, Lofstrom built a program in keeping with the boutique hotel's driving theme: quality. To him, this meant looking to the classic regions of the Old World, which "are classics for a reason," he says. But he also turns to quality-driven New World regions like Napa Valley, Oregon, and Australia's Margaret River; when he was working for the WS club, these were particularly integral to the list given *Wine Spectator's* famed affinity for New World wines.

On the floor, Lofstrom aims to put guests at ease. He takes note when they open conversations with self-doubting phrases like, "I usually drink Malbec. Is that OK?" To reduce their anxiety, he seeks to offer selections that are recognizable and popular. On any given night, Lofstrom says, at least four guests will ask about Chablis, so he makes sure to have it on the list. Additionally, he says, "Sancerre is a big category in New York. Gotta have it!" And there isn't a program he runs that doesn't include Bordeaux: "Even people who know little about wine have heard the name Bordeaux."

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANINA LEE COMMUNICATIONS



◀ Dave Lofstrom.

reflects on the business side of running a wine program. "Don't put a barrier in front of a guest who wants to spend money," he says, meaning that by replacing a well-known Bordeaux château with an up-and-coming (and cheaper) producer, you're automatically preventing a higher sale. But your high-end wines still need to be within reach of most of the clientele: To that end, Lofstrom is seeking more second wines from top châteaux as Bordeaux prices continue to rise. Relatedly, availability has become a challenge in recent years due to the pandemic and various weather disasters; while Lofstrom relies on his knowledge of current events in the wine world to main-

tain consistent availability—for instance, he approached his bosses about investing in extra stock of Sancerre before the shortage hit—he also works to establish interest in satellite appellations and to give voice to up-and-coming regions, especially those with available wine to sell. Lofstrom jokes that his affinity for Bordeaux makes him the least cool wine director in New York. He says there is a strong trend among a younger generation of local sommeliers to avoid the region, or at least its best-known châteaux, as they seem to view it as having little diversity. But Lofstrom, a student of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust Master of Wine program, believes it to be incredibly nuanced, adding that the top châteaux are proven representatives of this. He also makes a good case for changing the perception that Bordeaux is outdated by pointing out that it is at the cutting edge of innovations in the face of global climate change.

In making his argument for the benchmark producers of Bordeaux, Lofstrom

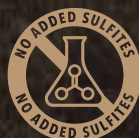
maintain consistent availability—for instance, he approached his bosses about investing in extra stock of Sancerre before the shortage hit—he also works to establish interest in satellite appellations and to give voice to up-and-coming regions, especially those with available wine to sell.

Lofstrom pays attention to how the world perceives wine, as evidenced by his habit of asking friends outside the industry to check his offerings for approachability. Because of this, he has picked up on a new trend across the U.S.: an increased interest in stemware. As anyone who has ever broken a costly yet fragile Zalto glass knows, this is another example of a beverage director's need to invest in the guest experience while still making sound financial decisions. SJ



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Viewing Red Wine Through Rose-Tainted Glasses

FROZEN LEAVES PROFOUNDLY CHANGE THE PROFILE OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON

WHEN YOU PICTURE a rose in your mind or see one in a photo, it's very likely you can recall its scent. Yet interestingly, the aroma compounds that make up the scent of a rose vary significantly at different stages in the flower's development. When the flower is fully open, there's a complex matrix of volatile aroma compounds that include geraniol, linalool, nerol, cis- and trans-rose oxide, and many others. Oil of rose contains more than 100 organic compounds, with citronellol, geraniol, and nerol being the dominant three.

After attending the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium in Sacramento, California, in late January, I've discovered a new, rose-related wine taint. Presenter Scott Frost of Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, studied atypical aromas in Cabernet Sauvignon made from fruit harvested after an autumn freeze in Washington State. The wines had potpourri, floral, and rose-like aromas and were deemed to be "rose-tainted" or "frost-tainted."

Because the grapes had not frozen, winemakers attributed the source of the taint to freeze-killed leaf material (FKLM) that made its way into the fermentation tanks. In describing why this material

other than grapes (MOG) could not be effectively sorted out, Frost explained, "The leaves are crispy, and during machine harvesting, they explode into tiny pieces that stick to the grapes, increasing the leaf surface that comes into contact with the ferment." When the FKLM, which smells like alfalfa or hay, was present during fermentation, winemakers reported that it led to a decrease in Cabernet Sauvignon's color, tannin, and astringency in addition to contributing overt rose-like aromas and a floral aftertaste.

Frost and his colleagues researched these effects by adding increasing amounts of FKLM to Cabernet Sauvignon fermentations and analyzing the chemical and sensory profiles of the resulting wines. These were determined by ten trained panelists over several sessions using black ISO glasses.

The floral aroma and aftertaste they described is correlated with increased concentrations of three compounds. The first is 6-methyl-5-hepten-2-ol, which is known as sulcatol or "coriander heptanol" and described as sweet, oily, green, and coriander-like; it has been found in the leaves of Muscat of Alexandria grapes,

freshly distilled Calvados, and yuzu citrus. P-menth-1-en-9-ol, meanwhile, is herbal and has been identified in both honey and yuzu; 6-methyl-3,5-heptadien-2, a component in basil and green tea, is also herbal as well as spicy and woody. Interestingly enough, missing from the analysis were the compounds that are found in roses, e.g., geraniol, linalool, nerol, and cis- and trans-rose oxide; though they have been found in frozen MOG from other wine-growing regions, the researchers attributed their absence in this case to Washington's high-desert terroir. As for the reduction of black-fruit aromas, they found that the aroma compounds weren't removed but rather masked by added aroma chemistry imparted by the dried leaves.

Frost established that the detection threshold for rose taint from FKLM is likely near 1.0 grams/kilogram. Consider a single vine that produces 16 clusters: It would only take three freeze-killed leaves to impact the flavor and aroma of the resulting wine. While rose taint clearly has a negative impact on wine quality, further study is required to determine whether consumers could recognize or would reject rose-tainted wines. S



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by Allison Jordan, executive director, California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, and VP of environmental affairs, Wine Institute

Growing Smarter

HOW THE CALIFORNIA WINE COMMUNITY IS ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

THE CALIFORNIA WINE COMMUNITY

has earned a reputation for leadership in the sustainability movement. But at a time when climate change and its impacts are top of mind for many enophiles around the world, did you know that sustainable winegrape-growing and winemaking practices are also “climate smart”?

“Climate-smart winegrowing” refers to practices that help mitigate the impacts of climate change and build resiliency to future impacts by, among other things, increasing carbon sequestration and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These practices are considered “smart” because they take into account the size and scale of the vineyard or winery operation and are tailored to local conditions, such as the varying levels of water stress in California’s wine regions. With impacts of climate change already apparent in California—examples include decreasing water supply and more extreme weather events—growers and producers across the state are taking steps to both adapt to and help mitigate these effects.

Climate-Smart Practices That Increase Carbon Sequestration

- Increasing soil organic matter
- Reducing or eliminating tillage
- Reducing soil compaction and off-site soil loss
- Increasing vegetation in and around the vineyard and/or winery

Climate-Smart Practices That Reduce GHG Emissions

- Adopting energy-efficiency measures
- Optimizing nitrogen fertilizer use
- Using renewable energy and alternative fuels
- Reducing transportation needs
- Increasing recycling and minimizing the waste that goes to landfill



Cover crops boost soil health and carbon stocks by reducing erosion, incrementally increasing organic matter, building soil structure, and reducing soil compaction.



Solar energy is a renewable power source that plays an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change.

- Reducing or minimizing packaging, including by the use of lighter-weight bottles


Climate-Smart Practices That Build Resiliency

- Using water-efficient rootstocks and scions
- Utilizing alternative energy with backup battery storage

Metrics allow growers and producers to track their GHG emissions, a requirement for Certified California Sustainable and other certification programs. Many additional steps have been taken to better understand, measure, and improve the industry’s carbon footprint, as determined by the amount of GHG, and specifically carbon dioxide, emissions it creates: For example, Wine Institute conducted a

Carbon Footprint Assessment of California wine and worked with international partners to develop an International Wine GHG Protocol, while the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance has created numerous educational tools and resources related to climate-smart winegrape growing and winemaking.

In addition, because there is broad scientific agreement that we need to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, California’s state legislature has set ambitious goals for reducing GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 (Assembly Bill 398) and achieving statewide carbon neutrality and 100% carbon emission-free electricity by 2045 (Senate Bill 100). Meanwhile, some countries to which California wine is exported, including the EU nations, New Zealand, and South Africa, have Net Zero goals or laws in place. And finally, some wine regions and many individual wineries have established their own climate change-related targets and initiatives, with dozens of producers working to meet common goals via International Wineries for Climate Action.

Looking ahead, the California wine industry will continue to help our growers and producers respond to a changing climate while contributing to and thriving in a sustainable future. To honor our commitment to sustainability and climate action, we celebrate Down to Earth Month (discovercaliforniawines.com/d2e) each April. It is an ideal time to purchase California wines grown and made in a climate-smart manner or to visit California wine country’s many sustainable estates. 

Authored by Wine Institute contributors, The Inside Sip on California Wine provides an insider’s look at the latest developments in California’s wine community. Wine Institute is an advocacy group of over 1,000 California wineries and affiliated businesses that initiates and advocates for state, federal, and international public policy to encourage the responsible production, consumption, and enjoyment of wine.

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Smoke and Mirrors

LOOKING BACK AT THE 2020 VINTAGE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

FOR THOSE OF US who made wine in Northern California in 2020, the vintage will be forever remembered as one of extreme potential that ended in devastating losses and uncertainty due to the wildfires that raged throughout the ripening season. With many 2020 wines from the region now on the market, it is time for some thoughts on how to approach them, with the caveat that smoke taint in wine is an infinitely complex topic.

Smoke taint occurs when fruit, or must, is exposed to compounds in the air created by wildfires. These compounds can vary greatly in kind and quantity: Think smoke from burning oaks versus smoke from burning cars. A hint of the former in a wine can come across as similar to that from a toasted oak barrel. Indeed, many of the compounds are literally the same: Eugenol exhibits spice, furfural hints of vanilla and caramel. The smoky bacon notes found in Syrah come from the grape's naturally high levels of guaiacol, another compound found in smoke-tainted wines. Given that we all have varying sensitivities to these compounds, the answer to the question of whether or not a wine is suffering from smoke taint can be a matter of taste. At its worst, however,

smoke taint is unambiguously smoky, with a harsh, lingering metallic finish.

The 2020 Northern California harvest began in late July, prior to the LNU Lightning Complex fire that ignited on August 17. Fruit for sparkling wines, which came in first, was largely unaffected, and early-picked whites such as Sauvignon Blanc should also be safe: These grapes had minimal if any smoke contact and little sugar to bind to any smoke-taint phenols they did absorb. Chardonnay and rosé should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

As September arrived, the wildfires continued, laying thick layers of smoke down over ripening fruit. How were producers to determine if their crops were ruined? Proximity to the fires matters, of course, but if a vineyard even a quarter-mile away is not in the smoke's path, it can escape smoke taint. Exposure duration is another important factor to consider: The longer it is, the heavier the impact.

Researchers at the University of California, Davis, and others have identified many of the phenols we should be testing for. However, these compounds can be present in both "free" forms, which one can smell and taste, and "bound" forms,

which one cannot. The kicker is that as wine ages, molecules break apart: Bound phenols can become free over time, and suddenly a wine that tasted fine has undeniable smoke taint.

Crops that were obviously damaged were mostly forfeited. Sonoma County alone estimated the loss of grapes at \$600 million, a testament to the integrity of this industry: Nobody wants to sell faulty wine. However, it is possible that some wines have slipped through the cracks. Perhaps they were not tested properly, and though they tasted fine a year ago, the smoke is now beginning to show.

When it comes to 2020 reds, my recommendation is this: Instead of writing off the entire vintage, do your homework. Listen to the vintners and let them tell their stories; pick date and location are key. Taste wines blind, preferably in a group to help calibrate your taste buds to smoke taint. Smoke taint can linger in your mouth for two or more minutes, so leave plenty of time between wines. The more you taste, the more you will know! ST



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Mexican Spirits Meet Their Match

A TASTING HIGHLIGHTS THE COMPLEMENTARY COMPLEXITIES OF MEZCAL AND CHOCOLATE by Kim Haasarud

LIKE GRAPES, cacao and agave are two ingredients whose flavors are impacted by their terroir, which is one reason why chocolate and mezcal make for a compelling pairing. While most people associate mezcal with smokiness, it comprises a whole world of aromas and flavors: These agave spirits can taste like tropical fruits, minerals, barnyard funk, and even bubble gum. Their price tag, however, can be intimidating to those unfamiliar with the category, so pairing them with chocolate can be a fun and interactive way to introduce guests to mezcal.

As owner of Garden Bar PHX in Phoenix, Arizona, I recently hosted a mezcal and chocolate tasting with “chocolate sommelier” Michelle Zimmerman of events company Curating Taste and mezcal importer Abel Arriaga of Compa Spirits. It started with a lesson on how to taste chocolate: According to Zimmerman, it must melt on your tongue. (Biting and swallowing it like candy is not the way to fully experience all of its nuances.)

The event showed participants how pairings really work: For example, flavors of sweet baking spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, and vanilla play off spicy, smoky chile flavors. The same principles apply when pairing wine with food. Read on for a description of our pairings with my tasting notes.

PAIRING 1: Lopez Real Espadín with Karuna Orange & Timut Pepper Dark Chocolate 70%

Lopez Real Espadín hails from Santiago Matatlan in Oaxaca. It has a clean, fresh aroma with light, pure smoky notes. The full-bodied palate displays flavors of exotic fruits and sweet agave.

Tasting notes: The small pieces of orange in the chocolate really played off the exotic fruity notes in the mezcal, which was soft enough to not be overpowering, making for a beautiful pairing.

PAIRING 2: Comiteco 9 Guardianes with Cuna de Piedra Cacao Mexicano de Soconusco Chiapas con Mezcal Joven 73%

Made from the sap of *Salmiana atrovirens* haw (not cooked agave) and fermented sugar, Comiteco 9 Guardianes comes from Comitán in Chiapas. It has a funky, vegetal nose reminiscent of rum agricole and a sweet, clean finish. The cacao beans used in the chocolate were washed in joven mezcal.

Tasting notes: This was a more subtle pairing. The agave spirit was so incredibly unique with its grassy sugarcane flavors; the chocolate was a nice, soft, and smoky complement.

PAIRING 3: Erstwhile Tobalá with Cuna de Piedra Comalcalco Tabasco with Coffee Beans 73%

This woman-owned brand of ancestral mezcal is produced in Santa María Sola, Oaxaca. It offers floral aromatics, including rose petal, with notes of damp earth. The gentle finish shows hints of honey.

Tasting notes: This chocolate had pieces of coffee beans in it; its dark, bitter earthiness played off the floral notes of the mezcal in a way that reminded me of lavender coffee. It isn't a pairing you'd think would work, but it was one of my favorites of the tasting!

PAIRING 4: Carreño Tobasiche with Cuna de Piedra Cacao Mexicano de Comalcalco Tabasco con Mezcal Reposado 73%

This artisanal mezcal from San Dionisio Ocotlán in Oaxaca has aromas of cedar and roots and flavors of papaya and sweet smoke.

Tasting notes: This chocolate was made with a higher-roast cacao bean washed in reposado mezcal. Rich and fruity, it danced with the tropical-fruit profile of its accompanying spirit.



A mezcal and chocolate tasting at Garden Bar PHX in Phoenix, AZ.

PAIRING 5: IZO Bacanora with Utopick Chocolate Negro con Chili Peppers 70%

Made from *Maguey pacifica* in its namesake region of Mexico, this bacanora has smoky tones of anise, apple, and pepper as well as lots of minerality derived from the desert terroir.

Tasting notes: One of the highlights of the event—wowza. The chocolate enhanced the herbaceous, green-peppery flavors of the bacanora while softening its heat, yielding a rich, lingering smoky sensation in the back of the throat.

PAIRING 6: Derechito Reposado Tequila with Cuna de Piedra Comalcalco Tabasco with Smoked Heirloom Chile 73%

Made from 100% estate-grown Blue Weber agave in Jalisco, this tequila aged for nine months in bourbon barrels. Vibrant notes of coffee, cinnamon, and classic oak lead to a soft, dry finish.

Tasting notes: The tequila had rich caramel and vanilla aromas with some subtle baking spices like cinnamon and nutmeg as well as roasted coffee. The chocolate had subtle notes of pepper reminiscent of smoked paprika. Together, the fabulous pairing made a strong impression up front with baking spices and sweet notes before softening into something akin to a warm mug of Mexican hot chocolate—delicious. **SJ**

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BECAUSE OUR MEZCAL REQUIRES TIME, WISDOM, AND PATIENCE TO CREATE, WE SAY IT IS
BORN AGED

Success Is Shallow Without Support

by Kami Lee Robb

A FEW MONTHS AGO, a film came out depicting a restaurant that was something of a mash-up between *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* and the world-famed Noma circa 2023. Bear with me here.

As at Noma, the executive chef of *The Menu*'s fictional restaurant, Hawthorne, can no longer see a sustainable way to stay open, and thus the team creates a grand plan for shuttering its doors forever.

And as at Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, the worst of the worst arrive at Hawthorne to attend its last supper: guests who represent the absolute pinnacle of bad behavior for anyone who's worked in fine dining for long enough to see its shine permanently tarnished. You know the type: people who dine at all the best places strictly so they can say they've been, not because they truly enjoy the craftsmanship of the meals.

Meanwhile, a young female chef in the film is coming to terms with the repercussions of spurning her male superior's unwanted sexual advances. To see just what that sort of unwelcome pursuit feels like, all the male guests are sent off on a harrowing excursion, while the female guests remain in the dining room to enjoy an exquisite dish created especially for them by this ingenue.

If you saw this film and you're not a woman, you might not have even noticed this little vignette that keeps haunting me. But if you think as much as I do about the bizarre way that women sometimes (mis)treat each other in work, friendship, and life in general, perhaps it jarred you as much as it did me.

The diners taste the young chef's creation and politely compliment her on it. Starved for so long of anything resembling praise, she begins to cry. Suddenly realizing that she hasn't ever achieved the kind of insulation from overbearing men

PHOTO COURTESY OF KAMI LEE ROBB




Author Kami Lee Robb.

Are we only willing to help each other when we're going to benefit as well? Are we that dependent on the approval of men? Can't we just give without expecting anything in return?

that they possess due to their privilege, the women try to use this knowledge to get her to be their ticket out of the nightmare they've found themselves in. For instance, promises to help her start her own restaurant via coveted industry connections suddenly spill forth from the professional critic known for destroying people's culinary careers with the scribble of a pen.

Then, the kicker: The chef proudly announces that the hellish climax that awaits them all was actually *her* idea, and she is overjoyed that the executive chef finally recognized her capacity for innovation. Without missing a beat, the other women sigh, ask "More wine?", and change the topic.

While this life-or-death scenario is hardly representative of how we interact with each other under more normal circumstances, it does leave us with some

things to consider about how we can respond when someone is clearly in need of support. Are we only willing to help each other when we're going to benefit as well? Are we *that* dependent on the approval of men? Can't we just give without expecting anything in return? The privileged and out-of-touch women at Hawthorne may not represent us, but we can certainly use them as a reminder to do better. 

Fresh Voices is a collaborative effort between The SOMM Journal, The Tasting Panel, and 501(c)(3) organization Dream Big Darling. The concept centers around providing opportunities to and amplifying the voices of the next generation of women in the wine and spirits industry. To learn more about Dream Big Darling, visit dreambigdarling.org or follow @dreambigdarling_org on Instagram.

97
POINTS

Sumptuous, bold and statuesque, this lushly textured red – 94% Cab Sauvignon with some Petit Verdot and Malbec – is aged 18 months in 80% new French oak. Its small production allows its name to ring true and its magnificent, lofty nature can surely bring it to cult status. Notes of blackberry preserves, roasted coffee, and sandalwood are impressive. The fruit flavors integrate well with its savory side of black olives and a field of violets.

THE TASTINGPANEL
MAGAZINE

CULT
The Beau Vigne Collection

97
POINTS

Seamless. Black velvet-hued, polished red with aromas of mocha-espreso and dried violets. The fruit is from high elevation vineyards, spending 21 months in 80% new French oak. With some Malbec and Petite Verdot blended in, this big, broad, teeth-gripper evolves into a glamorous mouthfeel, resplendent with dark red fruit. Devil's Food cake, anise, and pencil shavings thread through a field of mountain brush and turned earth.

THE TASTINGPANEL
MAGAZINE



96
POINTS

Grainy tannins wash across the palate with melted dark chocolate and a fever pitch of black raspberry and mulberry. Broad paintbrush strokes of dried lavender, maple, and balsamic keep the wine concentrated and juicy.

THE TASTINGPANEL
MAGAZINE



ATC WINES
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{ winery spotlight }

The Remaking of Merlot

THE GRAPE PLAYS A KEY
ROLE IN **JORDAN VINEYARD
& WINERY'S** MAJOR
REPLANTING PROJECT

by **Virginie Boone**

*Planting Merlot UberVines—a type of
vine with an extra-long rootstock cane—
on the Jordan estate's River Block.*



The Jordan Winery Chateau in the Alexander Valley.





PHOTO: ALEXANDER RUBIN

Jordan winemaker Maggie Kruse.



Since its founding in 1972, Jordan Vineyard & Winery has produced just one red wine in every single vintage: a Cabernet Sauvignon. The fruit comes from the Alexander Valley in Sonoma County, where the Jordan Winery Chateau sits amid 1,200 acres of rolling hills and vineyards. With roughly 120 of those acres currently planted to grapevines, the property also includes groves of olive trees, gardens, two lakes, grazing pastures, and woodlands; 900 acres have been left wild. The resulting biodiversity contributes to a healthy ecosystem.

Divided into 18 individual blocks, the certified sustainable vineyard and another recently purchased property located just north of Geyserville will contain roughly 110 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, 25.85 acres of Merlot, 7.5 acres of Petit Verdot and 5.5 acres of Malbec when a replanting process that began in 2017 is completed later this year. What is planted where is

guided by extensive maps that detail soil type, texture, and water-holding capacity.

The majority of Jordan's acreage has always been planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, on estate blocks set deep in clay-rich soils that echo the Right Bank of Bordeaux. (The winery also works with numerous grower-partners to source additional grapes, many of which come from well-drained, mid-slope parcels that contribute more of a Left Bank character to the wine.) That's because Jordan's winemaking philosophy has been French-inspired from the beginning, reflecting the producer's belief that Cabernet would be the future of the Alexander Valley. That was prescient: When much of the appellation, which as a whole encompasses 15,000 planted acres, was hit by phylloxera in the 1990s, replants became widely necessary. With an opportunity to start again and plan smarter, many growers chose to plant more Cabernet Sauvignon in lieu of a greater diversity of Bordeaux reds such as Merlot,

Petit Verdot, and Malbec, as Cabernet commanded and continues to command a higher price in the marketplace.

The gap between grape prices can feel cavernous. For example, Sonoma County's Merlot plantings in 2021 totaled 4,140 acres and were worth an average of \$1,961.36 per ton, according to the USDA's annual Grape Crush Report. Its Cabernet Sauvignon, on the other hand, totaled about 12,293 acres and was worth an average of \$2,728.69 per ton. Smart business means planting Cabernet.

This was not always so. Back in 2004, the year a movie called *Sideways* maligned Merlot, plantings of the variety in Sonoma County totaled 6,873 acres and were worth \$1,663.90 per ton, while Cabernet Sauvignon accounted for 10,216 acres and was worth \$2,397.71 per ton—not that big a difference. But Cabernet continued to rise in acreage and value; Merlot did not.

At Jordan, the combination of vineyard location and soil type certainly gives wine-



PHOTO: JAMES ESCOBAR

PHOTO: MARC OLIVIER LE BLANC



Jordan director of agricultural operations Brent Young.

maker Maggie Kruse the tools to produce a complex Cabernet Sauvignon. But, she says, “the Merlot is essential in making our style of Cab. It offers soft, silky tannins [and] structure.”

Jordan director of agricultural operations Brent Young began a deep analysis of the soils on the Jordan estate in 2012, and his findings prompted the winery to sell some of its original valley-floor vineyard to focus on its hillside blocks and to work further with grower-partners in the region that were growing great fruit. Then red blotch was diagnosed in 2016, forcing Jordan into the replant that is still underway. In the process, the winery is also taking the time to change row orientations, while new rootstock and clonal selections have been made to optimize each vine.

Along the way, Jordan underwent a struggle to find exceptional Merlot in the Alexander Valley due to the aforementioned replants across the appellation.

Because of this scarcity, Young and his team decided to plant two new Merlot vineyard blocks in 2021 and 2022 in an effort to be proactive regarding its most important blending grape. “We are hedging our bet to always have good Merlot,” Kruse says. “Merlot is a beautiful grape, and so many people use it; I hope more people will put Merlot back in. The Alexander Valley is ideal [for growing it].”

Kruse and Young worked with Duarte’s Nursery, tasting through 15 different clones of Merlot. Their top picks were 181, a longtime favorite at Jordan, and 8, which is originally from Argentina; Kruse describes it as soft and juicy with beautiful tannins.

“[The new blocks] have been great Cabernet spots but will be even greater for Merlot, in [slightly] cooler soils, rocky, well draining—the drainability is crucial,” she adds. “We are taking some of the best spots on the property for Merlot and giving it its best shot of being amazing.” **SJ**



Out of Napa's Shadow

THE CASE FOR SONOMA COUNTY

IT'S BEEN ALMOST five years since *V is for Vino's* episode on Napa Valley came out, but so many fans of the show still reach out to me and ask me for tips on visiting the region. My first piece of advice is almost always this: "Go to Sonoma too—it's right next door." It's not that I don't like Napa wine. But for your average consumer, I think Sonoma County offers a better experience, both as a place to visit and as a source of wines for drinking at home or in restaurants.

Napa is similar to Burgundy in that it's expensive; the price-to-quality ratio can be hit or miss; and because it focuses primarily on one grape, the differences between cuvées from different producers or vineyards can only really be appreciated by more experienced tasters. But Sonoma County is more like the entire country of Spain, established in its own right but diverse in terroirs, varieties, and styles. With 19 AVAs—from the cool Sonoma Coast and Carneros to the warmer Russian River and Dry Creek Valley to the downright hot Alexander Valley and Knights Valley, not to mention little boutique AVAs like the Fountaingrove District—there's a climate for every grape.

And sure, the big-name grapes dominate production, but there's still so much space for experimentation and surprise in Sonoma County, where more than 60 varieties are grown. For instance, Italian grapes like Cortese, Arneis, and Ribolla Gialla can be found here; I had a buddy who was growing the Portuguese variety Alicante Bouschet; and even more common grapes like Viognier and Pinot Blanc are a breath of fresh air. Plus, producers can easily source from neighboring



Author Vince Anter with Journeyman Meat Co. manager/chef/butcher Adam Banie in Healdsburg, CA.

Sonoma County AVAs, which means your favorite winemaker can offer a wide variety of styles under the Sonoma label. While you'd be suspicious of a Napa winery offering a Blanc de Blancs, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet, you wouldn't think twice about a winery from Sonoma doing the same.

Sonoma's much higher volume of wine production relative to Napa also means more variety and, often, greater affordability. And there's a massive commitment to sustainability here; 99% of the vineyards are certified sustainable. Meanwhile, about 85% of the region's wineries are family-owned and -operated, which means plenty of opportunities to introduce your customers to a "hidden gem" they didn't see coming. The reason lots of old-vine Zins come from Sonoma? A handful of those families didn't rip out Zinfandel vines when it became more lucrative to plant Cabernet Sauvignon.

As a travel destination, Sonoma County is a no-brainer. The diverse landscape en-

compasses beaches, mountains, and plains. You can bounce from cute town to cute town, hitting restaurants in each. And the wineries tend to be less crowded than Napa's if you know where to look—and they're more excited to have you visit.

Our Sonoma County episode (season 2, episode 3) didn't get as much fanfare as our Napa episode, just as the region itself never does. While they're often mentioned in the same breath, they're seldom given the same respect. But just because they have different strengths doesn't mean they're not equally excellent when judged on their own merits. So while it's easy to sell the novice wine drinker who walks into your restaurant or shop yet another Napa Cabernet and call it a day, it's worth pushing them toward Sonoma County.

*Until next wine,
Vince SJ*

Episodes of V is for Vino can be watched free on visforvino.com, YouTube, and Roku.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VINCE ANTER



The Sonoma Coast at sunset.

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A New New Zealand

THE COUNTRY'S WINES MAKE A SPLASH IN LOS ANGELES

by Jessie Birschbach

THE FROWNING FACE on a Māori walking stick, repurposed as an interior door handle, paid a grumpy goodbye to the parting guests of Jeremy Clarke-Watson, consul-general to Los Angeles for the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. His beautiful Brentwood, California, home, adorned with artifacts from all over his native country, had just served as the launchpad for New Zealand Wine Week, which he promoted in partnership with New Zealand Winegrowers via a luncheon for area somms in late January. My belly full of the country's searingly bright wines, I thought of the initiative's recently refreshed motto, created through the branding efforts of New Zealand Winegrowers: "Altogether Unique."

It's true, as we all know, that New Zealand's vivacious and tropical Sauvignon Blanc is unlike any other version found in the rest of the world. But what I came to appreciate as a guest at the lunch is that the same can be said for other wines



Grilled lamb over wheat-berry risotto paired with a trio of New Zealand's bright Pinot Noirs.

such as its Pinot Noir, which is on a path to becoming just as popular as its beloved Sauvignon Blanc.

"I remember having my first New Zealand Pinot Noir 15 years ago and thinking, 'Wow, this is special,' at a time when New Zealand was still sort of like this wild and unknown place to me. So that's when I

got curious about [it]," said Bonnie Graves of hospitality consulting business Girl Meets Grape. The charismatic industry veteran helped the New Zealand Winegrowers put the lunch together.

Chef Neal Fraser—the owner of Redbird and other LA restaurants as well as a onetime *Top Chef Masters* contestant—prepared two main courses for pairing with a trio of Pinot Noirs for the high-caliber guest list of Angeleno sommeliers:




PHOTOS: ERIK SMITH

sautéed John Dory with potato gnocchi and grilled rack of New Zealand lamb with wheat-berry risotto. Each hailing from a different region, all three wines were special in their own regard, but it's safe to say that the bright and cherry-fruited Craggy Range 2018 Te Muna Road Vineyard Pinot Noir from Martinborough was particularly beloved by attendees. Other standout pairings included the No. 1 Family Estate Cuvée Méthode Traditionnelle from Marlborough served with Ōra King salmon tartare, crispy ginger rice, and avocado crema; the powerful yet elegant Kumeu River 2021 Hunting Hill Chardonnay from Auckland with a roasted kumara and citrus salad; and the biodynamic Millton Clos de

Back row, from left to right: Jordan Davis, AGM/wine director, Etta Culver City; Bonnie Graves, Girl Meets Grape; Carole Dixon, USA Today; Alex Weil, wine director, Osteria Mozza; Andrew Pettingel, wine director, Otium; Haylon Smith, trade commissioner—Los Angeles, New Zealand Winegrowers; Jeremy Clarke-Watson, consul general to Los Angeles, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Randall Middleton, sommelier, Esters Wine Shop; Matthew Kaner, CEO, Will Travel for Wine; Isa Roske, wine buyer, Butcher's Daughter. Middle row: Beth-Ellen Claufield, wine specialist, Costco Wholesale; Taylor Grant, winemaker/wine director, DAMA; Ranit Librach, market manager USA, New Zealand Winegrowers; Jessie Birschbach, senior wine, spirits, and beer editor, The SOMM Journal; Emily Rutan, sommelier, Terroni. Front row: Devon D'Arcangelo, sommelier, Citrin Hospitality; Michele Garber, senior VP, Girl Meets Grape.

Ste. Anne 2020 The Crucible Syrah from Gisborne with chocolates and macarons.

Hosting the lunch with Clarke-Watson was Ranit Librach, the sharp, knowledgeable market manager USA for New Zealand Winegrowers. Based in New York, Librach holds an important position, as the U.S. remains New Zealand's number-one export market. In fact, her organization anticipates that sales to both the U.S. and Canada should soon reach \$1 billion NZD.

The week that followed our lunch in LA offered a slew of New Zealand wine-centric webinars that perhaps even the crabby Māori walking stick could smile about; to view them, visit nzwine.com/en/trade/nzww-23. 

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{ cover story }

small WONDER

WANDER + IVY'S SINGLE-SERVE WINES ARE THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Wander + Ivy Founder and CEO Dana Spaulding outside the Oxford Hotel in Denver, CO, one of many Sage Hospitality Group properties that carry the brand.



*story by Wanda Mann
photos by Stephanie Fassler*

“Are you really going to waste another bottle of wine?”

The average person wouldn't respond to that question by starting a new business, but Dana Spaulding answered her husband by founding Wander + Ivy.

Every wine lover has faced the conundrum of whether to open an entire bottle when craving just one glass. Spaulding, thankfully, has found an elegant solution to this quandary: convenient single-serve bottles of premium wine. In a world of pricey wine-preservation systems, the idea is brilliant in its simplicity—just open the 6.3-ounce glass bottle and pour. There's no gadget to buy and figure out, no fuss, and no waste.

Before launching Wander + Ivy in 2017, Spaulding was an enthusiastic wine consumer but had never worked in the industry. But the skills she garnered from her previous career in high-stakes private-wealth management prepared

her to develop the brand strategically. The first step was obtaining a solid wine education, so she earned certifications through the Court of Master Sommeliers and the International Wine Guild.

Next, eyeing other single-serve wines on the market, Spaulding seized the opportunity to reimagine and elevate the category. The patented cylindrical Wander + Ivy bottle is one-fourth the size of a standard 750-milliliter bottle, but it's not flimsy; it looks and feels substantial. “We've intentionally made them very thick glass because I knew we had to compete with the other portable options out there,” says Spaulding. “I wanted to make sure this one was gorgeous, weighty, and beautiful and had a luxury feel in your hand.” Meanwhile, the screw-cap on top makes it a breeze to close for those moments when you want to drink a little less.

Finally, Spaulding recognized the importance of building a team of experts with extensive experience to ensure that the wine would be as pleasing to the

palate as the bottle is to the eye. Among them is industry veteran Richard Bruno, who serves as winemaker for Wander + Ivy. “I've made wine professionally for 30 years and have accumulated a wealth of knowledge about winemaking and production,” he says, having worked at both Francis Ford Coppola Winery and Don Sebastiani & Sons; in 2005, the latter was named “Winery of the Year” by *Wine Enthusiast* under his watch. “However, it took meeting Dana to realize that I have been a part of an industry that has stifled innovation by limiting bottling formats,” he adds. “I fell in love with the Wander + Ivy package right away and have enjoyed solving many of the production challenges.”

Wander + Ivy does not own any vineyard land; rather, it partners with wineries that meet Spaulding's criteria of being “internationally renowned, family-owned, and certified organic,” in her words, and sources fully finished wines, to which Bruno adds some final touches if needed. The brand name pays homage to this



commitment to procuring organic wines from around the globe. "We landed on 'Wander' because I felt like most of the other single-serve or alternative packages in the market were very U.S.-centric. I really wanted us to be global to stand out in this category," she says. "And we landed on 'Ivy' because I felt like it had the wine-vine feel, and it landed on this green element that I wanted to incorporate. The fact that [our products are] certified organic is something I'm so proud of."

The Wander + Ivy portfolio currently includes four wines. The Chardonnay is produced in California by a women-helmed winemaking team in Mendocino County; Spaulding describes it as "rich and slightly buttery with the perfect

amount of toast." The Cabernet Sauvignon is also from Mendocino County, specifically the highland valleys and mountain slopes of one of the largest organic vineyards on the West Coast; it is, according to Spaulding, "supple with soft tannins, a velvety texture, and flavors of black cherry and a hint of vanilla." The light and crisp Rosé is from Languedoc in the south of France, where the family that produces it has been making wine for over 14 generations; the current winemaker is a young woman who learned from her parents and grandparents. And a father-and-son team in Valencia, Spain, produces the fresh and medium-bodied Red Wine Blend of Bobal and Merlot, which Spaulding says has "hints of chocolate and spice." Despite

their distinctions, she points out that Wander + Ivy's wines share a common trait: Designed to be accurate expressions of their varieties, they're all "dry, clean, crisp, and with no added sugar."

They're also designed to match the preferences of their target demographic, namely millennial women. In fact, the response has been astounding: Since launching in the market at the end of 2018, the company has averaged 160% sales growth year over year. And Spaulding sees more growth in its future as her team explores additional varieties and styles. They've also invested in their own bottling line, giving them even more creative and logistical control.

Based in Denver, Colorado, Wander + Ivy currently ships direct to consumers



Spaulding with Sage Hospitality Group area marketing manager Caroline Munoz at the Oxford Hotel in Denver, CO.

ties such a unique, high-quality product while also supporting a female-founded business," she says. "We feature Wander + Ivy's products in seven of our Colorado properties currently"—including Denver's historic Oxford Hotel—"with plans to expand the partnership across other hotels in the very near future."

The success of Wander + Ivy's business model isn't just good for the company's balance sheet but also its community. "Our mission is to elevate the single-serve wine experience while making a meaningful impact in the communities around us. From the beginning, I've committed 1% of all of our sales to charitable organizations, and we specifically focus on charitable organizations that deliver healthy and organic food to those in

need" such as Feeding America and Colorado Feeding Kids, says Spaulding.

Organic, luxurious, and socially conscious, Wander + Ivy has raised the bar for single-serve wines, proving that Spaulding's decision to ignore naysayers was correct: "Many people had told me you absolutely can't bring something like this to market because the packaging was so hard. [They said,] 'You're never going to get quality wine in there. No one's going to accept something like this; that's so different,'" she recalls. "And now, five and a half years later, I'm so proud that we've expanded so much. We've clearly proven that there's a huge market for it, and I'm so proud when people use words like 'innovators' or 'trailblazers,' because there really isn't anyone doing what we're doing." ❧

tasting notes

Note: The following wines are packaged in 6.3-ounce single-serve glass bottles.

Wander + Ivy 2021 Chardonnay, California

(\$8) Sourced from Mendocino, this white exudes the elegance of ripe stone fruit and buttered biscuit. Toasty vanilla aligns with lemon verbena for a lush mouthfeel.

92 —*Meridith May*

Wander + Ivy 2021 Rosé Wine, France

(\$8) Delicate aromas of rose petal and peach meet a sea breeze. Mineral tones glisten among honeyed roses, accompanied by a whirl of melon, tangerine, raspberry, and chamomile. **93**

—*M.M.*

Wander + Ivy 2020 Red Wine Blend, Spain

(\$8) Toasted scents of coffee and oak lead to a broad, dramatic flavor profile. Led by grainy dark chocolate, purple plum, and black cherry, a finish of cinnamon, cedar, and espresso offers waves of flavor. **93** —*M.M.*

Wander + Ivy 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, California

(\$8) Intense yet balanced fruit and oak create a classic, elegant California Cab. Streamlined tannins release a coffee-mocha middle, followed by maple-kissed cedar on the long, plummy finish. **93** —*M.M.*

in 38 states. Its wines are also available at retail locations, including Kroger, Whole Foods, and Safeway-Albertsons, in 13 states and counting. Distributing the wines in hotels has proven to be yet another lucrative and logical move. "From day one, I thought this absolutely belongs in hotels," says Spaulding. Like many travelers, she adds, she's "much more likely to have one glass of red instead of opening up a whole 750 if I'm traveling for business."

Jan Lucas, vice president of strategic sourcing and partnerships for Sage Hospitality Group, which manages more than 110 hotels, restaurants, and bars across the country, considers Wander + Ivy a valued guest-room amenity. "We're thrilled to be able to offer guests at our proper-



Bordeaux in the Big Apple

MILLÉSIMA USA'S FLAGSHIP STORE BRINGS THE CHÂTEAUX TO NEW YORKERS' DOORSTEPS by Marci Symington

MILLÉSIMA, A BORDEAUX-BASED

négociant founded by Patrick Bernard in 1983 that specializes in the sale of fine and *en primeur* wines, expanded to the United States in 2006 with Millésima USA (millesima-usa.com), a 3,800-square-foot retail store located on New York's Upper East Side. In 2011, Millésima USA broadened its reach by establishing itself as one of the nation's premier online fine-wine retailers with a direct line to some of Bordeaux's most exclusive offerings.

In 2018, the company hired senior fine-wine specialist Michael Peltier to provide personal service to customers seeking to buy and collect wine. As the Paris-born Peltier—who moved to New York in 2002 and has worked as a sommelier and wine director for star chefs and restaurateurs like Bruno Jamais, Alain Ducasse, David Bouley, and Joël Robuchon—explains, “[Not only] can I share my experience and what I have learned about wine but also [what I know about] service.”

The assistance Peltier and his team offer runs the gamut from selecting a single bottle to pair with dinner to helping to build a cellar or invest in wine futures. “When [clients] place an order online, I present myself as their contact,” he says. “I talk about Millésima [and] what we are doing as a négociant in Bordeaux, mentioning that we don't only have Bordeaux wine.” In fact, Millésima USA boasts wines from a number of other classic French regions such as



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MILLESIMA USA

Millésima USA's 3,800-square-foot retail store in New York City.

Champagne, Burgundy, and the Rhône Valley as well as other countries, among them Italy, Spain, and New Zealand. (It's also famous for its extensive supply of large-format bottles, including 18-liter Melchior.)

That said, Millésima USA takes pride in its strong ties to Bordeaux as benefiting its customers. Peltier points to its three product categories: the in-stock items purchased in-store or via the website; the “pre-arrival” wines stored in Millésima's warehouse in Bordeaux, which are also

Millésima USA senior fine-wine specialist Michael Peltier.

available to U.S. customers through the website with deferred shipping for financial and legal reasons; and wine futures. Referring to the latter category, Peltier elaborates, “Millésima is the fifth-biggest buyer of Bordeaux. We have a great allocation, and I go to Bordeaux every year to the *en primeur* representing Millésima USA. . . . Our clients know we are taking care of them with the lowest price.”

With a burgeoning inventory, Millésima USA plans to move to a larger location on the Upper East Side this fall. While world-class wines will remain the focus, Peltier asserts that the company doesn't bill itself as a “luxury” retailer because, in his words, “We want to have wine for every budget and taste . . . that at the same time represents our company, our website, and brand . . . with staff to help [customers] choose the right wine for whichever occasion.” **§**

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Man of Steel

FRANCISCAN WINERY'S SUPERMAN OF WINEMAKING, MATT STEEL, REINVENTS THE BRAND by Meredith May

NAMED FOR THE FRIARS

who brought Old World viticulture to California, Franciscan Winery is now under the helm of Matt Steel, director of Central Coast winemaking for E. & J. Gallo. The label is synonymous with generous, full-bodied wines, yet for the past two vintages—2020 and 2021—Steel has maintained a consistent freshness in the wines as he sources fruit from some of the best growing regions in the Golden State. We met with him to talk about his vision.

Q: *The SOMM Journal:* That's not a California accent.

Where are you from?

Matt Steel: I'm an Aussie who moved to the Central Coast in 2014. After working for some large Australian companies like Beringer Blass and also smaller wineries—I spent 15 years in the Yarra Valley—I thought it would be great for my wife and kids to have a new adventure in the U.S.

Q: E. & J. Gallo acquired some of Constellation Brands' Central Coast portfolio, including Wild Horse and Estancia. But Franciscan was a Napa property. Has it since expanded its portfolio to include wines from other areas?

The focus of Franciscan was Monterey County when we purchased it. We've moved more broadly with our sourcing to include a wider selection of vineyards in the Central Coast as well as some special locations in Lodi, among others. Blending across some really outstanding vineyards gives us the ability to create layers of flavor in the wines we make.



PHOTO COURTESY OF E. & J. GALLO

Matt Steel is the director of Central Coast winemaking for E. & J. Gallo.

Q: What is the signature style of the Central Coast Franciscan wines?

Above all, we want to express the fruit and make bright, drinkable wines. It's a palette of diverse vineyards [that] allows us to develop those layers of flavor to make really bright, complex wines.

Q: If as a winemaker you could have a superpower, what would you wish yours to be?

Consistency. We planted the flag with our house style in 2020—which wasn't easy, [what] with heat and fires as well as having to navigate COVID restraints. But sourcing across California gives us flexibility, and in my tenure at some of my past winery positions—especially working at Domaine Chandon—I learned the art of blending.

Q: What is your most valuable asset in regard to making that consistent lineup of wines?

Our fantastic grower families, some of whom have been with us for several generations [and] who pride themselves on making sure their vineyards are farmed properly and the fruit is the best it can be. **SJ**

Franciscan 2021 Chardonnay, California (\$16) Perfumes of pear, banana, lemon chiffon, and chamomile are delicate on the nose of this clean and brisk white, while cinnamon and vanilla leave a creamy trace on the tongue. Candied pineapple and lemon bar ignite the freshness of the wine, which is focused and balanced, with nuances of toasted coconut and toffee on the finish. **91**



Franciscan Estate 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$18) Ripe aromas of blueberry and vanilla lead to a velvet cushion of violets, chocolate, and coffee on the palate, whose freshness is undeniable. This well-structured red guides bright boysenberry, toasted cocoa, and oak down a juicy, concentrated path. **92**

THE **SOMM** JOURNAL & THE **tastingpanel**



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Meridith May, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief
MMay@SommJournal.com
818-625-7107

Bill Brandel, COO/Marketing & Sales
BBrandel@TastingPanelMag.com
818-322-5050

Lars Leicht, VP/Education
Lars@SommJournal.com



Taylor Serres is the fifth-generation proprietor of Serres Ranch in Sonoma, California's Valley of the Moon. She's pictured here with her dog, Jed.



Farmers First

SONOMA'S **SERRES RANCH** DATES BACK TO THE 1800S

story by Meredith May / photos by Maryssa Souza

"FIGHTING JOE" HOOKER was a career Army officer who served in both the Civil War and the Mexican-American War. As the original owner of what is now Serres Ranch, General Hooker sold his Sonoma Valley property in 1857 to a man named George Waitriss, who soon developed a longtime partnership with John Pierre "Toots" Serres. Serres started as a ranch hand and slowly began purchasing the land, remaining a managing partner until his death; in 1924, his family became the official owners.

The Serres family is still at it today. Besides tending premium grapes, they produce blueberries "the size of a quarter," in their words, selling directly to consumers at local farmers markets. They also raise cattle and own a construction company. Fifth-generation proprietor Taylor Serres states, "Sonoma is our home, and now the sixth-generation Serreses are continuing the legacy. We are farmers first."

Growing Bordeaux varieties "shows the diversity of our soils," adds Serres. "Our geothermal conditions under the soil warm up the microclimate to about 5 to 10 degrees higher than in nearby downtown Sonoma. That's why we never see frost on our vineyards."

We tasted two Serres Ranch reds, each from a specific estate-vineyard block, that we found bright and fresh. It's a small-production winery, but there's room for growth! **SJ**

Serres Ranch 2018 Watriss Bordeaux Blend, Sonoma Valley (\$65)

The entry to this opulent blend of 33.5% Merlot, 30.5% Malbec, 28.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 7.5% Petit Verdot is stunning, with bright flavors of strawberry and vanilla as well as stark acidity that perpetuates its freshness. Spiced mulberry and lavender come in midway. **94**

Serres Ranch 2019 Marshall Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma Valley (\$100)

Blended with 15% Cab Franc and smaller amounts of Merlot and Petit Verdot, this red aged over two years in French oak, undergoing bâtonnage for eight months. Plush velvet tannins wrap around boysenberry and chocolate. Bright notes are a welcoming highlight, lit up by fresh acidity that sparks a juicy and delicious profile. It finishes with a rush of dusty plum. **94**

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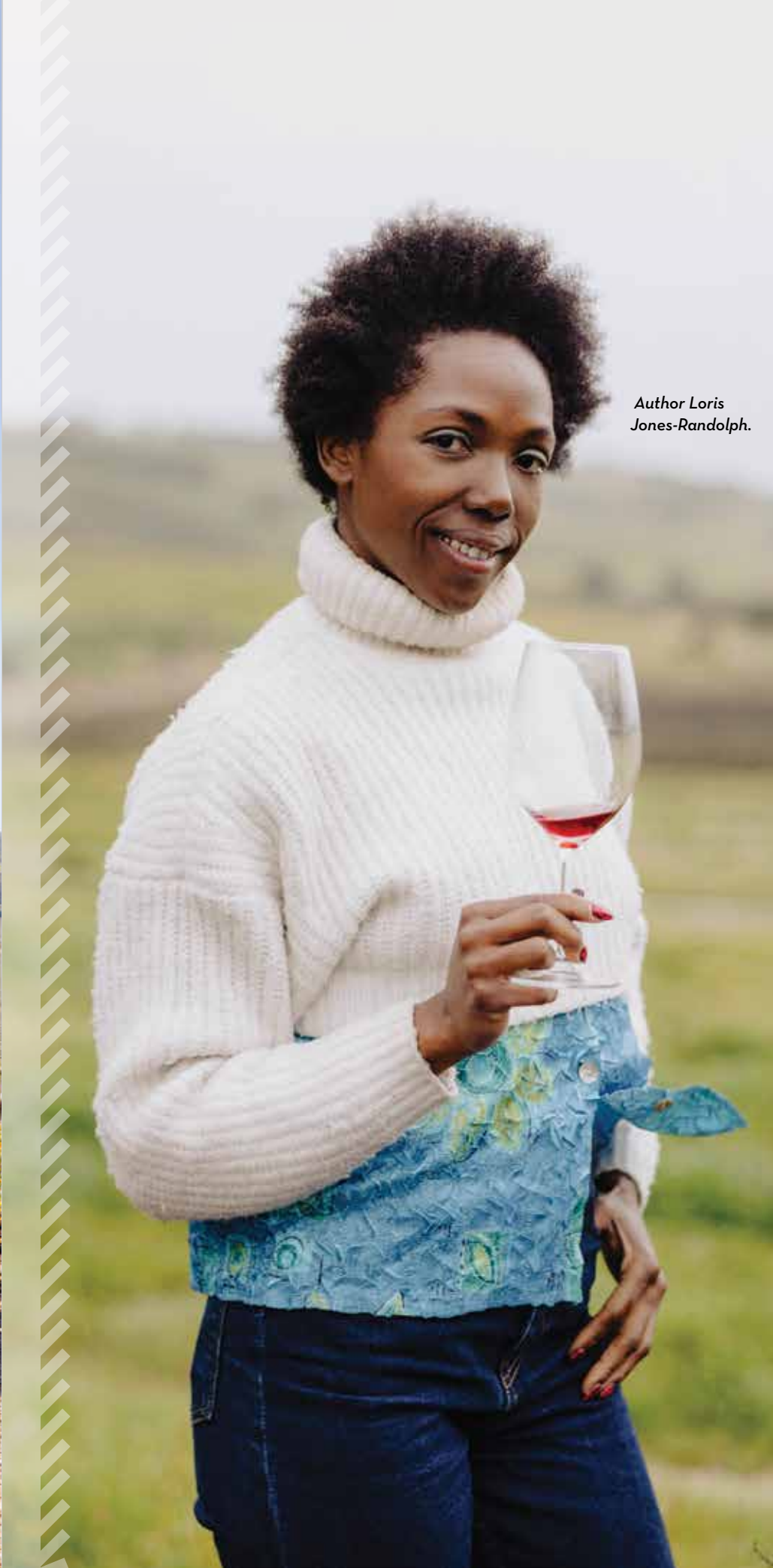


PHOTOS: HEATHER DAENITZDRAFT & CLUSTER

Dinner is served at the Presqu'île winery in Santa Maria, CA.



Women's Sommelier Symposium attendees visited Cambria in Santa Maria, CA, among other wineries.



Author Loris
Jones-Randolph.

A Space to Build Community

BY LORIS JONES-RANDOLPH

In February, the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas, hosted its inaugural Women's Sommelier Symposium in collaboration with the Santa Barbara County Vintners Association. I was overwhelmingly excited to participate and engage with my peers in the field, including sommeliers, winemakers, and other industry leaders, for a weekend.

On our first day, we checked into the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott and received a lovely welcome gift from the trip sponsors: Coravin provided us with a special Lunar New Year edition of its namesake device equipped with an aerator as well as custom screwcaps, while Nielson and Diatom provided wines on which we could quickly test out our gadgets. Downstairs, we attended a quick reception featuring Loubud's delicious sparkling rosé before heading to Roblar Winery in Santa Ynez.

Indicating Roblar's biodynamic practices, the sight of grazing sheep in its vineyards caught the group's attention right away. In the winery, we tasted the producer's pét-nat as well as a Viognier and cool-climate Syrah that everyone loved. Then we headed to dinner, which kicked off with speeches by several female winemakers from across Santa Barbara County. It was world-altering

{ SommFoundation letter }

to be ushered into the same room as Master Sommeliers Madeline Triffon and Laura DePasquale, the latter of whom proctored my recent Certified Examination and who encouraged me and the other two women I passed with to continue our journeys.

The next day, multiple panels were intertwined with winery visits and tastings. We headed first to the women-run Cambria winery, where we explored the subject of barrels, from differences in toast level to aging techniques, and the topic of navigating a male-dominated industry. Panelists like self-funded winemaker Brit Zotovich, wine and media professional Julia Coney, and Master Sommelier Andrea Robinson gave us insights at a level that is unfortunately not so often shared.

Fess Parker was our next stop, where we attended a women-led panel on sustainability in wine and the future of farming. Going beyond organic certifications, regenerative farming takes into account the social responsibility of wineries: Santa Barbara County producers like Foxen as well as Fess Parker and Cambria have been among the first to provide health insurance, mobile health-care units, and 401ks to workers. To treat the vineyard as a place for equity is to truly tap into the things a new generation of wine drinkers holds as values for themselves and the brands they engage with. After the seminar, we headed to Presqu'île for an amazing meal. Enologist Anna Murphy paired the local bounty that was served with the producer's Chardonnay, Syrah, and Pinot Noir, making for an experience many of us are still dreaming about.

On our final day, we visited the legendary Foley Estates. While feeling the effects of the Santa Barbara winds, we had the pleasure of experiencing a workshop on structure, in which the Foley team demonstrated variations in alcohol, tannins, acid, and texture. Next, we attended a workshop led by female négociants from Santa Barbara County and were able to taste through their wines before heading to dinner at famed restaurant Pico in Los Alamos. Illustrating the adage "what grows together goes together," the seven-course meal showcased produce and proteins from the chef's own backyard that blew us all away as Lane Tanner spoke to us about her Lumen wines.

The Women's Sommelier Symposium was a space not only to network and learn but to build community and to find your place within the wine world. I found more sisters and aunts and mothers on this trip than I have in a long time, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to connect with them—and to share that with others looking for the same.

Loris Jones-Randolph is a sommelier at the Intercontinental Hotel Group in Los Angeles, CA.



Emily Wines, MS, served as host of the Women's Sommelier Symposium.



Madeline Triffon, MS, looks on during a tasting at Foley Estates.



Author Vanessa
Da Silva.

Forming Connections

BY VANESSA DA SILVA

As the attendees of the Women's Sommelier Symposium drove away from the bustle of Los Angeles, the dramatic rolling hills of Santa Barbara County quickly encompassed us. Picturesque slopes were dotted with cows grazing lazily, and cool Pacific breezes made it clear why Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are the region's best-known varieties.

The dramatic departure from hectic city to peaceful wine country was a fitting metaphor for our experience at the symposium. It's easy to feel alone in a male-dominated profession, and it can be a tricky environment to navigate. But here, the organizers put so much thought into including women winemakers, chefs, and other top professionals; I don't think I've ever been surrounded by so many sommeliers who were also moms like me—facing the same challenges, the uphill work, the difficult decisions regarding work-family balance, and the triumphs too! I discovered there are so many shared experiences that we as female sommeliers have, whether it's being passed over for a promotion that goes to a less-qualified man or working the floor while pregnant. Simply having the space to see and discuss them felt like clouds parting: as though a fog had lifted and I found that I wasn't walking alone at all but was one among many. The sense of being truly listened to and understood was so refreshing.

In the formal examination setting there can be a sense of divide due to an almost rigid professionalism. There was no air of this here; our mentors were warm and compassionate. As panelists, they were careful to offer wisdom and guidance to the attendees as we navigate our careers and professional growth. I was struck by their generosity as they shared their time and experience with us, showing sincere interest in our goals and struggles as well as a willingness to offer perspective. During the panel "Having a Seat at the Table," Laura DePasquale, MS, spoke of the grit and determination it takes to reach a high-level position, adding three simple words: "It's *your* table." And in "Turning Your Side Hustle into a Business," panelist Julia Coney encouraged us, "Don't be afraid to say what isn't negotiable." Standing up for yourself was a recurring theme and a personal challenge for many women whom society expects to be polite and accommodating.

What I walked away with, more than anything else, was an understanding that when women come together to support one another, amazing things can happen. We are so much stronger when we form connections and work to lift one another up. The symposium felt like the beginning of something wonderful—a start to a much more welcoming and inclusive industry. *sj*

*Vanessa Da Silva is a sommelier at
The Press Club Grill in New York City.*

Tannat is the star at Gimenez Mendez, a historic family-run winery in Uruguay's Canelones area.

Across the Andes

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE VINEYARDS OF SOUTH AMERICA, FROM THE PACIFIC TO THE ATLANTIC

VISITING WINE COUNTRY has been one of the greatest pleasures of my 37 years in this industry. It is a wonderful way to touch base with old friends, meet new ones, and gauge progress while making discoveries. For me, it never gets old.

This past February, I relished the opportunity to lead a group of wine lovers on a two-week tour that made stops at 14 wineries across three countries in South America. I'd previously visited some of the wineries before and tasted most of their wines, but all offered fascinating new developments and lessons (for more on the trip, see the next two spotlights).

My first visit to South America was in January 2000 to attend the opening of the Almaviva winery, a partnership between Concha y Toro and Château Mouton Rothschild. Despite the growing importance of the Chilean wine industry at the time, a good portion of the nearly two-hour journey from Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport to downtown Santiago was on a dirt road. By the time I returned two years later, the entire route was paved, delivering me at my hotel downtown within 20 minutes of leaving the airport. Similar infrastructure projects have had widespread effects: The construction of privatized toll roads across the country have dramatically shortened travel times between regions.

Chile's wine industry has also progressed in leaps and bounds over the past two decades. Chilean wine has long outgrown its low-cost image to become truly world-class as native producers continue to up their game and European winemakers enter the burgeoning scene. We visited five wineries there:



PHOTOS: LARS LEICHT

- **Concha y Toro** takes advantage of its winery location near Santiago's city center to offer daily tours and tastings that are a model of basic wine education. We tasted through the top of the range with winemaker/ambassador Rodrigo Alonso. Several of these wines, like Don Melchor and Marques de Casa Concha, enhanced the visibility of Chilean winemaking in the 1990s and continue to set the standard.
- **Viñedos Veramonte** in Casablanca is a convenient stopover on the way to or from the port city of Valparaíso, offering winery tours, tastings, and picnics on its vineyard grounds and in its organic gardens. Its cool-climate Sauvignon Blancs and Pinot Noirs are crisp, refreshing, and accessible.
- At **De Martino** in Isla de Maipo, fourth-generation proprietor Sebastián De Martino showed off some of his family's finest traditions and innovations. Most fascinating was the work they are doing with historic old-vine varieties fermented in 140-liter clay amphorae known as *tinajas* under the Viejas Tinajas label.
- At **Undurraga**, Ben Gordon, managing director of the winery's **Bodega Volcanes de Chile** project, tasted us on his minerality-driven wines from sites



Gathering for a tasting at Gimenez Mendez.

meticulously selected in volcanic terroir with the help of a geologist. After a tour of Undurraga's historic winery and vineyards in the Maipo Valley, we enjoyed a Chilean-style *asado* barbecue in the shade of a large eucalyptus tree.

- **Montes**, a great pioneer of hillside viticulture and quality winemaking in Colchagua, proved it's still an industry leader with an informative tour of its spectacular cellars, a comprehensive tasting, and a delicious paired lunch at its Fuegos de Apalta restaurant led by South American celebrity chef Francis Mallmann. The Montes Alpha wines continue to impress.

Our visit to Argentina marked my first time in the country, entering in a way I've always wanted to: crossing the Andes by roadway. Despite getting shaken down by Argentine customs authorities for a bribe to help expedite the border-crossing process, I found that the dramatic scenery made for an even better passage than I had hoped for. In vibrant Mendoza, the wines were stellar. Argentina arguably has made even greater enological strides than Chile in a shorter amount of time, with noteworthy levels of foreign investment, evidenced by several French-owned wineries we visited, including:

- **Flechas de los Andes**, where winemaker Agustín Alcoleas led the tour and tasting, giving us background on this joint venture between Edmond de Rothschild and Laurent Dassault on the Clos de los Siete campus (see below), a project of seven winemaking

families that's led by Michel Rolland. Though part of the original group, they do not contribute to Clos de los Siete's eponymous blend.

- At **Domaine Bousquet**, chief winemaker and COO Rodrigo Serrano tasted us through most of the range, including the first organic Argentine wine to be permitted for sale in the U.S. and a certified kosher wine. We dined at the winery's exquisite signature restaurant, Gaia.

I also separately visited the **Antigal** winery and all four wineries that contribute to the aforementioned Clos de los Siete blend: **Bodega Rolland**, **Cuvelier Los Andes**, **Monteviejo**, and **DiamAndes**, the latter of which has an on-site bistro and wine bar serving local cuisine to pair with its wines. All four are turning out the kind of excellence you would expect from producers involved with a Rolland project.

The group made its final Argentine stop in Buenos Aires, and while there are no wineries there, we enjoyed a wine lunch at one of its most historic bars, Los Galgos.

The next morning, we went to the city's port for a high-speed ferry across the Río de la Plata to Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. The country provided the greatest surprises and contrasts of this trip with two winery visits:

- **Gimenez Mendez** is a historic family-run winery in the Canelones area north of Montevideo. Traditional cement tanks are kept pristine alongside



De Martino in Chile's Isla de Maipo ferments historic old-vine varieties in 140-liter clay amphorae known as tinajas under its Viejas Tinajas label.

state-of-the-art stainless-steel fermenters to make a great range of wines, of which Tannat is the star. After our tasting inside the winery, we were able to taste Tannat in pill form—that is, whole grapes harvested that afternoon.

- In the far east of the country, **Bodega Garzón** demands a long journey but is well worth it given the phenomenal investment by Italy's Bulgheroni family in stellar hospitality, superb winemaking, and literally groundbreaking vineyards. Historically, this area was not wine country, but by blasting into the granite under the soil, consultant Alberto Antonini and managing director Christian Wylie are making it one of the world's most dramatic wine estates.

If one overarching message became clear from our trip, it's that wine lovers from anywhere in the world will find much to enjoy in the top-quality Merlots, Cabernets, Sauvignon Blancs, and Chardonnays of South America. More significantly, the three countries' signature wines—Chile's Carménère, Argentina's Malbec, and Uruguay's Tannat—make for eye-opening and palate-pleasing discoveries. These may not be the low-cost South American wines of the 1990s, but you can bet that, dollar for dollar, the current bottlings from these countries—especially those from the producers listed here—are delivering greater value than many other wines from the New as well as the Old World. To me that makes them a bargain at any price point and yet another rewarding lesson from traveling to wine country. S

A CLOS OF MANY COLORS

CLOS DE LOS SIETE IS A UNIQUE PROJECT IN A UNIQUE PLACE

by **Lars Leicht**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLOS DE LOS SIETE



Winemaker and Clos de los Siete founder Michel Rolland.

The Andes are a formidable presence in wine country on either side of the Chile-Argentina border: I've been fortunate enough to see them from the Chilean side many times, and I recently got my first view of them from the Argentine side.

In addition to the mountains' majesty and the incredible influence they have on the surrounding microclimates—attracting rainstorms, clouds, hail, and snow while reflecting sunlight in turn—what struck me most from this eastern perspective were the striations of color on the slopes, which I never found as dramatic on the western face. When driving up into the Andes from the Chilean side on the serpentine highway, the scenery changes quickly from green hills to a monochromatic rockface, but once you pass through the Tunnel of Christ the Redeemer and across the Argentine border, the geologic kaleidoscope reveals itself.

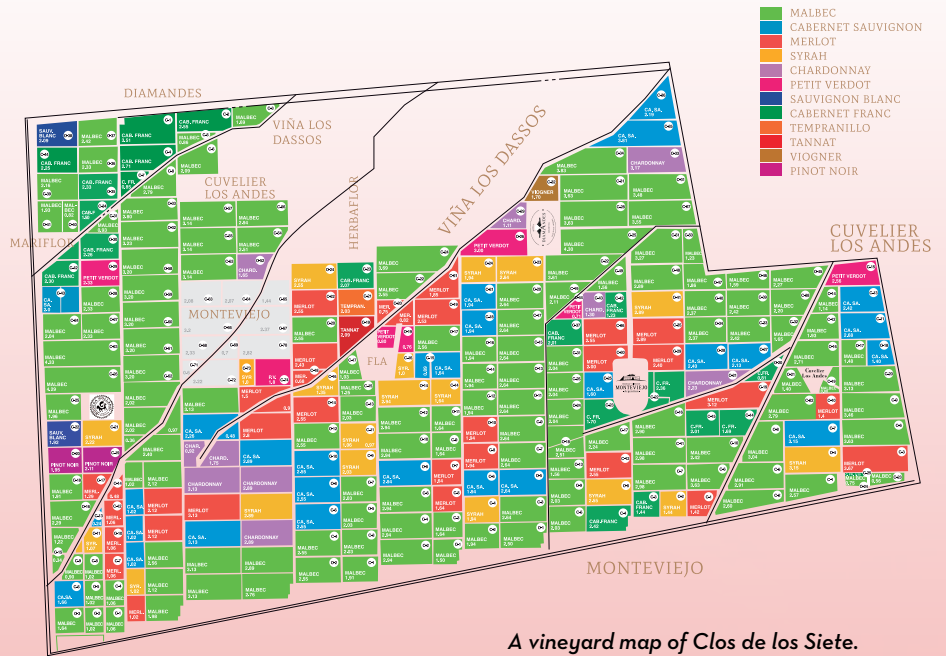
Heading south from the pass parallel to the mountains, Highway 40 follows the Andean mosaic of purple, pink, coral, light gray, charcoal gray, black, and blue. That tapestry evidently also caught the eye of renowned winemaker Michel Rolland as he planted a patchwork of grape varieties in the vineyards of his Clos de los Siete project outside the village of Vista Flores: Today, multicolored rocks punctuate Clos de los Siete's "campus," from the large stones found in beds along the cement walkways to the gravel on its roads.

The Clos de los Siete property outside the village of Vista Flores in Argentina's Uco Valley.

On my recent visit to the property, its backstory was recounted to me by hospitality director Oscar Agustín Pravata, who told me that Rolland first visited Argentina in 1988 at the request of a producer in the northern region of Salta looking to raise the quality of his wines. Argentines were convinced at the time that to be considered world-class, they had to excel with Cabernet Sauvignon. But Rolland, who hailed from Bordeaux and was famously known as a “flying winemaker” thanks to his consulting roles around the globe, saw greater potential in another Bordelaise variety: Malbec, undervalued in its native France but prolific in Argentina. Together with other French producers and international critics, he convinced locals to focus on the grape while lowering their yields to achieve high quality (an uncommon practice for them at the time).

When Rolland had the opportunity to taste some wines made from grapes in the Uco Valley to the south, he truly became smitten, according to Pravata, and sought out land to plant his own vines there; after a couple of years he found an unplanted 850-hectare site on the northern slope of an alluvial cone in the foothills of the Andes. Though he only wanted 100 or so hectares, the seller made acquisition contingent on the purchase of the entire property. It was too big for Rolland alone, so he approached some consultancy clients to join him.

Rolland and six other French winemaking families each invested in different parcels on the lot, which is isolated by the Frontal Cordon Range of the Andes to the west, federally owned land to the south, and unplanted land to the east and north; they named their project Clos de



A vineyard map of Clos de los Siete.

los Siete to allude to their number and to the Bordelaise concept of making wines exclusively from estate grapes. The vineyards were planted to Rolland’s specifications: Dominated by Malbec, which claims 60% of the plantings, they comprise 11 other varieties, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Petit Verdot, and Cabernet Franc.

“There are about 40 different soil types on the campus, and the altitude varies between 1,100 and 1,200 meters above sea level,” said Pravata. “That might not seem like a lot, but at this height it can make a significant difference” in how the grapes grow and the character they impart in the finished wines. He said the vineyards have a shallow surface layer of clay and gravel on top of a deep rock base, which makes for ideal drainage. Levees were built to prevent flash flooding off the

nearby slopes, while drip irrigation was installed to ensure the grapes’ survival in the dry conditions (Clos de los Siete receives only about 8–12 inches of rain per year)—conditions that also ensure that phylloxera cannot impact the vines’ roots.

Today, each of the seven producers on the property owns a share of the land, and five modern wineries dot the vineyard grid like ships on a sea. All produce wines for their own independent labels—including Val de Flores, which Rolland makes from his subsequently purchased 10-hectare plot of old-vine Malbec nearby—while four of them work with Rolland to contribute to the blend known as Clos de los Siete, aka “C7.” His legendary blending skills bring the underlying character of each winery—

Bodega Rolland, Monteviejo, DiamAndes, and Cuvelier Los Andes—together into something unique.

Yet the wine also remains consistent over time: A vertical tasting of five vintages (see sidebar) showed a steady stylistic hand behind the blend, which has featured at least 50% Malbec since its inception in 2002. About 70% of the wine is aged for 11 months in first-, second-, and third-use French oak barriques; the balance is kept in stainless steel. It's clearly not meant to be an oak-dominant trophy wine but rather an expression of the generous fruit character and minerality that the rocky soils of the Uco Valley can yield. Available at a relatively reasonable price point of \$22 in the U.S. market, it serves as not only a bellwether for Argentine wines, reflecting variations in annual vintage conditions, but a standard-bearer given its approachability.

As we sat at the DiamAndes winery overlooking the Clos de los Siete vineyards about ten to 15 days ahead of harvest, Pravata said that the 2023 would likely present a record low yield due to late frosts, hail, and a hot summer; but that concentration will offer up intense flavor, outstanding quality, and greater structure. A few days later wind and rain swept through the region and brought temperatures down by about 20 degrees, a refresher for the harvest. As a result, the artist in Rolland will have deeper colors on his palette. *SJ*

Multicolored rocks across Clos de los Siete's "campus" match the striations seen on the slopes of the Andes.

TASTING NOTES

Clos de los Siete 2020, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina The most recent vintage of this wine available on the U.S. market is a blend of 55% Malbec, 16% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Syrah, 3% Petit Verdot, and 2% Cabernet Franc. Exhibiting silky tannins and chocolate notes on the finish, it shows concentration endowed by one of the hottest summers on record. I found it powerful but still closed, like a sullen teenager whose potential is nonetheless evident.



Clos de los Siete 2019, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina According to hospitality director Oscar Agustín Pravata, the summer weather was mild in this vintage, with a brief heat wave followed by an ideal diurnal shift, leaving healthy grapes for harvest. Rolland dialed back the Malbec to 50% and the Cabernet to just 5% alongside a more generous portion of Merlot (24%) and the usual support from Syrah (11%), Cabernet Franc (5%), and Petit Verdot (3%). The influence of Cabernet Franc brings spicy notes framed by silky Merlot and good minerality.

Clos de los Siete 2018, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina Pravata described this blend of 55% Malbec, 19% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Syrah, and 2% each of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot as "our best vintage yet," thanks to a snowy winter, the absence of spring frosts, a moderate summer, and low rainfall. At this stage, the well-balanced wine shows abundant tertiary aromas, including cigar box, cedar, baking spices, and tobacco leaf, along with a finish of ripe blackberry.

Clos de los Siete 2017, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina Yields were low this vintage, said Pravata, after a cold winter and spring frost so severe that fruit mainly came from a second budding. Harvest was a month later than usual, but the fruit in this blend of 52% Malbec, 21% Merlot, 15% Syrah, 7% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot, and 2% Cabernet Franc has a savory character. Notes of white pepper appear on the nose before refreshing flavors of just-ripe cherries arise on the palate.

Clos de los Siete 2016, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina El Niño marked this vintage with eight times the usual rainfall in Mendoza, a record for the Uco Valley. Pravata said the weather was reminiscent of Bordeaux: cool, cloudy, and wet. Despite notes of humus and wet earth, the wine (54% Malbec, 18% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Syrah, 3% Petit Verdot, and 1% Cabernet Franc) is intensely aromatic and fresh, with good blackberry and plum notes.

PHOTO: LANS LEICHT



SOMETHING NEW FROM SOMETHING

Old

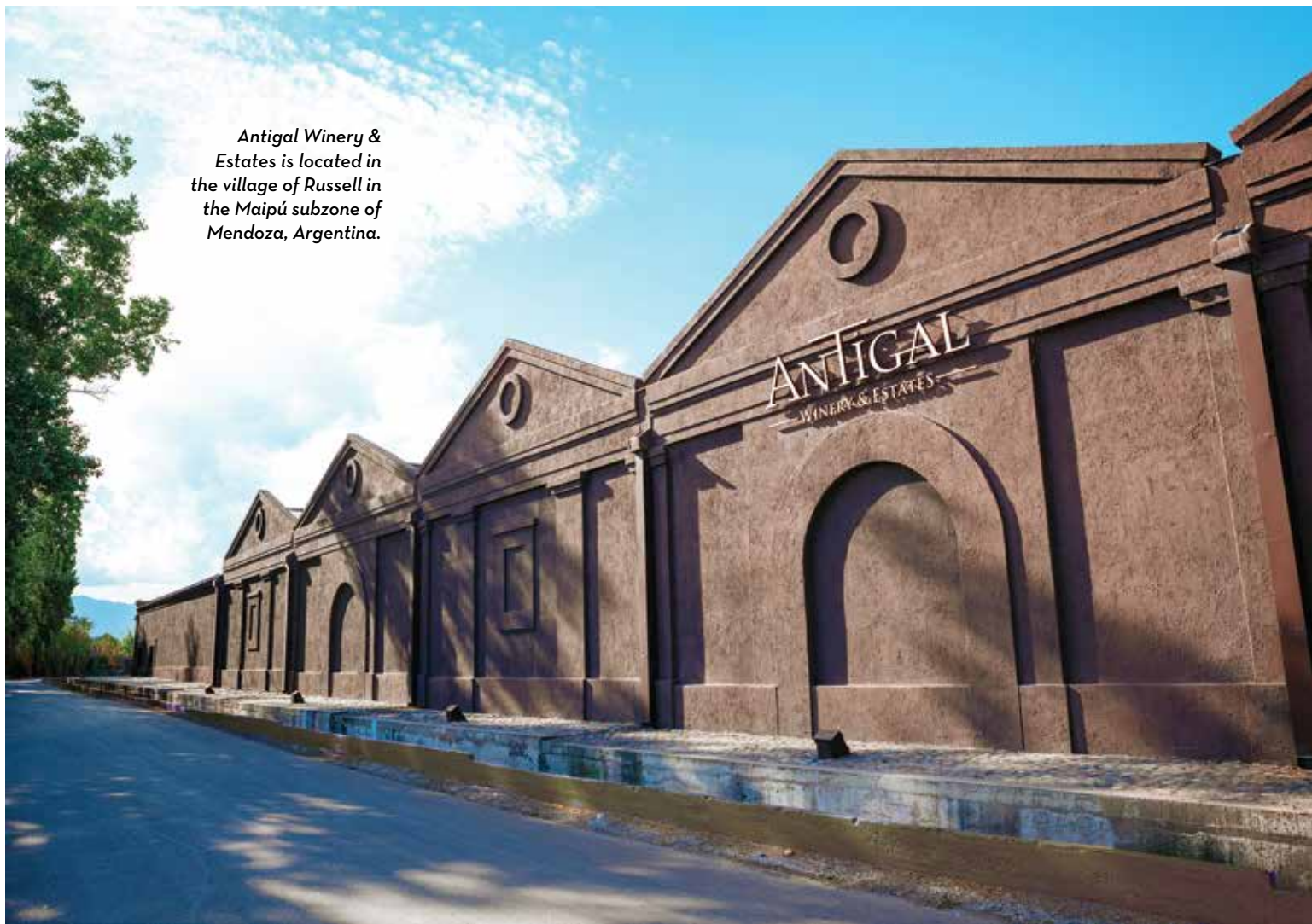
***ARGENTINA'S ANTIGAL WINERY & ESTATES
STRIVES FOR "ACCESSIBLE LUXURY"***

by Lars Leicht

The late 19th century was considered the start of a golden era in Argentina: With exports of wool, beef, and wheat at an all-time high, the economy was thriving. Migrants flowed in from Europe, bringing their customs and traditions to what had previously been a sparsely populated country.

It was in this context that many wineries were founded on the outskirts of the growing city of Mendoza. The wine industry flourished, yielding quality wines made from Bordeaux varieties into the 1950s. But by the late 1960s and early 1970s, political and economic turmoil had led to an emphasis on bulk production; while Argentina's wine consumption had grown to a peak of about 90 liters per capita annually, it was based mainly on low-quality jug wine. In the 1990s, as the political situation stabilized, Argentina changed its wine laws to establish an appellation system and encourage the return of quality production.

Antigal Winery & Estates is located in the village of Russell in the Maipú subzone of Mendoza, Argentina.



In 2000, after several changes of ownership, the historic shell of a winery founded in 1897 in the village of Russell in the Maipú subzone of Mendoza underwent a refurbishment by descendants of European immigrants who had settled in Argentina. They named it Antigal, the Creole word for “very old.” Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the building was completely renovated with contemporary equipment. On the ground level, a cold room chills freshly harvested grapes in small baskets overnight before sorting, crushing, and fermentation in stainless-steel tanks; the fruit used for whites and rosés is sent to a pneumatic horizontal press, while a basket press awaits the red grapes. Deep below, the original cellar holds aging reserves in both barrels and bottles, maintaining a constant natural temperature of 64 degrees Fahrenheit.

Russell can best be described as a suburb of Mendoza, just 25 minutes by car from the city center. There, Antigal hosts tours and tastings for small groups in idyllic settings, whether in the cool cellar surrounded by bottle reserves or out under the bright Argentine sun in the vineyards. The winery is also opening an on-site restaurant this spring, where guests can pair the estate wines with local cuisine.

To produce its wines—which have been imported to the United States since 2007 with a focus on the on-premise market—Antigal sources fruit from 1,150 acres of its own vineyards, including the La Nonna estate surrounding the winery in what it calls the “Luján-Maipú Oasis,” which it defines as an area characterized by alluvial clay loam over limestone soils at roughly 792–853 meters above sea level. Two other Antigal vineyards are located in the Uco Valley’s Tupungato subzone: La

Dolores in Gualtallary and Doña Angeles in La Arboleda, which sit at elevations of 1,100 meters and 1,000 meters, respectively, on deep sandy-loam soil within a dry continental climate.

In the midst of a transition to fully organic farming, Antigal recently released its first wine certified as being made with organic grapes, a 100% Malbec under the UNO label. Winemaker Miriam Gomez crafts six other monovarietal wines and two blends for UNO as well as two single-vineyard wines under the ONE label and three blends and two monovarietal wines for the Aduentus line. (Clearly the house specialty is Malbec, featured in five single-varietal bottlings.) The grapes are harvested manually and Gomez uses little if any malolactic fermentation, preferring to preserve the natural character and vibrancy of the fruit. She ages her wines in mostly French as well as some Ameri-

TASTING NOTES

UNO 2022 Rosé, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$13) Proportions of this warm, flavorful blend of Tempranillo, Malbec, and Syrah vary slightly from vintage to vintage, joined by a touch of Cabernet in some years. The wine has a classic onion-skin color and abundant red fruit on the nose. Hints of cherry blossoms, currants, and berries appear on the palate. Aged six months in stainless-steel tanks.

UNO 2019 Platinum Edition Malbec, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$25) This lush, round 100% Malbec aged in French and American oak for 12 months. Exuding dark fruit and smoke on the nose, it shows great structure and acidity, with notes of blueberries and ripe plums leading to an oaky finish.

Aduentus 2018 Cabernet Franc, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$30) This 100% Cabernet Franc—one of my favorite varieties—aged 14 months in oak to yield baking spices on the nose and sweet tannins joined by notes of black pepper, ripe plums, and blackberries on the fruit-forward palate. The long finish features hints of black licorice. When the technical tasting was finished, this is the wine I went back for to enjoy with a charcuterie board!

Aduentus 2018 Classic Blend, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$30) This velvety blend of 40% Malbec, 30% Merlot, and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 14 months in oak and shows deep red fruit as well as rich flavors of red velvet cake and cherries in light syrup.

ONE 2018 La Dolores Vineyard Malbec, Gualtallary, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$100) Antigal marketing coordinator Macarena Gimenez calls this 100% Malbec “the king,” as it’s made with fruit from the heart of Antigal’s best vineyard. Notes of black pepper and crème de cassis on the nose give way to sweet tannins and fruit that dominates any oak flavors despite a lengthy barrel aging regimen of 24 months in 80% French and 20% American oak. Winemaker Miriam Gomez will only make this wine in optimal vintages; it has been released in just nine of the 12 years since its inception.



Antigal winemaker Miriam Gomez.

can oak barriques of medium toast and various ages.

Antigal celebrated the inaugural releases of UNO and its limited ONE series by shaping the numeral “1” from a barrel hoop and affixing it to the bottles; today, the number continues to be applied by hand to each wine. The numeral takes on greater significance with respect to ONE: The wines are produced from single vineyards with a production level equaling one bottle per vine. All of Antigal’s wines have cork closures except for a Rosé, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and the Malbec made with organic grapes under the UNO label,

which are sealed with a screwcap.

Macarena Gimenez, the winery’s marketing coordinator, hosted me for a tasting during my visit to Mendoza in mid-February, which coincided with Antigal’s first day of harvest. She likes to refer to the wines as “accessible luxury,” and after tasting them, I can’t disagree. Gomez and her team have worked within the shell of something very old to create something very new, making contemporary wines dressed in classic style that uniformly show bright fruit and refreshing acidity. Perhaps this is the dawn of another golden age for Antigal and Argentine wines. *ST*

Inside the Hub of the UNIVERSE

BOSTON SOMMELIERS TALK EMERGING INDUSTRY TRENDS

by Jillian Dara

All too often overshadowed by New York City 200 miles north is the East Coast's "other city": Boston, also known as Beantown or, as it has recently been proving, the Hub of the Universe. As Boston's culinary landscape has witnessed a renaissance over the past couple of decades, its beverage culture has also taken off, as represented today by the likes of globally inspired cocktail bar Hecate and natural-wine bar Gray's Hall. We asked ten experts who are contributing to the long-deserved recognition of the city's drinking scene to weigh in on some of the most noteworthy trends.

Evan Turner

Sommelier and wine director,
Krasi Meze & Wine

At Krasi Meze & Wine, Evan Turner oversees one of the largest Greek wine lists in the country: 320 labels, to be exact. Every week, his Symposium program serves as an educational take on "Wine Wednesday," offering guests exclusive tastings, flights, and by-the-glass offerings. He says that he's witnessed Greek and orange wine having more than a moment: "I have seen a marked increase in interest and enthusiasm for Greek wine in every way. Regarding orange wine, it is immensely popular. Our bestselling wine is an orange wine, and it is by a wide margin. People are constantly asking about them and for them; it is such a pleasure to see orange wine take off as it has."



PHOTO: ADAM DETOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Hugo Bensimon

Sommelier and beverage director,
Grill 23 & Bar

At Grill 23 & Bar, Hugo Bensimon manages a wine list with over 1,900 selections. He's an advocate of the concept that "what grows together goes together" as he expertly pairs the Back Bay steakhouse's fine cuts of beef with even finer wines. Meanwhile, behind the bar, Bensimon has noticed a strong trend toward agave spirits, observing that more people are asking bartenders to incorporate them into classic cocktails. "We are constantly pouring tequila or mezcal Espresso Martinis or Old Fashioneds," he says. "We have been growing our artisanal agave selection with some very unique bottlings. My favorite currently is Rezipiral—they are making some of the best mezcal in the game right now."



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRILL 23 & BAR

Eileen Elliott

**Director of operations,
Social Wines**

With two admired locations in Cambridge and South Boston, Social Wines reflects Eileen Elliott's trademarks: taste, sociability, and approachability. The stores, which feature a variety of small grower-producers that they showcase during frequent tasting events, have over the course of a decade assisted with the emergence of the natural-wine market in Boston. When Elliott isn't drinking wine, she enjoys sipping quality tequila neat, and she's noticed that the local beverage community has also caught on. "What's most exciting is the interest in additive-free agave-based spirits across all demographics of buyers," she says.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EILEEN ELLIOTT

Sarah Maclsaac

**Wine and beverage
director, Bar Volpe and
Fox & the Knife**

Professing a deep love for Champagne, Sarah Maclsaac has traveled extensively throughout Italy and California. In 2022, she joined the teams at Bar Volpe and Fox & the Knife as wine and beverage director, undertaking the task of elevating their wine and cocktail programs. Formerly sommelier and wine director at Straight Wharf on Nantucket, Maclsaac has noticed that while the natural-wine movement has been an "overarching new theme" in the industry, consumers are better understanding that there is plenty of wine available that may not technically fall into the category yet "has been produced in the most thoughtful, intentional, and traditional way possible," she says. "They understand the difference between small production and mass production and how that translates to the product."



PHOTO: KAREN AKUNOWICZ, BAR VOLPE

Alec Riveros

Sommelier and general manager, Woods Hill Pier 4

Between serving as general manager at such acclaimed Boston restaurants as Barbara Lynch's Menton and Ken Oringer's Clio and Uni Sashimi Bar and developing the wine program for the entire Four Seasons Hotel, Alec Riveros brings a wealth of expertise to his duties at Woods Hill Pier 4, both in the front of house as sommelier and behind the scenes as general manager. He's noticed three trends in the wine space recently. First, he says, "The level of interest from guests in grower Champagne continues to surprise me. Two years ago we would have guests ask for Dom Pérignon before even looking at the wine list. Today we find guests more open to trying things like Special Club Champagnes or single-vineyard Grand Cru Champagnes." Second, Riveros says that orange wine, while by no means a new trend, has gained traction this past year, pointing to Lunar from Movia, an eclectic, biodynamic Slovenian producer, as one that guests currently love. Third, he remarks, the demand for Sancerre "is stronger than ever. . . [I have] a hard time keeping up with these wines at the restaurant." It's his view that "people who fell in love with the grapefruit-y Marlborough New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs over the past eight years or so have now transitioned to wines of more elegance and typicity. With increased demand and all of the frost/mildew issues of the 2021 harvest, [Sancerre] is a category that will continue to draw demand and interest."



PHOTO: DAVID SANTANA

Nader Asgari-Tari

Wine director, Bin 26 Enoteca

After moving to Boston in 2015 and getting his start in wine at Lala Rokh, a now-closed Persian-Azerbaijani restaurant that focused on Old World wines, Nader Asgari-Tari joined Bin 26 Enoteca in 2018 and quickly became the wine director. He's been at the Beacon Hill institution since, and although it specializes in Italian cuisine, Asgari-Tari has recognized an interest in German wine among his guests. He points to "the increasing popularity . . . of Germanic non-Riesling varietals such as Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), Grauburgunder (Pinot Grigio), Sylvaner, Müller-Thurgau, Scheurebe, Elbling, and especially Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) from high-quality if not benchmark producers farming pedigreed sites." Asgari-Tari continues, "Definitely on both coasts there is a fervor for [producers such as] Keller; Haardt, Stein, Lardot, Wasenhaus, Lauer, Weiser-Künstler, Emrich-Schönleber, Schäfer Fröhlich, Forstmeister Geltz-Zilliken, Stefan Vetter, Koehler-Ruprecht. . . The list is long and the names are many, but the diversity of options makes [German wine] very approachable for all consumers and wine enthusiasts."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BIN 26 ENOTECA

Haley Fortier

Owner/operator, haley henry and nathalie

In 2019, Haley Fortier was named one of *Food & Wine's* "Sommeliers of the Year," while *Imbibe* named nathalie its "Wine Bar of the Year." Fortier, who's spent more than 20 years in the industry, says she's noticed an increase in "people actually caring about what's in their glass in terms of sustainable beverage options. Wine in particular is probably the biggest thing I'm seeing—people are really beginning to understand the difference between mass-produced, chemical-filled wine versus vine-to-bottle wines that have very little manipulation to them. It's a great sign because it gets everyone not only drinking something that is literally better for them but [also] supporting actual people: [the] farmers, growers, [and] winemakers behind these projects."



PHOTO: JON PACK

Bertil Jean-Chronberg

Sommelier and founder, Bonde Fine Wine Shop

French-born Canadian Bertil Jean-Chronberg made his mark in Quebec in the late 1990s before moving to Boston in 2000, where he opened a string of restaurants and was nominated by ZAGAT as one of the "12 Boston Power Players to Watch." His latest venture is Bonde Fine Wine Shop in Harvard Square, which he opened in 2021. Here, he's witnessed a shift toward sustainably produced wines. "The consumption of industrial wines has impacted health, and the demand for quality 'healthy' wine will take an increasingly significant share of real wine shops," he predicts. "Therefore in 2023, the trend will focus on consumer introspection and the origin of the wines they consume. The 'silent' label will no longer be fashionable, and consumers will request more information to become increasingly knowledgeable." Jean-Chronberg says some of that information might include the agricultural and winemaking methods used to produce a given wine; the names of the grape varieties and their percentages; the amount of acidity (pH) and residual sugar; and, if possible, a "numbering [on the] bottle [indicating the] total quantity produced [as a way] to guarantee production on a human scale and quality in the [finished product]."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BONDE FINE WINE SHOP

Nick Daddona

Wine director, Boston Harbor Hotel and Boston Wine & Food Festival

Nick Daddona oversees the Boston Wine & Food Festival, the longest-running festival of its kind in the country, choosing wines for the events it hosts over the course of three months. Remarking on the evolution of the natural-wine movement and on his efforts to educate consumers about light, bright wines besides Sancerre, Daddona says he's also excited about the opportunities presented by the nonalcoholic category: "There are quality spirits [producers] coming out with nonalcoholic [options], but most restaurants and hotels are not [yet] capturing the revenue they could have, just looking at it purely from a business perspective." He particularly commends a Sacramento-based company called All The Bitter that's dedicated entirely to nonalcoholic bitters, pointing out that he sees alcoholic bitters on cocktail lists purporting to be alcohol-free all the time; even though they introduce only a small amount of alcohol, he says, it's still alcohol. So All The Bitter is all he uses now, including at home.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICK DADDONA

Matt Thayer

Co-founder, American Provisions and Gray's Hall

In 2010, Matt Thayer opened American Provisions, a small specialty-food and natural-wine shop in South Boston with his business partner, Andy Fadous. As its popularity grew, the partners took over the space next door to open a complementary natural-wine bar, Gray's Hall. Thayer runs both establishments with a mission to create community through exceptional service and the appreciation of small producers. Even though he's been overseeing the sale of natural wines for the past 12 years, Thayer says he's been seeing "more and more young people seeking out these low-intervention wines; I think people are tired and bored of traditional wine culture and just down for drinking *fun* wine." Echoing what a few others have touched on, he adds, "This interest will only grow as people become increasingly aware of the environmental impacts of winemaking and the importance of supporting small farms and wineries." **ST**



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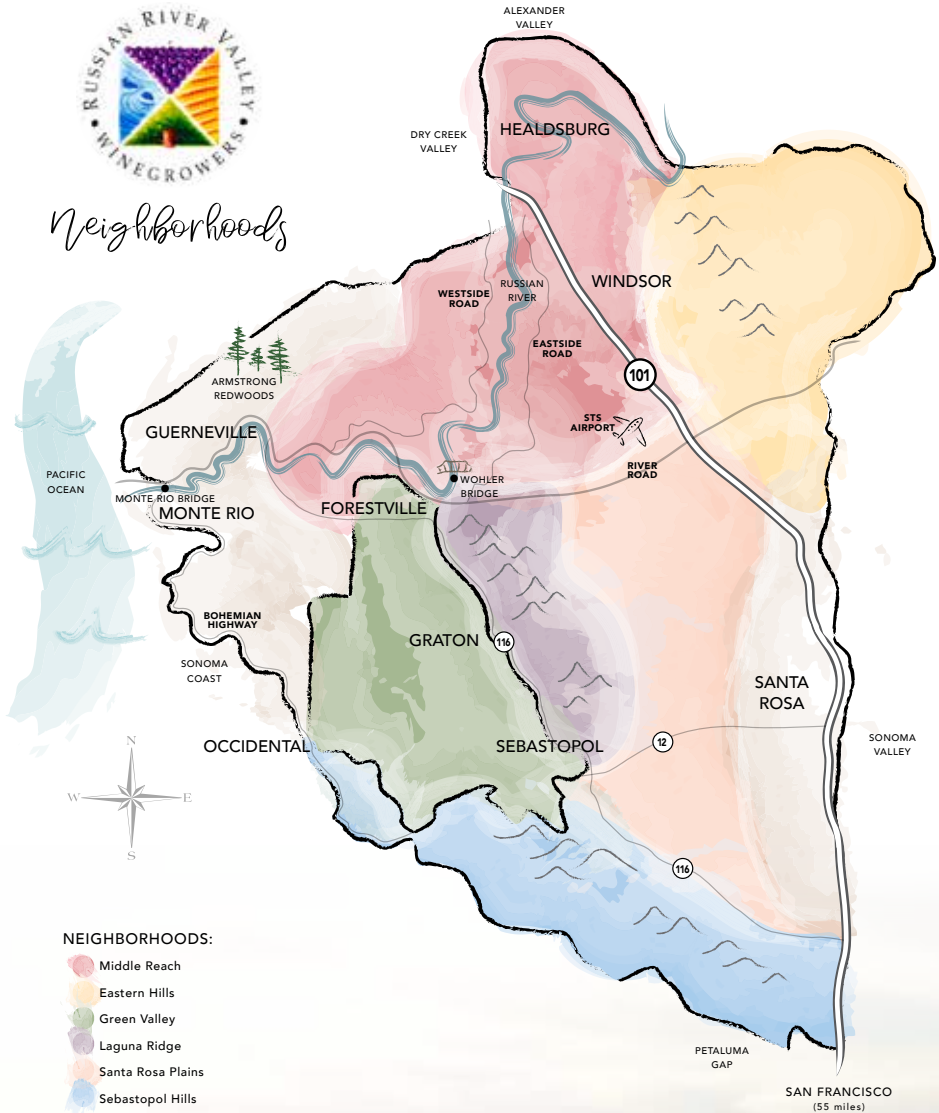
A LOOK AT THE RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY'S **SANTA ROSA PLAINS** NEIGHBORHOOD

by Virginie Boone

WINE IS THE BEVERAGE most linked to a sense of place; provenance matters greatly to the end product. For a large AVA like the Russian River Valley (RRV), it can be tricky to convey all the nuances and complexities of the terroir with just one designation.

That challenge is what led the growers and winemakers of the RRV to undertake an experiment in 2015 called the Neighborhoods Initiative. While they knew instinctively about the differences in soil, climate, and elevation within the RRV, they aimed to approach the process of delineating its subregions with scientific rigor. Working with Dr. Roger Boulton, a professor of viticulture and enology at the University of California, Davis, they helped identify a set of elemental fingerprints corresponding to the wines from each of these unique pockets of the larger AVA, which led to their designations as neighborhoods—six in all.

Among them is the Santa Rosa Plains, an area east of the center of the RRV that's composed of upland foothills and low valleys. It extends west of Santa Rosa, north of Cotati, and south of Windsor and is bordered on the west by the city of Sebastopol. It's at the heart of the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed, a vast oak savannah grassland with vernal pools and swales that fill with water in winter; the laguna itself flows northward and empties into the Russian River. Many of the



One of Davis Bynum's sources for Pinot Noir is the 132-acre Jane's Vineyard in the Santa Rosa Plains.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVIS BYNUM

vineyards in the Santa Rosa Plains were planted on land that had been cleared and used to graze cattle and raise poultry. As parcels intended for large-scale agriculture, they are fairly sizable and have good access to water.

Because of the neighborhood's relatively low elevation, many of the vineyards in the Santa Rosa Plains have to wait a while each morning for the maritime fog that travels up from the Pacific through the Petaluma Gap to burn off before they see the sun. Annual rainfall averages from 28 inches in the southern end of the neighborhood to 40 inches in the north.

While the Huichica soil series is pervasive, soils across the neighborhood are diverse, ranging from heavy clay to lighter sand. The wines they yield are bright and red fruit-focused, with soft tannins. And because of the Goldilocks climate—not too hot and not too cold—the grapes are able to ripen slowly and reach their full flavor potential while retaining natural acidity.

At Saralee's Vineyard, planted in the late 1980s off River Road by Richard and Saralee Kunde, Joseph Swan winemaker Rod Berglund sources from a plot of 20-year-old vines representing a mix of Pinot Noir clones that's affectionally known as Rod's Row. He says he gets consistent ripening thanks to consistent soils.

"I find myself seduced by the elegance, restraint, and simple beauty that wines produced from this vineyard exhibit; I always get pretty red fruit—a mix of raspberry, cherry, and strawberry—and floral perfume" from the lightly pigmented grapes, he says. "I get more tonnage due to the deep soils but not the concentration of the Middle Reach [neighborhood]. The Santa Rosa Plains neighborhood provides the more pretty side of Pinot Noir."

The Pellegrini family planted Olivet Lane Vineyard to Martini clone Pinot Noir (as well as Wente clone Chardonnay) in the

1970s, making it one of the first—and now one of the oldest—Pinot Noir sites in the RRV. Olivet Lane gets healthy sun exposure and moderate but ample heat. The first designated wine to come from the vineyard was made by Williams Seylery; Pellegrini, for its part, debuted its first Olivet Lane wine in 1984, when Merry Edwards was winemaker, a position she held for 11 years. (Edwards continued to source grapes from the vineyard for her own wines for decades.) Today, fourth-generation vintner Alexia Pellegrini serves as general manager of Pellegrini-Olivet Lane.

Davis Bynum was the first winery to produce a single-vineyard Pinot Noir from the RRV back in 1973, sourcing it from the Rochioli Vineyard on Westside Road. Today, Davis Bynum winemaker Greg Morthole sources from Lindley's Knoll, a section of the 132-acre Jane's Vineyard, which is planted to nine different clones of Pinot Noir in clay loam soils. Lindley's Knoll contains a Swiss clone known as Wädenswil 2A, first planted here two decades ago.

"There's a pretty tone to the fruit, a floral note, and balance between acid and tannin," Morthole explains. "The pitch of the vineyard is spread out like ocean waves—gentle, not dramatic. The wines are rounder, not linear, without sacrificing other things, like aging [potential]. They're immediately approachable but will continue to evolve and develop."

Owned and farmed by Balletto Vineyards, BCD Vineyard stretches across 70 acres of rolling hills in the Santa Rosa Plains planted to equal parts Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Balletto vice president and winemaker Anthony Beckman says he gets more soft, velvety tannins here than in the other neighborhoods he sources from, such as the cool-climate Sebastopol Hills, where the tannins can be tougher. "The picking window is lenient," he adds. "It's an easier pick call." SJ



Balletto Vineyards' BCD Vineyard stretches across 70 acres in the Santa Rosa Plains.

Tasting Notes

Balletto 2019 Pinot Noir, BCD Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$58)

Equally bright and dark, with lovely spice, mocha, and earth aromas playing off fresh cherries, this wine is silky on the palate yet offers enough weight to keep it memorable as well as enough acidity and tannins to pull it through to a long and lasting finish.

Davis Bynum 2019 Pinot Noir, Lindley's Knoll, Russian River Valley (\$58)

This vintage shows a cool-climate personality built on welcome tension and crisp red fruit, remaining light and bright throughout a substantive midpalate. On the finish, expect well-integrated, silky tannins that linger on a bed of baking spice.

Joseph Swan 2018 Pinot Noir, Saralee's Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$50)

Light in color, this wine leads with red fruit and pretty floral aromatics. The palate is richly elegant in texture, accentuating the inviting flavors of red berries and cherries, while acidity keeps it bright and light. The beautiful finish shows baking spice and dried herbs.

Pellegrini 2018 Pinot Noir, Olivet Lane Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$65)

Effusive in classic notes of red cherry and pomegranate, this estate-grown wine shows nuances of baking spice and forest floor. Rich in velvety tannin, it offers a good balance between acidity and fruit, finishing long with integrated oak and dried herbs.





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Valiant EFFORTS

INSIDE THE BEST SOMMELIER OF THE WORLD COMPETITION

by Doug Frost, MS, MW; president,
Best USA Sommelier Association

ON FEBRUARY 12, 2023, the new champion of the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale's (ASI) Best Sommelier of the World competition was crowned in Paris: Raimonds Tomsons of Latvia bested a field of 67 other competitors from around the world, including Mark Guillaudeu of the U.S. It was an honorable end to a great run for Guillaudeu—at least for now: The next global competition will be in 2026.

Guillaudeu was chosen to represent the United States by the Best USA Sommelier Association (BUSA). As BUSA board member Evan Goldstein, MS, states, "Given the recency of BUSA's formation (created only in 2019), we couldn't be more pleased with Mark's performance. Not only did his coming in at 14 (out of a field of 68) demonstrate his skills and tenacity, but his result marked the highest placement for an American ever in this preeminent competition and the first time an American has made the semifinal round!"

If you haven't been on top of these developments, you're probably not alone. For the past decade or so, the U.S. hasn't participated in the global competition. ASI's name gives away the game: The Europeans, and more specifically the French, have a firm hold on the competition's rules and regulations—including the requirement that all participants must compete in a language other than their own native tongue. Even more confoundingly, only French, Spanish, and English are allowed. Guillaudeu, being a native English speaker, had to compete in French or Spanish. His language studies, which represent a significant part of his training over the past several years, have served him well;

Mark Guillaudeu sets the table for service at the 2023 Best Sommelier of the World competition in February.



The contestants of the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale's 2023 Best Sommelier of the World competition.

one judge, speaking to me off the record, said that Guillaudeu's French was never a negative factor in his performances.

Guillaudeu won his U.S. title at the BUSA national finals held in June 2022 in Hermann, Missouri (site of some of the earliest successes in American viticulture), where he won out over five other U.S. sommeliers: David Bérubé, Eduardo Bolaños, Max Goldberg, Kaysie Rogers, and previous U.S. champion Dustin Chabert. Immediately, he began a regimen of blind tasting, training, and language immersion and even completed the arduous BAR (Beverage Alcohol Resource) Five-Day Certification Program only two weeks before leaving for Paris. He was accompanied on the trip by his coach, Jienna Basaldu, as well as myself, though I think that I was of less help than others. As president of BUSA, I was there more in an honorary role, and once we arrived in Paris, I advised Guillaudeu to stop cramming and find a way to relax. Wine (and spirits) can be a great help in such circumstances.

But in truth, Guillaudeu's training has at times been ad hoc. While many candi-

dates are the beneficiaries of their home countries' zeal to win trophies, the U.S. wine industry is still lagging in its support. Tomsons, the eventual winner, offered his praise to a team of a dozen trainers and coaches, and it was not his first attempt at the big prize. Most competitors are veterans of the ASI contests and as a result have benefited from their longer tenure and the experience they gain from regional competitions held in addition to the global contest once every three years. Both Guillaudeu and Chabert appeared at the Americas competition in Chile in February 2022, when both reached the semifinals.

As the only U.S. contestant at the global competition, Guillaudeu breezed through the quarterfinals into the semifinals. But he was not chosen as one of the three finalists: Instead, Nina Jensen of Denmark and Reeze Choi of Hong Kong as well as Tomsons were the last three standing. They spent almost four hours on the stage at Paris' La Défense Arena—a high-tech, 30,000-seat sports venue—blind tasting wines, spirits, and

even nonalcoholic beverages in addition to serving a series of ever-more-demanding tables of judges—all while racing the clock and answering arcane questions such as "Which vintages of Vega Sicilia Unico were not bottled?"

"All three candidates were extremely skilled and, more important, as kind and genuine off the stage as on," says Guillaudeu. He admits that finding good training was part of the challenge he faced given that the U.S. has participated in these competitions only intermittently (although some might recall that such famed American sommeliers as Michael McNeil, MS; Larry O'Brien, MS; and Andrea Robinson, MS, were competitors only a few decades ago). Guillaudeu has gone farther in his endeavors than any American before him, and he is eager to continue. "The experience I gained from this competition was invaluable," he says, "and I will be even better prepared next time." Though Guillaudeu has already proven that he is one of the world's top sommeliers, he believes that he now knows how to grab the top spot in 2026. *sj*

{ winery spotlight }

YIN and



*Barbara and Bruce
Neyers are the proprietors
of Neyers Vineyards.*

YANG

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Alexander Rubin

HOW NEYERS VINEYARDS SHOWS TWO SIDES TO CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY

California-made Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay famously bested their French counterparts at the 1976 Judgment of Paris tasting, but that wasn't the first time they've crossed the finish line ahead of the competition: Way back in 1939, the 1936 vintage of Wente Chardonnay took the top prize at the Golden Gate International Exposition on San Francisco's Treasure Island.

Today most enophiles would submit without argument that California Chardonnay runs neck and neck with the best Chardonnays in the world, which leaves room for another age-old debate con-



The entrance to Neyers Vineyards in St. Helena, CA.

cerning the grape: the topic of wood aging. Among the producers experimenting with the stylistic differences yielded by various aging regimens are Bruce Neyers, his esteemed wife (and former Chez Panisse chef) Barbara Neyers, and their longtime winemaker, Tadeo Borchardt. The goal, as Bruce Neyers explained during a recent tasting at their Napa winery off Sage Canyon Road near Lake Hennessey, is "to show what California is capable of"—a perspective Neyers, a trained chemist who served in the U.S. Army in South

Korea, began building early in his wine career when he worked as a cellar master at Mayacamas Vineyards and then as general manager for Joseph Phelps Vineyards. Upon establishing his own winery in 1992, Neyers held the position of winemaker until 1995, when he enlisted Ehren Jordan, who stayed on until 2005; Borchardt came aboard in 2004, while Neyers continued to provide philosophical direction. Soft-spoken and reflective, Borchardt makes pensive wines that are expertly balanced, with tremendous freshness and poise. (For

a more detailed history of Neyers Vineyards and its partnership with Trinchero Family Estates, see the February 2019 issue of *The SOMM Journal*.)

At the tasting, Neyers noted that what sets the state apart is its terroir, which can produce world-class Chardonnay à la Côte d'Or, with oak influence, or in the pure, fresh mode of Chablis. That said, he added, "We're not France. We learned from the French, and the French learned from us. Talk to Raveneau or Dauvissat, who aged [their] wines in wood, but in smaller, used barrels—never new oak. Why? It's a vessel to get the mouthfeel right and let the fruit express itself."

You would expect Neyers to answer a question about Chardonnay style with a nod to two pillars of Chablis. After all, the same year he founded Neyers Vineyards, he worked with Chablis champion Kermit Lynch and continued to do so for two solid decades while growing his own wine label.

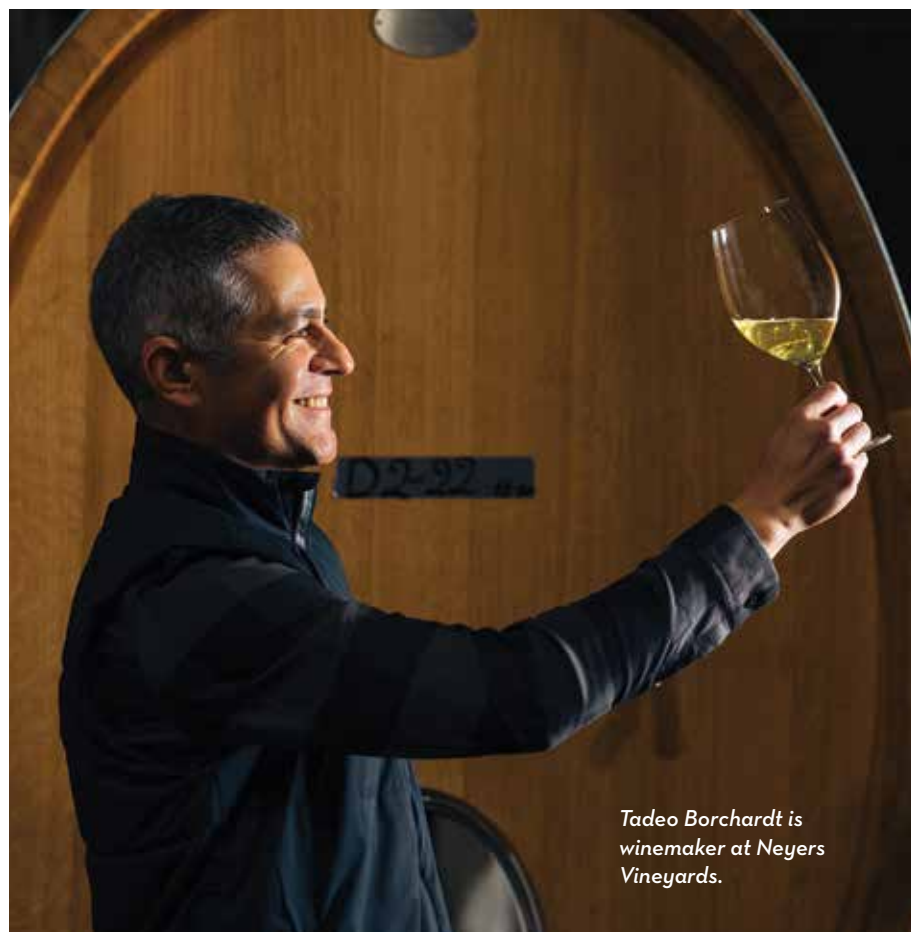
Leading up to that time in the 1970s and 1980s, Neyers contends, Chardonnay was either modest or extraordinary. The

first Chardonnay he never forgot was the 1964 Louis Latour Corton. In making wine today, he explained, "I rely on what I learned early on. . . . In the early days, we respected fancy. Fancy Chardonnay ruled the day. Fancy was Hanzell, Mayacamas, and Heitz. Fancy French was Puligny-Montrachet, Chassagne-Montrachet, or Meursault." When Neyers met Lynch, "my wine life turned around," he said, recalling that the portfolio of wines Lynch had amassed became a treasure trove of discovery. Neyers was bowled over by the enormous pleasure from simple Chardonnays like those from the Mâcon or small-production Beaujolais Blanc, but the real turning point came when he traveled to Chablis. "I adored the wines, found them perfect—fresh, crisp, low in alcohol—and [I] wondered how so much flavor could come from Chardonnay with so much acid," he recalled.

For Borchardt as well as Neyers, the character of their Chardonnays—among them the 304 Sonoma County Chardonnay, which is aged entirely in stainless steel, and the Carneros District—appellated

Chardonnay aged in oak—is predicated on two factors: excellent, attentive grape growing and distinct vine material. "We don't source a multitude of clones," said Borchardt, "but rather an Old Wente selection in each of our Chardonnay vineyards"—specifically the untreated Wente selection featuring small clusters of hens-and-chicks berries, many of which have no seeds, according to Borchardt. The widely planted Wente Clone 4, by contrast, produces large clusters and larger berries with more uniform growth.

Our conversation turned to geography. South of Napa, where Highway 121 snakes its way westward toward Sonoma, vines planted north of the two-lane road produce grapes with more ripeness and more tropical fruit flavors. In contrast, vineyards south of Highway 121 receive more extended periods of fog and cold weather because of their proximity to San Pablo Bay. Chardonnay grapes from the latter sites "tend to have lower pH and higher acid levels," said Borchardt. "As a result, we can make two different wines because of two different raw materials."



Tadeo Borchardt is winemaker at Neyers Vineyards.

“We don’t source a multitude of clones but rather an Old Wente selection in each of our Chardonnay vineyards.”

—Tadeo Borchardt



Barbara and Bruce Neyers taste with winemaker Tadeo Borchardt.


Further impacting style is the choice of aging vessel. “Wines from the southern sites in Carneros nearer to the bay, with their high acid profiles, don’t marry well with exposure to wood,” Borchardt explained. “But wines north of Highway 121, with fuller, more expressive tropical notes, need the wood to mitigate those characteristics.”

Neyers was in complete agreement and drew a parallel to Burgundy: “I’ve spent enough time in Chablis and the Côte d’Or to say that they have little in common,

because the limestone soil in Chablis isn’t the same limestone as in the Côte d’Or. Just as we do with our grapes from the coolest parts of Carneros, Chablis producers with their higher-acid grapes rarely age wines in new oak barrels, while everyone in the Côte d’Or ages their Chardonnays in newer, 60-gallon French oak barrels. It’s all about understanding the tools available to you. Charlie Watts, the late great drummer, said it was all about using his tools.”

On that note, here’s how the aforementioned Neyers Vineyards Chardonnays compare when tasted side by side. The **Neyers 2020 Chardonnay (\$40)** is sourced from three sites farmed by the Sangiacomo family and one site tended by the Yamakawa family on the Sonoma side of the Carneros District AVA—all north of Highway 121. The Wente Selection Chardonnay is night-harvested from late August to early October, and the fruit is put into a pneumatic press on a slow Champagne cycle running over three to four hours. After the press cycle, give or take a day in stainless steel, the wine is transferred to 60-gallon French oak barrels (30% new) for native yeast fermentation, which can last a couple of weeks to a couple of months; spontaneous malolactic fermentation typically happens in January or February following the harvest. The wine ages on its fine lees with no stirring before it’s lightly filtered for clarity and bottled unfined roughly ten to 11 months after harvest. The result is a layered white revealing quince paste, toasted almond, and fragrant oak as well as a plush mouthfeel supported by racy acidity and a stony mineral finish.

The **Neyers 2021 304 Chardonnay (\$35)** from Sonoma County, meanwhile, is sourced both from the Paul Larson Vineyard in Carneros near San Pablo Bay and from the Trincherio family’s Russian River estate. The former site, which sits south of Highway 121, was planted in 1994 to Old Wente selection Chardonnay; battered by cooling winds, it’s low-yielding. The fruit is picked at night, typically in late October, and gently crushed on a Champagne cycle in a pneumatic press, then transferred to stainless steel where it remains from native yeast fermentation until bottling. Malolactic fermentation is inhibited after primary fermentation, and the wine ages on its fine lees; at bottling, the malic acid is filtered. The result is lean, linear, and bursting with lemon zest, green apple, pear, and tart acidity all the way through its long, mineral finish.

Ultimately, Neyers Vineyards represents a bridge between the Old World and the New, balancing the elegance of the one with the fruit purity of the other while revealing their common ground: a deep appreciation for terroir. 

Winning in the Willamette

WHY THE FOUR GRACES IN OREGON IS SEEING REMARKABLE GROWTH

by Jonathan Cristaldi



SOMETHING EXPLOSIVE IS HAPPENING against the serene pastoral backdrop of The Four Graces in Oregon's Willamette Valley. The winery's four nationally distributed wines—the Willamette Valley Rosé (\$21), Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$21), Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$35), and Dundee Hills Reserve Pinot Noir (\$40)—are showing tremendous growth on the on-premise market.

"[The] Four Graces is up 28% [over the past 26 weeks], growing three times faster than the luxury table wine category, and is the second-biggest revenue-growth brand among all Oregon brands," explains Courtney Foley, second-generation winemaker at Foley Family Wines, which owns the producer. "Part of this success is due to the increasing popularity of Pinot Noir, which is growing 34% and is the number-one revenue-growth item among Oregon wines," she adds, citing an IRI study from February 2023.

Ask winemaker Tim Jones why The Four Graces is experiencing such impressive market growth, meanwhile, and he'll tell you it's simply about prime fruit sources. "We have vineyards in the Dundee Hills, Yamhill-Carlton, and Van Duzer Corridor AVAs with salmon-safe, biodynamic, and organic farming histories," explains Jones, "[and] we have decided to certify all [of them] and our winery [through] LIVE," a nonprofit organization based in the Pacific Northwest that supports environmentally and socially responsible winegrowing and winemaking. Jones adds that the LIVE program is unique because it looks at sustainability "as a holistic practice, challenging members to reduce carbon output, protect biodiversity in vineyards, conserve natural resources, and promote worker rights."

Additionally, The Four Graces is entering into long-term contracts with growers with an eye toward controlling quality at every step. The proof of their hard work is in the bottle: The wines exude characteristically Oregonian elegance, impeccable balance, purity of flavor, solid structure, and excellent length—not to mention a heaping dose of deliciousness.

The 110-acre Foley Family Estate Vineyard in the Dundee Hills AVA.





The 21-acre Weathergage Estate Vineyard in the Van Duzer Corridor AVA.

Jones works with four primary sources supplemented by a few select sites throughout the Willamette Valley. Surrounded by Douglas fir trees to the north and the town of Dundee to the south, the 110-acre Foley Family Estate Vineyard in the Dundee Hills AVA is the backdrop for The Four Graces' tasting room. This vineyard is rich in volcanic Jory soils on its upper slopes, which morph into Woodburn silt on the lowest slopes. It's typically the warmest and earliest-ripening site, delivering Pinot Noir with red fruit; earthy aromatics; light color; and elegant, refined tannins. The Pinot Blanc growing on this site tends to show notes of orchard and stone fruit balanced by bright acid and mineral character. It's the latest grape to ripen here, "which makes this vineyard the first source for our rosé of Pinot Noir and the last source for a Pinot Blanc Reserve that we make for our Wine Club," says Jones.

Just 10 miles west of the Foley Family Estate in Dundee Hills is the 90-acre Doe Ridge Estate Vineyard in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA, where The Four Graces' winemaking facility is located. Dominated by ancient marine sedimentary Willakenzie soils, "it's a slightly cooler site than our Foley Family Estate Vineyard, and it contributes dark fruits like blackberry and blue-fruit notes along with violet aromatics in our Pinot Noirs," explains Jones.



The 90-acre Doe Ridge Estate Vineyard in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA.

"Grapes from here produce a deeply colored wine with powerful tannins. The young Chardonnay vines also planted on the property are just beginning to bear fruit.

Thirty miles southwest of the Foley Family Estate Vineyard, near the town of Amity, is the 21-acre Weathergage Estate Vineyard in the Van Duzer Corridor AVA. The upper slopes of this site are composed of marine sedimentary Willakenzie-Goodin-Steiber series soils while the lower slopes contain Chehulpum and Rickreall silts. Pinot Noir grapes grown on these windy hills develop thick skins to yield "a plethora of black-cherry and tobacco aromatics along with a broad palate feel and mouth-coating tannins," notes Jones. Here, small plantings of Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Gris also tend to be thick-skinned, so "a light pressing is a must to produce elegant wine and not

extract bitterness," he adds. Fruit from a new vineyard, Black Walnut Estate 4 miles

west of the Foley Family Estate in the Dundee Hills AVA, will be harvested for the first time this year.

In the light of some national publicity—it has been featured on NBC's *Today*—The Four Graces is showing that it's got the recipe for excellent, modestly priced on-premise wines. "The Four Graces wines are ideal for BTG placements as they deliver maximum quality for the price and true AVA representation," says Devon Louquet Ulrich, Foley Family Wines' vice president of national accounts on-premise. "The national average BTG price on the Willamette Valley Pinot Noir is \$17 per glass, around \$23 per glass for the Dundee Hills Reserve Pinot Noir, and just \$12 per glass for the Pinot Gris." Simply put, for restaurant buyers, the Four Graces portfolio offers off-the-beaten-path value in the luxury table wine category. Snap these wines up. **SJ**

Savoring SEDONA

THE ARIZONA TOWN IS CARVING OUT ITS
SPOT AS A CULINARY DESTINATION

story and photos by Christina Barrueta

Each year, more than 3 million people travel to Sedona, Arizona, a city with a population of approximately 10,000. While they've long been beguiled by its breathtaking red-rock panoramas and the hiking trails of the Coconino National Forest, Sedona has also earned its place as a foodie destination in recent years, bolstered by talented chefs who are sparking the culinary conversation (not to mention by its proximity to the Verde Valley AVA). From an intimate creekside hideaway to a luxurious retreat immersed in nature, here are four resorts where you can find some of Sedona's finest food and beverage programs.



Creekside Inn

"In high school, I would ditch school to work at this little pizza spot in my hometown of El Segundo," admits Creekside Inn executive chef Daren Dawn. "That's where my love for the kitchen really started." He later worked in wine and cheese shops and as a butcher before attending culinary school. Upon graduation, he went to work for Wolfgang Puck Catering, which proved serendipitous, as it was there that he met his wife, Brittani Smith, a fellow chef and the Inn's general manager. Eventually, "tired of the hustle and bustle," the couple found their way to Northern Arizona—although acclimating to its slower pace was an adjustment. "Coming from Hollywood, where we were cooking for celebrities and movie producers, was definitely a culture shock, but it was good to shed that feeling of overinflated ego and being defined by your job," notes Smith.

Tucked along the banks of Oak Creek, the Creekside Inn is an idyllic bed-and-breakfast situated on 2.5 secluded acres. Guests who reserve any of its six suites are spoiled with daily tea and coffee service; afternoon treats that range from sweet (caramel-apple bars) to savory (veggie sushi); and, of course, breakfast. Have the latter delivered to your private deck and you'll be treated to house specialties such as creamy lemon-and-blueberry posset, breakfast tacos with organic eggs and house salsas, and eggs Benedict on homemade sourdough English muffins.

Those in the know arrange ahead for private farm-to-table dinners. While the Inn is working on obtaining a liquor license, guests are welcome to BYOB, and Dawn is happy to help with pairings. "We have friends who run wine tours like Sip Sedona, so we'll suggest a day at the wineries; we can recommend some wines, or they can pick out their own," he explains. Making an appearance at these multicourse repasts are local purveyors such as Da' Nede' Farms, My Girlfriend's Gardens, and Tres Hermanas Ranch; the results include microgreens with grilled nectarines in lemon vinaigrette; corn bisque with pancetta and lemon crema; and melt-in-your-mouth, pasture-raised and braised short rib with pommes puree and sarsaparilla-infused Bordelaise sauce.

"Since the farm dinners are designed for only two to 12 people, we're able to create a private experience that you can't get at a regular restaurant," notes Dawn, "and we love when guests tell us they feel like they're dining at our home." It's a sentiment shared by Smith: "That's the environment we try to create—a home away from home."





Creekside Inn executive chef Daren Dawn and general manager Brittani Smith.



Creekside Inn's breakfast tacos.



The Wilde Resort & Spa

In 2021, Sedona Rouge was rebranded as The Wilde, a 105-room boutique hotel and spa in West Sedona. Meandering paths, gardens, and a rooftop deck all take full advantage of the striking views, while the hotel's signature restaurant, Rascal Modern Diner, is a hit with locals and tourists alike.

Mention Mercer Mohr in this region, and his name will be widely recognized, as will his role in shaping Sedona's culinary scene. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and the recipient of a James Beard Foundation certificate for Outstanding Contribution to the Foundation, the executive chef built his reputation at what is now Creekside American Bistro when he arrived in Sedona in 2008; as the founders of the Mercer's Kitchen restaurant group, he and business partner Mithat Evirgen today own four of Sedona's most popular hot spots—Mesa Grill Sedona and René Restaurant as well as Creekside Bistro and Rascal.



◀ **Executive chef Mercer Mohr with Rascal Modern Diner's chicken piccata.**



The Wilde in West Sedona is home to Rascal Modern Diner. ▶

In developing a career that spans more than four decades, Mohr honed his skills in the hotel industry, working at Hyatt Hotels and Four Seasons; he also spent five years at Tsar Nicoulai Caviar. "I'd be up to the top of my boots in fish poop one day and at the Waldorf Astoria the next," he recalls. "It was great."

As for Rascal, it comes by its popularity honestly, thanks to a menu of casual yet sophisticated fare in a bright and colorful space. Open for brunch, lunch, and dinner, it offers fresh takes on classics ranging from creamy shrimp and grits studded with pork belly to meatloaf in mushroom gravy to chicken piccata served over Greek lemon pasta. There's also a vegan bento box brimming with farm-fresh vegetables, dirty rice and borracho beans, fruit- and nut-accented arugula salad, tomato soup, and hummus with black-pepper papadums.

Rascal's beverage program, meanwhile, features one of the most extensive whiskey collections in Sedona, which includes Mercer's Barrel-Aged Whiskey. "I have never-ending hobbies," Mohr says with a laugh. "I'm doing all kinds of blends in 5-gallon kegs in my garage." The restaurant also sells his line of condiments, among them prickly pear ketchup, mezcal mustard, and Mohr's famous hot sauce. "This morning three different people came up to me to tell me [the latter] was the best stuff ever and they were buying more as gifts. I was like, 'What's going on here? Is somebody paying these people?'" he jokes, adding, "[Mercer's Kitchen] used to have a tagline that said, 'The Fun Foodies of Sedona.' It's all about the full experience. We just want people to have a good time."

Ambiente

Sedona was abuzz when Ambiente opened in February. Announced as North America's first "landscape hotel," the luxurious boutique property, set on 3 acres, combines five-star amenities with low-impact architecture nestled into the surrounding topography. Its 40 glass-walled guest accommodations with private rooftop decks capture dramatic views of red-rock vistas and the Coconino National Forest.

Ambiente centers around signature restaurant Forty1, which is led by executive chef and director of beverage Lindsey Dale. "It's named Forty1 because it was the 41st building built on the property," explains Dale, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in New York who most recently hung her toque at acclaimed Sedona resorts Enchantment and Amara. Exclusive to hotel guests, Forty1 sits adjacent to the pool and offers breakfast and dinner daily. Surrounding the dining room and bar is an elevated deck with fire pits and lounge seating; an al fresco chef's table; and The Drifter, a custom Airstream trailer serving lunch. "We're focused on creating memories for our guests. The landscape and the rooms are so beautiful, and the food needs to match that atmosphere," says Dale, whose hallmark is elegant, locally sourced seasonal fare. "Aside from the experience here at Ambiente as a whole, we want to be known as a food destination."

As director of beverage, Dale collaborated with lead bartender Breann Anzar on the craft cocktail program in addition to curating the noteworthy wine list. "Who better to pair the wine with the food than the person who's creating the food? Everything here sparked something in me, made sense flavor profile-wise, or had a great story," she says as she ticks off selections from Portugal, Greece, India, and Switzerland as examples. "I especially love the grower Champagnes like Francis Orban, [which is] perfect with the pear and radish carpaccio, and the Interesting Whites section with wines like a Johanneshof Reinisch Rotgipfler, which I would pair with my green curry prawns."

Sourcing from farms such as Blue Bird in nearby Rimrock, she manifests her culinary philosophy through dishes like salmon with charred cranberry-and-ginger puree and a melange of spaghetti squash, snow peas, red-onion petals, and blood-orange supremes or juicy venison rack with nutty red lentils, turnip puree, and red-currant gastrique plus a garnish of lemon-scented asparagus ribbons and dried maitake mushrooms. Dale also delights guests with such indulgent desserts as a trio of pomegranate-and pink peppercorn-poached pears; Greek yogurt; and cardamom panna cotta accented with blood orange, basil, and sesame-cashew crumble.

"We want people to look forward to the dining as much as the environment and setting," Dale reiterates. "We don't want to be just an amenity—we want to be a showstopper."



Ambiente executive chef and director of beverage Lindsey Dale.



Ambiente's rack of venison with red-currant gastrique, salmon with charred cranberry-and-ginger puree, and poached pear with pomegranate and pink peppercorns.

Junipine Resort



Junipine's foie gras- and caviar-topped bone marrow.



Junipine chefs Brett Vibber and Jaren Bates.

"I think it's more fascinating to create a picture with paints you have crafted yourself," says beverage manager Justin Gorecki of The Table at Junipine as he gestures at Mason jars filled with red-corn tincture and blueberry-cactus fruit shrub, the latter of which he combines with mesquite-smoked whisky, wild-flower syrup, hibiscus bitters, and egg white to yield his Flagstaff Sour. It's an imaginative ethos shared by co-chefs Brett Vibber and Jaren Bates, whose singular expression of Arizona cuisine through wild and indigenous food earned them a 2023 James Beard Award nomination for Best Chef: Southwest.

Bates grew up on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico, while Vibber's childhood was spent camping and foraging with his family in Arizona. Years later, their respective culinary careers would bring them together at Vibber's now-closed restaurant Cartwright's, the recipient of a 2018 Uniquely Arizona Foodist Award. At The Table at Junipine, the duo incorporates indigenous foods like tepary beans and pinole, foraged ingredients including spruce and wild sumac, and hyperlocal bounty such as crab apples and watercress plucked from the resort property.

"The 40 pounds of barrel-cactus fruit that we just harvested have been turned into nine different things," says Vibber as he offers a delicious example: In addition to its foie gras and caviar garnish, fire-roasted bone marrow is accompanied by a cactus-fruit compote as well as chiltepin pepper-infused honey and desert-seed tahini, "which we make with the wild seeds we find," explains Vibber. "We also blend them with dried chiles from Rhiba Farms to make our own togarashi."

At The Table, oysters are adorned with preserved crab apples and ponzu vinegar accented with locally grown yuzu, while ravioli is made with Sonoran white wheat and toasted pinole, stuffed with smoked trout, and garnished with leek-cactus fruit chutney and creekside watercress. "The creek is just 200 yards away, and the Sedona trout farm is five minutes down the road," notes Vibber.

Then there are Bates' phenomenal desserts. Take, for example, what he calls his "non-chocolate chocolate," made by simmering Ramona Farms tepary beans in a butternut-squash broth until they're creamy, then sweetening them with agave and maple syrup. Using the mixture to make s'mores, he tops the beans with torched juniper, porcini marshmallow (an ingredient that "took two months to perfect"), and mesquite-flour graham crackers. "It comes to you still smoking," says Bates. "I want you to feel like you're at a campfire with the smell of the trees and the mushrooms and forest floor around you."

"Our food tells a story," says Vibber. "Sure, we can make a steak and sides, but I want people to say, 'I've never had anything like that before.' And then I'm happy." ❧

The Evolution of Expression

A LOS ANGELES DINNER SHOWCASED THE AGEWORTHY WINES OF
DOMAINE ANDRÉ BRUNEL

by Allison Levine

PHOTO COURTESY OF DOMAINE ANDRÉ BRUNEL



Son-and-father winemakers Fabrice and André Brunel.

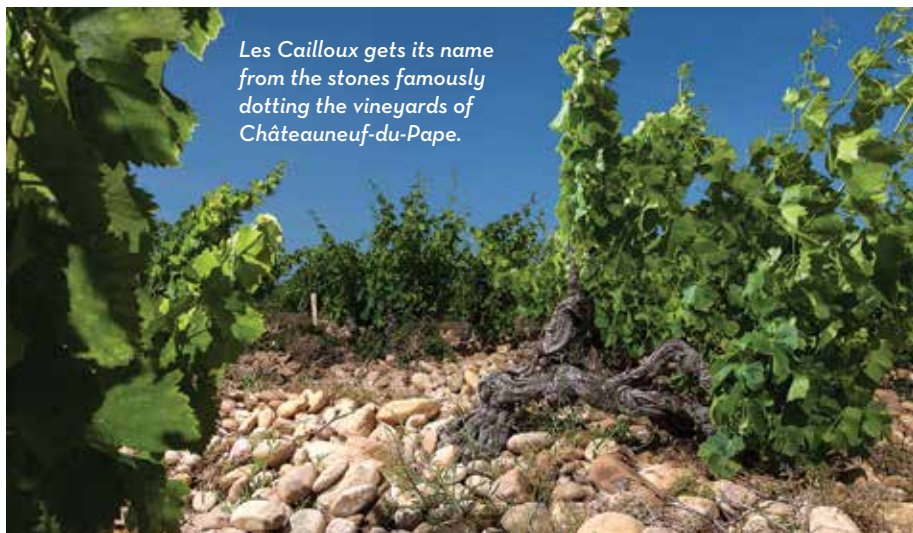
REPRESENTING THE EIGHTH generation of Domaine André Brunel—one of the oldest family-owned wineries in Châteauneuf-du-Pape—winemaker Fabrice Brunel traveled to Los Angeles in late February to showcase three vintages of André Brunel Les Cailloux at a dinner hosted by Gwen Butcher Shop & Restaurant. The vertical tasting provided an opportunity to see how the wine evolves over time as well as to compare the vintages, while the food pairings were designed to showcase them in their best light. “As it is already an absolute pleasure to taste a vertical of a beautifully balanced wine like André Brunel’s Les Cailloux,” explained Louise Jordan, DipWSET and director of communications for Quintessential, the importer of Domaine André Brunel, “I was inspired to [ask the chef to] take the tasting one step further by highlighting the ‘evolution of age’ in the food paired with the wines,” namely three differently aged beef cuts.

While the Brunel family has been making wine since the 18th century, it was not until 1954 that they began bottling it. Les Cailloux was the first label created by the estate; French for “the pebbles,” the name is an allusion to the large oval stones found in the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

Domaine André Brunel has 51 acres of vineyard land in Châteauneuf-du-Pape as well as an additional 170 acres under vine in Côtes du Rhône and Vaucluse. Its red-grape plantings in Châteauneuf-du-Pape include Grenache (70%), Mourvèdre (17%), Syrah (10%), and Cinsault (3%). The fruit for Les Cailloux comes from 75- to 125-year-old vines; the blend is typically two-thirds Grenache from rocky soils and one-third Mourvèdre and Syrah from sandy and shale soils. The Mourvèdre, Syrah, and 70% of the Grenache are

destemmed, and all the grapes are fermented in concrete vats. The Syrah is aged for one to two years in barrel, while the other grapes are aged for 18 months in concrete. The wine is then blended and aged for another six months before bottling. The overall result has great complexity, length, and structure yet freshness and drinkability. The Grenache gives Les Cailloux its aromas of crushed red fruits; Mourvèdre lends the wine its structure; and the Syrah provides deeper color and aromas of fresh black fruits.

Production of the **2015 Les Cailloux** was small, reflecting a vintage marked by spikes of heat followed by rain in September. The wine is fresh, elegant, and well



Les Cailloux gets its name from the stones famously dotting the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DOMAINE ANDRÉ BRUNEL



At Gwen Butcher Shop & Restaurant in Los Angeles, CA, three different vintages of Les Cailloux were served with three different cuts of beef.

PHOTO: ALISSON LEVINE

structured, with good but not overpowering concentration; showing lively fruit notes, it finishes with silky tannins and finesse. At only seven years old, it has another ten years to go. The **2010 Les Cailloux** hails from a vintage characterized by a rainy spring and dry summer, which yielded concentrated grapes. Fruit-driven with mineral notes, it has both structure and freshness and could be aged another 15–20 years. Finally, the **2005 Les Cailloux** came from a good harvest with low yields. Well balanced and structured, it shows maturity in its expressive aromas of leather and dried fruit but is still alive with acidity.

The 2015 vintage was paired with

New York strip and roasted seasonal vegetables, while the 2010 was accompanied by smoked brisket with smoked-potato espuma and the 2005 was served with 30-day dry-aged rib-eye with truffle butter. The attendees at the dinner were in unanimous agreement with the assessment of Fabrice Brunel as to the pairings' success: "I really enjoyed having the wines and dishes served together [simultaneously]. It allowed us to taste and try as we liked, but ultimately, I preferred the original pairings the most," he shared. "The Les Cailloux 2015 with the New York strip was a fresh and bright pairing. The Les Cailloux 2010 with the

smoked brisket was unique, the sweetness of the meat matching the viscosity and richer notes of the wine. And finally, the Les Cailloux 2005 with the 30-day dry-aged rib-eye was a perfect match—both showing signs of aged character but still retaining complementary fruity and juicy notes."

"As the wine aged, so too did its complementary dish," Jordan concluded. "It was a fun and playful way to showcase these elegant, complex, and ageworthy wines." SJ

The wines of Domaine André Brunel are available through Quintessential.



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Clarity of Style

A REVIEW OF THE **APPELLATION MARLBOROUGH WINE'S ANNUAL COLLECTION OF SAUVIGNON BLANCS**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF APPELLATION MARLBOROUGH WINE



The Appellation Marlborough Wine (AMW) collection was selected by high-profile wine professionals. Pictured from left to right are New Zealand-based Master of Wine Emma Jenkins; Liz Wheadon, the new president of Retail New Zealand; and Cameron Douglas, New Zealand's first Master Sommelier.

"THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY for Appellation Marlborough Wine [AMW] to put the lens back onto the serious side of Sauvignon Blanc," says Master Sommelier Cameron Douglas of the wine-makers' organization's creation of an annual wine collection. The collection was selected by high-profile wine professionals chosen by AMW coordinator Amanda McRae, including Douglas. "We are delighted to welcome Emma Jenkins, New Zealand-based Master of Wine, [and] Liz Wheadon, the new president of Retail New Zealand, [as well as] Cameron Douglas, New Zealand's first Master Sommelier, as our inaugural tasting panel," notes McRae. "They are experienced judges and leaders in their sector."

The judges evaluated 60 Sauvignon Blancs individually before launching into a robust discussion on their findings; in mid-September 2022, a unanimous final selection of 12 wines was achieved.

Douglas claims that too many quality-focused Sauvignon Blanc producers—whether they're working with specific vineyards, parcels of fruit, or permaculture-managed sites—are getting lost in the noise. "This is the perfect time to showcase the best of the Sauvignon Blanc variety and 2022 vintage from a region of growing diversity and competition," he adds.

"I was very chuffed to be asked to judge the AMW Annual Collection," says Jenkins. "I have followed AMW's progress with interest since its inception, as I believe it is a very important and useful initiative for the region. To see AMW grow and gain in rigor and integrity is really pleasing, and I'm looking forward to now being a small part of this progress."

The *SOMM Journal* was asked to taste through the 12 wines that made the cut. Below are our top six choices for their aroma, clarity, texture, and elegance. *SJ*

Sauvignon Blanc grapes from Astrolabe's vineyards.



Lawson's Dry Hills 2022 Blind River Sauvignon Blanc, Awatere Valley, Marlborough, New Zealand (<\$15)

Garden herbs grace the glass joined by scents of jasmine and green tea. Wet stone is slathered with salted pear and lime chiffon, then underscored by butterscotch-dipped yellow apple. **93**

—Meridith May

Whitehaven 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20)

Grapes grown on stony soils in the Wairau and Awatere river valleys create a classic Sauvignon Blanc perfumed by sweet basil and featuring notes of ripe papaya, lemon verbena, banana, and freshly cut grass. Subtle minerality leaves a trace of salted pineapple on the delicate finish. **92**

—M.M.

E. & J. GALLO

Astrolabe 2022 Sauvignon Blanc, Awatere Valley, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$25)

Perfumed notes of pineapple and white flowers announce this Sauvignon Blanc. Following bright lemon drop on the first sip, flavors of basil and tarragon are surrounded by honeysuckle and candied ginger. The palate enters a creamy stage toward the finish, with a trace of melted orange toffee. **96** —M.M.

Blank Canvas 2022 Sauvignon Blanc, Holdaway Vineyard, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$25)

A maelstrom of aromas led by guava, apricot, and freshly sliced grapefruit surges forward before a slew of salty stones creates a path for succulent peach and honeyed white raisin. **95** —M.M.

Greywacke 2020 Wild Sauvignon, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$29)

Named for New Zealand's ubiquitous bedrock, Greywacke ferments its juice in old oak barrels using wild yeast; the fruit for this wine was sourced from sites in the Southern Valleys and central Wairau Plains. Subtle, earthy scents of clay and lemon-vanilla custard define the nose. Brisk acidity adds to delicate notes of pineapple, cookie batter, and steely minerality. The atypical varietal profile progresses toward savoriness and oak. **94** —M.M.

The Paper Nautilus 2021 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$42)

This is an electric white, aged in large-format French barrels that add unique texture to its juicy intensity. With a bouquet of jasmine and lime chiffon, it displays exceptional character on the nose and palate. The entry exhibits an inherent ripeness through layers of grapefruit, corn cereal, peach, and lemon blossom. **95** —M.M.



Around the World in A-Town

A WORD WITH **OLIVA RESTAURANT GROUP** BEVERAGE
DIRECTOR DEMARIO WALLACE by Ruth Tobias

TECHNICALLY, DEMARIO WALLACE

lives in Atlanta, Georgia. But as the beverage director of Tal Baum's Oliva Restaurant Group, he dwells all over the globe: Modern Israeli restaurant Aziza and its fast-casual sibling, Rina, also focus more broadly on the Western and Eastern Mediterranean as well as on North Africa; Bellina Alimentari is an Italian-style market, eatery, and wine bar; Atrium is a slice of what Wallace calls "tropical escapism" in Ponce City Market; and the soon-to-open Carmel will specialize in the coastal cuisine of the Americas.

"All of our restaurants are different, but [they] keep the same values: working with the community, really caring about where our ingredients come from, and trying to tell the story of a place," he explains. "I'm intimately involved in creating those stories and mentoring the bar managers and bartenders to accurately tell them and also figure out what their story is—help them learn, help them grow. That is my biggest role in the company."

To that end, "the first thing we do is we figure out what we want to talk about," says Wallace, using Aziza as an example. "This previous season, we wanted to focus on mythology—Greek gods, Phoenician gods—so the first step was learning about those gods, diving into books and reading articles and scientific digests about artifacts and getting into that place and time. Then we all come back [together]—me, the bar manager, maybe a couple of the bartenders—and we talk about what piqued our interest and we go from there." Their collaborative efforts yield cocktails like the Chloris, named for a goddess associated with flowers: "We came up with this really pretty floral Martini" featuring magnolia-infused gin, vermouth, marigold elixir, and



a garnish of "flower petals on the outside of the coupe, so [it's] as if Chloris herself touched the cocktail," he explains.

As for Aziza's Mediterranean-centric wine list, "we really want it to pair with the food—the rich hummus and labneh, the stewed meats, [and] we work with a lot of fire, [yielding] all of those charred flavors—so we try to keep it light, bright, full of acidity, and mineral-driven," says Wallace. "Even our reds tend to be full of acid, full of fruit, to pair with those rich oils and fats that are coming out of the kitchen." But there's also a personal component to the program. For instance, in addition to seeking out "small, family-run producers [and] stay[ing] as natural as possible," Wallace notes that, as a onetime protégé of New York-based chef Sue Torres as well as Baum's right-hand beverage man, "I just look up to women, [and] I



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OLIVA RESTAURANT GROUP

Aziza's Chloris cocktail.

love women producers; their wines are usually a little more elegant and have more nuances. Like Martha Stoumen in California—we will always have one of her wines on the list."

Whether it's the Polynesian and Caribbean influences that suffuse the cocktail menu at Atrium as "a nod to the people that tiki takes inspiration from" or the charming tasting notes on Bellina Alimentari's all-Italian wine list—think "lovely fizz, tart cherry, plum, dry, party wine!"—that personal touch comes as no surprise from someone who credits his grandfather, a chef, with nurturing his passion for the restaurant world while crediting the industry in turn for "making me well rounded. I get to learn history. I get to learn geography. I get to learn the science behind wine and spirits. [And] this company lets me be creative in other aspects, [from] being able to design the way the menu looks to picking the specialty glassware and even helping with the design of the restaurants. Being able to show more of my creativity through the lens of food and beverage is what really excites me." Certainly it's taking him on a journey far beyond his hometown. **SJ**



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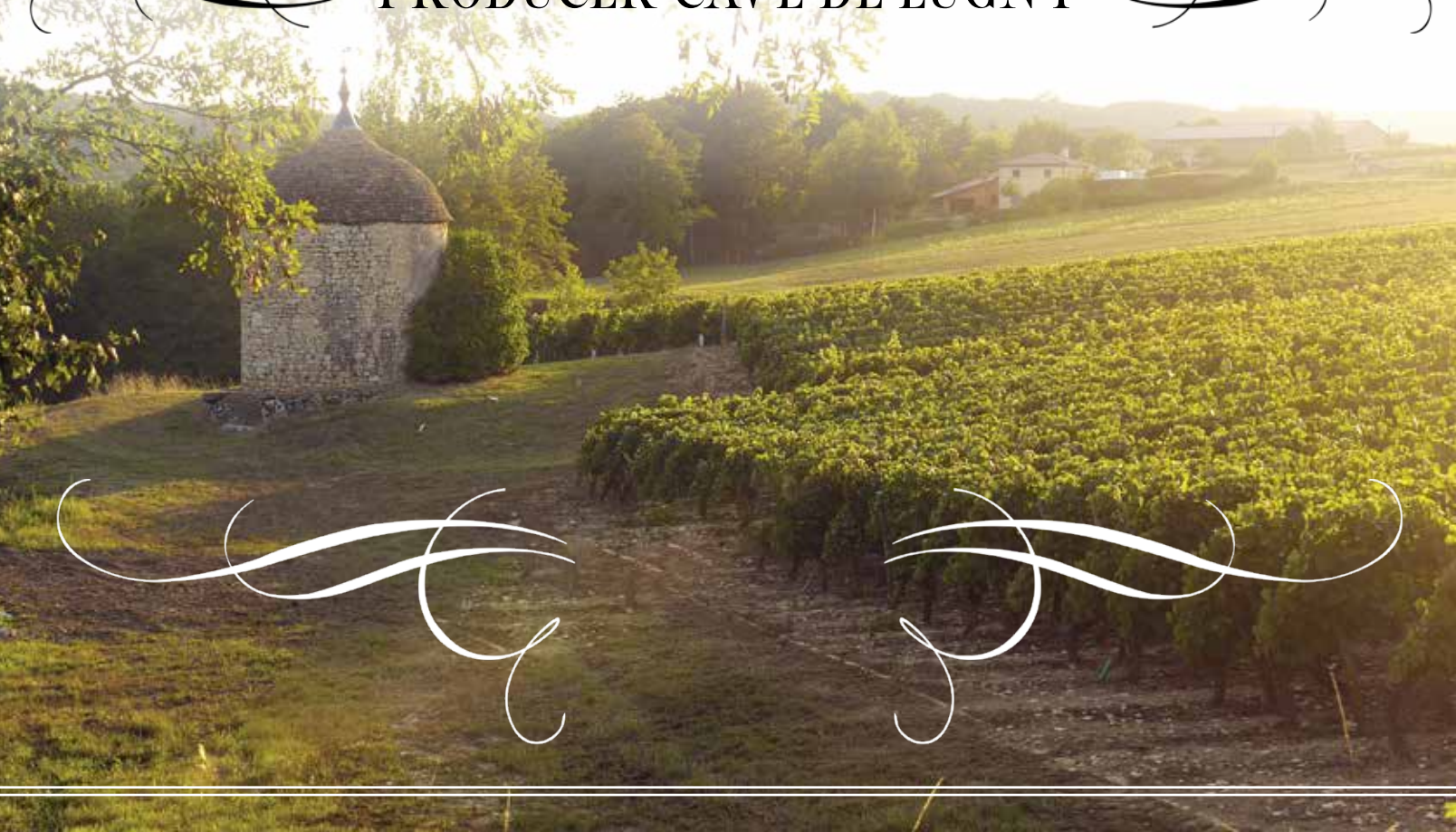
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MAKING A SPLASH
in
Southern
Bourgogne

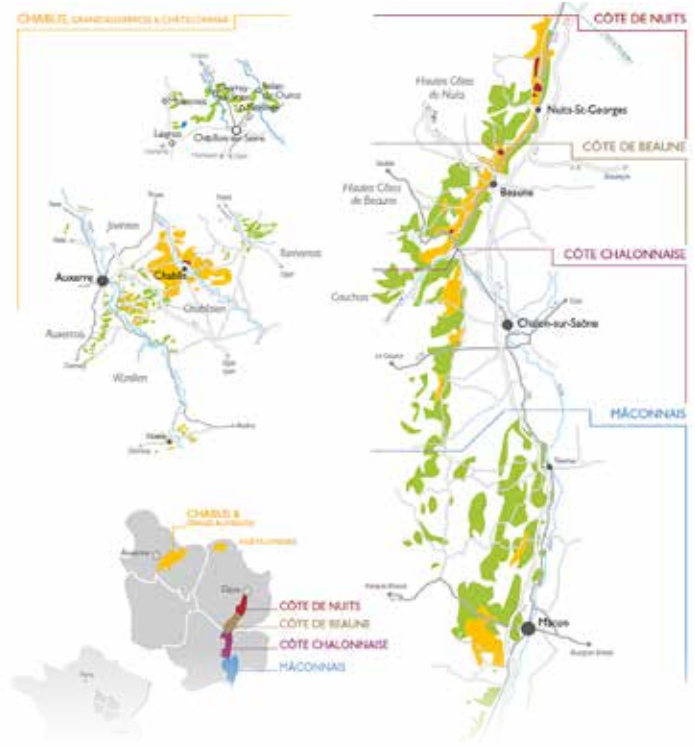
A PRIMER ON MÂCONNAIS
PRODUCER CAVE DE LUGNY



BOURGOGNE:

A Multitude of Appellations

- ✿ There are 84 appellations in Bourgogne, many of which enjoy an international reputation.
- ✿ In addition to the flagship appellations, there are many other lesser-known areas just waiting to be discovered.
- ✿ It used to be said that Bourgogne had 100 AOCs: In fact, this covered the aforementioned 84 AOCs, to which were added the geographical denominations of the Bourgogne AOC.

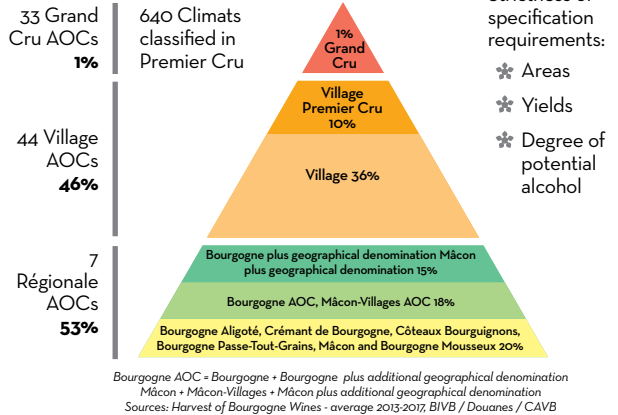


Regional Overview

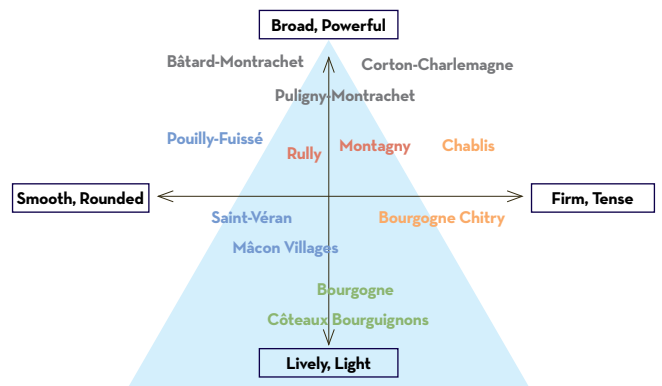
The reputation for quality of the wines of Bourgogne has as much to do with the fact that they are often produced in small quantities as it does with the region's strict classification system. Its best-known wines are made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, though Gamay, Aligote, Pinot Blanc, and Sauvignon Blanc are also grown in the region, which is divided into the Côte d'Or, Beaujolais, Chablis, the Côte Chalonnaise, and Mâcon.

These standards have also led to high demand and high prices. While wines from Northern Bourgogne, especially Côte d'Or, are reaching unprecedented price levels—some rank among the most expensive wines in the world—many somms and buyers have turned their focus to Southern Bourgogne and the wines of Mâcon.

UNDERSTANDING THE CLASSIFICATION OF BOURGOGNE APPELLATIONS



DIFFERENT STYLES OF WHITE BOURGOGNE WINES





The MÂCONNAIS Region

Surface area: 6,117 hectares (estimate)

Production: 45.6 million bottles

✿ **Village appellations, covering 2,126 hectares, including:**

Pouilly-Fuissé, Pouilly-Loché, Pouilly-Vinzelles, Saint-Véran, and Viré-Clessé

✿ **Régionale appellations, including:**

- Bourgogne
- Bourgogne Aligoté
- Côteaux Bourguignons
- Bourgogne Passe-Tout-Grains
- Crémant de Bourgogne
- Mâcon, which is divided into:

Mâcon, covering 307 hectares

Mâcon Villages, covering 2,021 hectares

27 geographical denominations, covering 1,771 hectares, including:

Mâcon-Lugny, Mâcon-Chardonnay, Mâcon-Péronne, Mâcon-La Roche Vaineuse, Mâcon-Azé, Mâcon-Igé, Mâcon-Charnay-lés-Mâcon, Mâcon-Pierreclos, Mâcon-Chaintré, Mâcon-Verzé, Mâcon-Mully-Lamartine, Mâcon-Fuissé, Mâcon-Uchizy, Mâcon-Cruzille, Mâcon-Solutré-Pouilly, Mâcon-Bussièeres, Mâcon-Vinzelles, Mâcon-Prissé, Mâcon-Serrières, Mâcon-Mancey, Mâcon-Burgy, Mâcon-Saint Gengoux-le-National, and Mâcon-Montbellet



A Look at Cave de Lugny

Firmly rooted in the Mâconnais countryside, Cave de Lugny is a specialist in the wines of Southern Bourgogne. The growers' cooperative was founded in 1926 with 116 producers; today, its 400 members share a love of their vineyards and passion for preserving the environment. Overseeing more than 3,100 acres, they control a third of the production of Mâcon. This unprecedented access to quality vineyards makes Cave de Lugny a leading producer in Bourgogne and gives it the unique advantage of providing top-selection wines at outstanding value. All Cave de Lugny wines are estate-bottled, 100% Chardonnay, unoaked, and terroir-driven; since the 2019 vintage they are also vegan.

Cave de Lugny was one of the first producers in Bourgogne to commit to sustainable winegrowing, including such practices as minimizing the use of pesticides and carefully managing its energy use and waste. While it's made

up of many grower families who have been members for multiple generations, their membership can be revoked if they no longer meet its standards. At the same time, Cave de Lugny regularly welcomes new growers who are eager to embrace its environmentally friendly practices. The cooperative's winemaker and cellar master, Grégoire Pissot, consults directly for many members who make their own wine. He is also on the board of Vignerons Engagés, a group of growers dedicated to environmental and social responsibility in winegrowing.

Pissot holds a degree in enology from the Université de Bourgogne and has made wine in Champagne, Savoie, the Côte de Nuits, and the Côte de Beaune, including the communes of Puligny-Montrachet, Meursault, and Chassagne-Montrachet in the latter.

As the winemaker for Cave de Lugny, Pissot oversees 1,450 hectares of vineyards, spread over 250 domaines. Along with the vineyard manager, he is



GRÉGOIRE PISSOT.

responsible for a program to improve grape quality that started in 2005. In addition to making various improvements in the vineyards and the cellar, he led the identification of key single vineyards within Cave de Lugny's holdings, which have added prestige and value to its offerings. His goal is to firmly establish the cooperative as the standard bearer for unoaked and pure Chardonnay from Bourgogne.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAVE DE LUGNY

FOUR WINES TO KNOW



Cave de Lugny La Côte Blanche is a classic entry-level Mâcon-Villages wine—clean, crisp, and fresh.

Varietal composition: 100% Chardonnay

Terroir: Sourced from Cave de Lugny's vineyards in Mâcon-Villages, an appellation encompassing specific villages making higher-quality wine in the region of Mâcon; the grapes grow on limestone, the ideal soil for producing Chardonnay with greater minerality.

Vine age: 30 years on average

Winemaking: 100% unoaked, 100% malolactic fermentation, aged a minimum of six months on lees

Tasting notes: The nose is bright, fresh, delicate, and balanced, with citrus, peach, apricot, honey, and white flowers. The palate is medium-bodied, with citrus and stone fruit balanced by bright acids and minerality. Pair with ceviche.



Cave de Lugny Les Charmes, Maçon-Lugny is the cooperative's flagship single-vineyard wine, sourced from older vines for a fresh, fruit-forward Mâconnais expression.

Varietal composition: 100% Chardonnay

Terroir: Sourced from a 220-acre vineyard in the village of Lugny called Les Charmes. The vines grow on chalk and limestone on south- and southeast-facing slopes that provide optimal sunshine, yielding more mature grapes.

Vine age: 50 years on average, with some vines as old as 92

Winemaking: 100% unoaked, 100% malolactic fermentation, aged a minimum of 12 months on lees

Tasting notes: Fresh and fruity nose with notes of flowers, nuts, honey, acacia, and citrus. Round, medium-bodied palate with delicate fruit flavors and a slightly spicy finish. Pair with butter-poached crab.



Cave de Lugny La Carte, Mâcon-Lugny is made exclusively from the La Carte vineyard, known for yielding more concentrated, intense flavors.

Varietal composition: 100% Chardonnay

Terroir: La Carte encompasses 7.7 acres on a steep slope known for its plated, limestone-rich soil.

Vine age: 50 years on average, with some vines as old as 71

Winemaking: 100% unoaked, 100% malolactic fermentation, aged a minimum of 18 months on lees and an additional six months in bottle

Tasting notes: The nose offers citrus, tropical fruits, and honey. The palate is medium-bodied with pronounced flavors of vibrant minerality, expressive fruits, and a touch of almond. Pair with poached fish with mushrooms.



Cave de Lugny Coeur de Charmes, Maçon-Lugny is a limited-production wine sourced exclusively from a 5-acre plateau at the heart of Les Charmes that's the oldest part of the vineyard.

Varietal composition: 100% Chardonnay

Terroir: Distinct Kimmeridgian limestone soil unique to this part of the vineyard creates a special complexity and finesse.

Vine age: 50 years on average, with many vines as old as 92

Winemaking: 100% unoaked, 100% malolactic fermentation, aged 18 months on lees and an additional 18 months in bottle

Tasting notes: Intense nose of exotic fruits—mango, papaya, pineapple—as well as grapefruit and flint. Medium-bodied and elegant on the palate, with a rich roundness, concentrated fruits, and a mineral finish. Pair with ingredients like mushrooms and cauliflower.