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Published six times per year
ISSN 1944-074X USPS 024881

The *SOMM Journal* is published bimonthly for \$52 per year by The *SOMM Journal*, The *Sommelier Journal*, 17412 Ventura Blvd., Suite 363, Encino, CA 91316. Periodicals postage at Van Nuys, CA, and additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE:

\$52 one year; \$100 two years
Single copy: \$10
For all subscriptions, email:
subscriptions@sommjournal.com

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to:
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Pinot Noir on the vine in the Russian River Valley.

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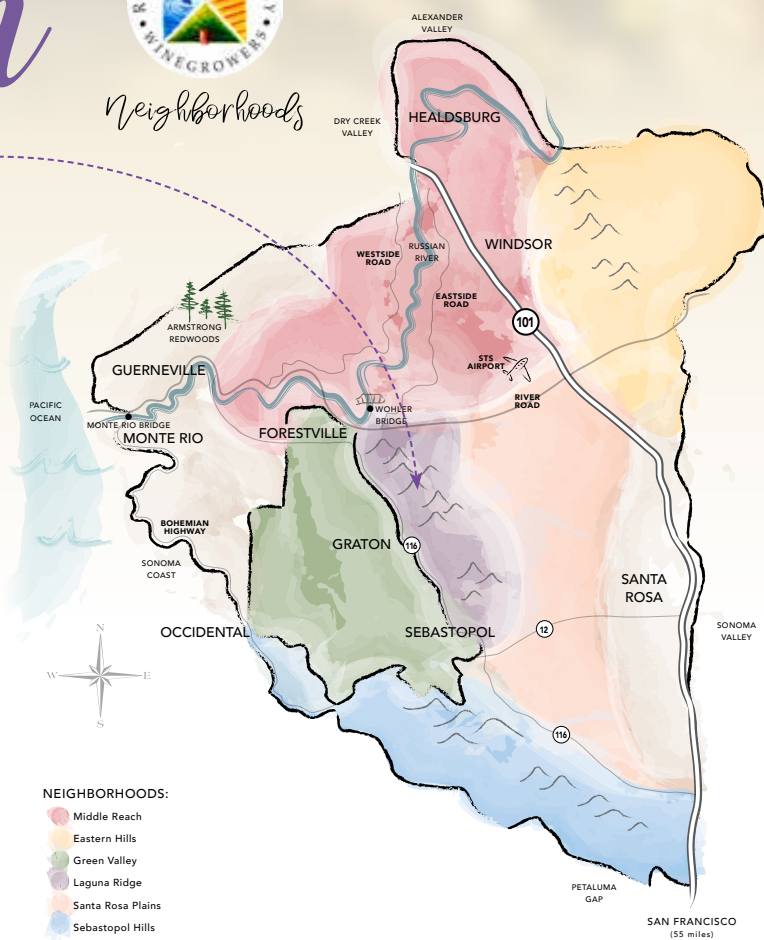
THE LAGUNA RIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD LIES AT THE HEART OF THE RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY by Deborah Parker Wong

THIS EDITION OF OUR SERIES on the neighborhoods of the Russian River Valley (RRV) focuses on the smallest of the six, Laguna Ridge. Lying at the geographic heart of the region, this well-defined and expressive terroir is located between the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetland complex of the Santa Rosa Plains to the east and Highway 116 on the border of Green Valley to the west; it's bordered to the north and south by River Road and Highway 12, respectively.

The landscape marks a clear transition from the plains as it unfolds in a series of gently rolling hills that reach 400 feet in altitude. The eastern and western exposures of the hills benefit from a marked downslope of air that flows out toward the east and west. Elevation is key here, as it helps drive the wide-ranging diurnal shift that can swing by as much as 40 degrees during the growing season and results in warmer winters than Sebastopol Hills experiences to the south. Spring temperatures are also higher, which means that Laguna Ridge tends to experience earlier budbreak, while summer temperatures are cooler than they are in neighboring Santa Rosa Plains and Middle Reach to the north.



Neighborhoods





Sonoma-Cutrer's Vine Hill Vineyard in the Laguna Ridge neighborhood.

Despite the presence of the outer Northern Coast Ranges that define the Sonoma coastline to the west, a marked coastal influence is felt here. During the mornings, the hills are shrouded in fog, a curious ribbon of which clings to the ridge line until it's burned off by the afternoon sun.

The soils that comprise these hills originate from the parent materials of the Wilson Grove Formation and the underlying, deeply eroded Franciscan Complex: The Gold Ridge–Sebastopol series is a deep sandy loam soil from weathered sandstone, while Altamont is reddish soil weathered from fine-grained sandstone and shale. Octagon soils that contain layers of clay can be found on the hilltops.

It's common to find layers of volcanic ash and pumice interspersed with these sandstone-based soils. They were deposited when volcanic vents spewed ash over the seabed at a time when the ridge from which the neighborhood takes its name, running from Forestville to Sebastopol (and further south to Cotati), was a shallow ocean floor. All of these soils, in combination with highly adapted clones, are credited with contributing to the tannin structure that has earned Laguna Ridge Pinot Noir its reputation for longevity. Described as having bright yet deep red fruit;


lively acidity; earthy spice; and fine, resolved tannins, it exhibits the lush mouthfeel that is characteristically associated with the RRV. "Laguna Ridge Pinots are rounder and fuller in the midpalate," says Rod Berglund. "They're markedly different from the 'laser-beam' character of Green Valley."

Pioneering winemaker Joseph Swan was the first to grow Pinot Noir in the neighborhood, specifically in the Trenton Estate Vineyard, located in the northeast corner. The site was originally home to cherry and apple orchards, followed by Zinfandel and Colombard vines; it was replanted by Swan to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in 1969 and replanted again to Dijon and Swan clones in 1996.

The Nurmi Vineyard at Ancient Oak Cellars sits at the northern end of the neighborhood, and it too was once an apple orchard. Winemaker Greg La Follette says that the patience required to establish a more robust microbiome by addressing deficiencies in the alluvial soils of this low-yielding site—which is planted to Pinot Noir on the east and south slopes and Chardonnay on the north slopes—has been rewarded.

Winemaker Adrian Jewell Manspeaker sources the fruit for his Jewell 2019 Martini Clone Old Girls Pinot Noir from the Starscape Vineyard. Located on

Laguna Ridge's border with Middle Reach, the site is home to some of the oldest Pinot Noir vines in all of Sonoma County; planted in 1971, they yield just 1 ton of fruit per acre.

Lying just east of Forestville, Vine Hill Vineyard spans 400 acres that reach 400 feet in altitude. It belongs to Sonoma-Cutrer, which was founded in 1973 and is owned by Brown-Forman. The producer's Pinot Noir winemaker, Zidanelia Arcidiano, describes the site as "a powerful, robust terroir" that has historically been planted to Chardonnay. The Dijon clone Pinot Noir she works with was planted in 2015 and is gaining finesse with each passing vintage. 

Tasting Notes

Ancient Oak Cellars 2018 Alcman Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$58)

From the alluvial soils of a steep north-east-facing slope in Nurmi Vineyard that doesn't see much direct sun, this wine offers bright red-cherry and dusty cinnamon aromas that radiate from the glass. Flavors deepen to ripe cranberry and darker berries while silky, resolved tannins frame notes of cedar and nutmeg.

Joseph Swan 2018 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$72) Planted in 1969, the dry-farmed Trenton Estate Vineyard is home to a combination of Dijon and Swan clones grown in shallow soils across several aspects. It yields a dark-fruited, savory, umami-driven wine with cola, dried leaves, and a distinctly saline mineral finish. Intended for release in 2024.

Jewell 2019 Martini Clone Old Girls Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$75)

This single-vineyard, single-clone wine leads with intense aromas of strawberry, cherry, pomegranate, and thyme laced with hints of saffron and leather. Wild berries reappear on the spice-tinged palate, meshing with mouthwatering acidity before a finish of citrus zest.

Sonoma-Cutrer 2019 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$50) The deep soils of the sunny Vine Hill Vineyard were planted to Dijon clones in 2015. The vines are maturing, and a complex picking regimen results in waves of black cherry, cocoa nibs, and savory leather.

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PHOTO: CHRISTINA STANLEY

Chris Gaither, MS, is pictured at PRESS Restaurant in St. Helena, CA, which hosted a dinner during the 2023 Rudd Round Table.

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NAPA VALLEY
QUILT
CABERNET SAUVIGNON



by Wanda Mann

New Orleans-style barbecued prawns with Anson Mills grits at Monterey American Brasserie.



Manhattan Meets Monterey

PICKY NEW YORKERS are known for wanting it all, and since opening last fall in midtown Manhattan, the retro-chic Monterey American Brasserie has been winning them over by giving it to them: inspired food, elegant drinks, and a glamorous setting. Accommodating upward of 200 guests, the lofty two-story space filled with plush coastal-blue banquettes is the place to see and be seen.

Monterey is the newest addition to the Chef Driven Group's Manhattan restaurant portfolio, which includes Nice Matin, Dagon, and Isabelle's Osteria. Sommelier Aviram Turgeman, the group's beverage director, is no novice to creating a compelling wine program, as he oversees Nice Matin's selection of 2,500-plus bottles. When it comes to Monterey's list, he explains, "As always, we believe in vintage depth and accessibility. We curated a list that has a strong core of the Old World, mirrored by California." Of course, it was also designed with executive chef/partner James Tracey's menu in mind. Tracey describes Monterey's contemporary American cuisine as "a mélange of flavors and dishes. New York City is exactly that—a mixture of flavors and cultures that you see and experience every day."

Turgeman's by-the-glass list includes "multiple selections to pair with the raw bar [such as] Domaine de la Pépière Muscadet, Columna Albariño, and Rombauer Chardonnay; some selections for the pasta section [like] Volpaia Chianti Classico; and several for the meat section, [including] Whitehall Lane Cabernet and Val di Suga Brunello," in his words. The



Aviram Turgeman is beverage director at Chef Driven Group.

bottle selection, meanwhile, has "a bit of everything, from different single vineyards of the elite of Sancerre for the wine savvy to verticals and large formats of California's best that appeal to our local bankers and tourists. We also have a respectable list of sweet wines to have with or as dessert, including a 1969 Mas Amiel Maury that we pour out of a demijohn."

Turgeman and Tracey both have their favorite pairings. Tracey recommends the 2021 Alea Viva Aleatico Rosso from Sicilian winemaker Andrea Occhipinti alongside his New Orleans-style barbecued prawns with Anson Mills grits: "This is one of my favorites because it's so full of

flavor," he says. "It also reminds me of all the great food in New Orleans." Turgeman, for his part, opts for prime rib with Château Noailac 2015 Médoc. "The wine is a classic expression of a mature Bordeaux with its earthy and sauvage notes, [plus] a tannic structure that is perfect with the texture of the meat . . . served rare to medium-rare with sauce Bordelaise, which is made with red wine, bone marrow, shallots, and butter," he says. "Sauce Bordelaise plus Bordeaux equals deliciousness."

For beverage directors seeking advice on perfecting their wine program, Turgeman has an answer:

"I always go out of my way to source mature vintages for immediate pleasure, whether it be from auctions, private cellars, or librar[ies]," he notes. "One of the advantages I have overseeing a large group is being able to secure inventory and pricing for wines I feature throughout the whole group. And the most important thing: Listen to your guests' requests and feedback!"

Visit montereybrasserie.com for more information. 

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



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tastingpanel

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From the birthplace of Malbec in Cahors, France, to the site of the earliest evidence of winemaking in Vayots Dzor, Armenia and the steep slate slopes of Galicia, Spain, Paul Hobbs has sought out distinctive terroirs from historic winegrowing regions to craft award-winning wines from indigenous varieties.

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SCOTCH & OYSTERS: A Delectable Maritime Union

IF YOU'RE A SCOTCH lover worth your salt, you already know that the vast ocean leaves its mark on the flavors of this esteemed spirit. It's responsible for the sea breezes, infamous peat bogs, and other elements that come together to give Scotch its unique richness and character: It's as if the spirit were a liquid gift from the deep sea.

Oysters, too, encapsulate the very essence of the ocean's flavors. These marvelous creatures, with their filtering prowess, allow us to taste the bounty of the sea, reflecting what it tastes like at a particular time and place. That's why oysters from the East and West coasts have different flavor profiles. Smoother-shelled East Coast oysters tend to have a savory quality, while their West Coast counterparts, which boast rougher exteriors and deeper cups, exhibit a mineral-rich character and may sport hints of sweetness.

Recently, my establishment, Garden Bar PHX in Phoenix, Arizona, hosted a Scotch and oyster tasting, bringing together these two oceanic delights for a memorable culinary experience.

The event featured an impressive selection of Scotch from Diageo's portfolio, with a focus on Talisker Storm. Chula Seafood, a locally renowned seafood purveyor, curated the perfect oyster pairings. Attendees were welcomed with such refreshing cocktails as Frozen Penicillins and Honey-cut Highballs, each showcasing the smoky allure of Talisker Storm. These libations set the stage for an educational session led by John Henderson, master educator at the Diageo Hospitality Partnership, who expertly guided guests through the terroir and characteristics of Talisker.

The journey commenced with a dram of Talisker Storm, paving the way for indulgence in a variety of oysters on the half shell: Duxbury oysters from Massachusetts instantly transported taste buds

to the shores of the Atlantic with their buttery and briny character: Hoshi oysters from Washington State boasted subtle vegetal notes influenced by the algal waters of the Puget Sound. And plump Mission oysters from the Baja California Peninsula delivered a briny savor with a delightful touch of sweetness.

As the tasting unfolded, participants were encouraged to explore the effects of pairing different Scotches with the bivalves. Talisker 10, Talisker 18, Talisker Distiller's Edition, Lagavulin 8, Lagavulin 16, and Oban Little Bay each offered distinct flavors ranging from intense smokiness to delicate floral tones.

While every combination was a delight, the standout was undoubtedly that of



PHOTOS: KIM HAASARUD

Grilled Mission oysters.

grilled Mission oysters with Talisker Storm: The smoky and savory flavors of the grilled oysters perfectly complemented the honeyed, peppery notes of the Scotch, creating an explosion of richness that lingered on the palate. It was a combination that left everyone in awe.

The event proved that the best way to truly understand the flavors of the sea is to experience them together. Scotch and oysters are a match made in oceanic heaven: Whether you're a seasoned connoisseur or a curious explorer, pairing them is an adventure you won't want to miss. **\$**



A Scotch-based punch welcomed attendees to Garden Bar PHX's recent Scotch and oyster tasting.

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Gavi's Got a New Groove

THE QUEEN OF PIEDMONT IS GROWING FOR THE BETTER

MENTION PIEDMONT TO wine lovers, and the conversation inevitably turns to the big reds: Barbaresco, Barbera, and, of course, Barolo—affectionately called the “Wine of Kings and King of Wines” due to its noble association with Italy’s past royalty. But Piedmont has a queen too: Gavi, the charming white wine from the opposite side of the region.

When I was an import-wine sales rep and then a brand manager back in the late 1980s, Gavi was overwhelmingly the white wine of choice in most of the big U.S. cities, especially New York and Los Angeles. Not only Italian restaurants but also French, American, Asian, and all sorts of other eateries poured it mainly because of its flexibility—it’s simply refreshing by the glass and goes with a wide range of dishes. When I transitioned to a position in international sales, Gavi followed me around the world: In Japan, for example, it was appreciated for its uncanny ability to pair with traditional menus that alternated between delicate and strong flavors rather than building steadily from the one to the other in a way more typical of Western menus. And in the hot, humid climate of the Caribbean, it was a welcome refresher even with richer dishes.

But wine markets can be as fickle as the fashion world; styles change, and Gavi somehow slipped under the radar in the U.S., eclipsed by a progression of darlings that included Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay. Somebody here is drinking it, though: About 85% of Gavi produced is exported, and among the more than 100 countries where it is sold, the U.S. remains a key market, even as the U.K. and Northern Europe embrace it. Now that we are living in a golden age for wine lovers—never has such a wide range of interesting wines been readily available to consumers at reasonable

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CONSORZIO TUTELA DEL GAVI



The vineyards of Gavi.

to the consumer,” he says, “but above all it should represent a standard of excellence.”

Here’s another key reason to give Gavi another look: Over the years, it has been growing in depth and breadth. The number of producers has burgeoned as small growers have started making their own labels rather than supplying their fruit to larger producers and cooperatives. That means that both the distinct terroirs of specific sites within the Gavi denomination and stylistic differences have come to the forefront, with captivating results.

Davide Ferrarese is a chronicler of those

prices—it’s time for Gavi to reclaim a leading place at the American table.

Maurizio Montobbio, president of the Consorzio Tutela del Gavi, which represents all producers in the denomination, is leading the charge for Gavi’s rediscovery via what he calls “a new pact with the consumer,” supported by environmental sustainability initiatives across the production area. The consortium actively encourages its members to use more natural treatments in the vineyards and trains producers on such practices as promoting biodiversity. In the winery, they encourage the use of native yeasts to make more natural wines that reflect the zone’s terroir. As a grower himself, Montobbio knows the importance of starting with good fruit. “Gavi can be many things

variations as well as a mapmaker for her majesty Queen Gavi. As a consulting agronomist in the region for the past 30 years, he has made it his life’s work to know how Cortese—the sole grape variety used in Gavi DOCG—behaves in its corner of the world. Southeastern Piedmont encompasses an open valley that brings breezes up from the Ligurian coastline to this mountainous, landlocked region. Unlike the cooler Langhe zone, where Barolo and Barbaresco vineyards back up against snow-covered Alps—the literal “foot of the mountain” from which Piedmont derives its name—the hills of Gavi are sunbaked in the summer. And while in other parts of Piedmont the best sites are dedicated to Nebbiolo, in Gavi the choice plots are planted to Cortese,

which thrives in its rocky clay soils. Gavi's production zone, Ferrarese tells me, is roughly divided by soil into two parts that give different results: The red soils to the north of the denomination are made up of iron from decomposed granite mixed with clay and ancient alluvial deposits, while to the south, white clayey marls of marine origin yield numerous fossils.

The climate also divides the north of the denomination from the south, according to Ferrarese. The northern reaches of the Gavi growing area, cultivated on alluvial terraces, are warmer thanks to their proximity to the Po River, which starts in the Alps in western Piedmont and winds its way across a central valley running the width of Italy to empty into the Adriatic Sea south of Venice. The southern part of Gavi is cooler, with steeper slopes as it runs up against the Piedmontese Apennines—the start of a chain that forms Italy's backbone, running down the Boot and reappearing on the island of Sicily. It's here that the aforementioned maritime influence, unique within Piedmont, is felt.

In the center of the zone sits Comune di Gavi, a small city off the right bank of the Lemme Stream. It is punctuated by a high hill that provided a key point of defense for the ancient Romans who built a settlement there—and constitutes a key vantage point for wine lovers who want to understand the surrounding vineyard sites (though on the day I visited it was socked in by dense fog). Here the soils alternate between marl and sandstone.

Immediately surrounding the town, steep slopes planted mostly to Cortese are challenging to cultivate, says Ferrarese. In the Middle Ages, this area belonged to the Republic of Genoa and served as a country retreat for its nobles. It was surrendered to the royal family of Piedmont at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 following

Napoleon's defeat. By European terms, that's yesterday. To the casual observer, then, it definitely feels more Ligurian than Piedmontese in terms of dialect, diet, and attitude; even its formal name, Gavi Ligure, reveals its historical association with its neighbor. While the people of northwestern Piedmont traditionally match hearty fare to bold reds, those in eastern Piedmont and Liguria are keener on whites to pair with the area's available bounty from the sea.

Like the wines from most denominations in Italy, Gavi can be made four ways: still, fizzy, fully sparkling, and reserve. Few producers give it any oak treatment. Generally the wines are pale straw with greenish reflections and a delicate bouquet that hints of fresh fruit and white flowers, joined by notes of citrus and a crisp almond finish. To those who enjoy Gavi's freshness and elegance, the concept of a riserva version might sound incongruous. But the bracing acidity endowed by the calcareous clay soils helps preserve the character of the wines, while time enhances their mineral notes and richness. When I visited the region this past winter, one producer even treated me to a vertical of Gavi; the current release, 2021, was followed by 2019, 2018, 2014, 2013, and 2010. The older vintages showed increasing complexity and struc-


ture, with minerality yielding to spice and citrus notes that developed into hints of lemon custard. The wines gained a distinct roundness with age but maintained their freshness, none showing even a glimpse of oxidation or overmaturity.

During that visit, most of the wines I tasted were from the 2021 vintage. As Ferrarese describes conditions, there was "little or no winter, [with] 50 to 70 centimeters of rainfall. A cold January with a small blanket of snow on the soil [was] followed by an early spring. Western Piedmont experienced frosts, but we did not here. It was a warm, wet summer, very hot in mid-August; then we experienced a great diurnal shift in temperatures, which seems to be a tendency here in recent years."

He says that Cortese particularly benefits from those hot days and cool nights, allowing it to maintain the malic acid that makes Gavi so refreshing. Harvest began on September 10 in the warmer areas and on September 20 in the cooler parts of the zone.

The 2022 vintage, coming on the market now, was marked by a drought, according to Ferrarese: "There was only a small rainfall on December 8, then a dry and mild winter that did not allow for hydric reserves to build in the soils." Some light rainfall in May helped push budding and canopy growth, but it was followed by a hot, dry summer. "We thought it was all done by June," he says, "but two straight days of rainfall on August 17 and 18 brought a miracle like we never could have imagined." Harvest was early, around September 10, with fruit that was in great health thanks to that reprieve.

My tasting notes of over 100 wines are remarkably consistent and favorable across the board for the region's producers, small and large, from the north and south. Want to discover more?

Join *The SOMM Journal* in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 28, when we will sponsor a master class on Gavi (see our website for details), or check out the consorzio-sponsored Gavi World Tour in New York City on August 30 (gaviworldtour.com/en) to taste for yourself! 



**Agronomist
Davide
Ferrarese
with his
terroir map
of Gavi.**

PHOTO: LARS LEICHT



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Why Old Vines Are a Thing of the Future

Beverage consultant James Brim, CSW, with Zinfandel vines planted in 1889 at Jessie's Grove in California's Mokelumne River-Lodi AVA.

WHILE THE TERM “old vine” has always been unregulated—to the point of now being virtually meaningless to wine buyers due to its ubiquity—there’s a growing movement within the industry to help it reclaim its meaningful place in the lexicon.

Members of the British wine trade, for instance, have formed a nonprofit group called The Old Vine Conference that has recently been holding a series of discussions designed to coordinate global efforts to preserve and celebrate old vines. The first thing you read on the organization’s website (oldvines.org) is: “The best old vines yield uniquely transcendent wines, incomparably rich in savour, symbolism, and heritage. The genetic material of ancient varieties, often retrieved from forgotten old vineyards, is proving vital in adapting to climate change.” That’s a lot of high-minded verbiage to absorb, but let’s break some of it down.

For starters, I’d use the word “transparent” rather than “transcendent” due to the nature of old-vine viticulture. Everywhere they are found around the world, old vines survive for 50, 100, and in some cases 150 years primarily because they sit on ideal terroirs, benefit from the healthiest possible environments, and continuously produce high-value wines defined by sensory qualities reflecting their origins. The longevity of old vines, in other words, is directly dependent upon not only their health but also the transparency of the resulting wines in terms of reflecting their terroir. Otherwise, they would have been pulled out long ago. That said, it’s also the case that vineyards over 50 years old become part and parcel of the culture and heritage of the wine regions they’re located in, as illustrated by the creation of a California nonprofit dedicated to preserving old-vine sites called the Historic Vineyard Society.

In regard to climate change, I would point out that the typical morphology of old vines—trained as free-standing gobellets or bush vines rather than on modern-day trellises—is currently teaching a thing or two to a wine industry beset by the shock of heat waves, drought, fires, “100-year” floods, and other manifestations of a changing planet. It has become clearer than ever that the grapevines best adapted to extreme climate events are



Grower Terri Harvey in her Original Grandpere Vineyard in the Shendandoah Valley AVA.



those with the deepest roots, the most mature trunks, and the most muscular spurs: in short, the oldest vines. No wonder there is a current movement to adjust the pruning of young trellised vines, which now dominate the industry, in ways that maximize wood size and sap flow—that replicate, in other words, the intrinsic physical advantages enjoyed by older vines, trained on stakes in the “old-school” style.

In California, authentic old-vine bottlings—primarily Zinfandel and Carignan along with the occasional Mourvèdre, Cinsaut, and Mission—are rarely labeled as “old vine”; they are primarily identified by vineyard designations. In South Africa,

by contrast, certified Old Vine Project wines are now identified as such on their labels: amazing bottlings of Cinsaut, Pinotage, Sémillon, Chenin Blanc, and other varieties. Barossa Valley has its groundbreaking Old Vine Charter, and France always has its *vieilles vignes*.

When tasting old-vine wines, do not expect dark colors, extreme concentration, or oversized body. You occasionally find that, but more often than not you’ll encounter a delicate, finely delineated profile: The older the vines, the more likely they are to express terroir-related earth or mineral notes. This is why, despite being around literally forever, old vines are a bigger deal than ever. **SJ**

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THE “OTHER” CATEGORY: Where Exciting Wines Go to Die

WE’VE ALL SEEN the offending category headings on wine lists: “Other,” “Assorted,” “Interesting,” “Unique,” et cetera. Nothing says “please ignore these sections” like ill-defined titles that provide no indication as to what the wines beneath them actually are. They not only suggest laziness and/or ineptitude on the part of the sommelier but also may imply that the wines are subpar, lacking the legitimacy conferred by a recognized category, when in fact some of the most exciting bottles on the list often end up under headings like these. In order to operate a profitable wine program for their establishment, a sommelier must design their list not as a mere source of information but as a sales tool—one that gives these bottles the credit they deserve.

Repeat after me: One wine does not a category make. If you fall in love with that one Assyrtiko, then find more wines that are from the same producer or region or that are made with the same grape or in a similar style and build a category around them. There is no singular solution for how best to do this, as each list has a unique identity and naming convention, but there are always ways to do it that ensure the category will be understood by staff and guests alike. This is your opportunity to be creative. One of my favorite headings to use to increase engagement is some variant of “Somme-

IMAGE COURTESY OF ERIK SEGELBAUM

AMERICA —DOES WHATEVER IT WANTS!		
1546.	Michael Shaps, Monticello, VA 2015 (Tannat)	70
1618.	Ambassador, ‘Diplomat’, Red Mountain, WA 2014 (75% Cabernet Sauvignon + 20% Syrah + 5% Grenache)	95
1633.	Efeste, ‘Final-Final’ Columbia Valley, WA 2014 (50% Cabernet Sauvignon + 50% Syrah)	70
1526.	Behrens Family, ‘The Collector’, Napa Valley, CA 2013 (50% Cab. Sauvignon + 30% Petite Sirah + 10% Petit Verdot + 10% Merlot)	150
1686.	Broc Cellars, Solano County, CA 2016 (Valdigué)	56
1684.	Cruse Wine Co., ‘Monkey Jacket’, North Coast, CA 2017 (Valdigué + Tannat + Carignan)	60
5588.	Edmunds St. John, ‘Bone Jolly’, El Dorado, CA 2016 (Gamay)	44
5585.	Forlorn Hope, ‘Suspiro del Moro’, Alta Mesa, CA 2015 (Alvarinho)	68
5573.	Hollyhook Lodge, Santa Barbara County, CA 2016 (Gumay)	44
5537.	Keep Wines, ‘Yount Mill Vineyard’, Napa Valley, CA 2017 (Pinot Meunier)	64
5564.	Poe, ‘Van der Kamp Vineyard’, Sonoma Mountain, CA 2016 (Pinot Meunier)	86
1562.	Sean Thackrey, ‘Pleiades XXVI Old Vines’, CA NV (Syrah + Sangiovese + Mourvèdre + Barbera + Carignane + others)	66
5546.	Stolpman Vineyards, ‘Combe’, Ballard Canyon, CA 2017 (Trousseau)	66



A page from a wine list created by the author.

as you can imagine, it was bursting with hard-to-define wines. I had a section called “America Does Bordeaux,” featuring domestic wines made with Bordeaux varieties. There was also “America Does Rhône,” “America Does Italy,” and so on. So how did I classify the really obscure stuff like Broc Cellars Valdigué, Michael Shaps Tannat from Virginia, and Sean Thackrey Pleiades Old Vines (a blend of Syrah, Sangiovese, Mourvèdre, Barbera, Carignane, and more)? That category was called “America Does Whatever It Wants!”

Positioning is also a key consideration. If you put these categories at the back of the list, then you’re not only making it harder

for guests to see them but also inadvertently transmitting the idea that they aren’t important; if they were, they’d be at the front. Show your pride in them by positioning them prominently in order to draw attention to them. After all, these wines are so exciting that you bought them knowing full well how difficult they might be to classify. §)

lier Selections,” “Recommended Picks,” or “What We Love Right Now”: Verbiage like that indicates that the wines in question are intriguing and worthy of attention. When I wrote the wine list for St. Anselm in Washington, D.C., I was certainly challenged to come up with coherent categories. The program was designed to take guests out of their comfort zone;



93
POINTS
PUBLISHER'S
PICK

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TERROIR SEEN
THROUGH
A NEW LENS.

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE
MILLER FAMILY'S RENOWNED
CENTRAL COAST VINEYARDS AND
WINEMAKER JOEY TENSLEY



THE SOMM JOURNAL

- 90 POINTS
- 92 POINTS
- 92 POINTS PUBLISHER'S PICK
- 93 POINTS
- 93 POINTS



Wood-fired octopus with
Picpoul de Pinet at Pa'La in
downtown Phoenix, AZ.

For the People

IN PHOENIX, **PA'LA** GUIDES DINERS THROUGH JAPAN AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

ON MY MOST RECENT visit to Pa'La, chef-owner Jason Alford set before me a fragrant curl of wood-fired Portuguese octopus set atop a puddle of smoked-pepper emulsion embellished with Controne beans and a salad of Steadfast Farm daikon radishes. It joined other exquisite plates such as prosciutto and smoked burrata drizzled in Japanese curry vinaigrette and lamb tartare served with squares of togarashi-sprinkled squid-ink milk bread.

When the second location of Pa'La opened in 2021, its unique confluence of Mediterranean and Japanese traditions and techniques ushered in an exciting new era of culinary sophistication. Expanding upon the tapas showcased at the restaurant's original location, the downtown menu debuted as a celebration of then-owner Claudio Urciuoli's Italian heritage and Alford's decade-long experience as executive chef at Japanese steakhouse Roka Akor, first at its Scottsdale flagship and then at outposts in Chicago, Houston, and San Francisco. "Japanese and Italian cuisine have many similarities," he explains, "like the importance of sourcing and using simple techniques that demonstrate restraint in highlighting ingredients."

Alford's penchant for thoughtful sourcing is displayed in menu descriptions of heritage grains from Arizona's BKW



Pa'La's dining room.



◀ Pa'La chef/owner Jason Alford and general manager Gilles Kolakowski.

Farms, A5 Takamori wagyu from Japan's Yamaguchi Prefecture, and WorldClass Pluma Ibérico de Bellota from Spain—the latter marinated in koji, coated in a balsamic-huckleberry glaze, and charred to juicy perfection over imported binchotan charcoal on a robata grill. A chalkboard also announces daily additions to the seasonal menu, from small plates such as hamachi crudo with smoked shoyu, extra-virgin olive oil, and caviar to pastas like campanelle with jamón Ibérico dashi and spigarello to entrees including wood-roasted fish with Meyer lemon miso. "We want you to experience something you won't find anywhere else," he notes.



PHOTOS: CHRISTINA BARRUETA

The beverage program likewise reflects cross-cultural influences. General manager Gilles Kolakowski, who brings with him 30 years of hospitality experience, oversees the cocktail menu and curates the wine and saké lists. "It's the same philosophy behind the [food] sourcing," he explains. Take, for example, his wines by the glass. "Right now we have whites from France, Portugal, Italy, Greece, [and] Mexico and reds from Slovenia, Italy,

France, and Portugal. I love to encourage people to try something different, like Tannat or Picpoul de Pinet, or when someone asks for a bottle of Pinot Grigio and I can introduce them to a Uruguayan Albariño."

Both Alford and Kolakowski are quick to credit their knowledgeable, passionate staff as integral to Pa'La's success. "Our chef team is a collaborative effort," notes Alford, "and we call our service staff 'ambassadors.'" Kolakowski agrees: "We're very fortunate to be surrounded by such an amazing team guided by the same passion. Pa'La means 'for the people,' and we all work together to create a conversation and provide an experience that brings the people on our journey." ■

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On Horseradish and Horilka

MOLOTOV KITSCHEN & COCKTAILS EXPLODES ONTO THE DENVER DINING SCENE

WHEN I THINK about the most notable dishes I've ever eaten over the course of my 20-plus years as a food writer, I don't think much about Michelin stars or world-famous names or \$300 tasting menus. What I do think a lot about is fried tripe poutine in foie gras gravy. And fava-bean falafel atop lamb liver—and—lentil hummus. And rutabaga latkes with braised collard and dandelion greens in potlikker Hollandaise, crowned with a fried egg. And pomegranate molasses—glazed swordfish souvlaki with smoked-mussel tzatziki. I think, in short, about chef Bo Porytko and the culture-crossing, endlessly freewheeling, high-low stamp he's been putting on the Denver dining scene for the past several years, first with co-conspirator Dan

Spring borscht with smoked chicken, stinging nettles, and assorted pickles at Molotov Kitschen & Cocktails.

honor of his heritage. As he explains, "After a while [as a chef], you're nostalgic for the thing that made you start cooking in the first place—and for me, spending time in the kitchen with my grandma making pierogi, that was my first experience in the kitchen. [It's] just an itch you want to scratch." If the menu is a little less wild and crazy than some Porytko has dreamed up, it's also a little more cohesive and elegant: Think kielbasa terrine with beet horseradish and pickled mustard seeds and radishes; rabbit Kiev stuffed with herbed papri-



Stee and I] did a lot of research on this, and what we discovered is that 'borscht' means a lot of things; it totally changes from region to region to region, so we don't have to do beets every time. We can go in a lot of directions."

To pair with it all, the short but sweet wine list naturally steers away from Western Europe toward "underrepresented areas" like Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, and even Serbia; similarly, the cocktail list is all about "paying tribute to things that they do in Eastern Europe but being quirky, like our food is," says Porytko, incorporating the likes of aquavit, slivovitz, and above all horilka, a vodka-like spirit he compares to moonshine. Infused with black currants, the latter appears with honey and lemon in the Pea-syanky, to which he and his team "added some juiced pea shoots . . . so it has this grassy, earthy note"; for the Cherished Wife and Mother, meanwhile, it's infused with peppercorns and tarragon and combined with ramp brine.

Though "it's almost more of a challenge for me to think [in terms of] one place [or] one culture" than it is to fuse cuisines, Porytko notes, "What's great is that Ukraine is a lot like the U.S. in its geography as far as seasonality," which means those ramps and pea shoots will soon give way to "lots of tomatoes, lots of dill." That said, "there'll always be lots of breads and grains" on the menu to reflect regional tradition as well as game like elk and venison, he explains. "In old Ukrainian cookbooks, there's moose; they have bear." If serving either were legal, I wouldn't put it past him. **ST**

PHOTOS: HI-REZ PHOTOGRAPHY



Molotov's tiny but charming dining room.

Lasiy at the much-missed Rebel Restaurant and then at Misfit SnackBar—where, working out of a miniscule kitchen inside a cocktail bar, he was announced as a semifinalist in the 2023 James Beard Awards' Emerging Chef category. (Come to think of it, his name may be world-famous yet.)

Now he's channeling all that creativity in a new—albeit Old World—direction: His latest venture, Molotov Kitschen & Cocktails, specializes in Eastern European cuisine, particularly that of Ukraine in

kash butter and served in carrot soubise with poached English peas and pickled onions; or smoked pork pâté—filled spelt pelmeni in tarragon béarnaise. Think sour-cherry borscht with braised duck dumplings, trumpet mushrooms, and mustard smetana—or, for that matter, smoked chicken—and—stinging nettle borscht. Says Porytko, "There's always going to be a borscht on the menu. . . . [Granted], sometimes I break my own rules, but [chef de cuisine] Andrew [Van

FLEURS de PRAIRIE





This Is Not a Wine List

A CONVERSATION WITH BLUE HILL AT STONE BARN'S WINE DIRECTOR HANNAH WILLIAMS

IF YOU ARE an enophile dining at Blue Hill at Stone Barns, you will be captivated when wine director Hannah Williams presents you with a book titled *This Is Not a Wine List*. The tome, bound in leather from cows raised at Stone Barns' farm, not only contains the restaurant's selection but also offers a window into the thoughts of a sommelier, with her own words and photographs breaking up the pages—which are themselves outfitted with transparent vellum sheets that can be laid over the text to show Williams' notes on the wines.

Williams points out that when you're creating a wine list, you are really editing a cellar inventory. Simply listing a selection on a page doesn't convey the heart that goes into curating it. By giving voice and context to the wine collection that she has helped build over her six-year tenure

at Blue Hill, she has innovated a way to connect with her guests.

Facilitating that connection in creative and engaging ways is in fact a key part of the experience of Blue Hill at Stone Barns, located in Pocantico Hills, New York. The Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture is a nonprofit farm and education center; the restaurant does its part to engage and edify each guest by serving upwards of 30 small plates composed of ingredients from the property and other local farms. There is no set dining menu. In that spirit, when Williams revamped the wine list for Blue Hill's reopening following a long hiatus after the pandemic shutdown, she looked beyond the traditional format.

Inspired by her favorite wine-centric novels, Williams wanted her list to be playful and personal as well as educa-

tional. The Magritte-derived title originally applied to her wine flights, which she called "This Is Not a Wine Pairing." Rebeling against the incongruous and "robotic" nature of serving the same flight to every table even though they weren't receiving the same dishes, she started customizing flights that drew on themes relating to the guests' individual experience. By a similar token, when her goal switched from serving flights to selling bottles, she decided that adding her own notes to the list would make it less intimidating. When she presents guests with *This Is Not a Wine List*, she notices that they open it with a smile.

It is easy to think of a wine list as merely a tool, but Williams points out that a lot can be read between the lines of the selections. She has encouraged me to read wine lists like books, as she does. **STJ**

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by Annette Alvarez-Peters

Pushing Through

THE INS AND OUTS OF OPENING A WINE SHOP

THERE'S A DOWNSIDE to the excitement of opening your own wine shop: sleepless nights. "You never really understand how crazy it can be until you are in it," says Paula de Pano, owner of Rocks + Acid Wine Shop in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. "Then you just have to have the stamina to push through and believe it will all work out." Via Zoom, I recently sat down with the sommelier and beverage director-turned-retailer to ask her about her experience in starting a new business.

Once the decision is made to open a wine shop, having a "business plan and understanding the numbers" are essential, said de Pano, adding that that plan "may evolve as you research various cost implications and learn from those who have firsthand experience." There are not a lot of wine shops in her area, so de Pano used her vast network to connect with retailers and restaurateurs from several different states. Rent, business insurance, taxes, best practices for operations, POS systems, and state laws were only a few of the subjects she researched. She noted that "it is imperative to determine whether you are in the ballpark or overpaying for a service" such as accounting.

De Pano believes that location is the most important factor to consider when opening a shop. It is crucial to understand the market you are entering, she pointed out: "Reach out to your local chamber of commerce. They can give insight as to what the community needs." In putting together her own business plan, she had a short list of four potential locations: For each, she considered the cost of rent, utilities, and fees for the space; customer traffic; nearby competition; and proximity to surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.

Of course, funding is also important. Startup costs can run you "up to \$200,000 or higher, depending on your location, custom design, and the amount



Paula de Pano is the owner of Rocks + Acid Wine Shop in Chapel Hill, NC.

"You never really understand how crazy it can be until you are in it. Then you just have to have the stamina to push through and believe it will all work out."

**—Paula de Pano,
owner, Rocks + Acid
Wine Shop**

payment begin? Will this be a balloon payment, or will it take three to four years to pay back? "It is so important to figure out the revenue and ensure your numbers work," she said.

De Pano's business philosophy is built on values of diversity and inclusion. She is mindful of selecting

of inventory carried," said de Pano. Amid long delays due to permitting and sourcing building materials—it took Rocks + Acid nearly two years to begin operating—renovation and construction represented her largest expense, followed by her inventory of 400 different wines. Other expenses included fees for professionals such as lawyers, engineers, architects, accountants, and marketing and PR firms. There are many options for funding, including SBA (small business administration) loans, angel investments, and financial backing from family. De Pano needed to consider the following questions: How will I pay back the loan? What are the terms and conditions? When will the first

wines made by women, people of color, people in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and immigrants as well as by family producers. Knowing hospitality is one of her biggest assets, she hosts educational tastings and classes such as "Let's Talk About Croatian Wines" and "Peppery Wines: Grüner Veltliner and Syrah." Rocks + Acid isn't about "just selling a product, it's about selling a service and an experience," in her words.

It was a long road to the shop's grand opening, but de Pano had been assured that "once you're open, it will be worth it." Now that Rocks + Acid is in business, she's emphatic that it has indeed "been worth it!" **sj**

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The SENSES by Ink Grade tasting transports visitors to the remote Ink Grade Vineyard on Napa Valley's Howell Mountain through an accompanying video montage and soundscape.



Entering the Winescape

MULTISENSORY WINE MARKETING AUGMENTS THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

THERE'S NO QUESTION that the pandemic has amplified the influence of the experience economy, which gives businesses a potentially lucrative channel for success in an unpredictable market while enhancing their level of direct engagement with consumers. The experience economy that has long existed in the wine industry is evolving as seated tastings are now de rigeur, replacing the once-ubiquitous tasting bar.

Research has shown wine marketers that the sensory experience provided by a wine-tourism destination is one of the most powerful tools available to help consumers identify its unique characteristics. While we create positive memories about a destination mostly through visual sensory stimuli, when we are engaged in an experience through the five senses, an emotional response is triggered and a distinct identity for the destination can be formed.

But because it's not always possible for consumers to visit a winery or a vineyard, brands have developed immersive, multi-sensory experiences designed to create the same cross-modal connections that we experience when all our senses are engaged.

One such experience, SENSES by Ink Grade, transports visitors to the remote Ink Grade Vineyard on Napa Valley's Howell Mountain, where the namesake winery's estate fruit is grown. Developed by brand manager Julie Gilles and introduced in February at the Pavilion by Ink Grade tasting room in St. Helena, SENSES is a guided tasting of four wines held in a soundproof room whose walls become the canvas for a dramatic 360-degree video montage of the lifecycle of the vineyard, accompanied by a soundscape of recordings made onsite.

Gilles, who joined Ink Grade owner Lawrence Wine Estates in 2020, worked with the London-based firm Igloo Vision to create the installation, which is the first of its kind in Napa Valley. (In 2016, Igloo created a similar immersive experience for Scotch distillery Lagavulin on the island of Islay.) The 90-minute SENSES experience is offered daily from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for \$195 per guest.

Considering that the relationship between wine and music has been credibly researched (though the effects of music on wine aging in barrel cellars have been hotly

debated), it's no wonder that sound is playing a larger role in multisensory wine experiences. In January 2022, Medlock Ames in Healdsburg introduced the Immersive Sound Experience, a 90-minute, self-guided audio tour of the winery's 340-acre Bell Mountain Ranch, which is followed by a guided tasting of six current-release wines paired with locally made organic cheeses. Local composer and sound artist Hugh Livingston spent months recording the soundscape, which is narrated by co-founder Ames Morison, winemaker Abby Watt, and a handful of winery staff. The experience is offered on weekends for \$75 per guest.

Recent developments in neuroscience and psychology have confirmed what many artists have long intuited: that our senses are connected and that wine possesses a complexity that activates an intricate network of sensory and aesthetic relationships. Research into cross-modal correspondence—the universal tendency of sensory functions to connect with one another and create synergies—has highlighted the strong links between flavor and sound that we have only just begun to explore. **SJ**

PHOTO COURTESY OF INK GRADE



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A Wonderful Relationship

PAIRING **WANDER + IVY** WINES AT THE CAMBY HOTEL IN PHOENIX, AZ

story by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Grace Stufkosky

WINDING DOWN AGAINST THE

backdrop of a Sonoran Desert sunset with a well-made glass of wine is all the more relaxing when that wine comes in a single-serve format like that of Wander + Ivy—not only is it easier to open, there's no pressure to finish an entire bottle. This convenience is part of why the brand and The Camby Hotel in Phoenix are in perfect sync: All of Wander + Ivy's expressions are featured in the hotel's modern American restaurant, Artizen; its bars; and its guest rooms as a tasty amenity.

Inspired by this blissful collaboration, *The SOMM Journal* met with The Camby's ambitious food and beverage manager, Diana Kinney, to talk pairings, as Wander + Ivy's thoughtfully designed 6.3-ounce bottles not only contain great juice but look great next to the hotel's signature



Diana Kinney is food and beverage manager at The Camby Hotel in Phoenix, AZ.

dishes. Kinney agrees that while the thick glass cylinders with wide screwtops elevate the brand, it's what's inside that really sells it, particularly to those "looking for a more health-conscious offering" in the form of wine made with organic grapes.

Discussing the portfolio, Kinney said that "the Rosé is a favorite because of the complexity of the different fruit flavors, from peach to strawberry, [as well as] the rose petals. It's easy to drink on a hot summer day. The Chardonnay is a favorite because of the rich flavor of the stone fruit with the hints of vanilla. And it's not overly buttery, which makes it easy to drink all year long."

But what would she pair these and Wander + Ivy's other expressions with at Artizen? Read on to find out. **SJ**



Wander + Ivy 2021 California Chardonnay with roast salmon, seasonal vegetables, and garlic mashed potatoes

"The blend of the stone-fruit aromas with the slight buttery taste of the wine complements our roasted salmon, which has hints of butter and lemon throughout."



Wander + Ivy 2020 California Cabernet Sauvignon with flat iron steak with black-garlic butter, cipollini demi sauce, roasted Yukon potatoes, and seasonal vegetables

"The balance of the berry profile [of the wine] brings out the rich flavors of our cipollini demi sauce that enhances the flat iron steak."



Wander + Ivy 2021 French Rosé with charred avocado tacos with chipotle mayo, house salsa, cabbage, pickled red onion, and cotija cheese

"The creaminess of the avocado, along with the richness of the chipotle mayo, is a nice contrast to the light, floral, and balanced taste of strawberry and peach [in the rosé]. We felt the two items had a yin-and-yang effect."



Wander + Ivy 2020 Italian White Wine with shrimp capellini sauteed with garlic, shallots, and Cajun spices; tossed in a white-wine sauce; and topped with parmesan

"The slight honeysuckle blossom—and-mineral finish [of the wine] works perfectly with our white-wine shrimp pasta."



Wander + Ivy 2020 Spanish Red Wine Blend with the "Camby cheeseburger," a double beef patty with cheddar cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato, red onion, and herb mayo on a brioche bun

"The richness of the burger works well with the complexity of the red blend."

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— TASTING PANEL MAGAZINE





Hands Across the Sea

BOYER FAMILY WINES IS THE RESULT OF A SUCCESSFUL LONG-DISTANCE PARTNERSHIP by Meridith May

"A friendship founded on business is better than a business founded on friendship." —John D. Rockefeller

BEFORE VINCENT BOYER met Gabriel Justice, he was heading up his family's winery as the fourth-generation owner and winemaker at Domaine Boyer-Martenot in Meursault, while Justice was running a successful restaurant in Carmel, California. Mutual friends brought them together to help a passion project come to life: a Chardonnay and Pinot Noir hailing from the Santa Lucia Highlands yet crafted by a Burgundian winemaker.

Boyer first came to Napa Valley in 2000 to work at Truchard Vineyards when he was 21. His family's top-tier estate would be passed down to him in 2002, but he nevertheless maintained a desire to make his own label in California. "I didn't know where I would find the right spot," Boyer admitted at a recent lunch meeting. "I would go back and forth from Burgundy to Sonoma [and] Napa, looking for that certain place. But it was my first visit to Carmel and Monterey when I had the 'wow' moment."

A combination of tasting wines from the region, driving up Big Sur, learning about the climate and soil, and meeting and picking the brains of local winemakers convinced Boyer that the Santa Lucia Highlands would be an ideal home for Boyer Family Wines. But, being based in France, he knew he couldn't do it on his own. Fortunately, the aforementioned mutual friends told Justice that Boyer was searching for a business partner, instinctively knowing that they'd be a good match.

"What did I know about owning a winery?" recalled Justice, who hardly considered himself an expert in wine during his tenure as an on-premise operator. Yet the former Marine and culinary school student was tasting it every day. "I never turned down the opportunity to meet with a supplier," he said.

Since Justice's interest was piqued, he thought he'd better meet Boyer. "What if we didn't get along? If I am going to be in business with someone, I should get to know them," he said. He thought he'd be taking a short trip to Burgundy, but his one-week stay turned into seven months. After learning the ropes while working the 2017 harvest in Meursault, he proclaimed, "I became a cellar rat!"

In its first vintage, Boyer Family Wines' small production is already gaining favor at high-end restaurants in Arizona, where Justice now resides. The wines are made at Caraccioli Cellars and aged in 20% new French oak barrels from Meursault before resting in concrete for ten months. Those interested in ordering can contact Justice at gabrieljustice11@protonmail.com. **sj**



Boyer Family Wines partners Vincent Boyer and Gabriel Justice.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOYER FAMILY WINES

**Boyer Family Winery
2019 Chardonnay, Es-
colle Vineyard, Santa
Lucia Highlands (\$95)**

Bright minerality and notes of lemon-thyme sorbet add tension while cut-glass acidity contributes balance. Aromas and flavors of honeysuckle and Asian pear pierce the palate, abundant in freshness and clarity.

**Boyer Family Winery
2019 Pinot Noir, Es-
colle Vineyard, Santa
Lucia Highlands (\$135)**

Delicate, with purity of fruit. Salted cherry and pomegranate have staying power. "I just want to show what the grapes have to say," notes partner Vincent Boyer. The lithe mouthfeel is garnished with a garden of roses.



as ONE CRU

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2018 Pinot Noir

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Daniel Webber (second from left), head sommelier at Maple & Ash in Scottsdale, AZ, was named the 2023 Somm Brawl champion; he's pictured here with fellow finalist Laura Bruno, wine director at Elements in the Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort; Certified Sommelier Drew Cameron, server at The Monarch and last year's Somm Brawl belt holder; and 2022 competitor Kyrra Rauber, Certified Sommelier and captain at Maple & Ash.



PHOTO: MARK GLUCKMAN

The Wine Heavyweight

THE SECOND ANNUAL **SOMM BRAWL** HAS A WINNER by Meridith May

"THE BUILDUP HAS been exceptional," claimed John Krause, proprietor of The Mick Brasserie in Scottsdale, Arizona. For months, The Mick had been ushering Arizona's top wine

professionals into the ring, so to speak, to pit palate against palate in its annual Somm Brawl; the finals were held on March 13.

The Brawl was conceived by The Mick's wine director, Jeff Menzer, not only to bring the wine community together but also to create an interactive event for loyal customers. "We have a restaurant that has a culture of wine appreciation," he said. "We love to share knowledge with our guests."

The contest is designed to show the innate skill of participat-

ing somms in choosing wines to pair with a four-course meal without tasting the food ahead of time. The contestants do have the opportunity to question the chef at The Mick about ingredients, but from there, they must rely solely on what they know about the art of pairing. A crowd of 140 patrons voted on their favorites as chosen by the two finalists: Laura Bruno, wine director at Elements in the Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort, and winner Daniel Webber, head sommelier at Maple & Ash.

Course 1: Cauliflower panna cotta with carrot gel, smoked onion crème, Osetra caviar, and micro chervil

Bruno's pick: Defaix Chablis Côte de Lechet

Webber's pick: Nominé-Renard Special Club Brut Champagne

Course 2: Octopus stew with duck chorizo and beans

Bruno's pick: Château Simone Palette Rosé

Webber's pick: Maison des Ardoisières Silice Rouge

Course 3: Rib-eye with foie gras ganache and wagyu tallow

Bruno's pick: Ashes & Diamonds Mountain No. 4 Bates Ranch Mountain Cuvée

Webber's pick: Lillian Gold Series No. 7 Syrah

Course 4 was a strawberry tartlet with basil and white-chocolate mousse. Both somms found exquisite dessert wines to go with it: Between Webber's selection, Elio Perrone Bigarò Rosé, and Bruno's, De Forville Moscato d'Asti, it was a tough choice, but the victory ultimately went to Webber. **sj**

PHOTO: GRACE STUFKOSKY



Somm Brawl is the brainchild of Jeff Menzer, wine director at The Mick.



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Road-Tripping Through the Southern Rhône

WHEN PLANNING OUR episode of *V is for Vino* on the Southern Rhône Valley, I assumed we would visit the usual suspects, namely cru AOCs like Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Gigondas, and Vacqueyras. I'm so glad we didn't. After all, as is the case in Bordeaux, cru wines make up only a tiny portion of the region's output; 82% of its wine falls under the Côtes

Author Vince Anter, right, with Philippe Guigal of famed Côtes du Rhône producer E. Guigal.

The village of Vaison-la-Romaine in the Southern Rhône.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VINCE ANTER



du Rhône or Côtes du Rhône Villages designations. And if you miss out on these wines, you're missing out on fresh, food-friendly, and value-driven expressions from a classic region.

Southern Rhône blends are often considered to be big, brooding, high-alcohol wines. But my experience in the region was quite different. Producers understand that lighter, fresher styles are in vogue right now, so they're following suit. The Côtes de Rhône-level reds are supple and less extracted—and thus less tannic—with more red fruit, so they are easy to drink when young and easy to pair. And the whites retain that core of acidity needed for focus while still achieving a ripeness that gives us the stone and tropical fruits we know and love from the

region. I had the honor of tasting with E. Guigal's Philippe Guigal, and he stressed the importance he places on his Côtes du Rhône line. He said he's aware that it may yield many people's first impression of the Rhône Valley, and he takes that responsibility seriously, so it isn't an afterthought but rather an essential part of the portfolio.

But if there's an area that encompasses the best of both worlds, it's the village-level wines. Every current cru was a village appellation before it was promoted, and it's here where you begin to see the quality and ageworthiness of the wines take form. There are almost 100 Côtes du Rhône Villages, 22 of which are allowed to put the village name on the bottle, such as Sablet and Rochegude. Each of

the villages has its own terroir making it worthy of distinction; what's more, each is more visually stunning than the last. We road-tripped through the Southern Rhône Valley for the episode, taking in the hilltops, ancient geology, and quaint towns.

Finally, more than almost any other wine region I've visited, the Southern Rhône seems committed to sustainability, including organic and biodynamic farming. More than half of the bottles on any given shelf I perused had certification logos on them, and the menus of most restaurants we visited denoted winemaking practices with little symbols or icons. The winemakers I talked to take a holistic approach to their craft and understand that preserving the land today means passing it down to their grandchildren tomorrow.

So as consumers increasingly search for fresher, more food-friendly wines with integrity that are affordable to boot, remember that you don't need to compromise: The iconic Côtes du Rhône and its Villages offer all of that. Look for our Southern Rhône episode this summer at youtube.com/@visforvino.

Until next wine,
Vince 

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

Rob & Bonnie Lloyd

Rob Lloyd was the winemaker behind some of California's most successful Chardonnay producers. In 2008 he stepped out from behind the curtain, when he and his wife Bonnie launched Lloyd Cellars to produce wines that are of unequalled quality.



UPCOMING EVENTS

June 5 - 11: Yountville Pride Celebration – Napa Valley, CA

June 15 - 25: Tampa Bay Restaurant Week – Tampa Bay, FL

June 23 - 24: California Wine Festival – Carlsbad, CA

June 27: Broadway & Vine feat. Tituss Burgess – Napa Valley, CA

July 14 - 15: California Wine Festival – Santa Barbara, CA

July 28: Broadway & Vine feat. Darren Criss – Napa Valley, CA

Aug 16: Broadway & Vine feat. Erika Henningson – Napa Valley, CA



SCAN ME

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by Natalie Wymer, vice president of communications and member relations, Wine Institute

Setting the Table

WINERY CHEFS DELIVER MEMORABLE TASTING EXPERIENCES

PICK A SPOT almost anywhere in California, and it's virtually guaranteed that a winery is only a short distance away. That's particularly convenient for the more than 25 million tourists—wine connoisseurs and foodies alike—from all around the world who visit the Golden State's 4,800 wineries annually. Given this level of demand, many producers aim to distinguish themselves through unique offerings, including special pairing experiences in outdoor venues that offer gorgeous views of wine country. While some began blazing a trail years ago by showcasing their wines with distinctive cuisine, we're now seeing a growing trend of wineries hiring in-house or guest chefs with impressive credentials and innovative ideas.

Prioritizing Wine's Role in Pairing

Rather than designing a tasting menu first and then selecting the wines to pair with it, talented chefs are taking the reverse approach, putting the wines first as they create dishes specifically tailored to elevate the producer's offerings—a challenge that many consider to be a rewarding perk of the job.

The laid-back vibe of many estates also gives chefs more flexibility to explain first-hand the featured dishes and the intricacies of their respective wine pairings to guests; they may even lead tours through estate gardens as they discuss how they chose which types of produce to cultivate and the wine-friendly dishes they plan to serve to future visitors. The people they engage with then walk away with not only a better understanding of the art of pairing but the immediate desire to take wine home and craft their own menus.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINE INSTITUTE



PHOTO: JOSEPH WEAVER




◀ *Cakebread Cellars executive chef Brian Streeter has conceptualized seasonal dishes to pair with the winery's offerings since 1989.*

A glimpse inside the kitchen at Far Niente in Napa Valley. ▼

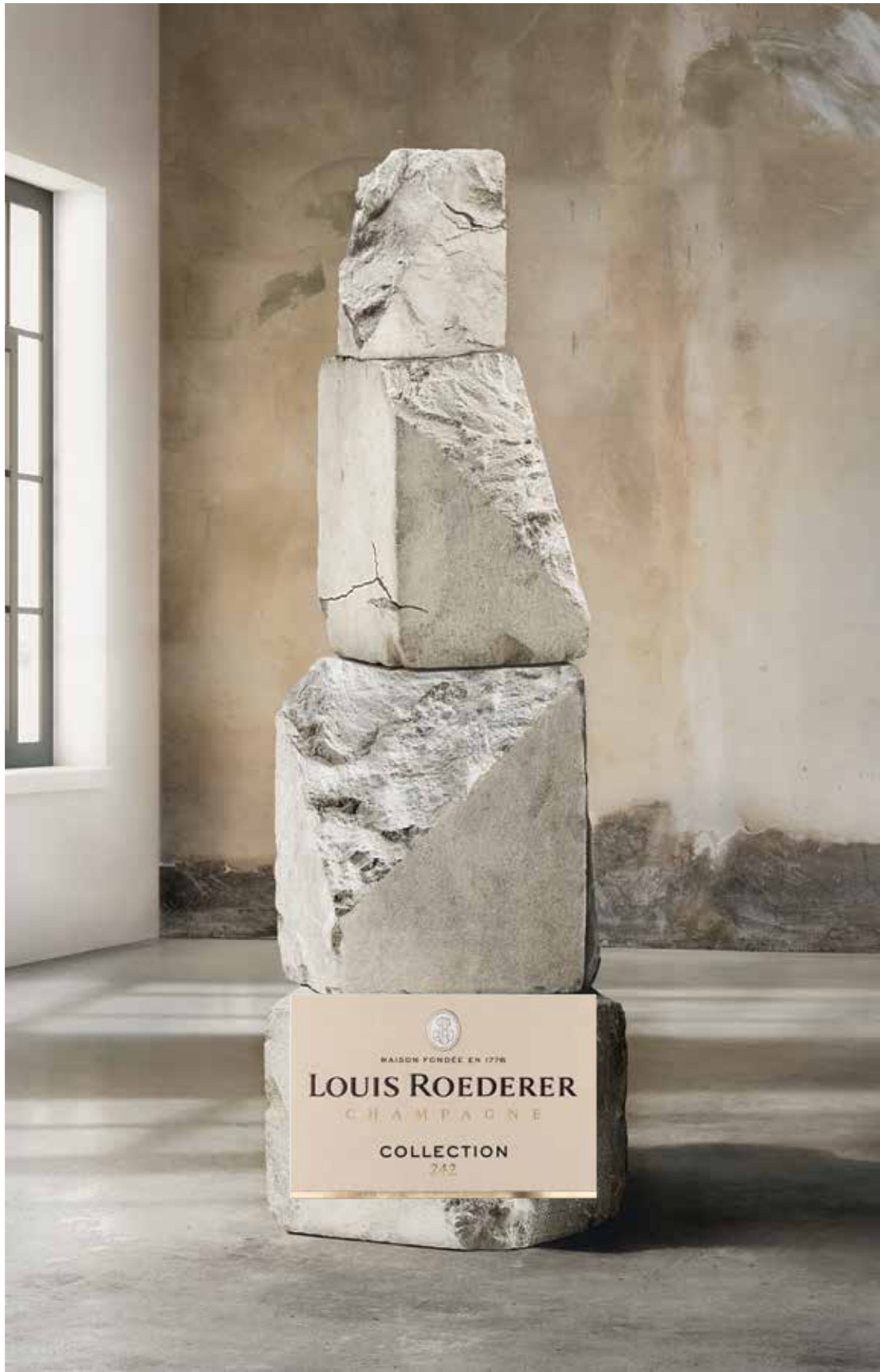
Benefiting From the Bounty of Winery Gardens

Estate gardens essentially serve as winery chefs' own backyard farmers market, providing ready access to a variety of in-season ingredients. This bounty can include everything from fruit orchards and olive trees to plentiful vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers to eggs from onsite henhouses. Guests stand to benefit, taking advantage of the opportunity to savor fresh, seasonal, and healthy offerings during their visit—not to mention sustainable ones, as chefs can ensure that their produce is responsibly grown whether they're sourcing ingredients from their own garden or from local farmers. This

philosophy naturally aligns with sustainable practices in viticulture and wine production, of which California is a leader.

For a sampling of wineries across California that offer elevated, interactive food and wine experiences created by in-house chefs, go to discovercaliforniawines.com. 

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.



LOUIS ROEDERER
HAND IN HAND WITH NATURE



Checking All the Boxes

IN SEBASTOPOL, CA, **OYSTER** COMBINES THE TALENTS OF CHEF JAKE RAND AND WINEMAKER PAX MAHLE

CHEF/RESTAURATEUR JAKE RAND'S latest venture, Oyster—which opened in Sebastopol, California's, food and wine hub, The Barlow Market District, last November—might have stood on the strength of its delicious, carefully thought-out food alone. But when neighboring winemaker Pax Mahle heard about the project, he approached Rand with what he calls a “purely selfish” proposition: If Rand was amenable, Mahle would work to create the wine list he'd been “craving” for no compensation other than the pleasure of visiting a place that he and “every wine lover would want to find.” It certainly helped that Mahle is enormously fond of Champagne while appreciating the wide array of varieties and styles that would complement the seafood Rand intended to serve.

After establishing Sushi Koshō across the street, Rand had asked himself, “What comes after sushi?” Looking to develop “a more sustainable relationship with the oceans,” in his words, he revived a concept he'd created during his time as a restaurant consultant: one that feels like a European sidewalk café while promoting, for lack of a sexier term, “bivalve aquaculture.” Rand speaks enthusiastically about the positive impact that filter feeders such as oysters, mussels, and clams have on our ecosystem; they lower the ocean's pH, reduce corrosion, sequester carbon, and work synergistically with kelp beds. With the help of his designer, architect, and Mahle, Rand was able to “elicit a clearer vision” of Oyster. Honing in on the zinc bars of Paris as his inspiration, he lives up to it with such hits as French fries cooked in duck fat and moules marinières.

Wine lists in Sonoma County are typically flush with local greats, but Mahle saw the opportunity to fulfill a need and create something unique for the area. It starts with an extraordinary selection of Champagnes designed to go with “every-



*Chef/
restaurateur
Jake Rand.*

Oysters at Oyster. ▶



PHOTOS: SUITED HOSPITALITY

thing fried,” as he puts it; it's also heavy on French whites. But beyond that, Mahle has no agenda other than to develop a program that's balanced and delicious. By refusing to be boxed in with respect to his selection, he succeeds in checking lots of boxes—from an affordable Muscadet for those who want to wash down oysters with something simple and refreshing to the perfect Chablis to partner with

seared scallops. The experience can be as lighthearted or as seriously indulgent as one wants.

Success often comes when creators stay true to their vision: Make it exactly how you would want it and chances are others will flock to it. Oyster stands as a perfect example of this—and of how a brilliant wine list can give a new restaurant an edge in the marketplace. *SJ*

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11:15 a.m. September 12

Topic: Innovation or Tradition?

Moderator: Annette Alvarez-Peters

New and established brands sometimes have to reinvent themselves or simply create something unique to stand out. In this seminar, we'll discuss how they bring products to market while tasting six wines with the audience to determine their status.

2 p.m. September 12

Topic: Climate Change and the Future of Sustainability

Moderator: Deborah Parker Wong, global wine editor, *The SOMM Journal*

While tasting and talking with our group of producers, we'll explore topics from regenerative organics and biodynamics to ideas for addressing the challenges of the future.



11:15 a.m. September 11

Topic: Premium Argentina: A New Movement of Luxury Wines

Moderator: Lars Leicht, VP of education, *The SOMM Journal*

Argentina is taking its place at center stage in the world-class wine category. We'll prove as much by tasting and talking with producers who continue to up their game.

11:15 a.m. September 12

Topic: Languedoc Wines: A Fresh Approach to Wine Lists and Strong Bottom Lines

Moderator: Erik Segelbaum, contributing editor, *The SOMM Journal*

Producers from Languedoc will present wines to taste with our audience and provide an understanding of the region's AOC and its grapes, from Mourvèdre and Mauzac to Carignan and Clairette.

2 p.m. September 11

Topic: Napa Valley's Green Scene: A Community Dedicated to Sustainability

Moderator: Martin Reyes, MW

At this seminar hosted by Napa Valley Vintners, talk and taste along with some Napa Valley sustainability leaders as we discuss how sustainability is more than a set of practices: It's an ethos of looking toward the future to ensure the long-term viability of the land, the community, and the wines of the Valley.

LANGUEDOC COMES TO SOMMCON

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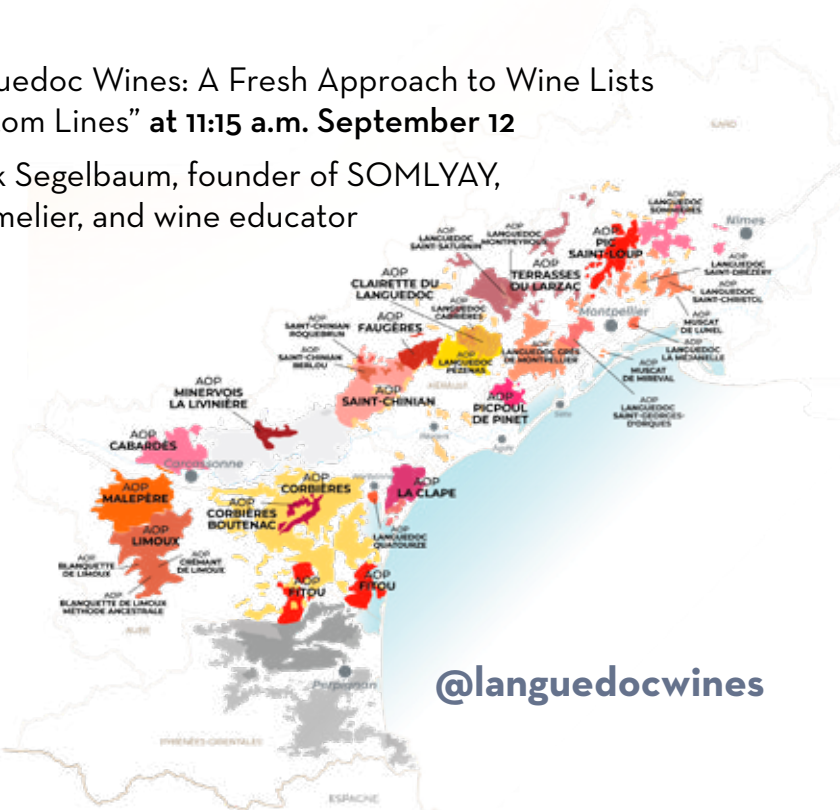
PHOTO: MICHAEL BUTCHER



Seminar: “Languedoc Wines: A Fresh Approach to Wine Lists and Strong Bottom Lines” at 11:15 a.m. September 12

← **Moderator:** Erik Segelbaum, founder of SOMLYAY, Advanced Sommelier, and wine educator

Very few wine regions have it all—quality, range, and organic leadership, all driven by a dynamic, young generation of winemakers. Today’s Languedoc region is unstoppable and realizing its full potential with red, white, rosé, and sparkling wines from 20 unique appellations. Erik Segelbaum, the trailblazer behind SOMLYAY, has spent the last year immersed with the top growers from Languedoc and will share his insights on how to reinvent your wine list and increase your bottom line. The U.S. is the leading export market for Languedoc wines with sales growth up 17% overall—find out how to capitalize on this consumer powerhouse!



@languedocwines

PHOTO: MAUD CHALARD



{ france }

What the Terroir Has Given

ÉTABLISSEMENTS JEAN-PIERRE MOUEIX'S **EDOUARD MOUEIX** OPENS THE CELLAR FOR A LOOK AT OLDER VINTAGES

story by Deborah Parker Wong / photos by Paige Comrie

AFTER A FOUR-YEAR HIATUS, Edouard Moueix, son of Christian Moueix and deputy general manager of Établissements Jean-Pierre Moueix, returned to San Francisco this spring for a tasting of both older vintages and newer releases from the Bordeaux producer's expansive portfolio, held at Michelin-starred restaurant Angler; all of the wines we tasted are currently available through Maisons Marques & Domaines.

Now 46, Moueix became the third generation to represent the family business when he joined the company in 2003.



Third-generation vigneron Edouard Moueix of Établissements Jean-Pierre Moueix pours flights at Angler in San Francisco, CA.



For the past 20 years, he has played an integral role in its growth, though he's seemingly never far from the vineyard: He and his wife, Kelly, and their two children live at Château Bélair-Monange in Saint-Émilion, which he helped acquire in 2008. His connection to the land is conveyed through the intimate knowledge of both vineyards and vintages that he expresses with the clarity and innate humility that are well-recognized family traits.

In addition to overseeing its many holdings in Pomerol and Saint-Émilion, Ét. Jean-Pierre Moueix has operated as a négociant for 85 years and enjoys exclusive distribution rights to over 20 Right Bank châteaux. Moueix presented a cross section of its estate and négociant portfolios, focusing on Château Certan de May and Château Hosanna in Pomerol, Château Magdelaine in Saint-Émilion, and Dominus Estate in Napa Valley.

At Château Certan de May—which sits adjacent to the company's own Château La Fleur-Pétrus on Pomerol's central plateau—pure gravel over clay produces powerful, elegant wines that possess both the structure and freshness necessary for longevity. Made under the direction of Michel Rolland in a notably dry vintage, the **2011 Certan de May**, a deep-garnet blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc, was quite fresh and powerful even as it moved toward tertiary aromas and flavors.

The **2018 Certan de May** came from a vintage whose rainy spring was counteracted by a record number of sunshine hours from June to September. Made under the direction of Jean-Claude Berrouet, the blend of 70% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon showed characteristic freshness, with floral and graphite aromas followed by plummy red fruits, cassis, and dried herbs as well as firm tannins.

Château Hosanna was purchased by Ét. Jean-Pierre Moueix in 1999 and is noted for its combination of red gravel and blue clay atop *crasse de fer* subsoils as well as for its plantings of rare old Cabernet Franc vines that have escaped historic frosts. The **2006 Hosanna** hailed from what Moueix described as a challenging vintage; now at its peak drinking window, it showed celery, truffle, sous bois, honey, and tobacco notes.

The **2017 Hosanna** was from a dry year that yielded excellent quality. Praised by



Moueix (sixth from right) and Xavier Barlier, senior vice president of marketing and communications for Maisons Marques & Domaines USA (far left), are pictured with the devoted group of tasting attendees, including author Deborah Parker Wong (fourth from left).

Moueix for its equilibrium, it was a stand-out whose beatific aromas were the result of a shift toward reductive winemaking to better showcase the site and of pressing off before malolactic conversion to eliminate off-aromas. On the palate, it showed a mélange of red fruits, brown spices, and truffles along with a round, savory quality reminiscent of beef marrow.

Two older vintages were highlighted from Château Magdelaine, which is nested within Château Bélair-Monange; in 2022, the two estates were merged. The site's shallow clay soils atop limestone bedrock are known for producing wines of distinct drinkability. Although the vintage was plagued by late rains, the **2004 Château Magdelaine** was a masterpiece of tertiary characteristics, including patchouli spice and cinnamon. The **2009 Château Magdelaine** came from a vintage that was heralded as legendary in Bordeaux and lauded as one of the estate's best. Made under Hubert de Bouard, it was delicate and floral, with fresh yet muted darker fruit and secondary notes of sweet wood.

At that point, we turned to Napa Valley and the wines of Dominus Estate. The Napanook Vineyard, first planted in 1838, was purchased in 1982 by Christian Moueix, who released the first vintage of Dominus made from the site's fruit in 1983. Single-vineyard wine Napanook was released in 1996; it's considered by the Moueix family to be not a second label to Dominus but

simply an "other wine." In early 2021, the iconic dry-farmed vineyard was certified organic by the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF). The practice of rinsing the grapes ten to 15 days before harvest is unique to Dominus (at least this writer has not seen it performed elsewhere); it's done to remove dust, not to mention ash from wildfires, and can enhance the purity of the fruit.

The 2018 vintage was considered to be absent of challenges, making it "normal" by Napa Valley standards, and yet the **2018 Napanook** was far from normal: Spicy and dark-fruited with plum, currant, and cherry, the blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Petit Verdot exhibited a ferrous mineral streak and earthy depth.

The final wine we tasted was the **2006 Dominus** (the 2019 vintage has recently been released). Initially floral with white roses, the blend of 91% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petit Verdot was still very energetic at nearly 20 years old, with the mineral expression on the midpalate—one that's characteristic of this foothill site—expanding through the finish. The black fruits, dark spices, and mocha that the wine showed in its youth have been seamlessly integrated; the effect is nothing less than sublime. "After 20 years, the wines lose their obviousness," said Moueix. "It's only then that we truly see what the terroir has given us." ❧

Charting a Course for Discovery

AT WSWA, A DINNER WITH **DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS** SHOWCASED STANDOUT PRODUCERS FROM FAR AND WIDE

story by Stefanie Schwalb / photos by Cassidy Earney

DURING THE WINE & SPIRITS Wholesalers of America (WSWA) convention in Orlando, Florida, this spring, *The SOMM Journal* invited a select group of industry pros on a voyage of discovery at sailing-themed restaurant MOOR featuring some of Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits' top producers. Our palates set sail across several wine-producing countries as we tasted bottles running the gamut of varieties and vintages throughout the dinner. At the helm to chart each course were Theo Rutherford, Deutsch Family's senior manager of wine and spirits education, who navigated the food and wine pairings with insights on each, and Sarah Gorvitz, the company's vice president of communications and PR.



All Aboard for Apps

Before we embarked upon the main meal, we were treated to a selection of three Champagnes—Beau Joie Brut, Beau Joie Nature, and Beau Joie Rosé—paired with passed appetizers such as risotto cakes with piquillo pepper aioli and fried green tomatoes topped with pimienta cheese. As Rutherford noted, the addi-



Theo Rutherford and Sarah Gorvitz—Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits' senior manager of wine and spirits education and vice president of communications and PR, respectively—navigated guests through a series of pairings at a recent dinner showcasing the company's wines at MOOR in Orlando, FL.

tion of the brand to the Deutsch Family portfolio marks the company's reentry into the Champagne sector (it previously worked with Pommery), representing its quest to look for new and interesting projects; in that endeavor, he added, chairman Bill Deutsch "desperately wanted bubbles, because, well, who doesn't?"

With 3.5 grams per liter of sugar, the Beau Joie Brut—a blend of 30% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, and 40% Pinot Meunier—"has a little of that richness from the Pinot Meunier, and it's aged about 12 months on lees," Rutherford said. "There's no oak whatsoever—with



Nancy Sabatini, wine director at Mainstreet Wines and Spirits, and Alec Bruggenthies, national beverage director at Smith & Wollensky, were among the trade professionals in attendance.

any of these wines actually—but instead a bit longer lees aging." The zero-dosage Beau Joie Nature contains 60% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir and aged 16 months minimum on the lees. "We can go up to 24 months every once in a while," Rutherford added, "when we decide that's where we want it to head." As for the Beau Joie Rosé, he continued, the blend of 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir spends at least 24 months on the lees: "This one is just super-special. We don't come out with it every year, so it's limited, but hopefully we will be able to continue with more."



Sarah Gorvitz with Kevin Bratt, wine director at Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab, and Gary Fisch, founder and CEO of Gary's Wine and Marketplace, which has locations in New Jersey and Napa Valley.

First and Second Courses: Destination France

For the first and second courses, guests were treated to two wines from Cave de Lugny, a Burgundy cooperative of 250 families established in 1927.



The first was the 2020 Mâcon-Lugny Les Charmes, paired with a citrus beet salad; the second was the 2015 Mâcon-Lugny Coeur de Charmes, accompanied by truffled polenta agnolotti with poached spiny lobster. In addition to "mak[ing] what you have in front of you . . . we also work with our growers to help market and make their own private labels should they want to," said Rutherford. "We help them with all of their viticulture, and they can rent all of our equipment. Our winemaker actually specializes in making their small-batch wines, so if you go to Cave de Lugny, you can taste more than 40 different [labels] from all of the growers—and it's awesome to see what they're doing."

Cave de Lugny's wines are all unoaked. Les Charmes, which comes from one of the largest vineyards in Burgundy at 220 acres, is aged on the lees for 12 months, "so you get something that's nice and rich but not overpowering," Rutherford continued. "You also get the acidic nature that Chardonnay brings. The great thing about [the] Les Charmes vineyard is we

have two different soil types: One is . . . clay, and one is Kimmeridgian limestone," which gives the wine a little bit of salinity. Coeur de Charmes, meanwhile, is "aged 18 months on lees, then 18 months in bottle. It [hails from] a 7.7-acre plot on a limestone ridge right in the middle of [the] Les Charmes vineyard, and it's all Kimmeridgian—there's no clay whatsoever. The ridge sits higher than the rest of the vineyard, and it's the first thing to be picked every single year."

Third Course: Destination California

The next port of call was The Calling 2019 Sonoma Coast Patriarch Pinot Noir, which was paired with herbed potato gnocchi. "The whole point of The Calling is showing the best that Sonoma has to offer," Rutherford said, "so we have two different tiers: a Gold Tier, which is more general[ly] AVA-[appellated as Russian River and Sonoma Coast], and then our Platinum [Tier], which is much more vineyard-specific." Crafted by winemaker James MacPhail, The Patriarch is one of only three wines to come from Putnam Vineyard, which is 3.3 miles from the ocean in the West Sonoma Coast AVA. "The great thing about this vineyard is there are two different levels to it: One is below the fog line and one is above it," Rutherford noted. "We actually have to pick this entire vineyard by ATV. The vineyard produces little, tiny babies of grapes—and they are angry. They are so small that they produce such concentrated flavor." The Calling's oak program is all French, featuring barrels made by 26 different cooperages. "James is an oak freak," Rutherford said, "and he's always trying to find something different to do to give those wines what he really wants."



Fourth Course: Destination Argentina

For the fourth course, we traveled to Argentina with a pairing of Clos de los Siete 2019 Uco Valley Malbec Blend and grilled New York strip. "This is Michel Rolland's project out of Mendoza, and this next vintage will be our 20th," Rutherford said. "Michel went down for the first time in 1988, explored Mendoza, and found

this one plot. It was over 200 acres, and he wanted to buy only 10 of them. The owner of the plot looked at him and said, "You get the whole thing or nothing." So Rolland went back to Bordeaux and convinced six different families—as well as his own—to invest in it. "The rule was: You can do anything you want. You can build your own winery. You can make whatever you want. You can make it however you want, so long as every year Michel can go through and taste whichever wines he likes and blend those together," Rutherford continued. And that's what became Clos de Siete. Unfortunately, after the first year, one of the owners died; then two of the owners bought themselves out, leaving four producers—namely Montevejo, Bodega Diamandes, and Cuvelier Los Andes in addition to Rolland.

Much of the wine that goes into the Clos de Siete blend is organically or biodynamically grown, a fact that will soon be noted on the bottle. "Given where we are in the Uco Valley, we [have] one of the highest-elevated vineyards in the Southern Hemisphere, so we don't have to deal with pests or birds. The only thing we have to contend with is frost every once in a while," Rutherford said. Though the first two vintages of Clos de Siete were Merlot-based because Rolland wanted to make a Right Bank-style Bordeaux blend, "it didn't work at all, and he saw that, so Malbec was what he went to." The 2019 vintage contains 55% Malbec, along with some Cabernet, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot plus a touch of Syrah.

Fifth Course: Destination Portugal

For dessert, attendees were treated to Quinta do Vale Meão 2019 Vintage Port paired with honey-cheesecake mousse. "This is our first vintage since 2016. We do come out with an LBV [Late Bottled Vintage] pretty much every year, but vintage [Port] is obviously a little bit different," Rutherford said. "The wonderful thing about this is we are very traditional in the way that we make the wine. Everything is still foot treading, we still have *lagares*, and we still do our festivals. That's how we make our wine, and we get something that's really lovely in terms of tannin structure when you taste." The wine was big, bold, and tannic indeed—and a delicious way to end the evening. 

*Bien Nacido
Vineyards founder
Stephen Miller
(center) with his
sons, Marshall and
Nicholas, who both
serve as executive
vice president.*



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CRU

BIEN NACIDO VINEYARDS TURNS 50

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Jeremy Ball

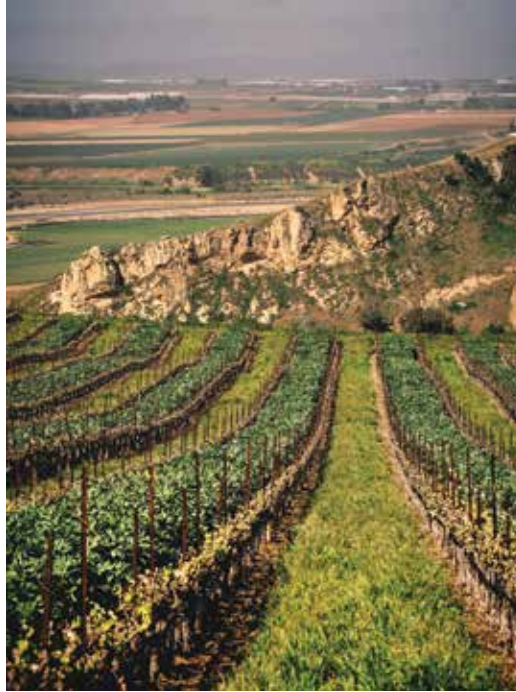
Established in 1973

by brothers Robert and Stephen Miller in the Santa Maria Valley AVA, Bien Nacido quickly became synonymous with exceptional wines, supplying fruit to some of the most prestigious wineries in California as a Grand Cru-caliber site. Now, one of the most iconic names in the state's wine industry is marking its 50th anniversary of growing grapes.

The celebration of this milestone coincides with the opening of The Gatehouse at Bien Nacido, a beautiful open-air tasting room situated off Rancho Tepusquet Road that will welcome the public to the vineyard for the first time in its storied history. The immensity of the site—referred to by the wine brand, whose official name is Bien Nacido Estate, as Bien Nacido Vineyards—and its steep hillside plantings are impossible to comprehend unless seen with the naked eye: something visitors will now get to experience.

Bien Nacido Vineyards' diverse soil structure—composed primarily of sandy loam, chalk, gravelly loam, and marine loam—allows for cultivating a wide range of grape varieties, including its sought-after Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Syrah as well as Pinot Blanc, Roussanne, Marsanne, Viognier, Grenache, Mourvèdre, and Nebbiolo. The estate wines it yields—which are rolling out a refreshed and sleek look with the release of the 2021 vintage later this year—will be served at The Gatehouse alongside expressions from Solomon Hills Estate, another Miller family property 8 miles to the southwest that was purchased in 1999.

The impact on the American wine scene that has resulted from the foresight of Stephen Miller and his late



Composed primarily of sandy loam, chalk, gravelly loam, and marine loam, Bien Nacido Vineyards' diverse soil structure enables the cultivation of a wide range of grape varieties on steep hillside plantings.

presidents, regarding the company's future prospects; Nicholas, for his part, is similarly frank. "We have always been a working ranch that discouraged visits from the public," he said as I stood with him in the new Gatehouse tasting room, taking in views of Bien Nacido's hillside vines, "but that's all changing." Previously, the Bien Nacido Estate wines were presented in a tasting room in Los Olivos that now features the

Miller family's optik label from winemaker Joey Tensley.

brother Robert cannot be understated or overlooked. In the late 1980s, they led their family in establishing Central Coast Wine Services (CCWS), a massive custom-crush facility in Santa Maria that served as a major hub of production in Santa Barbara County, leading to immense growth in the winegrowing industry there. All the while, Bien Nacido was attracting a clientele of producers that helped catapult the vineyard and region into not only the upper echelon of the domestic market but the global arena.

As an example of their forward-thinking mentality, in 2020, Stephen and his sons Nicholas and Marshall formed the Miller Family Wine Company, which replaced CCWS and took over its space as part of the family's transition from being a service provider for other wineries to becoming esteemed producers in their own right. As CEO, Stephen is open about deferring to Nicholas and Marshall, both executive vice

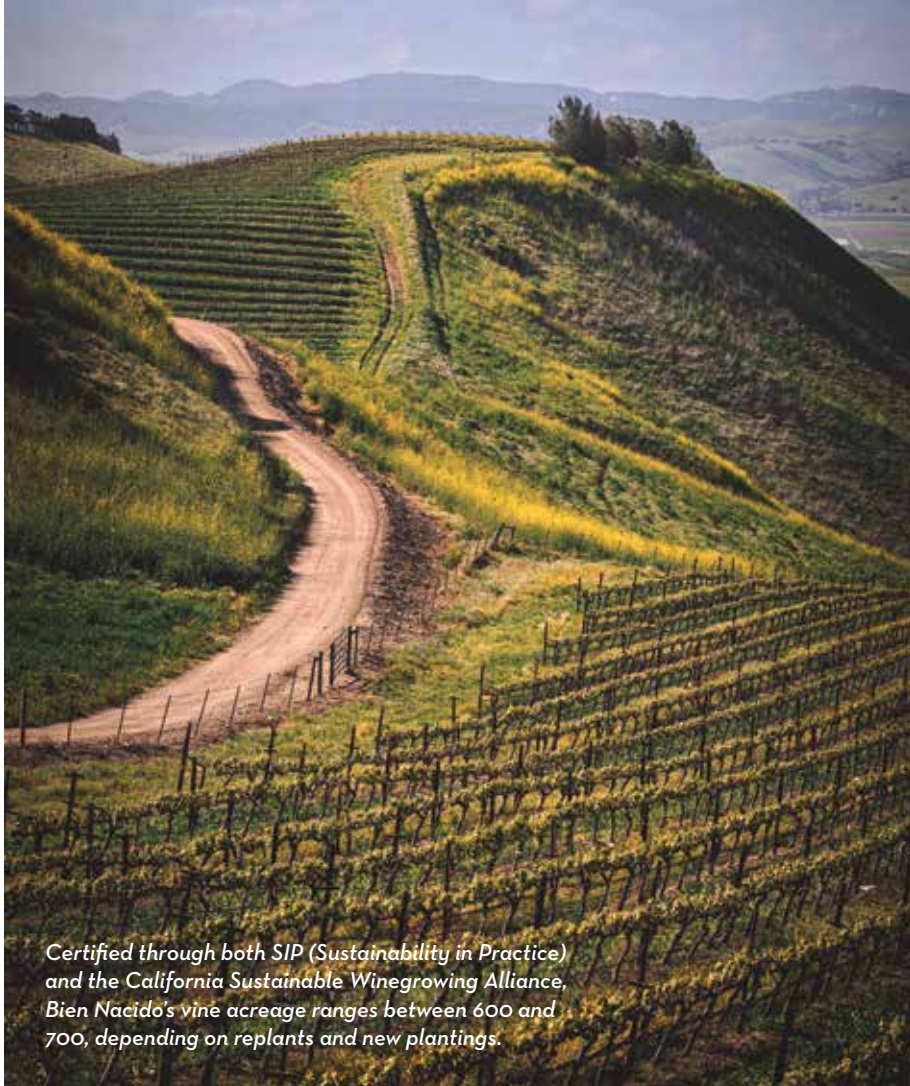
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Noting that it's "the natural next step as a family and company [to lead] with our wines" on their home territory, Nicholas acknowledges that The Gatehouse is a destination visit for most, as the valleys and hilltop bluffs of the property are over an hour from Santa Barbara and an hour and a half south of Paso Robles. But he assures that those seeking to taste through the singular portfolio while savoring a slice of wine-country beauty will find the trek to be worth the effort.

The tasting room's design takes cues from a nearby adobe building constructed in 1857 by the daughter and son-in-law of Tomás Olivera, who gained ownership of the property that would become Bien Nacido (then known as Rancho Tepusquet) 20 years earlier as part of a Spanish land grant. The adobe still stands today as a reminder of the site's history, and

An open-air tasting room named The Gatehouse is poised to open the vineyard to the public for the first time in Bien Nacido's 50-year history.





Certified through both SIP (Sustainability in Practice) and the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, Bien Nacido's vine acreage ranges between 600 and 700, depending on replants and new plantings.

the Millers worked with architect Tom Martinez to borrow certain architectural elements from it, resulting in a handsome structure of whitewashed walls framed by dark-brown beams and capped by a sleek tin roof. The global pandemic, meanwhile, forced changes to the layout as “the concept evolved from belly-up-to-the-bar to table service and more outdoor space with wide-open vineyard views,” said Nicholas, who noted that visitors “who want to go deep” will be able to explore the property on six-person ATV tours. During my recent visit, I had the same desire, so Stephen, Marshall, Nicholas, vineyard manager Chris Hammell, and I jumped in pickup trucks and drove into the vineyard.

“The Superpower of Santa Maria”

As our caravan lurched past the vineyard blocks being planted around the new tasting room on our way up to Block Z, known for its Syrah, Hammell stopped

at a bend near Block X. “Randall Graham [of Bonny Doon Vineyard] and [Qupé founder] Bob Lindquist[, now of Lindquist Family Wines,] split the Syrah in Block X for many years,” he explained. “We used that Syrah to propagate Block Z up on the hill.” Hammell started at Bien Nacido in 2000, having worked stints at David Bruce Winery in Santa Cruz and at Kendall Jackson’s Cambria just down the road from Bien Nacido.

“The superpower of Santa Maria is the . . . ag labor force that work[s] here” year round, Hammell said, noting that Bien Nacido is not only neighbored by farms but grows other crops in addition to grapes, including avocados, blueberries, and lemons. “After 50 years in the business, the Millers are proud of the extended family of employees that have enjoyed lengthy service with them.” Roughly 25 full-time workers have tended the vines for at least eight years and some for over three decades; they even have a benefits package, providing health and life insurance as well as a matching

401(k), reinforcing Stephen’s philosophy that “your most valuable assets are your team members.” Hammell told me that their winery clients are familiar with most of their employees after working in close proximity for years. “It’s a reflection of the Miller family’s attitude” of investing in their workers and valuing the skills they’ve honed over the course of their employment, he added as we passed Hammell’s home on the property.

Before they entered the wine business, the Millers had been farming fruits and vegetables at their home ranch in Ventura County, part of a land grant purchased by Stephen’s great-grandfather in 1871. But as interest in growing grapes gained momentum in California in the late 1960s and early 1970s, fueled by bank reports about winegrowing production struggling to keep pace with U.S. consumption, big investments by seekers of vinous fortunes spawned the planting of thousands upon thousands of acres and the advent of publicly traded companies in the grape-growing market.

The Millers opted to take a different approach from the outset with Bien Nacido, engaging experts from California State University, Fresno, and the University of California, Davis, on strategies for developing a successful viticultural operation. In the spring and summer of 1973, while enlisting the help of a consulting company called Coastal Farming, Stephen picked up a hoe, took the night shift driving a tractor, and got to work helping plant and design 580 acres. Today, Bien Nacido’s vine acreage wavers between 600 and 700, depending on replants and new plantings. All are certified through both SIP (Sustainability in Practice) and the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance.





Bien Nacido's estate wines will debut refreshed packaging with the release of the 2021 vintage later this year.

As we traversed the property, we pulled up to an overlook of the Au Bon Climat winery, which has been one of the Miller family's most important partners over the course of their tenure in the grape-growing business. Stephen recounted that when the late Jim Clendenen approached him about a facility, he gave Clendenen two options: Either build a winery on Bien Nacido grounds in Santa Barbara County and wait three years for permitting or build it in the portion of the vineyards that resides in San Luis Obispo County (SLO) and get permits in three months. After Clendenen opted for SLO, they built a 5,000-square-foot winery in 1987 and quickly expanded, helping to put the Millers' grapes—and the Bien Nacido name—on the map.

"We grew up at Au Bon Climat, here in the vineyards," recalled Nicholas, noting that Clendenen and Lindquist would host frequent tastings where they would open library bottlings that reinforced Bien Nacido's world-class status. Joined in their efforts by winemakers like Rick Longoria, Adam Tolmach, and Ken Brown, "they

have done so much for the region and for the vineyard," he said, adding that "in these next 50 years, we're never looking to pivot away from selling grapes. . . . Our Bien Nacido Estate wines are made to express this site—to tell our story of the vineyard—and serve as exciting reference points for consumers."

Well Born for the Future

Both the Bien Nacido Estate wines—which made their debut with the 2007 vintage—and those of Solomon Hills are produced in a small barn near the historic adobe, reflecting Stephen's preference for repurposing old buildings on the property. To craft the wines, "we source from parcels and sections that are spread across the length and breadth of the vineyard," said winemaker Anthony Avila. "The program is farming-focused so that when we get the grapes to the winery, the quality is there, and [then] we're just shepherding the fruit to the final process. The plan is to still be making wine from these vines 40 or 50 years from now."

Avila, who started at Bien Nacido as assistant winemaker in 2013, took over as winemaker in 2019. Today, he produces 11 wines for Bien Nacido's estate tier—including a Syrah, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Grenache as well as the three wines in its Black Label collection, The Captain Pinot Noir, The XO Syrah, and Succession GSM—along with five wines sold only in the tasting room. The Bien Nacido Estate and Solomon Hills wines are produced in exactly the same manner, from picking and crushing to blending and bottling, and the winemaking is "genuinely a team effort with [Hammell]; the Millers; and my assistant winemaker, Connor Bonetti. We make all decisions in tandem," said Avila.

While Bien Nacido has grape contracts with roughly 40–45 winery clients at any given time, only about half of the fruit that leaves the ranch will end up on a label bearing the words "Bien Nacido," as the Millers insist that two cases of each wine using the name be submitted for review so that they can be evaluated to ensure quality. When asked if they maintain a price threshold for the wines that list Bien Nacido on the label, Marshall responded that they're considering building price minimums into their contracts in

the future, noting that the pricing should reflect the quality of fruit that's expected.

"Burgundian monks have about 500 years' advantage on us," he said with a laugh, "but knowing how this site was planted in '73, we are proud that it was well born—that it was done as best as possible. But we have learned a lot, and the work being done today will define what 'well born' looks like for the next generation."

The current generation, meanwhile, certainly hasn't been afraid to experiment. For example, beginning a decade ago, the family initiated trials with French-produced Pellenc mechanical harvesters at Bien Nacido Vineyards; they proved so fruitful that in 2020 and 2021, the Millers decided to start bottling wines under a co-branded label with the word "Pellenc" hovering just over the grape name (the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, available for \$75 and \$50, respectively, will soon be available for consumers to sample in The Gatehouse). "We believe this is the future of viticulture in California and that Pellenc is one of the top harvesters available," says Marshall, noting that they're capable of optically sorting grapes as the machine makes its way through the vines.

Bien Nacido's leadership is aware that many in the wine trade might still look at mechanical harvesting as inferior to hand harvesting, but with fine-tuning, these machines are yielding successful harvests and serve as a symbol of what's possible as mechanization is increasingly adopted—a shift that will have immense implications for grape growers. For now, Bien Nacido will continue offering its clients the choice of hand-harvested fruit or grapes yielded with mechanized farming; their own Bien Nacido Estate wines, meanwhile, will still be hand harvested.

Above all, as the Millers round the bend on five decades in the business, their commitment to striving toward the highest standards of farming has never wavered. Like their vines, their principles are deep-rooted, and they're ready to tell their story to trade and consumers alike. "The Gatehouse is not just the first time we are opening our doors to the public at Bien Nacido," says Nicholas, "it also represents for us a step forward into the future. We no longer want to be thought of as just a world-class vineyard site but as a world-class winery as well." SJ

Morning fog drifts over Weir Vineyard.

On a Positive Note

DISCOVERING BROOKS NOTE WINERY

FOCUSING ON PINOT NOIR

is what Garry Brooks and his wife, Joanne Note, do best. Brooks caught the Pinot bug after working at Kosta Browne and Dutton Goldfield as enologist and assistant winemaker, respectively. In 2012, he decided to do his own thing, purchasing a few tons of Pinot Noir grapes from both Marin County and the Weir Vineyard in Mendocino County's Yorkville Highlands AVA and founding the Brooks Note winery. In 2021, the couple opened a new winemaking facility and tasting room in downtown Petaluma.

We were lucky enough to experience some of these special wines. They span diverse terroirs, which makes Brooks Note's portfolio all the more appealing to us as tasters.



PHOTO: GARY OTTONELLO

Brooks Note winemaker and proprietor Garry Brooks left a career in IT business management to pursue winemaking in 2004 and started his winery in 2012.

Brooks Note 2021 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$42)

Just south of Sebastopol is a small backyard vineyard called Monroe, which sits on sandy Goldridge soil and experiences afternoon winds from the Petaluma Gap. It yielded this steely, crisp, and edgy Chardonnay with notes of peach, guava, apple, and cashew. Lemon blossom brings floral tones to the finish, which is carried forward by stark minerality and keen acidity. **94**

Brooks Note 2021 Pinot Noir, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$42)

Cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg surround blueberry on the nose. On the deep and savory palate, salted cherry and sage meet up with vanilla and oak. This wine glistens with good acidity and an innate freshness. **93**

Brooks Note 2021 Pinot Noir, Weir Vineyard, Yorkville Highlands, Mendocino County (\$52)

The vineyard sits at about 1,000 feet above sea level on rocky, well-drained soil. While experiencing a large diurnal temperature shift, it's cooled by a coastal breeze during the day. Aged for 11 months in French oak, this wine offers alluring aromas of cinnamon and exotic incense with a smack of pomegranate. It's delicate on the palate, with velvet-lined notes of rose petal, sweet basil, and cinnamon tea plus a hint of saddle leather. **93**



PHOTO: @M.POGGI

Brooks Note 2021 Panther Ridge Pinot Noir, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County (\$65)

Planted on a steep ridge at 1,000 feet in elevation on Sonoma Mountain, the vineyard this mineral-driven Pinot Noir comes from is kept cool by the notorious winds from the Petaluma Gap. Wet leaves, heather, dark cherry, and fennel set a brilliant tone for the palate. Framed by fine acidity, notes of black tea, violets, and Worcestershire leave behind a dusty, memorable finish. **95**

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Bodega Luigi Bosca
winemaking and vineyard
director Pablo Cúneo.

FROM THE **ESSENTIAL** TO THE
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Bodega Luigi Bosca

Founded in 1901 by Don Leoncio Arizu in Mendoza, Bodega Luigi Bosca is among the most historic wineries in Argentina, continuously crafting award-winning wines that showcase the unique terroir of the region in the eastern foothills of the Andes Mountains. Mendoza's bright sunshine, moderate rainfall, alluvial soils, and vineyards that are planted at some of the highest altitudes in the world are key attributes that help produce its vibrant wines.

While Mendoza Malbec has been popular in the United States and on the international wine market for at least two decades, there has been a more recent trend for producers to zero in on the subregions that their grapes are grown in, such as Luján de Cuyo and Valle de Uco. One of the producers at the forefront of this movement is Luigi Bosca, which has the distinction of being Argentina's oldest family-owned winery. Luigi Bosca recently celebrated the 120th anniversary of its first vintage under the guidance of Don Leoncio Arizu's descendants, Alberto Arizu Sr. and Alberto Arizu Jr. The Arizu family was instrumental in establishing Luján de Cuyo as Argentina's first DOC in 1989, which was also the first in South America.

Luigi Bosca's work in the 1970s and 1980s helped establish the beginning of Argentina's fine wine industry, and its dedication to and investment in defining and elevating Argentine wines helped lay the foundation for the growth of and accolades for Mendoza's diverse subregions that we see today. The Arizu family maintains a historical library of back vintages in their cellar that define the story and evolution of Luján de Cuyo. Theirs is one of the few wineries that can showcase the historical representation of Luján de Cuyo and demonstrate the journey of Argentina's fine wine through a tasting.

Dedicated to showcasing ultra-premium and luxury wines, the family has four estate vineyards spanning over 1,300 acres in not only Luján de Cuyo but the celebrated subregions of Uco Valley

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LUIGI BOSCA



Alberto Arizu and his son Alberto Arizu Jr. represent the third and fourth generations of family ownership at Bodega Luigi Bosca, founded in Mendoza in 1901.

The Arizu family has four estate vineyards spanning over 1,300 acres in the celebrated subregions of Luján de Cuyo, Uco Valley, and Maipú.



and Maipú. Winemaking and vineyard director Pablo Cúneo, a passionate advocate for the region, also serves as secretary at the DOC Luján de Cuyo Council, whose mission is to protect and promote the acclaimed Mendoza terroir and its high-quality wines and vineyards.

Luigi Bosca's deep regional and subregional understanding of terroir for over 120 years is reflected in the final wines. Los Miradores Vineyard in the Uco Valley focuses on the Malbec variety and its expression in this unique terroir. Los Miralejos is a 46-acre high-elevation vineyard in Altamira in the heart of the Uco Valley. Los Nobles Vineyard covers 123 acres in Luján de Cuyo and is home to the original genetic vine material of the Arizu family, with ancient vines that respect the estate's natural slopes and pioneering layout. And El Paraíso in Maipú is the location of the family's home and the center of their history. The vineyard spans over 700 acres and is planted to a range of white and red varieties.

The portfolio today includes the Luigi Bosca tier; the De Sangre collection; Los Nobles' single-vineyard expressions; and the pinnacle wine of the group, Paraíso.

The Four Secrets of the Andes: What Makes Mendoza So Special

Argentinian wine regions are impacted by a continental weather condition created by the Andes Mountains that stops all influence from the Pacific Ocean. Luigi Bosca refers to this as the "Four Secrets of the Andes," which contribute to what makes the wines from this region so unique.

THE FIRST SECRET: dry weather and sunlight that gives a large amount of energy to the vines to develop and concentrate color, aromas, and flavors and helps to achieve a complete ripeness of tannins.

THE SECOND SECRET: very well-drained alluvial soils that make the vines grow in balance and limit excessive vigor. This helps to control yields and to obtain very concentrated grapes.

THE THIRD SECRET: pure water coming from melting snow from the Andes. As rainfall is limited, typically to only 200 millimeters (7.9 inches) per year, there is a need for irrigation, which is another tool to control and manage the development of the vines.

THE FOURTH SECRET: the altitude, which is the only way to differentiate areas with special microclimates. In Mendoza, Luigi Bosca has vineyards planted from 700 meters to 1,700 meters of elevation, which ensures a diverse range of climates from very cold to warm. These continental conditions are perfect for growing Malbec and helping to develop its full potential and character.



TASTING NOTES

Luigi Bosca De Sangre Malbec DOC, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, is a pure expression from Argentina's first designated wine appellation, Luján de Cuyo. This generous, rich wine offers layers of red fruit and spice. Aged 12 months in oak, it's complex and integrated on the palate, with a long finish. **93**

Luigi Bosca Los Nobles Malbec, Las Compuertas, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, is an exceptional single-vineyard blend of 94% Malbec and 6% Petit Verdot sourced from 90-plus-year-old vines in Luigi Bosca's Los Nobles Vineyard. Aged for 20 months in new French oak, it offers layers of red and black fruit and sweet spices with notes of coffee and leather. **95**

Luigi Bosca Paraíso, Mendoza, is the result of the most celebrated harvests only and pays tribute to the El Paraíso Vineyard and the location of the Arizu family homestead. For over 120 years, this location has served as a source of inspiration, innovation, and family legacy. Paraíso, the winery's most important wine, is a blend of 71% Malbec and 29% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aromas of red fruits and spices lead to a graceful and broad mouthfeel along with integrated fruit, spice, toast, and leather notes. **98**



the CHARDONNAY *Gateway*

THANKS TO A NEW WAVE OF PRODUCERS, **CHABLIS** IS ONCE
AGAIN THE WINE OF THE TIMES by Wanda Mann



PHOTOS: BVB—S. BOULARD

▼ *The Chablis Grand Cru hill.*





Domaine Long-Depaquit estate manager Louis Gimonet.



Thomas Ventoura of Domaine Ventoura.

CHARDONNAY IS OFTEN the gateway grape for burgeoning white-wine drinkers—and once their palates arrive at Chablis, their admiration only deepens as they discover the variety's capacity for terroir-driven vibrancy. But as consumers chase new trends, could the region's reputation as an Old World classic lead them to overlook it? Hopefully not: If they look a little closer, they'll see a renaissance in Bourgogne's northernmost appellation as a new generation reimagines Chablis, bringing fresh ideas to the table without sacrificing quality. Today, 25% of the region's producers are under 40, and women are playing a more prominent role in the industry, from the vineyard to the cellar; in fact, 30% of Chablis' domaines are owned or co-owned by women.

One of those women is Marine Descombe, a fifth-generation vintner who assumed leadership of her family's estate, *Famille Descombe*, in the 2010s. Ask her what distinguishes Chablis from other 100% Chardonnay expressions and she'll tell you that "the wines of Chablis are characterized by their purity, their

crispness, and their minerality. The cool climate and the Kimmeridgian soil of Chablis give Chardonnay a special and singular grain. The freshness, minerality, and pep in [these] wines make them the purest expression of Chardonnay without artifice." As such, she adds, they're "perfectly adapted to the expectations of the new generation."

Chablis encompasses roughly 14,500 acres of vineyards set among 20 villages and hamlets on both sides of the Serein River in the Serein Valley, a low-lying sedimentary basin that's subdivided into four appellations: Petit Chablis, Chablis, Chablis Premier Cru, and Chablis Grand Cru. Named after a geological age that occurred around 150 million years ago during the Upper Jurassic Period, the area's aforementioned Kimmeridgian subsoils are composed of clay, limestone, and the fossils of ancient oysters called *Exogyra virgula*, which contribute to the pronounced mineral character of the wine.

Louis Gimonet, estate manager for *Domaine Long-Depaquit*, knows very well how Chardonnay expresses itself

in different soil types. The Champagne native's winemaking journey has taken him throughout France and abroad to California and Oregon; experienced in conducting terroir studies, he extols the unique qualities of Chablis' soil, noting that "all terroirs have their own identity, [and] Chablis is a remarkable example." In addition to the "marine origin of the soils," he says, "a cool microclimate typical of a northern region allows us to make very authentic wines," with Chardonnay being "the ideal grape variety to best express [this] terroir. The concentration of [its] mineral and saline notes, coupled with the balance of the lively and energetic structure, [make it] sought after by producers and loved by consumers."

Indeed, it seems that Chablis was ahead of the curve when it comes to the tastes of contemporary wine drinkers. "Chablis benefits from the evolution of consumption patterns," says third-generation winemaker Thomas Ventoura of *Domaine Ventoura*. "Life has abandoned rich and powerful wines in favor of more digestible and more accessible wines.



Laurent and Camille Schaller of *Domaine Camille & Laurent Schaller*.



Eléonore Moreau of *Domaine des Pérégrins*.

Chablis[as] a dry white wine with a low alcohol content, allows us to seduce this new generation of consumers." This sentiment is shared by Camille Schaller, who makes wine with his father, Laurent, at their eponymous estate, *Domaine Camille & Laurent Schaller*: "The current trend is to look for freshness and finesse, which is reflected in the wines of Chablis," he says.

Meanwhile, second-generation winemaker Eléonore Moreau of *Domaine des Pérégrins* believes that the gastronomic appeal of Chablis, be it young or evolved, also distinguishes it from other Chardonnays. "Located in Northern Bourgogne, we still benefit from lower temperatures than other regions, and this allows us to have wines with lower ABV, which are . . . really pleasant to drink," she says. "The minerality of our wines, combined with the aromas of white fruits and flowers for some vintages, [makes them] very well appreciated as an apéritif as well as with a main [course], [such as] a fish or poultry dish with cream. More and more, wine lovers even appreciate Chablis with cheeses. Consumers, therefore, have many opportunities and occasions to appreciate our wines . . . at almost every moment of the meal."

Although all wines labeled Chablis must contain 100% Chardonnay, the region is not a monolith. Like a student who

personalizes a classic school uniform with a unique accessory, Chablis producers bring their own sensibility to their wines. *Ventoura's* is perhaps the most reflective of the traditional style: "Our production is purposely limited and our vinification simple and natural, which allows us to highlight our terroir," he says. "Our plot of land in the commune of Fontenay-près-Chablis allows us to obtain balanced, very pure wines with a dominant chalky Chablisian character." But for those who believe Chablis is always lean, austere, and unoaked, *Gimonnet* presents a compelling counterpoint: "The wines of *Domaine Long-Depaquit* have the reputation of being . . . rich and ripe [yet in] balance. We are fortunate to [oversee], in addition to the Chablis village, six Premiers Crus and six Grands Crus, including a unique monopole. This diversity of soils, slopes, microclimates, and exposures allows us to offer wines with a very different style of freshness, fatness, concentration, and minerality. The wood aging for the crus is used sparingly in order not to disturb the typicality of Chablis and to keep the spirit of the terroir!"

Schaller, for his part, embraces both freshness and power: "Our Petit Chablis and Chablis are in the pure Chablis tradition—minerality, purity, finesse, [and] freshness [are] what we are looking for,"

he says. "Our Premier Cru *Vau de Vey* expresses a rich aromatic complexity . . . with a relative freshness due to its eastern exposure and a saline finish, [while] our Premier Cru *Vaucoupin* gives a more powerful wine with an aroma of ripe fruit and a saline freshness on the finish due to its southern exposure."

Although Moreau also aims for a house style, she is intrigued by vintage variation. "Our wines are fruity and taut, with a typical minerality well present," she explains. "Our long maturation in vats brings roundness and power. Our wines need some time in the bottle to open up and be fully appreciated. [Over time,] some vintages can be quite atypical and surprising." *Descombe* likewise delights in creating Chablis that showcases the impact of long aging: "We are looking for perfect maturity, purity, and the right balance between acidity and roundness. This is why we carry out long maturing on fine lees [between 12 and 18 months] with a [brief] passage in barrels for the Premiers Crus. We vinify each of our 21 parcels independently in order to reveal the full expression of the terroir."

While Chablis will always be a reference point for Chardonnay, a new wave of dynamic winemakers is committed to ensuring its relevance for the consumers of today—and tomorrow. **\$**

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It's a Small World

ITALY, NEW YORK, AND FLORIDA CONVERGE AT A WINE DINNER EXPLORING THE DEEP HISTORY OF **MASI** AND **CA' DEL BOSCO**

story by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Cassidy Earney



Jacob Gragg, Ca' del Bosco and portfolio fine wine specialist for Santa Margherita USA, hosted a five-course dinner featuring the company's wines at Il Mulino New York Trattoria in Lake Buena Vista, FL.

LOCATED IN THE Walt Disney World Swan Resort at the edge of the hotel's namesake park, the New York City-based Il Mulino Trattoria is typically filled to the gills with tourists happily enjoying regional Abruzzese cuisine while decompressing from their long day at the park. But even amid the hustle and bustle of regular dinner service, Il Mulino's gracious general manager, Eric Nelson, and his attentive staff found the time to make a large party of sommeliers and other wine professionals feel welcome as they visited the restaurant for a private dinner while attending the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America's (WSWA) Access LIVE convention in early April.

Hosting the five-course dinner was Jacob Gragg, Ca' del Bosco and portfolio fine wine specialist for Santa Margherita USA. Although the voices of the boisterous travelers echoed within our private room, they were still no match for Gragg: Few can hold the attention of the trade quite like the Advanced Sommelier, who somehow always knows just what people want to hear about any given wine. That was especially true of the bottlings that Gragg chose to share on this balmy Florida evening.

Placed in the hand of each arriving guest was a glass of Ca' del Bosco's flagship sparkling wine, Cuvée



A group of 30 buyers attended the dinner.



somms were surprised to see a still wine made by the sparkling stalwart, Gragg noted that the first wine Ca' del Bosco produced was a still Pinot Blanc. "And a few years later [after the Pinot Blanc.] we started making a still Chardonnay under the supervision of André Tchelistcheff," he explained. "In fact, [it was] the very first barrel-fermented Chardonnay from Italy, made in 1982." The 100% Chardonnay comes from six of Ca' del Bosco's estate vineyards, all home to old vines: "The youngest of the six is about 28 years

style of wine called *ripasso*, which ... is reusing the Amarone skins to make a second wine that [is] refermented," said Gragg. The expression was the world's first *ripasso*-style wine.

In the 1980s, in an effort to evolve the style, Masi "dried Corvina and Rondinella expressly for the purposes of use in a second wine. So rather than repurposing Amarone's leftovers, Masi uses freshly dried grapes. This is a much more intentional version of *ripasso*, and that's the product you have here in the glass," Gragg explained while raising his own. "So yes, the Boscaini family and this region is known for Amarone, but [Campofiorin] represents the family and their innovations over the last, well, 50 out of 250 years."

The final two courses offered two similar but distinct wine pairings: The Masi 2017 Costasera Amarone della Valpolicella Classico accompanied grilled boneless rib-eye with sautéed spinach and an Amarone reduction, while the Masi 2016 Costasera Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Riserva joined a cheese plate featuring aged Parmigiano Reggiano and honey. The biggest difference between the wines, according to Gragg? "The inclusion of grapes. The first Amarone you had only has the three classic grapes: Corvina, Rondinella, and Molinara. The [Riserva] has a fourth grape that 25, 30 years ago basically didn't exist in the region. Well, it did technically, and it's been in the region for hundreds of years, but [it] was so minute that almost nobody had it," he explained. In fact, the variety, called *Oseleta*, was generally thought to be extinct until the Boscaini family discovered it in a friend's vineyard, identified it, and began planting it. "[They] really helped to bring it back into the fold for the region. It's really unusual and it makes up about 10% of the blend," Gragg added.

Along with a longer *appassimento* process and a longer aging regimen, it's this grape, Gragg noted, that helps to elevate the Riserva. While Amarone is generally considered to be a big, concentrated, texturally driven wine with considerable residual sugar, Masi's skews more elegant, with the high-acid *Oseleta* contributing a fresh vibrancy—much like the sense of vitality that the Boscaini family continues to bring to the Valpolicella region and its wines. *sj*



Prestige Edizione 45. "What you're tasting was made just like Champagne," noted Gragg. "It was also made with similar grapes, as it's mostly Chardonnay, but it's not at all like Champagne if you consider every single other factor: It comes from a very different place with a different climate, different soil, and, most importantly, a very different mentality and approach."

Established in 1968, Ca' del Bosco is known as a pioneer of Franciacorta and remains one of the region's benchmark producers. Its Cuvée Prestige Edizione 45 is a multivintage wine that's labeled according to its base vintage, namely 2020, of which it contains 68%, plus 29% 2019 and 3% 2018. "We've been counting up since 1976, when we made our first multivintage wine," added Gragg. The dry, citrusy, and floral sparkler, consisting of 82% Chardonnay, 16.5% Pinot Nero, and 1.5% Pinot Bianco, not only helped to cut through the fat in the first course of prosciutto, mortadella, soppressata, and other Italian cured meats but revived our palates after a long day of blind tasting at WSWA's wine and spirits competition.

On the heels of the salumi came a Caesar salad whose creamy tang and buttery croutons paired well with the Ca' del Bosco 2017 Chardonnay. As a few of the



Eric Nelson is general manager at Il Mulino New York Trattoria.

old right now," said Gragg, who was also careful to note that the grapes that go into the bottling are grown exclusively for still-wine production and are much less densely planted than the Chardonnay grown for the producer's sparkling wine. Only about 100 cases (600 bottles) make it into the States, "so we're drinking 1% of that right now," he joked.

As the dinner's courses became more substantial, so did the wine. Served alongside arborio rice with wild mushrooms and truffle oil was the Masi Campofiorin 2019 Rosso del Veronese. Owned by the Boscaini family for over 250 years, Masi can trace its roots back to 1772, when the Boscainis purchased a vineyard in a small valley known then as the Vaio dei Masi. "Then in 1964 they made a new



Cru des Côtes du Rhône

AOC Rasteau: The Cru to Know in the Southern Rhône

Tucked away in southeast France, the Rhône Valley is one of France's premier wine regions, recognized primarily for its production of Grenache- and Syrah-based wines. While many names from this region are well known around the world, part of its beauty lies in its diversity. Among the many gems of the Rhône Valley, the village of Rasteau is home to a new generation of ambitious winemakers dedicated to producing world-class Cru wines that represent their magnificent terroir.

Crus of the Southern Rhône

As the Rhône River winds south, far from its source in the Swiss Alps, a vast wine region occupies the territory between the villages of Vienne in the north and Arles in the south. Thirty-one AOCs (Appellations d'Origine Contrôlées) are found within these boundaries, forming the area that most know as the Rhône Valley. Of those 31 AOCs—which include the well-known AOC Côtes du Rhône—17 have achieved the status of Cru Côtes du Rhône, recognized for unique terroir and stringent production standards.

The southern Rhône, where Grenache is the bloodline of all wine production, is home to nine Crus. While perhaps less commonly recognized than some of their neighbors in the north, these Crus have earned their status, producing outstanding quality wine and comprising only 9% of total production in the Rhône Valley.

What's in a Name?

The village of Rasteau is seated 200 meters (650 feet) above sea level on a hilltop in the southern Rhône Valley in the department of Vaucluse. Lodged between the Ouvèze River, a left tributary of the Rhône, and the Dentelles de Montmirail mountain range, the hills of Rasteau are interrupted by hollows and valleys, forming spurs and ridgelines that together look like the teeth of a rake.



The appellation's name, Rasteau, is derived from the early French word for "rake," which today has evolved into the modern word "râteau." Rasteau's terroir is in its very name.

A Mosaic of Terroirs

Boasting one of the region's most unique terroirs, Rasteau sits atop three layers of soil, including clay and limestone soils, sparse soils over marl, and red soils on sandstone. Many parcels are covered in rounded cobbles, swept down from the Alps by the Ouvèze when the glaciers melted over 18 million years ago. During the growing season, these cobbles gather heat from the region's bright sun during the day and release it to the vines at night, helping to extend optimal ripening conditions and creating concentrated berries.

The vineyards of Rasteau are arranged in an amphitheater shape with mostly south-facing slopes, protecting the vines from the harshness of the mistral winds. The dry Mediterranean climate is ideal for producing fruit of varying concentrations and characteristics across Rasteau's soil types. This undulating landscape offers growers great variety and depth of fruit for winemaking, with the highest parts of the growing area reaching 320 meters (1,050 feet) above sea level.

Blue marl is a signature component of Rasteau's terroir due to its high iron content, which is a necessary element for the production of anthocyanins, contributing to the deep color of Rasteau's wines. Water-retaining clay benefits the vines in times of drought and provides the vine with a stock of chemical elements.

Mild winters in Rasteau envelop the dormant vines in shimmering light, reflecting off of red and bluish soils to create a stunning, multicolored landscape.

A Foundational History of Winemaking

Winegrapes have likely been planted in Rasteau since 30 BCE, although vineyards were largely forgotten until the Middle Ages. By the 18th century, Rasteau's vineyards were the largest in Vaucluse, best known for producing Vin Doux Naturel, a fortified sweet wine. In 1870, as in much of Europe, phylloxera ravaged the vineyards, which were later replanted using American rootstock. In 1935, winemakers in Rasteau began producing their famed Vins Doux Naturels again, and in 1937 Rasteau became part of the Côtes du Rhône AOC. In 1944, a separate AOC was created for Rasteau's sweet wines. As quality improved for dry red wines, the appellation was awarded Côtes du Rhône Villages Rasteau status in 1966. By 2010, the region had achieved the coveted Cru des Côtes du Rhône status.

The Power and Elegance of Cru Rasteau

The dry red wines of AOC Rasteau Cru des Côtes du Rhône, which form 97% of the appellation's still-wine production, are known for their depth and richness, combining power with subtle complexity and elegance. These are gastronomic wines, best enjoyed with equally elegant cuisine.

Cru Rasteau wines must contain at least 50% Grenache, which provides aromatic structure and roundness. Syrah is added to increase color intensity and aromatic complexity, providing notes of black fruit, violet, and spices. Mourvèdre is added to build structure and tannic texture, along with forest-preserved fruit aromatics.

In 2022, Cru Rasteau encompassed 942 hectares (2,328 acres) of planted vines, which yielded 32,734 hectoliters (864,741 gallons) of wine.

A New Generation Brings a Bright Future

As younger generations of winegrowers and winemakers take charge, Rasteau has experienced a surge in organic and biodynamic farming. Thirty-two percent of vineyards are farmed with organic practices or are in the process of converting to organic practices. Winegrowers commonly preserve natural flora in their vineyards, increasing biodiversity and providing essential habitats. This young generation of farmers and winemakers is looking toward the future, committed to making better wines and protecting the land that yields them.

WINE SCORES



Domaine des Escaravailles 2019 La Ponce, AOC Rasteau, France (\$26)
This blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah offers dry walnut-skin tannins; creamy, sumptuous notes of blackberry preserves and spiced, charred oak; and delectable flavors of dark plum liqueur that last into the lengthy finish. **96**



Domaine La Soumade 2019 Cuvée Prestige, AOC Rasteau, France (\$19)
Spiced oak, cinnamon, and black cherry light up the nose and palate of this blend of 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, and 10% Mourvèdre. It exudes a striking acidity that lifts and brightens notes of rhubarb, mincemeat, and tobacco. The dry, dusty finish readies you for the next sip. **95**



Alain Jaume 2020 Les Valats, AOC Rasteau, France (\$17)
Dusky and dry, with concentrated flavors of cassis, mulberry, and garrigue. A brisk acid structure aligns with cigar-box spice for a zing on the palate. Roasted coffee and milk chocolate meander through to the finish. **93**



LAVAU 2020 Lavau, AOC Rasteau, France (\$20)
A bold, concentrated blend of Grenache and Syrah with notes of grilled meats, tobacco, black pepper, and a generous array of blue fruit. Silky and juicy, with a piquancy of spiced cedar that defines the savory and robust finish. **93**



Maison Gabriel Meffre 2021 Gabriel Meffre Saint Didier, AOC Rasteau, France (\$19)
A pleasurable, suede-like mouthfeel intertwined with coffee bean and black cherry sets this wine apart. Red plum and garrigue are sweetened by gardenia, peony, and a juicy flow of boysenberry and mocha. Stunning. **96**



Domaine Mikael Boutin 2019 M-B AOC Rasteau Red, France (\$22)
Dried violets grip and take time to release. The chalky mouthfeel coats the teeth and tongue, but ultimately this stately red morphs into an opulent sipper. Wild strawberry and black-tea tannins are lifted by fine acidity. **94**



Domaine de Verquière 2020 AOC Rasteau Red, France (\$17)
A perfume of rhubarb and peony syncs with garrigue spice on the palate of this fresh and pretty wine. Cured meats and red tea come in midway, along with bright acidity. **93**

WHERE CAB

IS

King

THE PASO ROBLES CAB CAMP
LOOKED TOWARD THE CALIFORNIA REGION'S
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

.....
story by **CHRISTINA BARRUETA** / photos by **CAL BINGHAM**
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*Looking out at the vineyards of DAOU
Family Estates atop DAOU Mountain at
2,200 feet in elevation.*

The Paso Robles CAB (Cabernet and Bordeaux) Collective (PRCC) was established in 2012 to champion the Cabernet and red Bordeaux varieties that make up more than 60% of all plantings in the region. Located approximately midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, this Central Coast winegrowing area was recognized as an AVA in 1983 and has since been divided into 11 sub-AVAs: Adelaida District, Creston District, El Pomar District, Paso Robles Estrella District, Paso Robles Geneseo District, Paso Robles Highlands District, Paso Robles Willow Creek District, San Juan Creek, San Miguel District, Santa Margarita Ranch, and Templeton Gap District. Diverse soils, including prevalent calcareous clay and limestone, and wide diurnal temperature swings create ideal conditions for producing premier wines.

In March, I joined 50 of the country's top sommeliers, restaurateurs, and wine buyers for a three-day immersive CAB Camp sponsored by *The SOMM Journal* to delve into Paso's Bordeaux varieties and the role sustainability plays in its viticulture. Encompassing winery tours, seminars, and tastings, it was an unforgettable opportunity to learn more about the lauded wines coming out of Paso and to engage with the vintners and producers who are introducing them to worldwide acclaim.



Allegretto Vineyard Resort in Paso Robles draws architectural inspiration from Italian estates.



Wine Day one

As we gathered for lunch at the beautiful Allegretto Vineyard Resort in the Estrella District, PRCC executive director Linda Sanpei introduced owner-winemaker Douglas Ayers. "When I first met Douglas in 2015, he told me he was a gardener and that he was building a bed and breakfast," said Sanpei with a chuckle. "It turns out that the bed and breakfast was this rather magnificent resort with 171 rooms and suites." While we dined on pasta Bolognese and pollo arrosto

paired with Allegretto's Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Rosé of Malbec, Ayers welcomed us to his 20-acre property. "I'm just a humble gardener having fun," he said with a smile before sharing the importance of being environmentally responsible. "We practice biodynamic farming as stewards of the land, and the sacredness of this land is what I try to express in winemaking." He expanded on this philosophy as we toured the property complete with alpacas and sheep that graze vineyards planted to Cabernet, Vermentino, Viognier, Merlot, and Tannat.



Zeph Lachowicz, corporate sommelier at Dahl Restaurant Group in Sedona, AZ, poses with Ancient Peaks Winery co-owner Doug Filipponi.



A ziplining deck offers a picturesque panorama of the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA.

Next we headed to the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA, along the way picking up Doug Filipponi, co-owner of Ancient Peaks Winery. As we drove through its 14,000 acres of rolling hills, made verdant from recent rains, he shared its history and pointed out its SIP (Sustainability in Practice) Certified vineyard blocks. Our destination was the Santa Margarita Adventures ziplining center, where he shared a bit of trivia: "There are six ziplines now, but our first was named Renegade after a Syrah blend you'll have tonight. It's also a little like our personalities."

Upon arrival, our group parted ways—some to admire the vineyards from above, and others, like myself, to board vintage open-air Hummers for a foraging tour. As we trundled across shallow streams and past Angus cattle, Ancient Peaks co-owner Karl Wittstrom and naturalist Jacqueline Redinger spoke about the ranch's flora,



director Caine Thompson for a fascinating seminar on regenerative viticulture. As sustainability lead for parent company O'Neill Vintners & Distillers, Thompson is helping an ambitious 48-acre case study for becoming Regenerative Organic Certified (ROC). Though the winery is already certified by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA), ROC is a new standard with additional requirements for soil health, animal welfare, and social fairness. "It includes grazing animals, zero pesticides, minimal tillage, and paying staff a living wage," said Thompson. For example, mealybug-eating beetles are brought in for pest control. "We partner with an insectary to grow a predator called the 'mealybug destroyer,' *Cryptolaeus*, and use drones to drop them across the vineyard," he added.

To measure the regenerative effects on soil, fruit, and wine, 5 acres were marked as a control, while 43 were converted to regenerative organic farming. "It's the same soil, and the same clones and rootstock are all planted at the same time to minimize variables," said Thompson, who noted that one beneficial result has been improvements in grape-juice yield: "There's less water runoff, the canopy is larger, and the fruit is more hydrated and intact." The resulting wine displays a richer vibrancy, as evidenced by our side-by-side tastings. "We've been so encouraged by the results that we're now

fauna, and topography, at one point passing around the fossilized oyster shells that mark ancient seabeds on the property. Our journey ended at sunset with cheese and wine on Oaks Veranda followed by a short ride to Oyster Ridge Barn, the ranch's scenic event venue, for our "Power Blends" dinner, where winemakers and campers mingled over a main course of boeuf bourguignon—a hearty match for elegant Bordeaux red blends such as Ancient Peaks' rich and plush Oyster Ridge cuvée combining Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Merlot, and Malbec as well as the aforementioned Renegade, a blend of Syrah, Petit Verdot, and Malbec with notes of rich blue fruit and roasted coffee.



Journalist Matt Kettmann moderates the "Sustainability: Organic, Biodynamic, Sustainable & Regenerative" panel with Caine Thompson, managing director at Robert Hall Winery; Craig Reed, associate winemaker at Castoro Cellars; Marty Spate, winemaker at Riboli Family Wines; Douglas Ayers, vigneron and owner of Allegretto Wines; and Stasi Seay, director of vineyards at Hope Family Wines.

Day two

After breakfast at Robert Hall Winery in the Geneseo District, we joined managing



The “Fab Five” panelists: Kevin Willenborg, winemaker at Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery; Mike Sinor, founding winemaker at Ancient Peaks Winery; moderator Matt Kettmann; Damian Grindley, founding winemaker and owner of Brecon Estate; Jason Joyce, winemaker at Calcareous Vineyard; and Soren Christensen, winemaker at Hearst Ranch Winery.

converting the rest of the estate, which is 130 acres,” Thompson asserted.

Journalist and moderator Matt Kettmann continued the discussion during a seminar titled “Sustainability: Organic, Biodynamic, Sustainable & Regenerative.” On the panel, Thompson was joined by Douglas Ayres of Allegretto Wines, Hope Family Wines director of vineyards Stasi Seay, and winemakers Craig Reed of Castoro Cellars and Marty Spate of Riboli Family Wines. We tasted through some of their Cabernets as each shared their efforts in sustainability and environmental stewardship. “I don’t think sustainability is the fence line,” remarked Seay, who aided in drafting the SIP certification program. “Sustainability is about constant improvement. What else can we be doing?”

With these thoughts to ponder, we headed to the Riboli Family Winery and Event Center for a tour, lunch, and panel discussion. As associate winemaker Todd Jenkins guided us through the winery and production facility powered by solar panels, he noted that “the three pillars of the [Riboli] family are family owner[ship], sustainable winemaking, and estate vineyards. All

of our vineyards in Paso and 1,000 acres in Monterey County are sustainably certified by the CSWA, and so is our winery; only 5% or so wineries can make that claim.”

Kettmann next served as moderator for a discussion on the “Fab Five” varieties of Bordeaux. It featured winemakers Soren Christensen of Hearst Ranch Winery (who poured Malbec), Mike Sinor of Ancient Peaks (Merlot), Damian Grindley of Brecon Estate (Petit Verdot), Jason Joyce of Calcareous Vineyard (Cabernet Franc), and Kevin Willenborg of Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery (Cabernet Sauvignon). Panelists weighed in on each variety’s characteristics, including Christensen, who quipped, “Malbec is the Botox of Bordeaux—it perks everything up.” With this knowledge in hand, we entered into a blending session, with guests using beakers, funnels, and pipettes to create their own wine from the featured bottles; the winning submission would be announced during the evening’s festivities at DAOU Family Estates.

On the way up DAOU Mountain, lively chatter gave way to appreciative murmurs as we were rewarded with one of the

country’s most stunning vineyard panoramas. The highest-elevation winery on the Central Coast, DAOU Family Estates sits at 2,200 feet in altitude above the hills of the Adelaida District. Greeted with sunset views and glasses of Sauvignon Blanc, we were led past rows of steeply sloped vines and banks of fragrant lavender to take our seats around flickering firepits. Reserve Cabernet and Sequentis Merlot were poured and hors d’oeuvres passed as we settled in to learn more about DAOU and the brothers who founded one of the state’s most celebrated wineries.

“We’re only about 14 miles from the ocean, so that breeze that you feel is coming through Templeton Gap and bringing that beautiful maritime influence right over this vineyard,” senior vice president of strategy and business development Maeve Pesquera began. “Looking around, it seems like a foregone conclusion that Paso was meant to be a Cabernet and Bordeaux region and that this vineyard was always here. In reality, just 15 short years ago, there was nothing here except for an empty mountain, two brothers, incredible vision, and a whole lot of courage.”



CAB Campers tour the Barrel Room at the 100% solar-powered Riboli Family Winery and Events Center.



Jenkins Davis, room manager at High Steaks Steakhouse at Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Roseville, CA, crafts his wine submission during the “Fab Five” blending session with Bordeaux varieties.



Soul of a Lion, DAOU Family Estates’ flagship Cabernet Sauvignon, was poured at a Lebanese dinner in the winery’s tasting room on DAOU Mountain.

Born in Lebanon, Georges and Daniel Daou enjoyed a happy childhood in what was then known as “the Paris of the Middle East” until the first rocket strike of Lebanon’s civil war hit the sidewalk in front of the Daou home. The injured family was forced to flee and rebuild their lives in France, where Daniel discovered his passion for wine through a glass of Château Cheval Blanc.

The brothers attended the University of California, San Diego, before founding a successful software company, Daou Systems, which they eventually sold to pursue their passion project. Thus began Daniel’s eight-year-long worldwide quest to find the perfect terroir with calcareous soils

like those found in Bordeaux—a search that led him to Paso Robles in 2005. At the time DAOU Family Estates was founded in 2007, Paso was known for Rhône varieties and Zinfandel. With Daniel serving as winemaker and Georges managing hospitality, the two were determined to showcase Paso as a producer of world-class Cabernet and Bordeaux wines. “A singular focus on quality and pure expression of terroir is the thread that’s woven through the entire tapestry,” said Pesquera as she shared one example: Daniel’s dedication to using native yeast. “He took 100 different native yeast samples from the mountain [and] sent them to a lab in Europe, where they cultured those native

yeasts, [which] were ultimately narrowed down to 20. They ran trials on those yeasts for a number of years, and now we have a custom proprietary native yeast, DAOU 20, or D20.” In 2010, the first vintage of Soul of a Lion—named in honor of the brothers’ father—was released. It would go on to receive the highest rating of any domestic Cabernet Sauvignon outside of Napa and Sonoma.

“I really believe it was Daniel and Georges coming here that changed the perception of Paso Robles Cabernet for the world,” said Pesquera. “They brought famous Bordeaux and Cabernet clones that were not already in Paso and shared them, and they brought a group of vintners together to found the Paso Robles CAB Collective to work together as a community!”

Working with their neighbors also means that DAOU is a proponent of sustainability and, in keeping with its SIP certification, employs a number of eco-friendly and organic practices such as water conservation, composting, planting native drought-tolerant plants that attract pollinators, and providing nesting boxes for birds.

Hospitality is also fundamental to the Daou family philosophy, as was evident as the evening unfolded with an Arabic dance performance, large-format bot-

tlings, and a Lebanese feast. While appreciative guests dined on rack of lamb, falafel, couscous, hummus, labneh, zhoug, and fattoush, a multitude of DAOU bottles were opened, including magnums and jeroboams of Soul of a Lion and Reserve Cabernet. Paso Robles icons like J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines founder Jerry Lohr chatted with campers as the winemakers behind LXV, Vina Robles, Copia, Allegretto, and Calcareous introduced themselves and joined the fun. As promised, Kettmann announced the winner of the blending competition, declaring Mark Noah, wine manager of Fishpaws Market in Baltimore, Maryland, the victor for his “joyous, approachable wine that had structure and complexity.”

And before the DJ turned up the music to fill the dance floor, Patrimony Estate director Erik Johnson introduced a special methuselah of Patrimony Cabernet Sauvignon. A sibling to DAOU, Patrimony Estate was launched in 2013 as a luxury brand. It immediately developed a cult following, with the first vintage selling out in less than two months. In addition to Cabernet, Patrimony Estate’s portfolio includes Cabernet Franc and Caves des Lions, a Cabernet Franc/Cabernet Sauvignon blend. DAOU fans can experience more of the family’s celebrated hospitality when Patrimony’s Bordeaux-inspired chateau and restaurant open in 2024.



During the “Sustainability: Organic, Biodynamic, Sustainable & Regenerative” panel, sommeliers tasted through Cabernet Sauvignons from Riboli Family San Simeon, Hope Family Wines, Castoro Cellars, Allegretto Wines, and Robert Hall Wines.



Jeff Faber, national sales director at Opolo Vineyards, raises a toast to the CAB Campers at Opolo’s Westside Vineyard tasting room.

Day three

While half of the CAB Campers traveled to Castoro Cellars and Calcareous Vineyard, the rest of us began with breakfast burritos at Hope Family Wines, where Stasi Seay and assistant winemaker Samantha Taylor discussed Paso’s soil. As Seay noted, “Paso Robles has over 45 soil types, but the one consistency is calcareous, and that’s what makes our Cabernets quite unique.” Soil variations were illustrated through a tasting of wines from three different districts: Estrella, where calcareous soil mixed with chert contributed bright fruit and acidity; Geneseo, where decomposed calcareous contributed more richness and backbone; and Creston, where gravelly silt loam produced deep color and complex tannins. “This is great,” joked proprietor Austin Hope, who surprised us with a brief visit. “It’s not even 8:30 and you guys are talking about dirt and drinking Cabernet.”

Our next stop was the home of Neeta and Kunal Mittal of LXV Wine for the “Comparative Barrel Tasting” seminar with winemaker Jeff Strekas. Against a backdrop of vineyards dotted with sheep, we sampled a 2021 Cabernet showcasing five different barrel influences, including what Strekas called “old neutral oak as a baseline,” before guessing what went into

the producer’s new 2019 Meso Cabernet (Sylvain and Taransaud are among the cooperages it uses). “If you know Château Rauzan-Ségla, that’s my dream—that specific style, elegance, balance, and complexity,” said Neeta. “Meso has been ten years in the making, and this is the first time we’re introducing it.” A Cabernet from Gateway Vineyard in the Willow Creek District, it prompted many to declare it one of their favorites of CAB Camp.

The group reunited at J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines for the “Crafting Quality” seminar with Jerry Lohr and vice president of winemaking Steve Peck. A Paso pioneer, Lohr planted his first vines in 1972 and now owns some 3,000 acres in the region, as he explained while we tasted through the producer’s Seven Oaks Cabernet, Pure Paso Red, and Hilltop Cabernet and Peck explored the science behind the wines. On our tour following the seminar, Lohr emphasized the winery’s commitment to sustainable practices, pointing to the solar array that, “when we built it 13 years ago, was and still is the largest tracking solar array in California’s wine industry” as well as to the land they’ve allotted to the California Irrigation Management Information System: “I’ve given up 7 acres; it’s a land-irrigation restoration program and is exceedingly important.”



Vittorio DiCarlo, director of food and beverage at the Arizona Country Club in Scottsdale, AZ, pulls a barrel sample of J. Lohr 2021 Seven Oaks Cabernet Sauvignon.



The “Fab Five” seminar featured wines from Ancient Peaks, Hearst Ranch Winery, Brecon Estate, Vina Robles, and Calcareous Vineyard.

Following a wine-paired lunch that included a barrel tasting of the 2021 Seven Oaks, we gathered for CAB Camp’s last seminar, “Cabernet Sauvignon: King of Paso Robles,” moderated by journalist Sara Schneider. Joining Peck on the panel were Neeta Mittal of LXV Wines, Gary Eberle of Eberle Winery, Matt Glunz of Glunz Family Winery, DAOU Family Estates vice president of enology and viticulture José Alberto Santos, and winemaker Scott Shirley of JUSTIN Vineyards & Winery. As Shirley succinctly summed up the region’s success with the king of grapes: “We have the calcareous soils; we have the heat that gets Cabernet Sauvignon and its thick skins ripe; and [we have] the proximity to the ocean with nighttime temperatures to maintain acidity, which is essential for longevity. Cabernet Sauvignon just thrives here.”

With our classes complete, it was time to enjoy wine in a convivial atmosphere—first at Opolo Vineyards, where gregarious national sales director Jeff Faber introduced us to the new Willow Cuvée from Opolo’s Reserve collection, and then at the Grand Tasting, where PRCC members showcased both older vintages and new releases. Finally, we found ourselves at The Restaurant at JUSTIN, where hospitality operations



Winemaker Jeff Streckas of LXV Wines welcomes sommeliers to the vineyard home of owners Neeta and Kunal Mittal.

manager John Toigo informed us that, “aside from our Michelin star this year, we have a Michelin Green Star for sustainability practices, and we just received [a] Forbes Five-Star [award], which is really exciting.” Many new friendships were cemented over courses such as Creekstone filet and local mushroom risotto paired with 2019 JUSTIN Isosceles, and a special toast was raised to Gary Eberle, who decanted an imperial of Eberle 1981 Cabernet Sauvignon.

It was a fitting finale to our CAB Camp experience in that it bore witness to a passionate community. “We love Paso,” said Neeta Mittal. “There’s an intimacy here, there’s a fabric here, there’s love here.” Going hand in hand with that collaborative spirit is a commitment to sustainable farming, with the quality of both raising the bar on the quality of the wines. “Everyone’s success is shared,” observed Matt Glunz. “We’re all playing for Team Paso.” SJ

Something for Every Palate

NAPA WINE COMPANY **ATC** CONTINUES TO EXPAND
ITS ALREADY AMBITIOUS SCOPE *story by Jillian Dara / photos by Jeremy Ball*

SINCE LAUNCHING IN 2008, Appellation Trading Company (ATC) has been exceeding expectations. The Napa-based négociant may have begun as a way for its founders to buy and resell excess inventory during the economic crash, but it has since evolved to run its own winemaking facility with a mission to create hand-crafted wines sourced from a variety of growers for hospitality outlets like wine clubs and restaurants. Today, ATC's scope extends beyond Napa to encompass all of California's wine regions, and the company works with such renowned winemakers as Kevin Morrisey, Julien Fayard, and Chad Alexander as well as top viticulturists and cellar masters to produce some 20 brands.

In addition to bottling about 200,000 cases a year of their proprietary blends, the ATC team works with acquired brands. Take, for example, its flagship label, Beau Vigne. Head of marketing David Zurowski explains that typically when ATC takes over a brand, they build something new using estate fruit. In this case, however, the priority was to maintain the quality and intensity that Beau Vigne was reputed for while finding additional vineyards to work with. Fayard plays a key role in sourcing these vineyards. While "I was able to regain some of the older contracts that were lost in the [change-of-ownership] transaction," he says, he is also adding new, interesting vineyards to Beau Vigne's portfolio to ensure its power and concentration is balanced by modern consumer expectations in style. These include a couple of Cabernet Sauvignon plots on the west side of Napa Valley and a small lot on Dry Creek Road where they're looking to possibly add Merlot. "Adding those single vineyards with strong names will help maintain that trust," says Fayard.

As master blender at ATC, Fayard is also in charge of overseeing its brands,



*ATC master blender
Julien Fayard.*

which means his finger is continuously on the pulse of shifting preferences and trends. Most recently, he has witnessed a slight rise in consumer interest in Cabernet Franc. "This is basically people saying, 'I'd like more aromatic, less ripe wines,'" says Fayard, suggesting a connection to the movement toward less sugary foods. "It brings more freshness, white flowers,



and medicinal touches that . . . Cabernet [Sauvignon] doesn't have."

Yet just because Fayard's aware of this change in tastes doesn't mean he is necessarily going to contract with a majority of Cabernet Franc vineyards. "Trends can be misleading," he says, referring to Instagram fads that quickly replace one another, leaving brands with excess product. "The trick is to stay consistent without staying monolithic." He adds that he is thinking up to five years into the future—observing, predicting, and often making subtle changes in the wines in keeping with changes in preferences that consumers themselves might not even notice: "I'm introducing a few new wines with aromatic expressions, but slowly; that's how you change . . . in slight increments. We're not trying to be radical or trendsetters because we're really talking about a national market."

Having something for every palate is the main reason that ATC maintains a spectrum of brands, from value to luxury. While the logistics of managing multiple tiers can be a formidable task, Fayard explains that ATC "removes the challenge by being technically efficient," which allows them to be in control of what they do at every level, whether producing a \$30 bottle or \$300 bottle. This includes accounting for every grape while raising yields, he says, noting that less is not necessarily better: "It might be counterintuitive, but yields have been lowered for a research of concentration that has become too low economically for the farmer. It forces price hikes for grapes and does not have winemaking gain past a certain point. . . . When you concentrate the good, you [also] concentrate the bad," he adds, recalling a lesson learned from the vineyard director while he was working at Lafite Rothschild. "Some blocks call for a little more crop and more balance."

Of course Fayard also chooses vineyards for their terroir, which is particularly important for aging potential. "When we're doing a Romeo & Juliet [brand wine] that is going to be drunk within a year or two of bottling, you want something that's more approachable," he explains, pointing to the plots in Yountville he sources from, where the grapes achieve fine tannins. "Then, when you



*ATC head of marketing
David Zurowski.*

have a wine like Cult that is going to be a reserve and left for collectors, you'll need something with more power," he continues, noting that the older vines planted in river-rock soils in the Rutherford AVA's Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard provide black-fruited concentration.

In short, Fayard's experience allows him to recognize the sites that can provide for the different types of wine ATC produces. Inspired by the Grand Cru vineyards of France, he unofficially classifies sites in a similar fashion to ensure the right fruit is allocated to the right wines. "When you have an estate and want to make a certain style of wine [and] then the estate doesn't give you that, you're going to manipulate the wine too much," he explains.

Finally, Fayard recognizes the relationships the ATC team has with their farm-



ers, which ensures quality control from field to facility. He says farmers take pride in their work and want their grapes to go to top wineries, so there is a mutual respect and end goal. With maintaining both relationships and consistency at the core of its mission, ATC continues to solidify—and evolve—its unique position in the industry. *sj*

City Market Social House was the venue for Gambero Rosso's recent *Tre Bicchieri* tasting in Los Angeles, CA.



PHOTOS: KELLY VISEL

VIVA VINI

Italiani

SURVEYING THE BEST OF THE BOOT by Stacie Hunt

IT'S EASY TO become enchanted by *la dolce vita* while swirling, sniffing, tasting, and talking about the best wines from across Italy. We had the opportunity to do just that this spring, when Gambero Rosso—the wine- and dining-focused multimedia company that annually publishes its essential guide on Italian wine, *Italian Wines*—kicked off the U.S. leg of the *Tre Bicchieri* tour in downtown Los Angeles. (It also stopped in San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, and New York.) Everything from everyday table wines to wildly expensive Barolos and Amarones were available for tasting at the annual event, which always arrives with an air of festivity and plenty of style.



Gambero Rosso editor Giuseppe Carrus and importer Mark Newman lead a master class centered around the wines of Abruzzo.

At host venue City Market Social House, a queue began to form early for a seat in the one-hour master class led by Giuseppe Carrus, editor at Gambero Rosso, who was accompanied by importer Mark Newman. The class featured a variety of wines from the Consorzio di Tutela dei Vini d'Abruzzo with an emphasis on Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo, the first Italian denomination dedicated to rosato (rosé). By DOC law, 15% of permitted local grape varieties can go into the blend; however, most of the wines are 100% Montepulciano. Attendees sampled bottlings representing both traditional and natural methods of production, the latter of which U.S. audiences are especially eager to experience. Outside the classroom, the sounds of tinkling glasses, the "thock" of corks pulled from their nesting places in the bottles, and the hum of eager conversation abounded as hundreds of bottles featured in Gambero Rosso's *Italian Wines 2023* were poured by some 87 wineries.

Carrus and Newman sat down to talk with us about the massive amount of work that goes into Gambero Rosso's famous Tre Bicchieri ("Three Glasses") rankings, which this year resulted in an authoritative 1,064-page tome that reviews more than 27,000 wines. We wanted to know, in a field brimming with top-notch competition, what it takes for a wine to be recognized as one of the best wines in Italy.

Over the course of six months, 70 tasters make their way to every corner of Italy to sample around 46,000 wines, narrowing down their top selections into three tiers. These are denoted by one, two, or three wine glasses, or *bicchieri*. All the wines in the guidebook are tasted and ranked to receive updated reviews yearly—an incredible undertaking. What makes the evaluation process even more impressive is that it's done without influence from advertisers or sponsors to maintain the book's integrity as Italy's authoritative wine guide.

The rankings are also made without consideration for commercial appeal, which means the book might include niche styles, private labels unavailable for wholesale, and wines whose production is too small to export. "For us, [it's] more important that we represent all the wine business in [the] guide," said Carrus, in order to provide an authentic look at the

scope of wine production in Italy. Also noteworthy is that the book is organized by region; the idea is to get readers thinking about terroir and the people behind the wines rather than about variety or brand name. In that sense it evokes the truism that "there is no such thing as Italian cuisine—rather, there are the regional cuisines of Italy," Carrus added.

Wines are first judged by their organoleptic qualities; those with top marks get the "one glass" ranking. Next, judges look for wines that express a sense of place, which receive the "two glasses" ranking. From among them, about 2,000 wines (roughly 4%) are selected for the final tasting, which happens over the course of several weeks each year in Rome. The field is narrowed down again and again until the top contenders emerge from

According to Newman, the six wines chosen as best in their category have that special quality that sets them apart from the multitudes—something that makes them more than the sum of their parts; they're the Beyoncé of wine (who also happens to be on a world tour this year), if you will. "It's the people behind it, the place behind it, what they're doing," he said.

The 2023 winner in the red category, Dievole 2019 Chianti Classico Petriano, is just such a wine: "It is a Tre Bicchieri, of course," explained Carrus—which doesn't necessarily mean it would be considered the best under a points-based system. "[It's about] the wines that communicate very well, not just [about] the [ir] . . . organoleptic quality but also the right way to make this kind of wine." In short, the Tre Bicchieri ranking was created to clearly



More than 80 producers were featured at the tasting.

the pack as the Tre Bicchieri selections of the year. (The wines that made it to Rome for the final round but received two glasses are denoted in the guide with red icons instead of black—recognizing that they came exceptionally close to the top.) This year, 455 wines received the Tre Bicchieri designation, while special awards were given to the best red, white, sparkling, rosé, sweet, and value wines. Additional awards were presented to the winery, cooperative, up-and-coming winery, and grower of the year; also given were a sustainable viticulture award and a solidarity award, which focuses on social outreach.

express the quality of a wine without getting wrapped up in the minutiae of a numerical hierarchy, which often influences consumers to simply reach for the highest-scoring bottle. The Tre Bicchieri system encourages the consumer to taste the field and consider top-rated wines based upon their individual qualities.

It's clear that the U.S. has an enduring romance with Italian culture and cuisine, representing 23% of Italy's total wine exports in 2022; good thing, then, that the Tre Bicchieri wine tour will return to the States in 2024. Until then, aficionados can enjoy drinking their way through the *Italian Wines 2023* guide for a taste of *la vita bella!* **sj**

The Spice of Life

GUSTUS VITAE'S GLOBALLY INSPIRED SEASONINGS ADD ZEAL TO ANY MEAL

by Kate Newton

SINCE FRANCIS SCANLON BEGAN

selling the sea salts that would eventually evolve into his Gustus Vitae brand at the Venice Farmers Market in Los Angeles in 2015, he and his wife, Elizabeth Kernan—who serves as the company's CEO—have split their time between California, Arizona, Michigan, and New Zealand, channeling experiences from their travels as well as their respective family histories and culinary interests into their ever-expanding line of gourmet salts, artisan cane sugars, and seasonings.

All the while, Gustus Vitae—Latin for “taste of life”—has remained firmly rooted in LA, where its facility is located; it also continues to source the majority of its all-natural ingredients from within California even as the couple and their team increasingly draw inspiration from various global cuisines to develop products like their Shawarma and Taste of India Masala seasoning blends as well as the three newest additions to their Bougie BBQ collection: Spicy Korean, Japanese Teriyaki, and Aussie Style Surf & Turf. “Just being in the breadbasket [that is this state] has really allowed us to get good-quality product, and that’s reflective of the farmers,” Scanlon says, adding, “We really try and taste what [each] region or cuisine evokes, and [then] we try to recreate that in the best way we know how.”

During the summer months, the Bougie BBQ line is particularly poised to claim its share of the spotlight in the kitchens and backyards of Gustus Vitae's target audience: “the home cook who really wants to knock out the brisket, but maybe they're not super confident doing it, or maybe they want to try something different,” says Scanlon. “That’s our thing: that you can make a really elaborate meal and that’s fine, or you can just be heating up some dumplings or putting it on pizza and that’s fine too. What we

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GUSTUS VITAE



Elizabeth Kernan and Francis Scanlon are the CEO and founder, respectively, of small-batch spice and seasoning company Gustus Vitae.

want is for people to use our products ... and feel comfortable in what they're cooking.” To make things even easier, Gustus Vitae lists hundreds of recipes on its website (gustusvitae.com), including those featured on the next page, as well as the ingredient breakdowns for all of its SKUs.

While it wants its customers to think big when conceiving ways to use its products, the brand is intentionally staying small in scope, eschewing outside investment and refusing to scale up to fulfill placements in large grocery chains in favor of “growing at a reasonable rate,” in Scanlon's words, through its distribution at specialty grocers, co-ops, and retailers. (Its products are also available on its website and on Amazon.) Scanlon and

Kernan intend to eventually expand their presence internationally, but “[because] part of our ethos is sustainable growth, we have to do it in a way that’s considered and thoughtful,” he explains, noting that maintaining an open channel of communication with their customers remains paramount: For instance, “this barbecue-line development that we started doing about a year and a half ago has been cool to see—we just felt that there was a space in barbecue for a higher-quality ingredient. We’re fortunate in that [we’re] able to respond pretty quickly with new flavors and SKUs and [continue to] experiment.” Thanks to their 300-plus products and counting, curious cooks will surely continue to reap the benefits.



Packaged in 8-ounce tins, Gustus Vitae's Spicy Korean, Japanese Teriyaki, and Aussie Style Surf & Turf barbecue rubs are the latest additions to its Bougie BBQ collection.



Whole Smoked Fancy AF BBQ Chicken (Serves 2-4)

- ▶ 1 whole chicken, thawed and with innards removed
- ▶ 1 tin Gustus Vitae Perfect Poultry BBQ Rub
- ▶ 1 tin Gustus Vitae Fancy AF BBQ Rub
- ▶ 2 bell peppers, cubed
- ▶ 1 white onion, minced
- ▶ 2 sticks unsalted butter; room temperature

Preheat your grill to 300–350 degrees Fahrenheit, with a solid base of coals in an offset smoker or far to one side in a single barbecue/grill. Place the chicken in a large bowl, rubbing generously with about one-third tin each of the Fancy AF BBQ Rub and Perfect Poultry BBQ Rub. Place on a ceramic chicken roaster and fill in the reservoir with onions and peppers, dusting with both spice rubs. Place



in the barbecue as far away from the coals as you can and begin roasting. After 20 minutes, put the butter in a medium-sized bowl and briefly place it in the barbecue/smoker to melt.

Thoroughly mix in the remaining Fancy AF BBQ Rub and Perfect Poultry BBQ Rub, then generously brush about one-fourth of the seasoned butter jus on all sides of the chicken, starting from the top.

Continue monitoring the temperature, adding coals as desired and basting with the butter jus every 30 minutes. After about 1.5 hours of cook time, the internal breast temperature should be 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Remove the chicken roaster from the barbecue, tent with foil, and rest for 5 minutes before breaking the bird down and using a slotted spoon to remove the onion/pepper mix. Strain the remaining butter jus. The applications from here are endless: Serve simply with roast corn and potatoes; make smoked chicken tacos; or serve in sliders with Hawaiian bread, drizzling the butter jus on top of the chicken and onion/pepper mix.

Bison Short Ribs With Creamy Southern-Style Grits (Serves 2)

- ▶ 1 strip bison short ribs (around 2 lbs.)
- ▶ 0.75 cups stone-ground corn grits
- ▶ 2 red bell peppers
- ▶ 1 small shallot, minced
- ▶ 8 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- ▶ 1 stick unsalted butter, cubed
- ▶ 0.5 cups cream
- ▶ 8 Tbsp. Gustus Vitae Brazilian Steakhouse BBQ Rub
- ▶ 2 Tbsp. Gustus Vitae Green Harissa Seasoning
- ▶ 2 Tbsp. Gustus Vitae California Sea Salt
- ▶ 4 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- ▶ Minced parsley to garnish

Remove the membrane from the back of the short ribs and trim any excess fat. In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly coat the ribs with the Brazilian Steakhouse BBQ Rub and 4 Tbsp. olive oil before covering with Saran wrap and refrigerating overnight.


Preheat your barbecue to medium heat, transfer the ribs to a ceramic baking dish, cover tightly with foil, and place over indirect heat. Close



the lid of the barbecue and roast for 3.5–4 hours or until the ribs reach an internal temperature of 205 degrees Fahrenheit. (At this point, the meat should be falling off the bone.) While your short ribs are roasting, preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit, then rinse the bell peppers and split lengthwise, discarding the core, stems, seeds, and pith. Roast in the oven uncovered, skin side up, for 25 minutes, then remove and allow to cool.

Add 2 cups water, the grits, and the California Sea Salt to a medium pot and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, cover, and rest for 15 minutes. After peeling off and discarding their skins, add the bell peppers to a blender with the minced shallot, 4 Tbsp. olive oil, and the Green Harissa Seasoning; puree until smooth and add more seasoning or oil as desired.

Return the grits to medium-low heat, stirring as needed, and add the cubed butter, grated Parmesan cheese, and cream. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, for another 20–25 minutes or until the grits are creamy and have just the tiniest amount of bite remaining to them. Add more California Sea Salt to taste.

Increase the barbecue heat to high and place the short ribs on the grill under direct heat, searing each side for about 2 minutes. Remove, tent with foil, and rest. Brush the roasted red pepper sauce on plates beside a generous helping of the grits. Slice the short ribs in half and slide out the bones. Gently place the ribs atop the grits and spear with a rib bone. Garnish with minced parsley. 

Forever Students

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON THE **2023 RUDD ROUND TABLE**

PHOTO COURTESY OF SOMMFOUNDATION



The attendees of the 2023 Rudd Round Table, from left to right: Christina Stanley, Rudd Scholar Rick Stiles, Drea Boulanger, Rudd Scholar Michael Markarian, Rudd Scholar and Leslie Rudd Award winner Matthew Landry, Higor Valle, Simon Kaufmann, Rudd Scholar Ethan Gladner, Brandon Anderson, Morgan Gray, Angela Demmel, and Paul Lee.

A Community of Dreamers by Higor Valle

MY ALARM WENT off on a Sunday morning, pulling me out of a deep sleep that felt like a quick nap. It was 3:52 a.m., and I sluggishly got out of bed and jumped in the shower. While waking up at that time seemed to be the hardest task in life, I quickly remembered, with a smile on my face, why was I up at this ungodly hour: I was heading to Napa for the Rudd Round Table!

The Rudd Round Table is a two-day educational program put together by the Rudd Foundation and SommFoundation to help candidates prepare for their Master Sommelier exams. While I waited two hours for my delayed flight to board, I reflected on the journey that brought me to it. Born and raised in Brazil, I moved to the United States at the age of 18 as an exchange student. I entered the hospital-

ity industry shortly after, working as a busboy in a tiny, family-owned French restaurant in Naples, Florida. Through the years, I worked nearly every possible position at the front of the house, eventually becoming a captain. It was then that I realized there was a separate league for waiters who knew how to sell wines and, more importantly, satisfy palates with a spot-on recommendation.

While enduring 80-hour workweeks and moves back and forth between Naples and Nantucket (where I also held jobs in the industry), I had a conversation with a colleague that convinced me to pursue Introductory level certification through the Court of Master Sommeliers. That step was all that was needed for me to realize that this adventure was going to be a lifelong one.

Proudly sporting my Level I pin on my jacket, I decided to prepare for the next level. It was around this time that I also took the opportunity to volunteer at the Naples Winter Wine Festival, to which many Master Sommeliers are invited each year along with celebrity chefs and vintners from all over the globe—it was like the Oscars for me! While our community in Naples was tiny, the support and generosity from my peers and mentors from around the country was gigantic, giving me the motivation to continue moving forward.

I experienced the same level of support at this year's Rudd Round Table, where candidates arrived on a cool, rainy Napa afternoon to be warmly welcomed at Rudd Estate with a beautiful comparative flight. We would go on to share such

great bottles of wine as a 1975 Stag's Leap Cabernet Sauvignon; the generous gift from Jason Heller, MS, was a wine we could all stand to learn from.

For me, the experience of being invited and mentored by this incredible group of people was splendid. However, what will always stay with me are the intimate, humble, and inspiring stories shared by each Master Sommelier as they discussed the hurdles they faced to achieve their goals. They helped me realize this is a community of dreamers, hard workers, and forever students of the art of wine and hospitality.

Thank you, Rudd Foundation and SommFoundation, for this opportunity, and also many thanks to The Durand and Adelson for the thoughtful gifts!

Higor Valle is the beverage manager at Fisher Island Club in Miami, FL, and the co-founder of Wise Cellar, a wine-consulting and cellar-management company.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SOMMFOUNDATION

Winemaker Natalie Bath leads a tour of Rudd Estate.

A Common Goal by Christina Stanley


THE 2023 RUDD ROUND TABLE was a life-changing event. The hospitality shown to our group of candidates by the Rudd Estate (which established the Rudd Foundation); the Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas; PRESS Restaurant; the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia; and SommFoundation was exemplary and inspiring. In the span of two days, we participated in blind tastings, drilled down on theory, experienced the best cuisine Napa Valley has to offer, and forged deep bonds.

Day one commenced in Oakville at the beautiful Rudd Estate, where we did a blind comparative evaluation of the great growths of Bordeaux and Napa Valley led by winemaker Natalie Bath. Bath challenged us to think about second wines in the context of house style while offering profound insight into her own winemaking craft.

Next, we were off to PRESS Restaurant in St. Helena for a Champagne reception and welcome dinner. The PRESS team shared the creative dishes and impeccable service that have earned them a much-deserved Michelin star. Once we were entranced by perfect ricotta gnudi and 60-day-aged tomahawk steaks, proprietor Samantha Rudd poured a blind for our table. What was it? Old Burgundy? The tannins were so soft and fine, and the wine very pale-hued. Surprisingly, it was one of the great First Growths of Pauillac: 1970 Château Lafite Rothschild!

Full of delicious food and wine, we headed back to the historic Napa River Inn in downtown Napa to rest, as day two would provide our opportunity to learn alongside 12 Master Sommeliers, and we needed to be up early to start blinds at 8 a.m.

When blinds began, I felt empowered among my fellow candidates, all confident professionals full of hope; learning about them was particularly enlightening, as many of us have had similar life experiences, and our passion for wine brings us together in a common goal. The Master Sommeliers offered insightful feedback and support after each blind tasting. During the breakout one-on-one sessions, I was lucky enough to taste with Chris Tanghe, MS, and run theory with June Rodil, MS. Both were incredibly supportive and set me at ease while delivering critique and guidance.

The day wrapped up with a warm, lively flourish. The Rudd Foundation's scholarship recipients were honored, and we each received the generous gift of elegantly encribed Sofienwald glasses and The Durand wine openers! Another beautiful meal was served, this time by the CIA at Copia. Afterward, we shared more wine and laughter; then we said goodbye—but just for now. 

Christina Stanley is the Napa Valley representative for Vinifera Wine Marketing in Napa, CA.



PHOTO: CHRISTINA STANLEY

A sommelier's-eye view of the Rudd Round Table.

FRIENDLY GHOSTS AND THE *friendliest* SOMMS

ATLANTA WINE PROFESSIONALS IMPRESSED AT OUR BLIND SPEED TASTING

STORY BY JESSIE BIRSCHBACH / PHOTOS BY BONNIE J. HEATH



Front row from left to right: Clarke Anderson, beverage director, Rocket Farm Restaurants; Elizabeth Dames, beverage director, Capital City Club; Chelsea Young, owner/lead educator, The Oenophile Institute; and Rob Van Leer, beverage director/partner, Vino Venue. Back row from left to right: Ian Mendelsohn, beverage director, Fifth Group Restaurants; Andres Loaiza, beverage manager, Aria Atlanta; Jonathan Mattson, sommelier, Cuts Steakhouse; Devan Knobloch, sommelier, Kevin Rathbun Steak; Billy Turner, wine director, 5Church Atlanta; Janeen Jason, wine director, VinoTeca; Kelly Cornett, host, A Cork in the Road; Eric Crane, educator, Empire Distributors; and Joon Lim, independent consultant.

Founded in 1883, Atlanta, Georgia's Capital City Club is one of the largest private clubs in the country. Entering the immense brick building makes you feel as if you're about to file for a marriage certificate, but its inviting lobby makes any suspicion of governmental process melt away, and suddenly you'll find yourself staring at the actual Greek torch carried in the 1996 Summer Olympics.

There's a lot of history here; you can feel it even when you're not looking at one of the 19th-century black-and-white photos on the wall or perusing one of the club's many art collections—so much so that I asked its beverage director, Elizabeth Dames, if there were any ghosts. "Oh yes," she said without hesitation. "She lives on the third floor and she's very friendly. I call her Amy." In speaking with Dames, the first thing you'll notice besides her grace is her wit, so I don't think she's one to easily believe in apparitions. I saw no cause for concern, though; in fact, I couldn't help but wonder if this friendly ghost worked in service when she was alive because—just as they did the first time I visited Atlanta for one of our blind wine speed tastings—the city's sommeliers charmed me to no end.

Take Advanced Sommelier Eric Crane, whose colorful personality and humor are reflected in his blazers. (You'll find one of Crane's tasting haikus later in the story; while you're at it, look for sommelier Devan Knobloch's personifications of the wines we sampled. Chelsea Young's notes were quite clever as well!) Or take the soft-spoken yet searingly sharp blind taster, Advanced Sommelier Joon Lim, who according to Janeen Jason—a deft sommelier in her own right—is an incredible mentor. I could go on, as each and every one of our guests struck me as memorable as well as highly skilled. What's more, the entire community seems not just to know each other but to support each other.

On that note, I'll stop gushing. Read on to see what this group of somms thought of the wines featured at the event: I don't think I've ever read through a more insightful, creative stack of tasting notes.



OUT OF THIS WORLD

WINE: Rock the Day Spicy Wings, Spain

PRESENTER: Rod Haden, brand ambassador, Wines & Company SL

Rod Haden, brand ambassador for the Valencia, Spain-based Wines & Company, perused the room as he revealed the label that generated the most discussion of the day: “New World or Old World?” he asked. “Out of this world!” joked one of the somms. Haden agreed: “Spicy Wings is an out-of-the-box wine beverage designed to be an experience.”

During our blind tasting, it immediately separated itself from the pack with an intensely spicy, roasted character on the nose that was confirmed on the palate, along with rich red and black fruit. The finish? Also spicy, with a subtle burn. Haden offered some context: “Wines & Company’s CEO Melanie Nathou has 15 years of experience in the wine business and has had incredible success with her Toro Bravo brand. She knows how to create wine beverages with appeal; she starts first with the consumer in mind, then assesses a category in need of new innovation. Her approach is about to bring a breakthrough experience that will transcend the



As a bonus, a sweet, spicy white was also shared with the Atlanta somms.

notions we have about wine beverages while driving new customers to the category.”

Spicy Wings will be available for shipment this summer. Haden and the team believe it’s a unique product with appeal across multiple channels and customer types—from on-premise by-the-glass programs to off-premise, where it could be sold as a wine beverage consumed with food, an apéritif, or a cocktail mixer, to name just a few ideas.



Tasting Notes

Mocha latte? Cocoa powder? Such a unique aroma! The palate has rich, ripe, dense fruit qualities with a dusty gravel-road component. This would be such a twist for a cocktail like an Espresso Martini. —*Kelly Cornett, host, A Cork in the Road*

Roasted coffee! Cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, and a Mexican hot chocolate blend that finishes with jalapeño. —*Rob Van Leer, beverage director/partner, Vino Venue*

WINES & COMPANY



“DESTEMMED AND RESTEMMED”

WINE: ROCO 2021 The Stalker Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon

PRESENTER: Daniel Bresach, Southeast area sales manager, Santa Margherita USA

After Daniel Bresach, Southeast area sales manager for Santa Margherita USA, commended Janeen Jason for her spot-on assessment of the provenance of ROCO's The Stalker Pinot Noir, she elaborated: "It's got the chocolate, it's got a little dill, it's got the black fruit. It *has* to be Chehalem," she said with a confident smile.

Some in the room agreed at least that it was Pinot Noir, whether from Burgundy or Patagonia, Argentina. But no matter what the pros concluded, they all managed to find—along with all that rich black and bright red fruit—a briary, forest-like character. Bresach revealed that the wine's name is derived from the source of this note: "This is 'The Stalker,' not named after anyone in this room," he joked, "but because of its stems. . . . Our winemaker, Rollin Soles, did some training back in Australia, and there they call the stems of the grapes 'stalks.'" Bresach added that although Soles loves whole-cluster fermentation, he's not such a fan of the green-tannin character that often

results. To temper it, he starts by removing the stems; while the whole berries cold soak at about 40 degrees Fahrenheit for ten days, he ages the stems in inert gas for seven days, at which point "the fibers turn from green to brown," according to Bresach. Soles then adds the stems back into the tank, and this initiates fermentation. "It's the only wine that's been destemmed and restemmed . . . the only wine in the world that we know of that is made like this," Bresach said. The result of this truly unique process is a rich and hearty style of Pinot Noir.

In 1987, Soles—a Texas native who founded the Oregon stalwart Argyle Winery as well as ROCO—purchased a hillside property that sits at 400 feet in elevation on the southwestern slope of the Chehalem Mountains AVA, but it wasn't until the early 2000s that he began planting the site, naming it Wits' End Vineyard. In 2013, he expanded it to a total of 20 acres, adding a block of Chardonnay in the process. Certified sustainable by



Tasting Notes

Black cherry, dill pickle, blackberry, and a touch of cocoa powder. It's dry, with a fresh palate and soft tannins. Has to be Pinot Noir from Chehalem Mountains. —*Janeen Jason, wine director, VinoTeca*

Cherry, rhubarb, cranberry, wet forest, and autumn leaves. This is fall in a glass. —*Joon Lim, independent consultant*

SANTA MARGHERITA USA

LIVE and certified Salmon-Safe, Wits' End Vineyard is today arranged as a high-density plot with 2,600 vines per acre of Dijon clones; it is one of the sources for The Stalker Pinot Noir.

ROCO Winery itself sits at the base of the Dundee Hills, where, in addition to small-production Pinot Noir, it also makes Chardonnay and traditional-method sparkling wines.

POSITIVE GOSSIP

WINE: Banfi 2021 La Pettegola Vermentino, Tuscany, Italy

PRESENTER: James Amstutz, district manager, Banfi Vintners

"Here's a hint or two," said Banfi district manager James Amstutz about the wine he was presenting: "[It's] from Montalcino and the Maremma area. The grape is extremely durable because [it] grows in the sand where there's not a lot of water retention and it thrives. Any idea?" "Vermentino!" shouted the crowd of somms.

After a good collective belly laugh over our cork dorkiness, Amstutz added, "With this type of sunny, warm weather we're having today, this wine would be perfect." But the 100% Vermentino fared well among the group thanks as much to its high-toned aromatics and salinity as to the temperature outside. The former can perhaps be attributed to a reductive fermentation technique that strives for optimal preservation: La Pettegola is fermented in temperature-controlled stainless-steel tanks without undergoing pumpovers or malolactic fermentation before it ages three months, also in stainless steel.



Somms toast with the bright and floral La Pettegola Vermentino.

Although there are more than 40 different mutations of Vermentino in Italy, the versions from Tuscany and Sicily are best known. As confirmed by the 2021 vintage we tasted, Vermentino is widely considered most delicious when young.

La pettegola is both the nickname of an Italian coastal bird and a lighthearted term for a neighborhood gossip, which is fitting: Given the wine's value, its name will surely be floating around Atlanta's wine community for quite some time post-speed tasting.



Tasting Notes

Highly aromatic with citrus, lemon, kiwi, pineapple, [and] herbal grassy notes. —*Andres Loaiza, beverage manager, Aria Atlanta*

Mandarin orange. Juicy Fruit bubble gum. An aromatically expressive bouquet of acacia and gardenia. Honey and sea spray. —*Joon Lim*

This wine is that grandma who stopped by when you got home from school to feed you cookies and make you finish your homework: approachable, loving, and no nonsense. —*Devan Knobloch, sommelier, Kevin Rathbun Steak*



BANFI VINTNERS



THE RARE VALUE WHITE BURGUNDY

WINE: Cave de Lugny 2021 Les Charmes Chardonnay, Mâcon, France

PRESENTER: Theo Rutherford, senior manager of wine and spirits education, Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits

"In 1926, [Cave de Lugny] was established to be a growers' cooperative because of the Napoleonic laws of inheritance, in which everybody had two vines and no money to do anything with them," said Theo Rutherford, senior manager of wine and spirits education at Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits. A few decades later, however, the cooperative's members realized the quality of their vineyards and released their own white Burgundy, Cave de Lugny Les Charmes Chardonnay. Today, Cave de Lugny consists of 200 grower families representing over 3,100 acres of vineyards; it controls roughly one-third of the total production within the Mâconnais region, making it the leading producer of white Burgundy.

Les Charmes is sourced from the 220-acre Les Charmes vineyard in

Lugny, where vines average 50 years of age. The site's south- and southwest-facing slopes sit on chalk and limestone soil that's ideal for Chardonnay. Like all the producer's wines, Les Charmes is unoaked but goes through 100% malolactic fermentation before aging 12 months on the lees. "A big thing with us is that everything is no oak but we do sur lie age, which gives us that creamy mouthfeel," said Rutherford.

Rutherford also noted the uncommon clonal selection for the wine, calling Corton 805 "a little bit muskier and more floral"—as evidenced by references to flowers in several of the somms' tasting notes. But the day's biggest surprise came when Rutherford revealed the \$19 SRP—a rare low price for coveted white Burgundy.



Tasting Notes

A quiet vacation: mango, pineapple, honeyed peach, marzipan, beeswax lip balm, citrus-garnished drink, hotel-cleaned linens, leasiness, thyme, and elderflower. —Chelsea Young, owner and educator, *The Oenophile Institute*

Pineapple, grapefruit, lemon, and green apple. High acid. —Rob Van Leer

Yellow apple, crème fraîche, ginger skin, Bosc pear, and a touch of spice on the nose. —Janean Jason

DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS

ONE FAMILY, TWO WINES

WINES: Roederer Estate Brut Rosé, Anderson Valley, and Louis Roederer Collection 243, Champagne, France

PRESENTER: Florence Hunckler, Southeast region sales manager, Maisons Marques & Domaines



Representing one family but presenting two wines was Florence Hunckler, Southeast regional sales manager for Maisons Marques & Domaines. The import company is owned by Louis Roederer; so naturally, the wines came in the form of bubbly from Champagne Louis Roederer and Roederer Estate.

Delighted to learn that many in the group guessed that Roederer Estate's multivintage Brut Rosé was Champagne, Hunckler revealed the wine's true origins in California's Anderson Valley: "It's not from France, but it is made by a French winemaker and owned by a French family," she said. "They are making the wine just like they're making [it] in France."

Founded in 1982 by the Rouzaud family of Champagne Louis Roederer, Roederer Estate works with 100% estate-grown fruit, an uncommon occurrence among sparkling-wine producers in the United States. Hunckler explained that the Rouzauds carefully chose the Anderson Valley as an ideal site for growing the traditional Champagne varieties thanks mainly to its cool climate and maritime influence, by which it experiences frequent fog. "They really think the Anderson Valley is one of the best places in the world for sparkling wine and one of the best places to grow Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It's very similar to Burgundy and Champagne. So that's why they've invested so much in the area," overseeing 620 acres of vineyard to date, said Hunckler.



Roederer Estate Brut Rosé Tasting Notes

White cherry and toast
Bracing acid and sparkle
Drink this forever —Eric Crane, educator,
Empire Distributors

Ripe strawberry and lees, orange skin, raspberry, fine bubbles. Bone-dry and refreshing finish. Delish. —Andres Loaiza

Although Louis Roederer was founded in 1776, it wasn't until 1833—when its namesake inherited the maison from his uncle and began to acquire Grand and Premier Cru vineyards—that the Champagne house best known for prestige cuvée Cristal would begin to become what it is today: one of the few independent, family-run houses remaining in the region. Helmed by seventh-generation president and CEO Frédéric Rouzaud and cellar master Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, Louis Roederer owns and farms 650 certified-organic acres of Grand and Premier Cru vineyards across the Montagne de Reims, Vallée de la Marne, and Côte des Blancs districts. "In fact, we have the largest organic vineyard in Champagne," said Hunckler.

Hunckler emphasized that Louis Roederer Collection 243, which is composed of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier, is not a nonvintage but rather a multivintage blend of wines from selected vineyard plots in the heart of Champagne: 59% comes from the 2018 vintage, 10% is an oaked reserve wine made from young Cristal vines, and 31% consists of a solera-like reserve blend started in 2012.



Louis Roederer Collection 243 Tasting Notes

Bright lemon blossom, lemon peel, tart green apple, a pleasant creaminess. [There's] a touch of yeast and bread dough, but the bright citrus and apple notes lead the charge. —Elizabeth Dames, beverage director, Capital City Club

The most decadent hippie commune: white cranberry, Meyer lemon, fresh biscuit dough, whipped cream cheese, campfire ash, copper penny in old loafers, white mushrooms, day-old croissants, and pressed white flowers. —Chelsea Young

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES



ENDING IN THE VINEYARD

WINE: Feudi di San Gregorio 2021 Fiano di Avellino, Campania, Italy

PRESENTER: Lars Leicht, VP of education, *The SOMM Journal*

"After the devastating 1980 earthquake in Campania, a lot of people decided to leave the area, but the Capaldo family felt instead they needed to invest and established Feudi di San Gregorio in 1986," said *SOMM Journal* VP of education Lars Leicht, who recently met with proprietor Antonio Capaldo for an interview—so he was happy to present the producer's Fiano di Avellino at its request.

"What I like about Feudi di San Gregorio, and all of Campania for that matter, is that during the 1980s, while producers in Tuscany thought that the world would better understand its Sangiovese if they blended it with Cabernet Sauvignon and other international varieties to create Super Tuscans, Campania as a whole felt its wines were great as is and continued to focus on indigenous varieties," Leicht explained.

Historically, Campania's wine industry has been based not on large, feudal properties but on small properties owned by families who supplied their

grapes to the feudal lords. As a result, Feudi di San Gregorio, which is located within the Irpinia DOC, works with many small parcels within Campania's Avellino province; in fact, the producer, a certified B Corp, sources from about 800 vineyards while farming about 740 acres of its own vines. It also sources from a few of the region's DOCGs to produce, for instance, its Greco di Tufo and its Fiano di Avellino.

"In making the Fiano, they age all these vineyards separately and then put them together blind," said Leicht, who added that "the concept of wine being made in the vineyard is so important to Feudi di San Gregorio [that] they've made their agronomist, Pierpaolo Sirch, director of the cellar as well. My favorite quote from Sirch is that 'wine does not only begin in the vineyard, it ends in the vineyard.'"

Feudi's Fiano di Avellino was incredibly well received by the somms, many of whom remarked on its stone fruits, flowers, citrus, and substantial body in their tasting notes.



Tasting Notes

Lime, fresh peas, linen, bay laurel, and Greek yogurt in a porcelain texture. —*Clarke Anderson, beverage director, Rocket Farm Restaurants*

A sunlit 1950s kitchen with lemon cheesecake on an open windowsill. Linen curtains float in the breeze that rustles the bouquet of daisies. A butcher block of basil and marjoram sits beside crème fraîche and yellow apples. —*Chelsea Young*



“ARGENTINIAN IN NATURE”

WINE: Cigar Box 2020 Old Vine Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina

PRESENTER: Al Vrooman, director of national retail accounts, M.S. Walker

Cigar Box’s motto, “Bold wine for bold living,” might as well have been written in our somms’ tasting notes, as most were able to detect the dark fruits, full body, and sweet tobacco character of the brand’s 2020 Old Vine Malbec. Made by Argentine winemaker Belén Tudela, the wine is sourced from the Mendoza estate vineyards of Chilean behemoth Santa Rita Estates, which owns the brand; aged in French oak and value-priced at \$13, “it’s

Argentinian in nature,” said Al Vrooman, director of national retail accounts for M.S. Walker; adding, “It’s subtle, with soft tannins, and it’s approachable thanks to the price.”

Malbec, widely considered to be at its best in Argentina, is known for its plush, ripe dark-fruit flavors that almost always finish with a whiff of smoke. Given its typicity, some would say Cigar Box’s version likewise shows the brand at its best.

**Andres Loaiza
and Janeen
Jason compare
tasting notes.**



Tasting Notes

Dark blackberry, rhubarb, [and] savory herbs like oregano and thyme. Ripe and mouth-filling texture, leading with plush fruit. A touch of resinous branches, tree bark, and loads of moss and black potting soil. —*Elizabeth Dames*

Aromas of dark roasted coffee and mocha, vanilla, dark chocolate, black cherry, and leather. —*Billy Turner, wine director, 5Church Atlanta*

A wine that tastes exactly how it smells! Ripe pomegranate and black currant with an interesting copper undertone. Silky tannins and integrated alcohol for a “cozy up by the fire”-type finish. —*Kelly Cornett*

Ripe strawberry with vanilla and clove undertones. Jammy berry flavors along with raised acidity leave a lasting finish with firm tannins. —*Eric Crane*

Ripe blue fruits, violets, and baking spices move into a meaty quality and [a] long, dry finish. —*Jonathan Mattson, sommelier, Cuts Steakhouse*

M.S. WALKER



A WILD RIDE

WINE: Rose Gold 2022 Rosé, Côtes de Provence, France

PRESENTER: Casey Barber, owner

"I'm a one-trick pony. I do one thing and try to do it well," said Casey Barber with a laugh. The Rose Gold proprietor had flown into Atlanta from her home state of Texas, arriving just in time to present the only wine in her portfolio, which she does indeed do quite well: a Grenache- and Cinsault-based Côtes de Provence rosé. Winded from her travels, she still managed to tell the room of her own life's journey with an endearing authenticity that kept the room hanging on her every word.

Barber enjoyed her very first glass of Provençal rosé on her honeymoon in the south of France; though "the marriage didn't last, my love for rosé did," she said. Now, "some 20-odd years later," she's able to stand among those who try her wine and assert, as *A Cork in the Road* host Kelly Cornett did, that "it's everything I want in a rosé." Perhaps the dry, stone-fruity, herbaceous light-pink wine can credit its character to the red clay and limestone on which it's grown 50 miles northwest of Saint-Tropez in Côtes de Provence: Some would say the limestone contributes to the wine's freshness, while the clay may play a part in its minerality.

The 2022 vintage marks the sixth for Rose Gold. Having started with an initial production of 1,000 cases, the brand will import roughly 15,000 cases this year; it's an achievement that represents what has been "the wildest ride in my life," said Barber, one she began by selling her wine directly to on-premise accounts—she had no idea that's not allowed without a rep from her distributor—before having to pivot to off-premise accounts due to an overstock of inventory during the pandemic. Today Rose Gold is one of the most popular French rosés in Texas.

Tasting Notes

Pale pink, clear and bright. Red fruits, fresh and ripe. Fresh flowers. Mineral and bright. Bone-dry finish and medium-plus acid. —Jonathan Mattson

Delicate, floral, white peach and melon. Minerals and sea spray. —Clarke Anderson

WELCOME TO RIESLING



WINE: Schloss Vollrads 2021 Kabinett Riesling, Rheingau, Germany

PRESENTER: Cameron Pember, east zone manager, Transcendent Division of Delicato Family Wines

Although Cameron Pember of Delicato Family Wines ended his presentation with the words "This is Schloss Vollrads—wel-

come to Riesling," it's perhaps, for our purposes, more appropriate to start our recap there. In any case, it's a bold statement regarding what may be the grape most beloved by sommeliers—one that's arguably well earned nonetheless.

Consider the fact that the Rheingau-based winery is one of the oldest estates in the world at 800-plus years. "In 1211, they documented the first sale of wine in Germany, so I have them to thank for my job today," said Pember. This economic activity in essence created the wine industry as a whole. The winery is also known for creating the first wine classification ever, establishing and defining the Kabinett Riesling category in 1716.

In fact, the Schloss Vollrads Kabinett is the producer's signature wine. "They've been doing it longer than anyone by about 300 years," joked Pember, adding that the 2021 vintage was particularly suited to the category. "Compared to recent growing seasons, 2021 was much cooler and much wetter than the previous three years. . . . Budbreak . . . didn't happen until the last week of April, so in turn ripening occurred later. Harvest didn't even start until October. This was ideal for the Kabinett, because having that cooler temperature during that ripening period helps to elevate Riesling's fruity aromas."

Pember told the room that the producer's exclusively south-facing slopes "created millions of years ago" consist of Taunus quartzite, argillaceous shale, and calcareous loess soil. He also noted that Schloss Vollrads grows no other varieties on these slopes: According to him, "100% unblended Riesling means 100% expertise in Riesling." *ST*

Tasting Notes

Tropical: kiwi, white cherry, lemon, fresh grass, ripe grapefruit, and passion fruit. —Clarke Anderson

Herbaceous and complex nose. Lemon peel and apple. Good residual sugar in long finish with wet slate. —Jonathan Mattson

DELICATO FAMILY WINES



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Vonda Freeman, director of beverage programs for The Indigo Road Hospitality Group in Charleston, SC.

Charlestonians in Charge

MEET THE TASTEMAKERS QUENCHING THE HOLY CITY'S THIRST

by Helen Mitternight

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, regularly tops lists of the best food towns in the U.S., but Holy City residents do not live by bread alone; stellar cuisine needs a great beverage program as its partner.

We connected with six tastemakers to discuss what it takes to pull together a wine list that satisfies Charlestonians' discerning palates, among other topics.

Q: *The SOMM Journal:* What's important to you when it comes to designing a beverage program?

Vonda Freeman, director of beverage programs, The Indigo Road Hospitality Group: Each list is different, depending on the concept. Our Italian restaurants have a lot of Italian wines, for instance. But I also have to give each restaurant a bit of their own creativity.



PHOTOS: PAUL CHENEY

Mark Solomon, director of restaurants and bars at Planters Inn.



Jason Parrish is general manager at Wild Olive.



Kevin Johnson is owner/executive chef at The Grocery.

Mark Solomon, director of restaurants and bars, Planters Inn:

It's been important to me to feature all the great winegrowing regions and move from north to south in terms of how the list is structured . . . although I still want to add more lesser-known wine regions to the list.

Jason Parrish, general manager, Wild Olive: [Wild Olive was] the first Certified Green restaurant in the state, so having sustainable wines is extremely important. We deal with a lot of smaller distributors, so you get to know these winemakers, and we travel to Italy to walk through their vineyards. It's usually a visceral thing. There's always one that hits you with immediate gratification and you just know that's the one your customers are going to feel the same way about. You can get some terrific values in Puglia, Calabria—all over Southern Italy.

Kevin Johnson, owner/executive chef, The Grocery: I rely on my suppliers and try to get what works with the food [while focusing on] smaller producers with a sustainable approach. A lot of the list is dictated by the fact that my food is on the higher side of acidic, especially with not having a ton of meat on the menu. I do have some huge reds for people who want it, but I find [that] reds that are softer and more supple are better with fish and vegetarian foods.

John Riddick, wine manager/beverage director/sommelier, Circa 1886 Restaurant: Quality is definitely important, but farming practices are important too. Most of the wines I've tried to bring in lately are sustainable and leaning toward organic or biodynamic. Cost versus quality is definitely important [as well]. . . . With restaurants, you're not making a ton on food or labor, so you have to compensate by making a little more on the wine side. I feel that for the wine price point, you have to give the guest more quality than they expect.

Patrick Panella, owner/beverage director, Chez Nous, Bin 152, and Malagón: I always want to make sure there is something for everyone. I think most of the better wines are farmed with sustainable practices now. In terms of building a list, I try to hit all the different price points, and I like changing the lists a lot because I think it's important for the staff and the guests to experience new things.

Q: Are you seeing any trends in Charlestonians' drinking tastes?

Solomon: In general, our guests' wine knowledge has been elevated over the past three to four years. We get a lot of people who can describe what they want very accurately. A lot of people love red blends and are receptive toward trying [them] from countries such as Portugal. We've seen a nice trend toward not necessarily natural wines but more sustainable wines. Some people enjoy the drier and more earthy [reds] coming out of Italy, Spain, and France, and the whites are trending toward more textural wines like Chenin Blanc, one of my favorite grapes.

Parrish: Ten years ago, people wanted fuller [body], more oak, more tannins—big, huge, massive wines. I think [that] nowadays people are looking for wines with more finesse. The favorite wines on my list are lighter [and] lower in alcohol with more acidity and earthy components. They're better with food. . . .

People are definitely learning more about Italian wines, like dry Lambrusco, and [discovering] how food-friendly it can be, especially



John Riddick is wine manager/beverage director/sommelier at Circa 1886 Restaurant.



Patrick Panella is owner/beverage director at Chez Nous, Bin 152, and Malagón.

with cured meats and cheeses. Probably about 95% of our list is Italian, and I love gently coaching our guests to try things they're not used to trying, like wines from Mt. Etna that drink like a Pinot Noir.

Riddick: I definitely see more people looking for interesting things. [When teaching] wine classes . . . I [serve] four different wines without [guests] knowing what they are, and it's fun to see lightbulbs go off in [their] heads. I feel like more people are starting to explore different regions and not just sticking to California or domestic wines, which is exciting.

Panella: I think Charleston follows the general trend of the rest of the world. Natural wine is the big deal right now. I went to Paris last month and even in the Parisian wine bars, there is so much natural wine. I think something becomes the trend and then it gets overdone and then people get sick of it and turn to something else. I tried to purchase natural wines before they were cool, like from Italian producers making skin-contact

wines. Now that's cool. Natural wines have their place, just not [across] the entire list, unless you are a natural wine bar.

Q: What is your personal favorite wine?

Freeman: I just got back from France, and Gilbert Picq & Ses Fils had a Vosgros Chablis Premier Cru that was the most epic wine on the trip. It reminded me of a pineapple upside-down cake, with this crazy-fresh tropical fruit taste and a little caramelized note.

Solomon: My favorite wine of all time is a Riesling from Trimbach in Alsace, Clos Sainte Hune. I tried it when working in a restaurant in Sydney, Australia, and it was like biting into a perfectly ripe peach, with a full mouthfeel and beautiful acidity that finished clean. It was the first wine that really resonated with me as a "wow" experience. I had it in 2016 and it was a 2003 vintage.

Parrish: I'd have to go with Barolo from Luigi Pira. [The family has] been making wine and growing grapes since

the 1950s. It's grown on the eastern side of Barolo, so it's from older soil and [represents] the masculine side of Barolo. It can age forever.

Riddick: I love the great Nebbiolo—I love Barolos and Barbarescos. I love wines from Burgundy, both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir: I pretty much drink a little bit of everything, including a lot of cool and up-and-coming winemakers in California [and] a lot of Spanish wines. I look for things that not only are interesting and unique but also can be shared with other people.

Johnson: Assyrtiko. It just tastes good. I've never been to Greece, but when I put it in my mouth, I feel like I'm staring at a blue sky with stones under my feet. It's like chomping into a lemon—acidic and mineral.

Panella: Believe it or not, I don't drink, I just taste. But, if I were to break my 21-year streak of not drinking, it would probably be Blain-Gagnard Chassagne-Montrachet, Poggio di Sotto Rosso di Montalcino, or Domaine Tempier Rouge or Rosé. *sj*



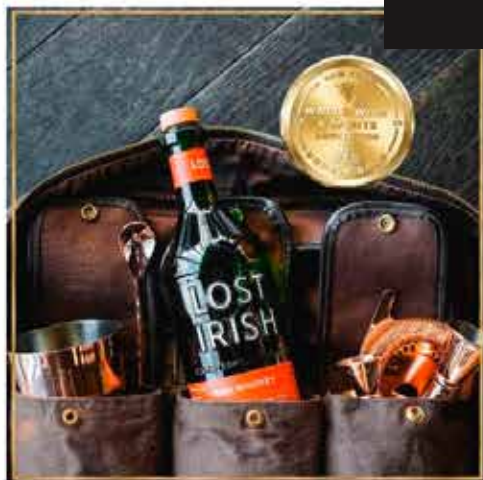
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A Global SMÖRGÅSBORD

HIGHLIGHTS FROM QUINTESSENTIAL'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY GRAND TASTING

by Deborah Parker Wong

WITH PRODUCERS FROM 11 countries to meet and quintuple that number of wines to taste, my afternoon at Quintessential's 20th Anniversary Grand Tasting at the Napa Valley Marriott Hotel & Spa in February was a global smörgåsbord. Highlights included familiar producers and some new discoveries, but navigating these international waters required a strategy, so I've divided my recap into Old and New World wineries.

Founded in 2003 by two generations of the Kreps family—Steve Kreps Sr and Dennis Kreps—Quintessential has made working exclusively with family-owned wineries of all sizes the very core of its business model as a Napa-based importer/marketer/distributor, ensuring that each member of its portfolio of producers overdelivers in terms of quality for value.

NEW WORLD

First up was Argentina—specifically the wines of Pascual Toso from Mendoza's Maipú district. Elevation plays a key role in the terroir there, as evidenced by the ultra-premium **Pascual Toso 2020 Alta Malbec**, which was sourced from the La Barrancas Vineyard at 2,500 feet: Fresh and round on the palate, it showed pretty notes of violets and mulberry. Chief winemaker Rodrigo Romero works with consulting winemaker Paul Hobbs to make Toso's beautifully balanced wines.

TerraPura, owned by the biodynamic and organic Matetic Vineyards, pays homage to Chile's wine valleys and vibrant ecosystems. In fact, TerraPura means "pure earth" in Spanish, and it lives up to the name through its strong com-

PHOTOS COURTESY OF QUINTESSENTIAL



mitment to sustainable viticulture. The **TerraPura 2021 Reserva Pinot Noir** is a single-vineyard wine from the coast of the Itata Valley; at 12.5% ABV, it was aromatic, earthy, and lean, showing off that cool *costa* terroir.

Next, I queued up for a taste of **3 Rings 2019 Shiraz** from the Hickinbotham family's Barossa Valley estate, which was quite fresh on the midpalate yet lush with plum, anise, and mocha. Despite lower yields due to variable set and lack of rain, the overall quality of the 2019 vintage was exceptional.

New Zealand's **Rongopai 2022 Sauvignon Blanc** was firing on all cylinders with fruit sourced from 14 different estate vineyards in Marlborough. Abundant in citrus, tropical fruits, and fresh herbs, it had a classic Wairau character.

The 3 Rings estate in Australia's Barossa Valley.





The Pascual Toso estate in Mendoza, Argentina's Maipú district.



The Bel Colle estate in Piedmont, Italy's Verduno DOC.



Showcased at the Bubble Bar, the Simonsig Cap Classique sparkling wines of South Africa were not to be missed. The **Simonsig Kaapse Vonkel Brut Rosé**—a blend of 75% Pinot Noir, 23% Pinotage, and 2% Pinot Meunier—was my top pick of the lot thanks to its vibrant notes of raspberry and its cream-biscuit quality. With this groundbreaking label, Simonsig's founding winemaker, Frans Malan, became the first to produce a Méthode Cap Classique.

Stateside, Lucas & Lewellen winemaker Megan McGrath Gates dipped into the spice cabinet when she crafted the **Lucas & Lewellen 2017 Valley View Cabernet Sauvignon** from Santa Ynez with 7% Malbec, 6% Cabernet Franc, 6% Petit Verdot, 5% Merlot, and 1% Carménère. Aged in 40% new French oak, the wine overdelivered in every aspect.

OLD WORLD

From a family-owned vineyard in France's Loire Valley, the **La Chapelle du Berry 2020 Sancerre** was fruit-forward in style, with appealing aromas and flavors of citrus and tropical fruit. It was on the riper end of the spectrum for Sancerre and quite tasty.

Given that Champagne Palmer holds over 500 acres of Premier and Grand Cru vineyards in the Montagne de Reims, tasting it comes with lofty expectations. Its **NV Brut Reserve**—a blend of 55% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay, and 15% Pinot Meunier that spends four years on the lees and comprises in excess of 30% reserve wine—boasted a heady nose of toasted brioche and precision on the palate. The **2015 Grands Terroirs** hailed from seven different cru sites and was inching toward greater evolution with roasted pineapple, citrus zest, and toasted brioche.

The sole Hungarian wine on offer at the tasting was worth tracking down: An ideal value pick for a by-the-glass list, the **Count Karolyi 2021 Grüner Veltliner** from Tolna showed varietal typicity with green apple, white pepper, and lots of citrus.

I chose two wines from Bel Colle, a producer in Piemonte's Verduno DOC: the organic **Bel Colle 2020 Barbera d'Asti Superiore Nuwanda**, a truly serious wine hailing from Castiglione, and the **Bel Colle 2019 Barbaresco Pajorè** with lean, sheer flavors of cherry and strawberry refined by two years in French oak *botti*.

Eguía means "truth" in the Basque language, and the **Viña Eguía 2017 Reserva** was true to the style of Tempranillo from Spain's Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Alto regions. This classic expression, which spent two years in American oak followed by another year in bottle, showed savory red fruits and dried herbs. Reservas represent some of the best quality for value in the wine world, and this one was no exception.

Portugal's historic Quinta do Vallado estate is best known as a Port producer, but its dry wines have earned high acclaim—and rightly so. The **Quinta do Vallado 2019 Touriga Nacional** was archetypal for the variety, maintaining acidity and freshness to balance its alcohol and tannin levels. *SJ*





In Deep

APHOTIC BAR DIRECTOR **TREVIN HUTCHINS** SHINES A LIGHT ON A COMPLEX BEVERAGE PROGRAM

by Ruth Tobias

IN A BODY OF WATER, an aphotic zone is the proverbial murky deep, receiving insufficient light for photosynthesis. In Peter Hemsley's new San Francisco restaurant, the adjective is a bold, even mysterious choice for a name—especially considering the chef's emphasis on transparency when it comes to sourcing the sustainable seafood at the heart of the fine-dining venue. That said, Aphotic certainly exudes boldness with an air of mystery, from its dim-lit dining room to its ten-course tasting menu featuring the likes of raw spot prawns with caviar and oyster ice cream with mignonette foam to bar director Trevin Hutchins' cocktail program, which abounds in briny intrigue.


As the Maine native explains, "With us being a seafood restaurant, I wanted to really challenge myself to incorporate savory, oceanic ingredients into the menu . . . and how we incorporate a lot of these ingredients is through house-distilled spirits." To that end, they obtained a craft distillers license—"the same one that any distillery in the state of California has"—and a laboratory still that Hutchins and his team use to produce, among other things, house gin, the main botanical in which is dulce seaweed. "We work with a seaweed farmer [who's] working to rebuild kelp forests in Monterey Bay, which obviously has a huge impact on the climate," he points out.

To supplement these necessarily small-batch spirits, Hutchins also maintains what he calls a "very extensive backbar" with a focus on "producers that have a connection to water;" from Clairin Communal Haitian rum—"a blend of four different village rums that's really grassy [and] vegetal, really incredible"—to single-estate Manzanilla Sherry: "It has that deep oce-



anic quality that we love." The latter stars in a cocktail called the Bay of Biscay, which also contains 20-year vermouth, bay laurel liqueur, and "a spirit that we distill with olives and anchovies, [which] has this really oily kind of factor [that] we balance with just a little bit of aged Sherry vinegar." It's served with a Gilda, the classic Basque pintxo composed of an anchovy, an olive, and a pickled pepper.

And then there's the Black Sea Old Fashioned. "Ancient Romans created garum, which is like an early fish sauce," Hutchins notes. "So [we make a] fish sauce with demerara sugar," which they combine with black-lemon bitters and Metamodernity bourbon from New York's Matchbook Distilling Co.: "They use toasted oats in their mash bill, which is really cool—it adds this really wild, black-sesame umami finish that I've never tasted in any other whiskey."

As if he weren't experimenting enough already, Hutchins is hard at work on a selection of nonalcoholic libations that will be "presented with the same amount of thought that a regular cocktail would take—it's not just putting together juice and syrup anymore," he says. "Bartenders are really working hard to [come up with] things that are still very creative without having to have alcohol!" On that note, he adds, "I'm very lucky to have a really talented team. . . . Honestly, we challenge each other a lot. On Saturdays we have a tradition where we'll [ask] guests [to] give us a specific spirit that they want us to work with and we'll have to create a cocktail on the fly for them. I want to keep everyone stimulated and excited to be doing what they're doing." After all, it's what he wants for himself too: In his words, "Pushing boundaries is what drives me." That much is perfectly transparent. 

"With us being a seafood restaurant, I wanted to really challenge myself to incorporate savory, oceanic ingredients into the menu . . . and how we incorporate a lot of these ingredients is through house-distilled spirits."

—Aphotic bar director Trevin Hutchins



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PHOTO: CAMILLE MEFFRE

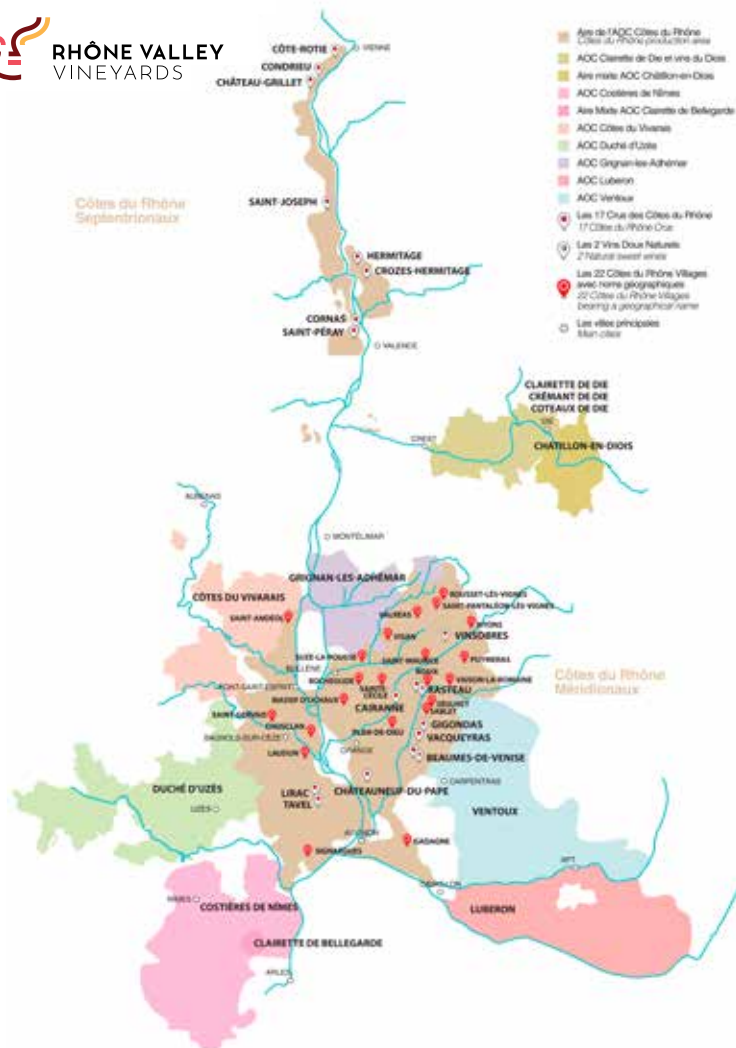


RHÔNE VALLEY
VINEYARDS

RHÔNE WINEMAKER TOUR

WINE REVIEWS

JUNE 2023



As part of a long-term plan extending through 2035, Rhône Valley Vineyards is prioritizing engagement with export markets through initiatives like tasting events. In the United States alone, we will reach 1,500-plus professionals at over 30 events in 12 cities in 2023. We are proud to present this Wine Reviews booklet representing over 110 wines from 30 Rhône producers that were tasted by the editorial team of *The Tasting Panel* and *The SOMM Journal*.

We invite you to embark on your own journey of discovery as you explore the wines of the Rhône Valley!

RHÔNE WINEMAKER TOUR

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WINERY: 

ALAIN JAUME

www.vignobles-alain-jaume.com

Domaine Grand Veneur 2022 Blanc de Viognier, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$18) An alluring perfume of honeysuckle and lychee surrounds the nose. The liquid is weighty and unctuous, with notes of white rose and brown-sugared apple. A beam of brightness shines through, tempered by buttered cashew and jasmine. Fine acidity adjusts to the rich, round body. **93**

Alain Jaume 2021 Grand Veneur, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15) Grilled meats, coffee, and soy sauce surface in this savory red. Garrigue dries the palate as it gives way to mocha and sandalwood on the finish. **90**

Domaine du Clos de Sixte 2020, AOC Lirac Rouge (\$26) Deep and dusky, with rich, ripe notes of blackberry, espresso, and bittersweet dark chocolate. Expressive and decisively luxurious, with a suede texture that caresses and satisfies. **95**

Château Mazane 2020, AOC Vacqueyras Rouge (\$30) The dusty, chalky entry is surrounded by black plum and distinct soil notes. Cassis and wild blackberry meld with the wine's brooding persona and linger. **92**



WINERY: 

BONPAS BOISSET COLLECTION

www.boisset.fr

Bonpas 2020 Légende de Bonpas, AOC Luberon Blanc (\$15)

Unctuous notes of peach and apricot followed by cashew butter are satisfying and generous on the palate. The stony middle adds a lean note to the wine, reining in its richness. **90**

Bonpas 2020 Réserve de Bonpas, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15)

Concentrated and intense, with savory notes of black olive, Worcestershire, and plum. Toasty spice adds a zing to a wash of suede tannins. **90**

Bonpas 2022 Croix de Bonpas, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Rouge (\$18)

You can taste the soil and slate in this dusky and earthy wine. Dried violets, soy sauce, and espresso add even more depth and shadow. **90**

Bonpas 2019 Grand Prieur, AOC Gigondas Rouge (\$45)

This fragrant and balanced GSM boasts aromas and flavors of black plum, cherry, and spice on a velvet carpet. Round and generous, with a spiced cedar finish. **95**



WINERY: 

CAVE DE CAIRANNE

www.cave-cairanne.fr

Cave de Cairanne 2021 Abélia, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15)

Mulberry, clove, red tea, and cinnamon oak are majestic aromas and flavors. The acid structure is heroic, retaining freshness and floral elegance. **94**

Camille Cayran 2021 La Bête à Bon Dieu, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Plan de Dieu Rouge (\$18)

Mulberry, white pepper, and bright acidity ignite this blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Carignan. Notes of orange peel, cassis, and candied violets add a lean, clean streak to the palate. Ample minerality appears on the finish. **90**

Camille Cayran 2020 La Grande Reserve, AOC Cairanne Rouge (\$22) Wild strawberry, red cherry, black pepper, and garrigue string together on the palate of this elegant, delicate, and earthy red with a pillow-like mouthfeel. **90**



WINERY: 

CELLIER DES CHARTREUX

www.cellierdeschartreux.fr

Cellier des Chartreux 2021 Celliers des Terres Blanches Intuition, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15) The dry, dusty tannins in this concentrated and vital blend of Syrah, Carignan, Mourvèdre, and Cinsault taste of crushed violets and black plum. As the wine opens, it unmask notes of rhubarb, sweet tobacco, cassis, vanilla, and oak. **91**

Cellier des Chartreux 2021 Chapelle Saint-Martin, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$20) Cinnamon, clove, and cassis line the mouth, joining high-toned acidity. An earthy and savory animale quality arises on the palate with tobacco, rhubarb, and red tea. **91**



WINERY: 

CHÂTEAU MONTPLAISIR

www.chateaumontplaisir.com

Château Montplaisir 2021 Éclats, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Blanc (\$29) Viognier and Marsanne are aged in stainless-steel vats. Notes of cashew, peach pie, and honeyed white flowers are framed by a plump body. Broad, with perceptible acidity and minerality. **92**

Château Montplaisir 2021 Terres Profondes, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Blanc (\$32) The vines that yield this charming blend of Roussanne and Grenache Blanc grow at an elevation of over 1,100 feet on limestone pebbles. Ripe pear makes for a delicate, fresh perfume, joined by remarkable floral notes that also add a lean edginess to the palate. Minerality expands as keen acidity threads through peach, citrus, and pine nut on the crisp, stoney finish. **93**

Château Montplaisir 2019 Cuvée Safres, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Valréas Rouge (\$25) This deep and expressive wine made from old-vine Grenache, Syrah, and Carignan offers sensuous notes of black plum followed by violets; roasted coffee; and lithe, chalky tannins. **93**

Château Montplaisir 2018 Hauts Galets, AOC Vinsobres Rouge (\$50)

Grown at elevations exceeding 1,400 feet and aged in 600-liter barrels for two years, this chewy, fleshy Syrah- and Grenache-based red possesses daunting complexity: Cigar box, smoked charcuterie, violets, and black-plum tannins coincide to create a deep, shadowed, and well-structured wine with roasted coffee and an abundance of blue fruit.

96



WINERY: 

CHÂTEAU MOURGUES DU GRÈS

www.mourguesdugres.com

Château Mourgues du Grès 2022 Galets Dorés, AOC Costières de Nîmes Blanc (\$17)

The taste of chalk is prevalent in this blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, and Rolle from stony limestone soils known as “grès.” Following luscious, ripe notes of baked pear, chamomile, and cashew butter, lemon blossom weighs in, backed by the stony component that characterizes this white. **92**

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE GRILHE





**Château Mourgues
du Grès 2022 Fleur
d’Eglantine, AOC
Costières de Nîmes
Rosé (\$17)**

This full-bodied rosé of distinction—made with Grenache, Cinsault, and Mourvèdre—exudes a perfume of rose, peony, and raspberry. Brisk acidity and flavors of watermelon and wet stone are carried on a saline path. **91**

**Château Mourgues
du Grès 2021 Galets
Rouges, AOC Costières
de Nîmes Rouge (\$17)**

Showing stunning aromas of blackberry, this lovely, velvet-lined blend of Syrah and Grenache with a touch of Mourvèdre is bolstered by fine acidity and a gracious supply of red plum, heather, and sweet tobacco. **94**

**Château Mourgues
du Grès 2020 Terre
d’Argence, AOC
Costières de Nîmes
Rouge (\$22)**

Grenache and old-vine Syrah planted on rolled pebbles and marl along the Rhône River yielded this concentrated, luscious red with notes of cured meats, rhubarb, and tangerine peel. Generous red fruit and bright acidity complement the elegant, velvet-lined mouthfeel. **95**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE DE COUSIGNAC

www.domainedecousignac.fr

Notre Dame de Cousignac 2022 Parcelle Sud, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$18) Artful blending can be credited for the gorgeous floral array of scents and flavors proffered by Viognier, Grenache Blanc, and Roussanne. Rich, round, and opulent, with honeyed peach nectar, macadamia nut, and creamed corn adding body weight. **94**

Domaine de Cousignac 2022 Parcelle Sud, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$18) Teeth-grabbing, chalky tannins surround high-toned red fruit. A dollop of cinnamon, red apple, and balsamic contributes juicy freshness to the finish. **93**

Notre Dame de Cousignac 2022 Accord Tonique, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Saint- Andéol Rouge (\$28)

French composer Claude Debussy's original style of harmony and musical structure may have influenced this blend of Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Carignan, and Cinsault, as his music was played during fermentation. Aromas of blackberry and heather join a chorus with fennel as dusty tannins sweep across the mouth in a legato of black fruit and licorice. Savory notes of olive tapenade linger with a staccato of black pepper and espresso. **95**

Domaine de Cousignac 2022 Parcelle Nord, AOC Côtes du Vivarais Rouge (\$18) From the northwestern area of the southern Rhône Valley, this blend of Syrah and Grenache is absolutely stunning: It's generous, balanced, and concentrated, with plush tannins and an inky purple-black hue that shows proof of its depth. Coffee, blackberry, and a dense layer of dark chocolate and plum line

the mouth. Persistent scents of violets, jasmine, and sweet earth ensure it stays intriguing. **95**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE DES ROMARINS

www.domainedesromarins.fr

Domaine des Romarins 2022, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$16)

An exquisite mouthfeel of honeysuckle and apricot is mirrored on the nose. Wet stone comes in midway and adjusts some of the richness, leading to a complex finish of spiced cedar and orange peel. **93**

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE GRILHE



**Domaine des Romarins
2021, AOC Côtes du
Rhône Rouge (\$16)**

Chewy and fleshy, with forward flavors of cassis and spiced cedar. Heather imparts a dry mouthfeel as white pepper laces through red plum and salted meats. **92**

**Domaine des Romarins
2021, AOC Côtes
du Rhône Villages
Signargues Rouge (\$18)**

Aromas of cassis and lavender introduce this juicy, well-balanced Syrah/Grenache/Mourvèdre blend. Plum-skin tannins uphold its structure, and its lithe body is focused and fresh. Spiced oak surrounds a core of wildflowers and grilled meats on the finish. **93**



WINERY: 

**DOMAINE LA
FONTAINE DE
MIL HOMMES**

[www.instagram.com/](http://www.instagram.com/fontainedemilhommes)

fontainedemilhommes

**Domaine la Fontaine
de Mil Hommes NV
Brut, AOC Crémant de
Die (\$20)**

A delicate mousse graces this splendid blend of 85% Clairette, 10% Aligoté, and 5% Muscat Blanc, which exudes aromas of a spring garden amplified by honeyed almond. A veil of linen, lychee, and lemon brioche descends on the palate. **92**

**Domaine la Fontaine
de Mil Hommes NV
Sparkling Doux, AOC
Clairette de Die (\$20)**

This splendid blend of 75% Muscat/25% Clairette shows its opulence through apricot nectar, candle wax, and cashew brittle. Delicate bubbles tip-toe on the palate with fresh peach, tangerine sorbet, and fine minerality. **93**



WINERY: 

**DOMAINE
LES HAUTES
CANCES**

www.hautescances.com

**Domaine les Hautes
Cances 2021, AOC
Cairanne Blanc (\$25)**

40% Clairette, 20% Roussanne, 20% Grenache Blanc, 15% Viognier, and 5% Bourboulenc make up this floral cuvée. Notes of apricot, pine nut, and steely lemon peel are fresh on the palate. **93**

**Domaine les Hautes
Cances 2019, AOC
Cairanne Rouge (\$25)**

Resplendent with blueberry, white pepper, and garrigue, this Grenache-dominant blend with Syrah and Mourvèdre tastes fresh, with fine acidity that lifts notes of red currant, red licorice, and nutmeg. **92**



WINERY: 

**DOMAINE
MABY**

www.domainemaby.fr

**Domaine Maby 2022
La Fermade, AOC Lirac
Blanc (\$24)**

An aromatic festival of stone fruit and apple pie, along with crackling acidity, makes this blend of Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Picpoul, and Ugni Blanc a standout. Peach blossom lingers on the tongue, as does the chalky, nutty finish. **90**

**Domaine Maby 2022
Prima Donna, AOC
Tavel Rosé (\$20)**

Matured in stainless-steel vats, this crimson-hued rosé of Cinsault and Grenache shows notes of spiced hibiscus, cranberry, and crushed stone as well as a candy-apple middle that leaves behind a trace of sweetness. It's a fine food wine thanks to its structure and citrusy acidity. **92**

**Domaine Maby 2021
Variations, AOC Côtes
du Rhône Rouge (\$16)**

A blend of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Carignan from 50-year-old vines. Sweet tobacco, grilled meat, and boysenberry settle within the silky mouthfeel. Dusty mocha imparts a dry finish. **91**

**Domaine Maby 2021
La Fermade, AOC Lirac
Rouge(\$24)**

Roses, violets, and blackberry are luscious on the nose and palate of this blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre. The palate offers flavors of cinnamon cookie and wild strawberry within a plush mouthfeel and graceful demeanor. Sweet tobacco, underbrush, and spiced rhubarb add layers to this concentrated beauty. **95**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE NIERO

www.vins-niero.com

Domaine Niero 2021 Les Ravines, AOC Condrieu Blanc (\$72)

This voluminous Viognier proffers flavors of hazelnut cream and lathers the palate with ginger and white flowers. White pepper and orange zest complement its mineral-driven nature. **92**

**Domaine Niero 2021
Coeur de Roncharde,
AOC Condrieu Blanc
(\$83)** Succulent and ripe, unctuous and bright. Honey coats the tongue, joined by secondary flavors of pear and pine nut. A fair amount of creaminess softens the spiced finish. **93**

**Domaine Niero 2021
Bois Prieur, AOC Saint-Joseph Rouge (\$55)** A 100% Syrah with white-peppered black raspberry, wild blueberry, and Italian herbs. Aromas and flavors of yellow pepper and violets are layered. Bright acidity and a satin texture show the wine's promise. **95**

**Domaine Niero 2021
Eminence, AOC Côte-Rôtie Rouge (\$85)** From steep granite terraces, this opulent, striking Syrah shows fresh boysenberry and herbes de Provence. Crushed stone adds lift to fruit character on the silky and juicy palate and persists on the clean finish. **96**



WINERY: 

FAMILLES AUBERT & AUTRAND

<https://www.domaineautrand.fr/>

Château Husson 2021, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$16) Perfumed with ripe boysenberry and lavender, this blend of Grenache and Syrah shows ambitious notes of smoked meats, espresso, and dark chocolate that meld together within a frame of dark plum. Shadowed flavors of soy sauce and blackberry brandy line the finish. **90**

Château Le Grand Retour 2020, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Plan de Dieu Rouge (\$18) Plump blackberry washes over the palate of this juicy Grenache-dominant red with dusty tannins. Baking spices, white pepper, and a dash of cardamom add an alert accent to the finish. **91**

Château la Couraçonne 2020, AOC Rasteau Rouge (\$22) Chalky tannins leave a coating on the tongue, augmented by dried violets and plum skin. Balsamic and black olive define the wine's shadowed side. **92**

Domaine Autrand 2021, AOC Vinsobres Rouge (\$20) Teeth-grabbing, chalky tannins allow juicy plum notes to shine through this blend of 70% Grenache, 15% Syrah, and 15% Mourvèdre. A layer of chocolate fudge smooths out with a charge of acidity before mulberry spice adds to the lengthy finish. **91**



WINERY: 

FAMILLE GASSIER

www.famillegassier.fr

Domaine Gassier 2020 Nostre País, AOC Costières de Nîmes Blanc (\$25) Sultry aromas of brioche and melon and notes of fresh citrus and flint are pronounced in this blend of 65% Grenache Blanc, 20% Clairette, and equal parts Viognier and Roussanne. Salinity threads through dill and dried apple on the palate. **90**

Domaine Gassier 2022 Brise de Grenache, AOC Costières de Nîmes Rosé (\$20) This vibrant pink wine made primarily with Grenache exudes a perfume of peony and tangerine. White cherry, just-ripened peach, and a hint of basil align on the palate as minerality arises on the finish of juicy raspberry. **91**

Domaine Gassier 2020 Michel et Tina Gassier, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$20) The indulgent personality of this Grenache-dominant blend with Mourvèdre and Syrah offers up aromas of black plum and coffee as well as flavors of ripe black fruit, licorice, and dark chocolate. Notes of grilled meats add to the fleshy texture. **93**

Domaine Gassier 2020 Nostre País, AOC Costières de Nîmes Rouge (\$25) Inky and savory, with notes of cured meats, black currant leaf, and balsamic. Supple tannins support dried purple flowers, leaving a coating of herbs and cedar on the finish. **92**



WINERY: 

JAILLANCE

www.jaillance.fr

Jaillance 2020 Impériale, AOC Clairette de Die (\$20)

A sensationally fruity sparkler combining 90% Muscat and 10% Clairette Blanche. Flavors of peach and orange cream burst from quickly dissipating bubbles before crisp Asian pear cleanses the palate on the finish. **92**



WINERY: 

LOUIS BERNARD BOISSET COLLECTION

www.louis-bernard.com

Louis Bernard 2020, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15) Supple tannins lather the palate with notes of boysenberry, dried violets, and mocha. Nutmeg, cedar, and a wash of coffee add desirability to the finish. **91**

Louis Bernard 2020, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Rouge (\$18) Plum skin, roasted coffee, and underbrush are lifted by chalky tannins. You can taste the terroir. **89**

Louis Bernard 2020, AOC Gigondas Rouge (\$45) With exotic incense, minerality, and dried lavender, this silky wine is a beautiful example of the region. Clove, olive tapenade, and Worcestershire define the flavor profile as plum-skin tannins add an edge on the finish. **94**

Louis Bernard 2020, AOC Vacqueyras Rouge (\$35) Predominant notes of garrigue are joined by spiced plum, clove, and wild strawberry. Finishes with a dusting of wet stone and dried flowers. **91**



WINERY: 

M. CHAPOUTIER

www.chapoutier.com

M. Chapoutier 2021 La Ciboise, AOC Luberon Blanc (\$18) Grenache Blanc, Vermentino, Ugni Blanc, and Roussanne aged on the lees in stainless-steel vats for five months. The nose imparts minerality, wet stone, clay, and lemon peel, while the palate shows notes of lemon, pear, and honeydew followed by an almond nuttiness. **91**

M. Chapoutier 2018 Chante-Alouette, AOC Hermitage Blanc (\$135) A 100% Marsanne exuding aromas of honeyed walnut, brioche, nutmeg and dried apricot. The palate demonstrates balanced acidity as citrus, creamy butterscotch, toast, and umami give way to notes of almond on the finish. **94**

M. Chapoutier 2022 Belleruche, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rosé (\$17) Grenache, Cinsault, and Syrah make up this light-pink sipper. A perfume of lilac, strawberry, and stony minerality leads to an acidic mouthfeel adorned with bright flavors of lychee, gooseberry, and lemon peel. **91**

**M. Chapoutier 2021
Belleruche, AOC Côtes
du Rhône Rouge (\$17)**

Intense aromas of cassis, raspberry, white pepper, and violets exude from this blend of Grenache and Syrah. Flavors of plum and dark chocolate peek through the herbaceous palate, riding a wave of silky tannins. **91**



WINERY: 

**MAISON
SINNAE**

www.sinnae.fr

**Maison Sinnae 2022,
AOC Côtes du Rhône
Blanc (\$15)** This zingy blend of Grenache Blanc, Clairette Blanche, Roussanne, Viognier, and Bourboulenc is initially defined by flavors of salty sandalwood and apricot preserves, which give way to notes of peanut brittle and lemon bar balanced out by minerality and acidity. **90**

**Maison Sinnae 2021
Excellence, AOC Côtes
du Rhône Villages
Laudun Blanc (\$25)**

Thanks to a foundation of Grenache Blanc, aromas and flavors of chamomile, lychee, and lanolin are evident. A mineral component and a hint of toast form the wine's core. **92**

**Maison Sinnae 2022,
AOC Côtes du Rhône
Rosé (\$15)** This Grenache Noir glides across the mouth with salted raspberry, goji berry, and wet stone. Refreshing and pretty. **89**

**Maison Sinnae
2021, AOC Côtes du
Rhône Rouge (\$15)** A composition of Grenache Noir, Syrah, Carignan, Cinsault, and Mourvèdre with a fruit-forward character. Bright black cherry and rhubarb are seasoned with basil and oregano. Juicy and fleshy, with keen acidity and dry, dusty cedar tannins. **91**



WINERY: 

MARRENON

www.marrenon.com

**Marrenon 2022 Pétula,
AOC Luberon Rosé
(\$20)** Mango and raspberry make for fine aromas as well as bright and fresh flavors. A dash of salinity spotlights luscious notes of melon. **91**

**Marrenon 2021 Grand
Marrenon, AOC
Luberon Blanc (\$21)** Vermentino and Grenache Blanc create a wine with mineral undertones. Buttered cashew intercepts plush, textured notes of papaya and gardenia. **93**

Marrenon 2021 Grand Marrenon, AOC Luberon Rouge (\$21)

Boysenberry is expressive on the nose and palate of this well-balanced Syrah-Grenache blend. Satin-lined tannins and a stream of cassis contribute juiciness as garrigue and hazelnut complement the wine's clean, direct acidity. **93**

Marrenon 2018 Gardarèm, AOC Luberon Rouge (\$70)

Violets and sandalwood are inviting scents in this Syrah-based red. Profound and deep, slate and espresso integrate with mineral notes before dark chocolate and black cherry combine on the plush finish. **94**



WINERY: 

PIERRE AMADIEU

www.pierre-amadieu.com

Pierre Amadieu 2021 Romane-Machotte, AOC Gigondas Rouge (\$40)

A bright and lively blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah with a foundation of garrigue and a core of cured meats that goes deep. Blueberry and red currant contribute tartness and keen acidity ensures superb food-friendliness. **94**



WINERY: 

VIGNOBLES & COMPAGNIE

www.vignoblescompagnie.com

Vignobles & Compagnie 2019 Château des Sources, AOC Costières de Nîmes Rouge (\$15)

Following aromas of ripe blackberry and coffee, rich plum and mocha appear on the earthy and juicy palate. The stony middle is threaded with Italian seasoning and wild strawberry. **91**

Vignobles & Compagnie 2020 Les Combelles, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Rouge (\$20)

In this cheerful red with loads of personality, bright acidity lends focus to black cherry and dried roses coated in a layer of mocha and espresso. Dusty tannins are manageable and do not interfere with the plush mouthfeel. **92**

Vignobles & Compagnie 2020 Rive de Malva, AOC Saint-Joseph Rouge (\$40)

This 100% Syrah is elegant from the start. Notes of coffee bean and black plum exude a concentrated mouthfeel and suede texture as oak confidently integrates with clove, black pepper, and fennel. **93**

Vignobles & Compagnie 2021 Les Sources de Montmirail, AOC Gigondas Rouge (\$45)

Aromas of cured meats and rhubarb are deep and decisive in this blend of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, and Marselan. Notes of sandalwood and Worcestershire appear alongside ripe red fruit and dark chocolate on the spicy finish. **92**

RHÔNE WINEMAKER TOUR

SECTION 2

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WINERY: 

CAVE LA ROMAINE

www.cave-la-romaine.com

Cave La Romaine 2022 Tradition, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$13) This wine offers a palatable retreat into mango and pear nectar. Fine acidity and a thread of minerality keep it fresh. **89**

Cave La Romaine 2022 Tradition, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rosé (\$13) Fresh raspberry, watermelon, and Italian herbs leave a fine trace behind on the palate of this fruit-forward blend of Grenache, Cinsault, and Syrah. The finish of pink grapefruit surprises. **90**

Cave la Romaine 2022 Tradition, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$13) An uncomplicated, easy-drinking Grenache-Syrah with bright cherry, rose, and underbrush. **89**

PHOTO: INTER RHÔNE



Cave la Romaine 2022 Terre Unique, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15) This 50/50 blend of Grenache and Syrah is light-bodied, with notes of dried rose, rhubarb, and blackberry leading to a sweet-tobacco finish. **90**



WINERY: 

CHÂTEAU DE CLAPIER

www.chateaudeclapier.com

Château de Clapier 2022 Vibrato, AOC Luberon Blanc (\$15) Roussanne, Grenache, and Vermentino combine to exude vivid aromas of ripe pineapple, honeysuckle, and lemon chiffon. Salted lychee, passion fruit, fresh linen, and key lime are layered and elegant. **93**

Château de Clapier 2022 Vibrato, AOC Luberon Rosé (\$15) Following a floral and fruity nose of lychee, strawberry, and passion fruit, minerality mixes with strawberry and honeysuckle on the palate of this blend of 55% Cinsault and 45% Grenache Noir. **89**

Château de Clapier 2020 Vibrato, AOC Luberon Rouge (\$15) Mocha, violets, and blueberry charm on the nose. Juicy, with ripe plum, gentled notes of garrigue, and a finish of nutmeg and cedar. **91**

Château de Clapier 2018 Cuvée Soprano, AOC Luberon Rouge (\$30) Aged in French oak, this standout blend of Grenache, Syrah, offers unique aromas of ripe summer plum and cherry blossom as well as a harmonious, silky mouthfeel. Delicious and fresh, with notes of white-peppered cured meats, mocha, and boysenberry jam. **95**



WINERY: 

CHÂTEAU D'ESPEYRAN

www.domaine-espeyran.fr

Château d'Espeyran 2022 L'Envol, AOC Costières de Nîmes Blanc (\$15) Rolle, Roussanne, and Marsanne exhibit prominent tropical fruit such as lychee and pineapple with a hint of lime. Equally charming are the notes of nectarine, fine acidity, minerality, and nutty cashew finish. **91**

Château d'Espeyran 2022 L'Envol, AOC Costières de Nîmes Rosé (\$15) A delicate blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah with apricot and peach, lime and orange peel, and gooseberry and strawberry. Bright minerality and a round mouthfeel lead to more citrus on the finish. **93**



**Château d'Espeyran
2020 l'Envol, AOC
Costières de Nîmes
Rouge (\$15)** The nose
of this impassioned and
elegant blend of 80%
Syrah and 20% Grenache
is filled with dark red fruit.
Black cherry preserves
and violets sprouting from
crushed stone arise within
the suede-lined mouthfeel. **92**

**Château d'Espeyran
2021 La Cantatrice,
AOC Costières de
Nîmes Rouge (\$18)**
Jasmine, blackberry tart,
charred meats, cinnamon,
raspberry, and rooibos
tea compose the chorus of
flavors that distinguish this
fruit-forward red. **93**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE DE L'ODYLÉE

www.lodylee.com

**Domaine de l'Odylée
2021 La Prometteuse,
AOC Côtes du Rhône
Blanc (\$19)** A blend of
Grenache Blanc, Viognier,
Roussanne, and Clairette
with a tease of salty
minerality. Hazelnut,
chamomile, dried apricot,
and crisp pear are layered
from start to finish. **93**

**Domaine de l'Odylée
2022 Rosé d'Automne,
AOC Côtes du Rhône
Rosé (\$26)** This crimson-
hued rosé of 100% Syrah
matured in oak barrels
offers mouth-filling
notes of cranberry and
cinnamon. Salty and fresh,
with orange peel and
tingling acidity. Crushed
stone, custard, and
cherry add texture to the
mouthfeel. **94**

Domaine de l'Odylée 2020 La Talentueuse, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$19) Earthy notes of coffee and tobacco are lit up by potent cherry, heather, and white pepper. Rosemary-seasoned cedar smooths out on the finish of this blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Carignan. **93**

Domaine de l'Odylée 2020 La Généreuse, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$21) Spiced cedar and mulberry conjure a winter holiday as clove, violets, and fennel combine to create a textural sensation. Fresh and clean, with a finish of wild strawberry and red tea. **93**



WINERY: 

**DOMAINE DE
ROQUEVIGNAN**

www.domaine-roquevignan.fr

Domaine de Roquevignan 2021 Mon Mignon, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$14)

Rhubarb and dark chocolate wrap around spicy garrigue in this stainless steel-aged blend of 60% Grenache and 40% Syrah. Cedar integrates with tart cherry and finishes with a coating of cured meats.

89

Domaine de Roquevignan 2020 Sélections Vieilles Vignes, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Rochegude Rouge (\$15)

Dominated by Grenache (80%), this mature, silky red is spiced with mocha and tempered by blueberry preserves. Italian herbs season a midpalate wash of mulberry, sweet tobacco, and peony. Ripe and juicy.

91

Domaine de Roquevignan 2020 Le Sourire de Jeanne, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Rochegude Rouge (\$16)

Aged in concrete tanks for nine months, this concentrated and spicy blend of 80% Syrah and 20% Grenache offers up black-peppered blueberry, black olive, and grilled meats. Shadowed and intense, with roasted coffee and licorice appearing on the lengthy finish. **90**

Domaine de Roquevignan 2020 Cuvée Magali, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Rochegude Rouge (\$17)

Grenache (80%) and Syrah (20%) are vinified separately and aged for 12 months in temperature-controlled tanks. Aromas of chocolate, boysenberry, and rosemary persist, and on the palate, ripe red fruit, garrigue, and spiced sandalwood are prevalent. Enveloped in supple tannins, white pepper seasons summer raspberries. **92**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE LA VALÉRIANE

www.domainevaleriane.com

Domaine la Valérie 2022 Valérie, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$15) Green apple and banana arise on the nose of this pale-yellow Viognier, Roussanne, and Grenache Blanc blend. Savory peanut brittle and medium acidity are balanced by soft, creamy pear; peach; and apricot with a hint of elderflower. **92**

Domaine la Valérie 2022 Valérie, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$15) The bright nose of this 60% Grenache/40% Syrah blend exudes raspberry and cranberry, and on the palate, more cranberry with a tinge of spice and herbaceous lavender is balanced by acidity. **91**

Domaine la Valérie 2021 Vieilles Vignes, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$17) A perfume of plum, cherry, and cranberry lifts from the glass of this 50/50 blend of Syrah and Grenache. Medium tannins, more red fruit, and mixed berry jam see a hint of white pepper, tobacco, and chocolate. **92**

Domaine la Valérie 2020 Les Archanges, AOC Côtes du Rhône Villages Signargues Rouge (\$27) This blend of 80% Syrah and 20% Grenache has a dark ruby color. On the nose, intense aromas of black currant and blackberry combine with herbal notes of fennel and licorice spice. The tannins are round and well balanced, and luscious flavors of cooked blackberries meld with mild licorice on the finish. **94**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE LEFEBVRE D'ANSELME

Domaine Lefebvre d'Anselme 2022 L'Art d'être Heureux, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$17) A blend of Clairette and Ugni Blanc, with rich notes of fig and cantaloupe supported by orange marmalade. Honeysuckle and peanut brittle add more lushness to the generous mouthfeel. **90**

Domaine Lefebvre d'Anselme 2021 Trilogie, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$20) Following pungent aromas of apricot, sweet pea, and lily, yellow apple and white-peppered cashew add to the perceptible body weight of this blend of 60% Roussanne and 40% Grenache Blanc. **90**

Domaine Lefebvre d'Anselme 2021 L'Art d'être Heureux, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$16) Mulberry, cedar, and coffee wrap around strawberry preserves in this rustic blend of Grenache, Carignan, Syrah, and Cinsault. **89**

Domaine Lefebvre d'Anselme 2021 Trilogie, AOC Côtes du Rhône Rouge (\$20) Savory notes of tobacco and soy sauce meld with juicy blackberry in this 50/50 blend of Grenache and Syrah. Good acid structure, lush black plum, and a saline fish of licorice inspire. **91**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE ROZEL

www.domainerozel.fr

Domaine Rozel 2022 Perle de Viognier, AOC Grignan-les-Adhémar Blanc (\$17) Following vivid aromas of gardenia and pineapple, a pinch of white pepper seasons notes of tangerine and hazelnut. Bright acidity ensures this voluptuous white is well balanced. A hint of bread dough arises on the finish. **93**

Domaine Rozel 2022 Le Temps de Vivre, AOC Grignan-les-Adhémar Blanc (\$17) This blend of 40% Viognier and 30% Grenache Blanc with some Roussanne and Marsanne is fruity, with a sunny perfume of passion fruit. The palate shows dried apricot, lemon bar, and elderflower as well as keen acidity and salinity that navigates through the glassy finish. **93**

Domaine Rozel 2021 Marquise, AOC Grignan-les-Adhémar Rouge (\$20) A light-bodied blend of 70% Syrah and 30% Grenache, with velvet-lined tannins. Powerful notes of red plum, mulberry, spiced cedar, and underbrush ignite a lengthy finish. **92**

Domaine Rozel 2021 Les Frangins, AOC Grignan-les-Adhémar Rouge (\$30) The defined tannins and generous fruit of this silky Syrah with 10% Viognier ensure it has great food-pairing abilities. Notes of Morello cherry are augmented by fine acidity, and white pepper and red tea add zest to the finish. **93**



WINERY: 

DOMAINE SAINT ROCH

www.domaine-saintroch.fr

Domaine Saint Roch 2022 Les 4 Baies, AOC Côtes du Rhône Blanc (\$19) Graceful stone-fruit aromas and a whiff of honeysuckle are mirrored on the palate of this blend of Roussanne, Marsanne, Viognier, and Grenache Blanc. Mineral notes are cleansing, and chamomile and lychee are exotic on the finish. **91**

**Domaine Saint Roch
2021 Amour, AOC
Muscat de Beaumes-
de-Venise Blanc (\$28)**

A beautifully balanced vin doux with orange-creamsicle notes and a whisp of honey and salty pistachio. **92**

**Domaine Saint Roch
2020 Cuvée des Taus,
AOC Beaumes-de-
Venise Rouge (\$22)**

This showy blend of 60% Grenache, 30% Syrah, and 10% Cinsault exudes a perfume of jasmine and blueberry. A garden of heather sprouts alongside notes of biscuit and grape preserves atop a layer of coffee, balsamic, and black tea. **93**

**Domaine Saint Roch
2021 Quentho, AOC
Vacqueyras Rouge
(\$29)** This Grenache/Syrah aged in stainless steel is earthy, with a hint of animale. A wave of cassis converges with wild blueberry on the midpalate, and a toasty twist defines the finish. **91**



WINERY: 

MAS EDEM

www.mas-edem.fr

**Mas Edem 2022
Delicato, AOC Luberon
Blanc (\$15)** White flowers bloom from start to finish in this light-bodied blend of Vermentino, Marsanne, Clairette, and Viognier. Fresh peach and lemon chiffon linger. **89**

**Mas Edem 2022
Delicato, AOC Luberon
Rosé (\$15)** With a base of mostly Grenache, this wine offers tingling acidity and inherent salinity. Rose and melon make for complementary flavors. **89**

**Mas Edem 2020
Delicato, AOC Luberon
Rouge (\$15)** Matured for 12 months in mostly stainless-steel vats, this Syrah-based red is rustic, with notes of tobacco, black olive, and coffee bean. Black fruit threaded with licorice expands on the finish. **89**

**Mas Edem 2020
Origini, AOC Luberon
Rouge (\$22)** This 50/50 blend of Syrah and Grenache offers mouth-filling notes of balsamic and grilled meats. The midpalate reveals notes of dried violets and black fruit as silky tannins emerge with fine acidity. **91**



PHOTO: INTER RHÔNE



RHÔNE VALLEY VINEYARDS



65 197 HECTARES
AND 2,6 MILLIONS
HECTOLITERS
PRODUCED IN
THE 2022 VINTAGE



329 MILLIONS BOTTLES
SOLD IN 2022



434 TRADING
COMPANIES



1 682 PRODUCTION
UNITS, OF WHICH
1 592 INDEPENDANT
WINERIES
90 COOPERATIVE
WINERIES



IN THE RHÔNE VALLEY
VINEYARDS, ORGANIC
WINES REPRESENT
18% IN VOLUME
AND 20% IN AREA
OF THE 2022 HARVEST



186 EXPORT
DESTINATIONS
AROUND THE
WORLD CONSUMED
RHÔNE VALLEY
WINES IN 2022

HVE 3 LABEL REPRESENTS
24% OF VOLUMES
AND 28% OF AREAS
OF THE 2022 HARVEST.



MORE THAN 10 BOTTLES
OF RHÔNE VALLEY WINES
ARE CONSUMED EVERY
SECOND



PHOTO: PAULINE DANIEL



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