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Richard Betts, MS, says the sandy Barossa Valley vineyard he owns with his wife, Carla, yields a Grenache akin to warm-climate Pinot Noir.

Lines in the Sand

**RICHARD BETTS
AND CARLA RZA
BETTS CARVE THEIR
WINEMAKING IDENTITY
INTO THE LANDSCAPE
OF AUSTRALIA'S
BAROSSA VALLEY**

by Tony Love

A PASSION FOR FINE WINE—where it comes from, how it's crafted, and the stories it tells—can lead aficionados down many a long and winding road.

For two leading—and married—U.S. wine professionals, Master Sommelier Richard Betts and Carla Rza Betts, that journey has landed them a world away from their industry starting grids: Richard as the former Wine Director of The Little Nell in Aspen, Colorado, as well as the co-founder of Betts & Scholl Wines, Sombra Mezcal, and Astral Tequila, and Carla as the former Wine Director of The Spotted Pig, The Breslin, and The John Dory Oyster Bar in New York.

Theirs is a love story that delves beyond the personal into the professional. Driven by their shared search for a particular landscape and style of winemaking, the couple were led to a little-known district within the Barossa Valley wine region: Vine Vale.

Carla Rza Betts and Richard Betts, MS, in Australia's Barossa Valley.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AN APPROACH TO RELAXATION



Roughly 75 percent of the vines in the Betts' 16.5-acre vineyard are estimated to have been planted sometime between the 1860s and 1880s. Among the wines the couple produces is the Sucette Grenache (right) from their An Approach to Relaxation label.

While working at The Nell, Richard became enamored with famed Châteauneuf-du-Pape estate Château Rayas, deducing that growing Grenache in sand was the key to producing lifted aromatics and taste profiles dominated by red rather than black fruit.

He sought to find additional examples, traveling through Spain, California, Sardinia, France, and eventually Australia before landing in Vine Vale; dominated by deep granitic sand, the region's soil profile is similar to that of Rayas. That asset, combined with the large concentration of old vines in the area, convinced Richard he'd found what he'd been looking for.

In his partnership with Betts & Scholl Wines, he began working with the Canutes of Rusden Wines fame. With six generations of experience, the family knows their patch of Vine Vale sand intimately, and Richard and Carla have continued to evolve that relationship through their own affectionately named project: An Approach to Relaxation.

The Canute family's close connection to the land inspired Richard and Carla to buy a nearby 16.5-acre vineyard, three quarters of which encompass old vines estimated to have been planted between the 1860s and 1880s. A few half-rows are planted to younger (27-year-old) Grenache from the vineyard's cuttings, and another 4 acres will be planted to rootlets this year.



The RZA block first contributed to the couple's Sucette Grenache in the 2016 vintage. An Approach to Relaxation makes this singular red in tandem with a white Sémillon–Sauvignon Blanc blend known as Nichon; for both wines, Richard says the trick is to get out of the way and let the grapes do the talking by maintaining a low-intervention approach throughout the winemaking process. "We feel extremely fortunate to be able to act as custodians for what is one of the great old-vine blocks left on

The Nichon expression from An Approach to Relaxation is a Sémillon-based blend from Barossa Valley.

the planet," he adds.

Basing their expressions on varieties with a prolific history in the region, they consider their approach not unlike that of a terroir-centric French domaine. "The sand is everything: It gives incredibly aromatic, sheer Grenache that acts like a warm-climate analogy of Pinot Noir," Carla says.

The Nichon is meant to serve as an homage to similar wines Richard and Carla both sold and enjoyed throughout their careers, including expressions from California's Kalin Cellars, Fiorano cuvées from Lazio, and old Chateau Musar Blanc, which features an obscure variety similar to Sémillon.

Both the Nichon and Sucette carry dreamy, colorful labels that prove the couple's shared passion for wine is guided by a 21st-century mindset. When it comes to their broader business philosophy, Richard and Carla have a simple message: "Stay frisky!" "Life is short; don't take yourself too terribly seriously," Carla adds. "We happen to find joy in sensuality, and we think the wines share some of that juicy character. They are easy to fall in love with, and that's a source of celebration for us." ❧

Setting Shiraz Free in McLaren Vale

KANGARILLA ROAD WINEMAKER KEVIN O'BRIEN WEIGHS IN ON
SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S MOST CELEBRATED GRAPE *by Tony Love*

PHOTO COURTESY OF KANGARILLA ROAD



Kangarilla Road Winemaker Kevin O'Brien offers five expressions from McLaren Vale.



WITH HERMITAGE AND Côte-Rôtie ranking among its famed French sources, Shiraz has also found a respected home in Australia, making it a truly global citizen of the wine world. The variety is considered the continent's talisman red, as it's now grown and consumed more than any other grape in the category.


For those seeking memorable Shiraz expressions from South Australia, Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale stand out. Categorizing the variety by individual regions does it a disservice, however, as viticulturists and winemakers explore more precise subregional, geological, and topographical variations in their Shiraz stylings.

Winemaker Kevin O'Brien of Kangarilla Road in McLaren Vale represents this new breed of curious and creative producers. His portfolio includes five Shiraz variations, with the Kangarilla Road Shiraz combining a range of sources from around the region into one all-encompassing wine. Rounding out the lineup alongside the Alluvial Fans, Blanche Point, and Road Q, the Devil's Whiskers Shiraz serves as a more defined and singular site expression.

"The regular Shiraz isn't that big, bold, over-the-top style—its real story is one of savoriness, spice, and elegance, but at the same time, power," O'Brien says. "Wines don't have to be inky black to be powerful and make a statement."

Sourcing its fruit from an array of vineyards around McLaren Vale, the wine picks up nuances of the two main aromatic and flavor profiles indicative of this variety: elegant, supple, and red fruit-driven as well as masculine, robust, and black fruit-driven. "What you find in our Kangarilla Road Shiraz is a lovely balance of those two—elegance and perfume and also the backbone of black fruit," O'Brien explains. "They complement each other, and at the end of the day they are a great expression of true McLaren Vale."

The single-site Devil's Whiskers expression, meanwhile, showcases a style many people have come to expect of Australian Shiraz. O'Brien describes it as his "robust" example of the variety, with deep, dark colors, dominant black fruit, and savory spice with new French oak influences. The wine is full-bodied without being overextracted. "It still has a degree of refinement for a wine that makes quite a statement," he says.

Ultimately, O'Brien notes, both wines highlight how McLaren Vale and its signature Shiraz variety can't be pigeonholed. "They show there can be surprising differences—and we celebrate that," he says. 



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Michter's Releases Its US*1 Barrel Strength Rye


LOUISVILLE-BASED DISTILLER Michter's has announced the April release of its US*1 Barrel Strength Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey. "Since I joined Michter's, I've developed a greater appreciation of how good American rye can be," Michter's Master Distiller Pamela Heilmann says. "I think this US*1 Barrel Strength Rye is really exceptional." Michter's Master of Maturation Andrea Wilson shared Heilmann's enthusiasm for the release, noting, "The increased corn and malted barley used in the rye recipe really allows the barrel to transform the product into a super smooth, rich, and complex rye whiskey with an elegance on the palate."

The average proof of the barrels in this release, a single-barrel product, is 110.8, and the suggested U.S. retail price is \$75 for a 750-mL bottle. According to Michter's President Joseph J. Magliocco, the



idea to offer a barrel-strength rye came from tasting different barrel samples at the distillery. "We would be sampling barrels of Michter's US*1 Single Barrel Rye before putting them to bottling proof, and people would say, 'Wow, this is really good!'" says Magliocco.

A longtime favorite of Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May, Michter's has a long legacy of offering traditional American whiskeys of uncompromising quality. With each of its limited-production offerings aged to peak maturity, the brand's highly acclaimed portfolio includes bourbon, rye, sour mash whiskey, and American whiskey.

In addition to the Michter's Fort Nelson Distillery, which just opened to the public, the company operates the Michter's Shively Distillery in Louisville as well as a 145-acre farm in Springfield, Kentucky. For more information, visit michters.com. 

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THE **SOMM** JOURNAL

Carla Rza Betts plays around in her Barossa Valley vineyard.

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POINTS

THE **tastingpanel**
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The forest of Tronçais is considered by many to yield the highest-caliber oakwood in Europe. California-based Jordan Winery now employs the use of 100% oak in its cooperage program.

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{ one woman's view }

Preconceived Drinking

CONFRONTING AMERICANS'
RED-WINE BIAS

by Karen MacNeil

DAN PETROSKI RECENTLY came to our offices with his new Massican wines in tow. During the tasting, he said something I've never heard a California vintner or winemaker say: He revealed that he wanted to make Massican "the best white-wine winery in the U.S."

For a moment I was shocked. Europe's great white-wine wineries flooded my brain, among them Didier Dagueneau, François Cotat, Jermann, Domaine Huet, Zind-Humbrecht, Domaine Weinbach, F.X. Pichler, Dr. Loosen, Willi Schaefer, and Dönnhoff. Yet, apart from Stony Hill, I could not name a single winery in California—even on the coast—that seeks to be known above all for its white wine.

So, when it comes to wine, do we have an anti-white bias? I think we might, and there's some anecdotal and empirical evidence to confirm it. Regarding the former, over the last year I've interviewed many people about their wine-drinking habits. My surveys are not scientific, of course, but I was surprised by one revela-

tion: Men dining with other men during a business meeting virtually never order white wine. Interestingly, some men now report being much more likely to order rosé than white wine.

What's going on here? Can American men really be so naive as to assume that white wine is somehow "lesser" than red or so insecure as to think of it as too "feminine" to drink?

Then there's the concept of white-wine glasses, which, of course, is not solely an American issue. I've conducted considerable research on this for more than a year, and it's unclear why white-wine glasses are smaller than red. Much of the literature suggests that, historically, white-wine glasses were designed to be smaller precisely because white wine was considered less complex. (Try telling that to any of the producers in paragraph two.)

Finally, there's the issue of how critics actually rate white wines. In a fascinating study, journalist Jeff Siegel and data scientist Dr. Suneal Chaudhary reviewed

major wine periodicals and analyzed almost 62,000 wine scores dating back to the 1970s. Their work, published in the March 23, 2017 issue of *Meininger's Wine Business International*, revealed that critics do seem to favor red wines over white. Among their findings: Red wines are 20 percent more likely than their white counterparts to be rated higher than 90 points. Fair? I don't think so.

Spring is now upon us. I, for one, plan on drinking some smashing delicious and complex white wines—in large glasses. **\$**



Karen MacNeil is the author of *The Wine Bible* and editor of *WineSpeed*. You can reach her at karen@karenmacneil.com.

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2016 KALI HART PINOT NOIR
FEATURED APRIL 2018

2016 KALI HART CHARDONNAY
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Defying Expectations

EXPLORING **BRAZIL**, SOUTH AMERICA'S NEWEST WINE FRONTIER photos and story by David Ransom



Brazilian producer Flavio Pizzato in the Merlot block of his vineyard in the Vale dos Vinhedos region.



Vinícola Salton is Brazil's oldest winery and largest producer of sparkling wine.

"BRAZIL MAKES WINE?" That was the question I heard over and over earlier this year when I told people I was crossing the equator not to visit Chile or Argentina but to learn about the wine industry in South America's largest country. Here's what I found out during my visit:

Brazil is the Southern Hemisphere's fifth-largest wine producer after Argentina, Australia, Chile, and South Africa. Its viticultural history can be traced back to the 1870s, when Italian immigrants, mostly from Trento and other areas of northeast Italy, arrived and started planting vineyards in the southwestern state of Rio Grande do Sul. A two-hour flight from São Paulo to the coastal city of Porto Alegre, followed by a two-hour drive inland, brings you to the Serra Gaúcha/Vale dos Vinhedos region near Bento Gonçalves, where the heart of Brazil's wine industry is based. Geographically, it's close to Uruguay and Argentina.

"Isn't Brazil a tropical climate?" was another bewildered inquiry I heard asked in conjunction with viticulture practices. Yes and no: To me, at least, the topography and climate of Vale dos Vinhedos resembles that of Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco DOCG, with its humidity, four distinct seasons, and lush rolling hills where vineyards have been carved into the slopes and valleys. Located at the 29th parallel south, this wine region is nowhere near the equator; snow often falls during the winter and frost can persist through spring.

A variety of wines are produced here, including Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Tannat, and Merlot, which serves as the star red grape. However, it's in the realm of sparkling wines that Brazil is making a name for itself, both in Charmat and traditional-method production (maybe it's that Veneto/Trento connection!). Grapes typically used in these expressions include Chardonnay, Glera (labeled Prosecco for distribution within Brazil by most producers, though that's changing), Pinot Noir, Moscato, and Riesling Italico (Welschriesling).

Starting in the 1970s, when Mario Geisse (owner of Cave Geisse) came from Chile to help Möet & Chandon develop vineyards for sparkling wine, the Brazilian bubbly segment has been a priority, and the country currently produces in excess of 25 million bottles per year. Producers to look for in the U.S. include Vinícola Salton (with a domestic market share of 40 percent, it's Brazil's oldest winery and largest producer of sparkling wine), Miolo, Aurora, Pizzato, Lidio Carraro, Basso (Monte Paschoal is their label), Casa Valduga, and Geisse's own Família Geisse.

So, to answer that aforementioned question: Yes, Brazil *does* make wine—pretty good wine, at that. And with more of its brands looking to gain a place on the international stage as they increase production, don't you want to be among the first to enjoy the look of surprise on your customers' faces as they take their very first sip? *SJR*

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Safta's pita can be topped with various salatim, which translates literally as "salads" but refers more generally to a wide range of Israeli-style hors d'oeuvres.



PHOTO: MIKE THURK

Where We're Dining and Drinking in Denver in 2019

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

IF OUTSIDERS HAVE deigned to characterize the Denver dining scene as "up-and-coming" for the past decade or so, 2018 was the year they could no longer deny it has officially arrived, with groundbreaking concepts from increasingly big-name chefs and beverage pros making national news right and left. My last column featured three restaurants—Morin, LeRoux, and Beckon—that indulge the city's newfound taste for ultra-glamour; here, I'm tipping my hat to four others that speak to its hunger for globally inspired adventure.

home bases of Louisiana and Texas. With Safta, the Israeli-born Shaya has brought the modern Eastern Mediterranean cuisine he pioneered at New Orleans' Saba to The Source Hotel + Market Hall, where the seasonal menu lends itself to group feasts so gut-busting you may not make it to the entrée section.

They all start with Shaya's famous wood-fired pita and hummus, optionally topped with everything from curried cauliflower to soft-cooked egg; from there, small plates like the luscious *kibbeh nayeh* (lamb tartare with

flown in daily from Japan as well as produce from a massive hydroponic greenhouse on the restaurant's rooftop. Though raw fish is the undisputed star here, many a cooked dish can steal the show: Adding the foie gras supplement to Uchi's kinoko nabe with egg yolk-enriched rice and mushrooms was perhaps the best dining decision I made last year.

Meanwhile, a pair of long-established local talents are attracting notice for redefining fusion cuisine. Dana Rodriguez, a past James Beard nominee for her mashup of Mexican and downhome American food at Work & Class, launched Super Mega Bien at The Ramble Hotel, also in RiNo, with her partners Tony Maciag and Tabatha Knop last May. Serving pan-Latin small plates dim sum-style from turquoise carts, the place is a walk-in kaleidoscope of color, noise, and the flavors of humitas, molotes, pupusas, ceviches, and so much more. They're best paired with gin-spiked *chicha morada*, a Peruvian purple-corn beverage.

And in February, Kelly Whitaker of Boulder's Basta received his first James Beard nomination for Best Chef Southwest as the owner of The Wolf's Tailor, which opened in late summer in the still-sleepy Sunnyside neighborhood. With a nigh-uncategorizable menu that reflects Whitaker's diverse obsessions—pastas and Italian breads made from house-milled heirloom grains, Japanese skewers and clay-pot dishes, raw and fermented nibbles of all kinds—it epitomizes the freewheeling, enterprising spirit that's made Denver such an exciting place to eat. **RSJ**



PHOTO: RUTH TOBIAS

Humitas, a sort of South American corn pudding, is one of countless rotating dishes served dim sum-style at Super Mega Bien.

Proving that interest in Denver has spread far beyond state lines, two of the four just so happen to be run by James Beard Award winners: Alon Shaya and Tyson Cole. Coincidentally, both chose the city's white-hot RiNo neighborhood for their first projects outside their respective

tissue-thin Yemenite flatbread) and charred cabbage with muhamarra leave just enough room for a bite of chocolate-hazelnut babka or labneh cheesecake.

Cole, meanwhile, has opened an outpost of his celebrated sushi emporium Uchi, where his team works with seafood

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Future Classics

DOMESTIC CHEESEMAKERS IMPRESS WITH INNOVATIVE CREATIONS

by Janet Fletcher


THE HITS JUST keep on coming from America's artisan cheesemakers. None of the cheeses on the following list existed five years ago, but all of them have staying power: I consider them future classics rather than "let's see what sticks" exercises. If you want to present a cutting-edge cheese plate, some of these innovative selections should be on it.

Face Rock Creamery Bandaged Cheddar, Oregon: Brad Sinko created the American Cheese Society (ACS) Best of Show–winning Flagship Reserve for Beecher's Handmade Cheese in Seattle. Now he's returned to his Oregon roots. Made in Bandon, on the coast, this cloth-wrapped Cheddar has a natural rind as well as the fruity aromas and sweet,

GOAT'S MILK
Central Coast Creamery Dream Weaver, California: This Paso Robles creamery won a blue ribbon at ACS right out of the gate for this beauty, a supple, squishy 2-pound wheel that smells of bread yeast, garlic, and smoke (although it's unsmoked). Washed-rind goat cheeses are uncommon, making this newbie all the more welcome.

SHEEP'S MILK
Central Coast Creamery Ewureka, California: Cheesemaker Reggie Jones earned yet another ACS blue ribbon for this new creation, his first sheep's milk cheese. He describes it as Cheddar-like in style, but to me it more closely resembles a Pyrenees sheep's milk cheese—nutty and sweet with no tang. Virtually any red wine would pair well.

MIXED MILK
Bellwether Farms Blackstone, California: Like its sibling, Bellwether Pepato, this firm 2-1/2-pound wheel has whole black peppercorns scattered throughout, lending a floral aroma and peppery bite. Produced with 60 percent cow's milk and 40 percent sheep's milk (Pepato is pure sheep), Blackstone has a warm melted-butter scent and a tart finish. A coating of ash, black pepper, and rosemary makes the wheel messy to cut, but it's worth it.

Hook's Triple Play Extra Innings, Wisconsin: Tony and Julie Hook are known for Cheddars and blue cheeses, but this recent addition to their lineup is more of a hybrid style that's Cheddar-like in texture with a roasted-nut and caramel aroma and the sweet finish of a Gouda. Made in rindless 40-pound blocks from a mixture of cow's, goat's, and sheep's milk, Extra Innings receives at least 15 months of aging before release—long enough to produce some of those crunchy protein crystals in the paste. 

COW'S MILK
Briar Rose Creamery Maia, Oregon: Made from the milk of Ayrshire cows, a rare heritage breed, Maia is a washed-rind disk that turns supple and custardy at six to eight weeks. Unlike most cheeses of this style, it's not a stinker: I detect aromas of yeast, sour cream, and cheesecake as well as a pleasantly tart flavor akin to crème fraîche.

Deer Creek The Blue Jay, Wisconsin: A rindless triple-cream blue cheese scented with juniper berries, The Blue Jay sounds over the top but works. Moist, mellow, and plush, it will win over blue-cheese skeptics while making enthusiasts swoon. Try it with an Oloroso Sherry.

mellow flavor that reflect the use of non-traditional cultures.

Stepladder Creamery Paso Vino, California: Steeped for 48 hours in Castoro Cellars' Syrah–Petite Sirah blend, this wheel spends four to five months in the cellar before release. It has a Manchego-like firmness, a seductive nuttiness, and enough acidity to balance its sweetness.

Tulip Tree Trillium, Indiana: A triple-cream bloomy-rind cheese in an unusual 8-ounce-square format, this handmade creation has a mushroom scent and a silky, whipped-butter texture. The cheesemaker helped Cowgirl Creamery devise Mt. Tam years ago, and you may notice a family resemblance.



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The Crucial Converters

BRUT IPA AND THE AMYLOGLUCOSIDASE ENZYME

by Jessie Birschbach

IF YOU KNOW anything about making beer, you know that enzymes play a key role. To start the germination process, dried barley is soaked in order to activate the natural enzymes present in each kernel. Later, during the mash process, the brewer adds hot water (aka hot liquor among the pros) to the malted barley; this addition further coaxes the activated enzymes to convert the starches within the mash into fermentable sugars.

Another important aspect to know regarding enzymes and the brewing process is that there are two main types of protein enzymes: *alpha-amylase* and *beta-amylase*, which operate at different temperatures to break down starch particles of various sizes.

The knowledge that we need enzymes to convert starch into fermentable sugars is something that can be used to the brewer's advantage. Controlling the temperature and/or using particular specialty malts (like super dark malts that have been kilned to the point where their enzymes have become denatured) can help determine the mash's level of fermentability.

For instance, a lower mash temperature of 154–160 degrees Fahrenheit is the preferred environment of beta-amylase. Mashing at this temperature range will result in a highly fermentable wort, and therefore a drier, crisper beer. But even at this lower temperature, you'll still be left with some residual sugar (typically 20–25%). This, my beer-loving friends, is where the enzyme amyloglucosidase comes in, and also wherein the recently popular brut IPA style was born.

Amyloglucosidase

Although there are other enzymes that do so, amyloglucosidase is used by most brewers to dry out their beer. This exogenous (added) enzyme has the ability

to break down the more complex sugars that beta-amylase and alpha-amylase cannot during the mash process, and it was typically used to help reduce the sweetness level and body in big imperial stouts (or to make light beer). But in fall 2017, brewmaster Kim Sturdivant of San Francisco's Social Kitchen & Brewery brewed a traditional IPA, added the amyloglucosidase after the first round of fermentation, and created the first bone-dry IPA with no residual sugar.

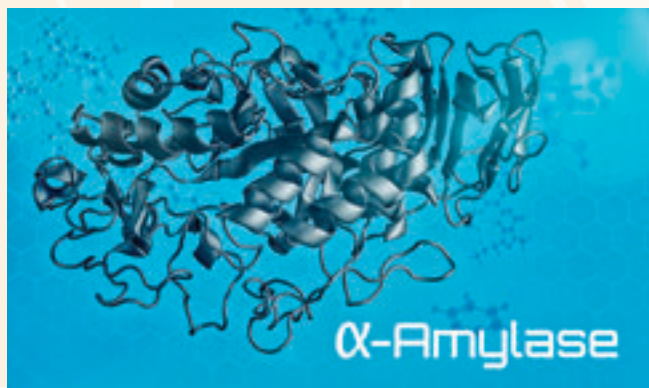


PHOTO BY ZERBOR VIA ADOBE STOCK

Brut IPA Style

It's quite popular and, in my opinion, here to stay, but the brut IPA style is still being defined. There's no set grain bill or universal agreement on when the amyloglucosidase enzyme should be added during the brewing process, nor does the style utilize a signature hop. But it's safe to at least describe it as a bone-dry, aromatic, moderately bitter; highly carbonated, and (usually) slightly hazy IPA at about 7% ABV.

Sierra Nevada's Brut IPA, Stone's Enjoy By Brüt IPA, and New Belgium's Brut IPA seem to be the most widely available. I've also had solid examples from Anderson Valley, Ballast Point, and Lakefront. **SJ**

Managing Editor Jessie Birschbach is a homebrewer and Certified Cicerone.



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The Proverbial Radical

A “SOMMELIER’S WINEMAKER” SHARES HIS PHILOSOPHY

by Randy Caparoso

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE thought Steve Matthiasson would become a sommelier's idea of a “wine god” had you met him in 2000, when he was still applying his master's in horticulture to a grant for Biologically Integrated Farming Systems (BIFS) in Lodi. This work morphed into one of the country's first books on sustainable winegrowing, *Lodi Winegrower's Workbook*, which Matthiasson co-authored with Clifford Ohmart.

Back then, Matthiasson was a grape savant who turned his compulsion into a career when he moved to Napa Valley, taking vineyard-management jobs for names like Araujo, Spottswoode, David Arthur, Chappellet, Stag's Leap, Dalla Valle, and others. But a funny thing happened on the way: The viticulturist decided to make his own wine.

Perhaps it was his philosophy background (he earned his bachelor's degree at Whittier College), but Matthiasson began to apply a strict set of ethics to his own conception of “wine.” First, “Thou shalt not make *big* wine.” Second, “Thou shalt respect the purity of a grape.” He's never actually said that, but it's implied in conversations and, of course, in his wines.

For instance, in his current release, the 2016 Matthiasson Ribolla Gialla, there's a gold tint that's not nearly as brassy as one would expect in a skin-contact/barrel-fermented white. The violet and citrus notes, meanwhile, are more about texture and viscosity than the sheer intensity of fruit or acidity by which white wines are normally judged. “Ribolla Gialla tastes terrible when it is fermenting—flat, like a cold, unripe banana, and then VA [vinegary notes] pop up in the barrel,” says Matthiasson. “But in the end, it's a beautiful wine”—just maybe not what you'd expect from a wine that typically carries that descriptor.

Like the Ribolla Gialla, the soft, unabashedly plummy, and peppery 2015 Matthiasson Refosco would be lauded by new-gen sommeliers for its lightness at 12.6% ABV (compared to the Ribolla's 11.2%) and obvious freedom from oak—as such, as un-Napa (or “un-big”) as you can get. But like the proverbial radical, it's with predictable varieties that Matthiasson is, well, the most unpredictable, like someone trying to change the “system” from within.

ing them into a svelte, compact package.

“I'm not so much a terroir geek as a plant guy,” Matthiasson admits, “but these are wines made in the vineyard.” His use of the old cliché, however, is more in reference to the work put *into* vineyards, like sending his team out to pick Chardonnay at 18 degrees Brix, then 18.5, 19, and so on up to 22 degrees. “That's how you get the most dynamic range of flavors—lemon, grapefruit, pear, green apple, Golden Deli-



PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDY CAPAROSO

Clifford Ohmart and Steve Matthiasson proudly display the first Lodi Winegrower's Workbook in 1999.

Lemony, feathery light, flowery, and racy, the 2016 Matthiasson Chardonnay from his home estate, Linda Vista Vineyard, is wound tight as a clock. Another release, the 2015 Matthiasson Cabernet Sauvignon, combines the scrubby/tobacco/pyrazine/burnt-nut notes of Coombsville-grown fruit with the classic floral/dusty cedar-box character of Rutherford, meld-

cious apple—and, of course, the lightness and acid we're looking for," he says. "I think the old way of making wine was great with heavy foods and highly seasoned sauces, but today's chefs are highlighting lighter foods with fresh, organic ingredients. That's why, just a few years ago, we could barely get in the door of a lot of restaurants. It's good to be finally appreciated!" ■

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EDITORS' CHOICE

WINE ENTHUSIAST



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Tasting Ten Years On



SHARING THE RESULTS OF THE YEARLY
“**SOUTHWOLD ON THAMES**” TRADITION REGARDING
BORDEAUX'S 2015 AND 2009 VINTAGES

IN 1980, SIMON LOFTUS, Chairman of Suffolk brewer Adnams, invited some colleagues to Southwold to assess the 1976 vintage from Bordeaux. This established an annual tradition that continued in January when 19 of us reconvened at Farr Vintners in London for what is now called “Southwold on Thames.”

Together, we blind tasted the major wines of Bordeaux in flights of 12 within their appellations, ranking them by the average of their total marks on a 20-point scale. Two bottles of each wine were collected from the chateaux, and for some years now the second bottles have been assessed at a “10 Years On” tasting by the same group. This year the vintages were 2015 and 2009.

2015

The tasting covered 20 dry and 27 sweet whites as well as 214 red wines. The group knows which wines are in each flight, but not the order of serving. Here are the results:

Top Right Bank First Growth and Top Wine Overall: Château Ausone

Top Left Bank First Growth: Château Haut-Brion

Top Non-First Growth: Château Leoville-Barton

Saint-Émilion: Château Canon and Château Figeac (dead heat) followed by Château Valandraud

Pomerol: Lafleur followed by Château L'Eglise-Clinet and Vieux Château Certan

Pessac-Léognan: Château Smith Haut-Lafitte followed by Domaine de Chevalier and Château Les Carmes Haut-Brion

Margaux: Château Brane-Cantenac followed by Château Rauzan-Segla and Château Palmer

Saint-Julien: Château Leoville-Barton followed by Château Leoville-Poyferre and Château Leoville-Las Cases

Pauillac: Château Pichon-Longueville-Lalande followed by Château Pichon-Longueville-Baron and Château Lynch-Bages

Saint-Estèphe: Château Montrose followed by Château Meyney and Château Calon-Ségur

Dry White: Château Haut-Brion followed by Château Smith Haut-Lafitte and Château La Mission Haut-Brion

Sauternes: Château d'Yquem followed by Château Doisy-Daene and Château Suduiraut

It's clear that 2015 is a better vintage than the previous four years, especially for the Right Bank, yet not as great as the classic 2010 and opulent 2009. (It's probably just behind 2005 and 2000 and just ahead of the lovely 2001.) The style is ripe, supple, and approachable now, but some exceptions lack the intensity and intrigue of a great vintage. For many of us, it recalled 1985.

2009

No dry whites had been retained, so our two-day tasting covered 25 sweet whites and 155 reds. Again, wines were tasted single-blind in flights of 12.

Top Left Bank First Growth and Top Wine Overall: Latour

Top Right Bank First Growth: Château Cheval Blanc

Top Non-First Growth: Château Leoville-Poyferre

Saint-Émilion: Château Canon followed by Château Belair-Monange and Château Pavie

Pomerol: Château Le Gay followed by Château La Conseillante and Château La Violette

Pessac-Leognan: Château Pape-Clément followed by Château Branon and de Château de Fieuzal

Margaux: Château d'Issan followed by Château Kirwan and Château Rauzan-Segla

Saint-Julien: Château Leoville-Poyferre followed by Château Saint-Pierre and Château Leoville-Barton and Château Ducru-Beaucaillou (dead heat)

Pauillac: Château Pichon-Longueville-Baron followed by Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste and Château Latour Les Forts de Latour

Saint-Estèphe: Château Montrose followed by Château Cos d'Estournel and Château Les Ormes de Pez

Sauternes: Château Guiraud followed by Château Rayne-Vigneau and Fargues

Our view was that 2009 was definitely a Left Bank vintage. The First Growths received many 20/20s, and I gave a modest 19/20 to both Latour and Margaux—these are great wines with a long future in front of them. Regarding the rest, most have opened up well and are ready now. **SJ**



Uncork

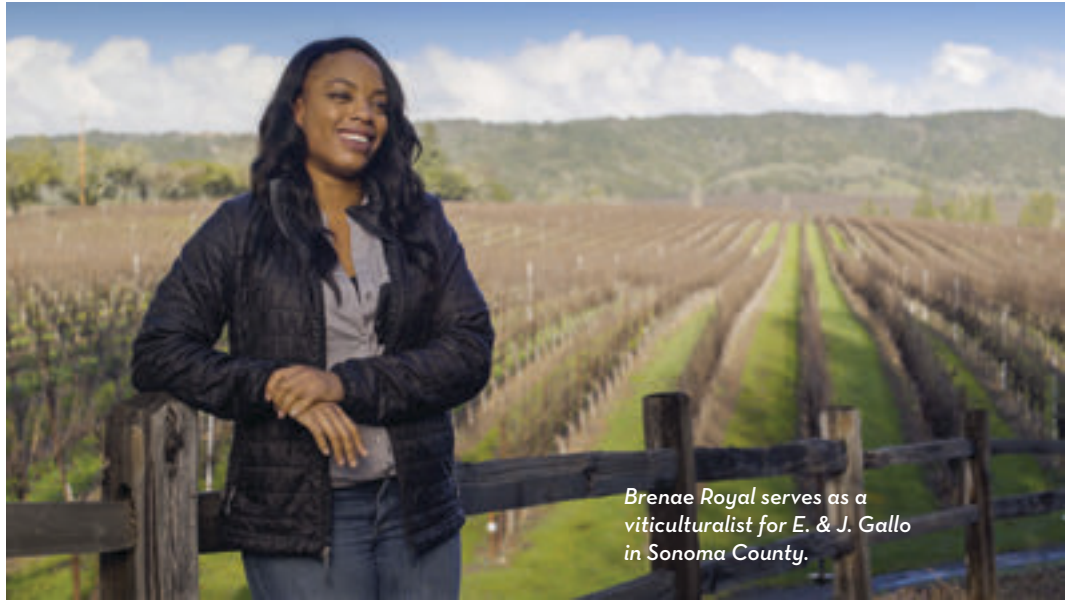
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*Brenae Royal serves as a
viticulturalist for E. & J. Gallo
in Sonoma County.*

Rising Representation

by Chris Sawyer

IN 2017, AMY BESS COOK began developing the Women-Owned Wineries (WOW) project in Sonoma County, aiming to celebrate a group of local entrepreneurs and industry professionals by amplifying their stories and lending support. Just two years later, the list of WOW members now includes more than 550 women-owned wineries and female winemakers nationwide.

To gather data and winery contacts, Cook worked with Dr. Lucia Albino Gilbert, a professor emeritus of feminist psychology at Santa Clara University who has spent thousands of hours studying women in the wine industry. Since the 1990s, reports have shown that the number of men and women graduating from major viticulture and enology programs has been more or less even, and at some schools, female graduates are pulling ahead.

Gender disparity, however, is still very much a reality in the industry. According to Gilbert's research, women represent roughly 10 percent of the lead winemakers at the 4,000-plus wineries currently operating in California. Just 4 percent of winery

owners, meanwhile, are women, but their labels—many of which are small boutique brands—are increasingly catching the interest of sommeliers, wine retailers, and general consumers seeking a more direct connection to the people behind the labels.

Not surprisingly, the highest concentration of WOW members as well as the largest share of lead women winemakers (roughly 12–14 percent) are located in the North Bay. As a result, Cook has been able to work directly with them while promoting exciting new brands emerging in the American market over the past year.

In February, to celebrate WOW's official one-year anniversary, members gathered at the "Here's to Her" dinner: a feast, fête, and informative discussion emceed by Rebecca Hopkins of Folio Fine Wine Partners and hosted by culinary entrepreneur Sondra Bernstein, chef John Toulze, and their staff at Suite D in Sonoma. Among the featured winemakers was Shauna Rosenblum, who joined forces with her father, "King of Zin" Kent Rosenblum, to start the Alameda-based Rock Wall Wine Company in 2008.

Another dinner attendee was Brenae Royal, a spirited viticulturalist who manages and curates the vines at the legendary Monte Rosso Vineyard, which overlooks other admirable E. & J. Gallo properties in Sonoma County. "To me, harvest is like sending the kids off to college," says Royal in reference to the Louis M. Martini 2014 Monte Rosso Cabernet Sauvignon, which was served with chocolate-dipped figs at the end of the meal. "You've done everything you could to get them there—now it's up to the people around them to help take them to the next level."

While meeting the needs of the wine-makers she works with comes easily, she says the more challenging part of her job has been getting people to accept her both as a minority and as a woman. "At the end of the day I'm a farmer, so the fact that I am a woman of color is completely irrelevant," Royal adds. "I'm not looking for notoriety, but to get the respect of my male counterparts in the industry." ■

*For more information on WOW,
visit wowsonoma.com.*

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Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

What dictates the price of a wine and what makes expensive wine better than cheap wine? Is there any justification for high pricing, or is expensive wine truly for suckers?

Sincerely,
 Cost Conscious

Good Somm

Dear Cost Conscious,

It sometimes seems perplexing why some wines cost \$10 and some \$100, but in most cases a variety of economic factors influence the cost of a bottle of wine. Just like with any other product, labor, raw materials, and the simple rule of supply and demand all play a role.

For example, the things you pay for as the price of wine increases include status, rarity, and concentration of taste and aroma. To achieve the latter, a producer must purchase high-quality grapes and employ skilled winemakers and consultants—none of which come cheap.

Then, of course, there's the cost of real estate. The greatest wines in the world are only grown in a handful of places; predictably, the price of land in these places is not cheap and most certainly is reflected in the cost of each bottle of wine.

That said, some wines simply *are* overpriced, so it's best to do your research, talk to your somm or retail buyer, and, above all, taste for yourself.

Best,
 Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Cost Conscious,

While there are some major differences between inexpensive and luxury-priced wines, if you can't appreciate the distinction, just stick to what you can afford. There's no shame in that. After all, there's a saying in the world of high-stakes poker: If you're sitting at the table and looking around for the sucker, it's probably you.

Yours truly,
 Bad Somm



PHOTO BY BINENIN VIA ADOBE STOCK

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

I own a wine shop in Chicago but am increasingly bombarded with invitations to join online wine clubs. I'm concerned about the impact these virtual outlets may have on my brick-and-mortar store. How can I compete?

Kindly,
 Am I Blockbuster Video?

Good Somm

Dear Blockbuster Video,

If you can't beat 'em, why not join them? Many retailers' business models revolve around online stores, so perhaps it would be wise to partner with an e-commerce site that can sell your products online while you warehouse the inventory. That way, you could grow your business and have a bigger piece of the pie—what your business will be tomorrow begins with what you do today.

Sincerely,
 Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear Blockbuster Video,

I don't know if I'm old school or just old, but I love retail wine shops and liquor stores! I love the smell of broken bottles that have never really been cleaned up well enough. I love cardboard and wooden boxes and the sight of a well-built endcap. I love reading wine labels and shelf talkers, and I *really* love chatting with frumpy sales clerks in bad polo shirts about their favorite wine and booze.

I think retail can fight back the robot horde of fancy-pants wine clubs by simply providing the one thing you can never get online: high-quality, emotionally present human contact and service. My advice is to be engaged, humble, and gracious—and, of course, to always drop everything when a potential customer walks in the door. ☺

Regards,
 Bad Somm

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A Small Segment of Representation

HOW BROKERS CAN CREATE
NICHE MARKETING FOR THE
WINE AND SPIRITS INDUSTRY

story and photo by Michael Cervin

LAUNCHED IN 1984, Bradford Wine Group is a small wine-brokerage operation covering the California counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. With only five people on staff, “small” may be an understatement, but there are advantages to the business’ size.

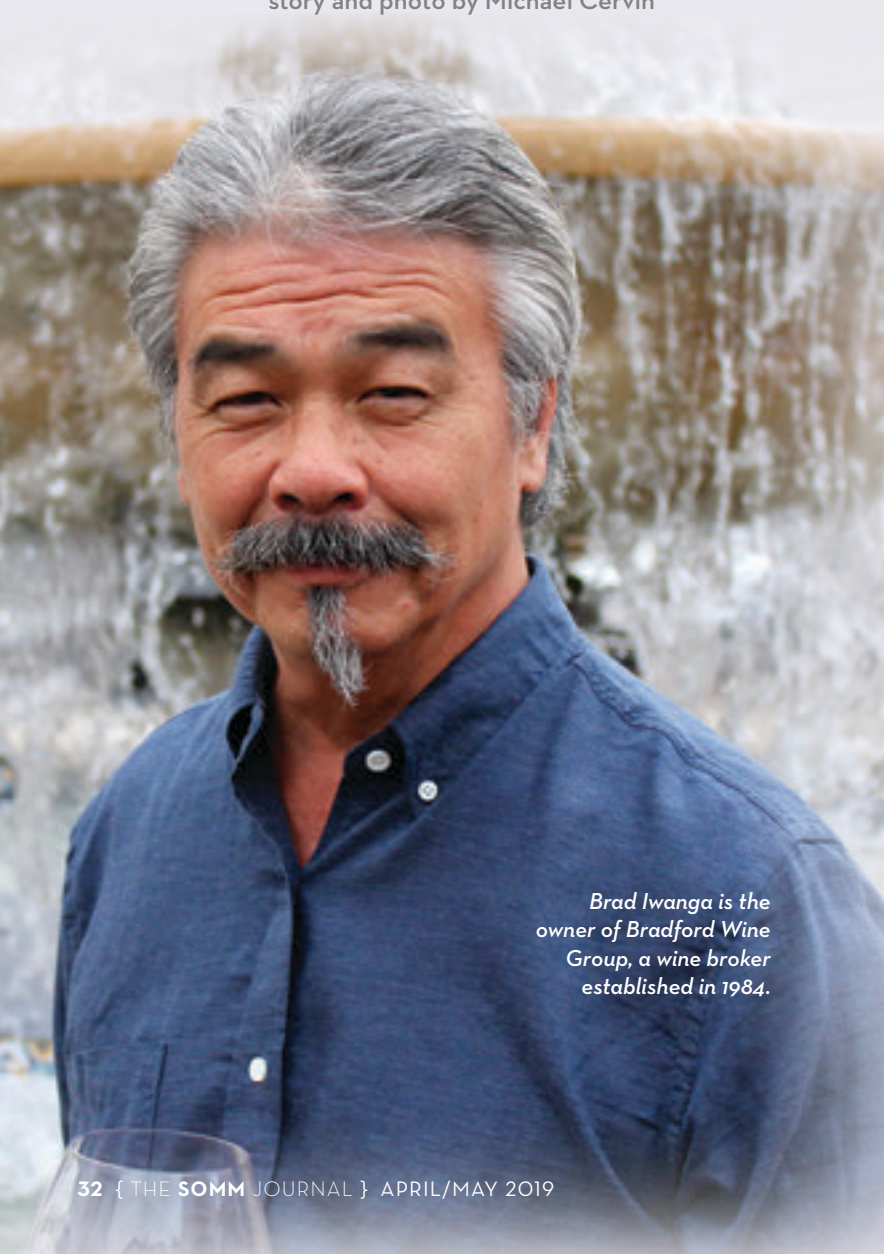
“As the owner of the company, I know every account, and store owners have direct access to me. There is value in that,” says owner Brad Iwanga. “We represent wines exclusively, working with our own book of domestic producers”—including 20 wines from in state—“as well as the portfolios from an array of partners that import wines from France, Germany, Italy, and South America.” Iwanga’s import partners are likewise small, focused suppliers whose business philosophies align with his own: All told, his firm represents 80 properties and more than 400 SKUs.

Iwanga believes it’s important for people to understand the difference between a distributor and a broker. “A distributor takes possession of a wine at an FOB cost, establishes its markup, then sells to the marketplace,” he explains. “As a broker, Bradford Wine Group essentially acts as an agent for the winery, helping to establish wholesale pricing and programming and receiving a percentage of what we sell in commissions. I’ve always felt this difference provides a more consistent, authentic pricing policy, since we don’t set margins and therefore avoid setting artificially high frontline pricing.” More than 75 percent of Bradford’s sales are to restaurants and specialty wine shops.

Iwanga acknowledges the need for multiple types of representation: “Large distributors offer a comprehensive list of items, from akvavit to Zinfandel, and have sales forces commensurate in size and scale,” he says. “For wineries, distilleries, and breweries that are looking for distribution that includes convenience stores, corner liquor stores, grocery chains, and big-box retailers, large distributors have an advantage.”

As a broker of small brands, he innately understands his place in the wine-selling landscape. “I am mindful that the nature of a small business is to be nimbler in responding to the vagaries of the marketplace,” he says. “The wine industry is one that involves constant education [by] staying abreast of new vintages, industry innovations, prevailing trends, and changing styles.”

Ultimately, Bradford Wine Group is not geared to do what the large distributors do. Instead, Iwanga asserts, “We provide a small segment of representation in the wine industry and strive to do it better than anyone else.” SJ



*Brad Iwanga is the
owner of Bradford Wine
Group, a wine broker
established in 1984.*

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MINUTES WITH ...

Christopher Hoel

FOUNDER OF **HARPER'S CLUB** by Michelle Metter



CHRISTOPHER HOEL is the founder of Harper's Club, a private wine-advisory firm based in Los Angeles. I sat down with Hoel to hear his thoughts on the art of selling older vintages, changing careers, and the wines that have made an impression on him.

Q: What motivated you to switch career paths and launch Harper's Club?

After nearly 25 years in the food and hospitality industries, I was looking for something else while staying firmly rooted within wine and spirits. The global beverage knowledge I had acquired in pursuit of the Master Sommelier diploma coupled with the long-standing relationships I had forged throughout my career were driving factors in launching Harper's Club.

Q: You spoke at SommCon last year on the place old and rare selections have on wine lists. What do you think is a common misperception among sommeliers when it comes to older vintages?


Most sommeliers simply haven't worked with a ton of older wines. And if they have, more might be in the 10- to 20-year-old range, so they have no point of reference for 30-, 40-, or 50-plus-year-old wines. Before working at The French Laundry, I was the same way. It was only after that experience that I truly had the privilege to gain insight on how they will be or should be showing.

Q: What advice do you have for those looking to source, serve, and sell old wine?

Buy exclusively from sources you know and trust. Get references from every new vendor you work with. Don't buy old wines based on price—buy them based on provenance. If you happen upon a great deal on an older-vintage Bordeaux or Burgundy that is well below the market average, there's most likely a reason why.

When serving older wines, be careful about being overzealous [with respect to] decanting. After a given wine has been presented to the guest, the wine should be opened and tasted to see where the tannins and bouquet currently sit. If the wine is showing beautifully, I recommend not decanting it at all. And when it comes to selling older wine, it is paramount to be clear how it will show. It's always best to assume your guest isn't as big of a wine geek as you are.


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

Though I've been blessed with being able to try some of the most amazing and rarest wines in the world, it's the 1981 Krug Collection that has left the most indelible memory. Its power and finesse cannot be described in words, and the only person I would want to drink it with would be my lovely wife, Miranda. 



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*Omakase wine
and sushi pairings
at Sushi Note in
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For the Love of Wine and Fish

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSHI NOTE

PERFECT PAIRINGS ABOUND AT **SUSHI NOTE** IN LOS ANGELES by Rachel Burkons

I GREW UP eating sushi in California's San Fernando Valley, a niche but known mecca of high-quality, low-key sushi joints; often tucked into inconspicuous mini-malls, they offer some of the best Japanese food in the Los Angeles area.

Throughout my life as a self-proclaimed Valley girl, my family and I have always had "our" sushi spots: places we frequent with enough regularity to get to know the chefs, servers, and staff. Orders of our favorite dishes are placed almost solely by eye contact, and we always seek out the best spot at the sushi bar—right in front of the chef.

For many years, a place called 4 On 6 in Encino provided this home away from home for my family, and I had the honor of getting to know its chef/owner, Kiminobu Saito, whose passion shone in every dish. He was known not only for the clean, fresh flavors present in his bites of sushi and sashimi but for his classic cooked foods made with heart. After a long tenure as a cult-favorite Valley spot, 4 On 6 shuttered, and Saito went back to Japan for a period. When he returned to the L.A. sushi scene, however, he did so with a splash, landing at

Sushi Note in Sherman Oaks.

At the restaurant, which opened last year, Saito offers elegant morsels of seafood that are expertly sauced and seasoned. And while the fish is always the star, each bite finds a stellar supporting cast in the form of wine pairings curated by co-owner David Gibbs and Beverage Director Andrew Pattison. "The fish really dictates the wine, and of equal importance to the actual piece of fish is its preparation: the sauces, additional flavorings, searing, et cetera," says Gibbs.

Saito's omakase menu showcases nuanced flavors and contrasting textures in layered and complex dishes that evolve on the palate: seared sable that melts in your mouth; bright baby snapper bursting with pepper and citrus; rustic sea eel sprinkled with coarse sea salt; and a jewel-like treat of delicate raw scallop topped with truffle salt and lemon.

While the concept of pairing wine and sushi is certainly not new, it is somewhat surprising that an upscale sushi joint would place a focus on the category, especially in the increasingly saké-knowledgeable marketplace

of L.A. "I think many sushi restaurants tend to overlook wine, especially in their by-the-glass offerings, simply because it's been ingrained in everyone's heads that saké or beer are the only beverages you should drink when eating sushi," says Gibbs. "I often found it to be the case that there were no suitable reds, so when we opened Sushi Note, wine was a big priority that we took seriously, both in selection and in service."

With a constantly changing menu of both fish and wine, Gibbs finds that striking balance sometimes means returning to the classics. "My favorite piece of fish has always been the Madai [Japanese red sea bream], which I suggest without wasabi and paired with the [Domaine Denis] Race Chablis 1er Cru Montmains," says Gibbs. "The Chablis' minerality and fruitiness pair perfectly with the natural sweetness of the fish, and even with a squeeze of lemon and salt, it never becomes too acidic. I tend to begin and end each meal with this."

With engaging wines guaranteed to keep the palate guessing and some of L.A.'s best sushi, one thing's clear: The pairing of Gibbs and chef Saito is hitting all the right notes. **SJ**

L'expertise **BORDEAUX**



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D R I N K R E S P O N S I B L Y

The 2015 vintage will mark the first-ever Jordan Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon matured in 100 percent French oak.

French Kiss

JORDAN WINERY SHIFTS TO 100 PERCENT FRENCH OAK FOR ITS 2015 ALEXANDER VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON by Cliff Rames

A KISS CAN sometimes be a slobbering mess, but when performed with skill, it can be tantalizingly sensual and profound, elevating passions—and life—to new heights. In winemaking, an oak regimen can have similar effects. When poorly matched, wood can slather the wine with a sticky, imposing glaze—an approach often taken deliberately to mask a variety of flaws. Conversely, judiciously applying the right type of wood will highlight the wine's natural fruit essence, even lending a pinch of spice and a peck of whimsical aplomb.

Which is why, in a move that pays homage to the great growths of Bordeaux, California's Jordan Winery has phased out the use of American oak after more than 40 years. The 2015 vintage marks the first-ever Jordan Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon matured in 100 percent French oak (a mix of new and one-year-old barrels).


Winemaker Rob Davis, who just celebrated his 43rd harvest at Jordan, says the transition has helped him realize his commitment to make every vintage of Jordan better than the last. In recent years

Davis felt increasingly dissatisfied with the potential of Jordan's estate-grown Cabernet, which was planted in poorly drained, alluvial soils on the valley floor and some hillsides. Davis eventually convinced second-generation winery owner John Jordan to source fruit from select Alexander Valley benchland vineyards—sites with the desired combination of clay, gravel, limestone, and gypsum soils. The results were dramatic: increased ripeness with less sugar, intensified cassis and blackberry flavors, and more refined tannins.

Davis knew this perfectly ripened, deeply flavored, and well-structured fruit demanded a new oak regimen. "We wanted barrels that best support and showcase the pristine, dark fruit character," he said, noting that American oak masks those sought-after flavors. By contrast, French oak—and in particular, Colbert oak—proves superior in its ability to frame and showcase the intensity of fruit while bonding with and taming the Cabernet tannins, lending a soft, silky Bordeaux style. Davis specially selected Colbert wood—the gold standard for oak,

it hails from a small grove in the Tronçais forest first planted in the late 1600s—for its tight grain, finesse, and ability to highlight aromatic notes of rose petal and violet.

"We don't want the word 'power' in our tasting notes," Davis says. "Balance, elegance, refinement, length of finish—these are the qualities I strive for in our wines. The 2015 Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon exudes great fruit character and fine structure that French oak supports and elevates. I've been dreaming of releasing a wine like this for decades." Davis often muses that pairing Jordan's terroir-driven fruit with French oak makes the wine sing like a violin. "Our 2015 Cabernet hits all the right notes," he adds. "It is no coincidence that sommeliers often blind-taste Jordan alongside many of the top crus of Bordeaux."

That's the thing about a perfect kiss: It can make you break into song—just like a great glass of wine. 

Editor's note: The 2015 Jordan Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon will be released on May 1, 2019.

NEVER BEFORE, NEVER AGAIN WINES



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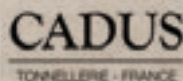


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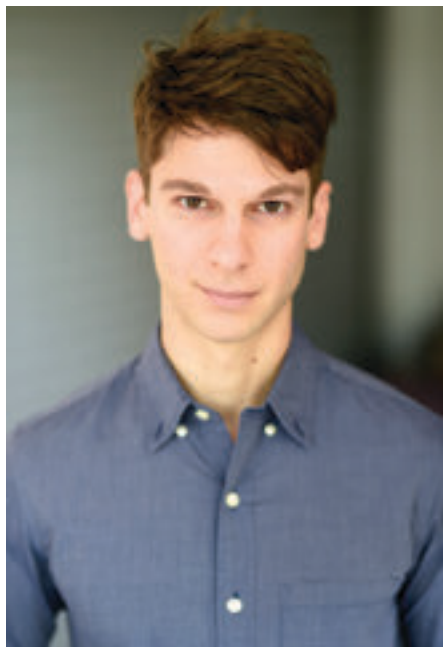
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Brimming with Possibility

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVAN WHITE



WORKING AS A SOMMELIER at Babbo Ristorante e Enoteca in New York City's West Village, I am proud and privileged to have access to one of the most comprehensive Italian wine lists in the country. Our selection of Barolo, Barbaresco, and Brunello is almost encyclopedic, and our range of Grower Champagnes rivals that of some of the best French restaurants in the city. Yet hardly any attention is paid to our inventory of Prosecco.

It sounds crazy, right? The category is such a staple in the Italian wine scene that not featuring it seems counterintuitive. The problem is cyclical: Consumers are uneducated about the virtues of refined, high-quality, terroir-driven Prosecco, so they don't ask for it. And since there's no demand, sommeliers end up shifting their focus elsewhere.

That said, I believe it's our job as wine professionals to offer guests exciting wines they might not have been aware of before. Enter the Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG: This (literally) superior classification of Prosecco only achieved DOCG status in 2009, and much

THE WINNER OF THE CONSORZIO OF CONEGLIANO VALDOBBIADENE PROSECCO SUPERIORE DOCG'S PROSECCO ESSAY CONTEST GIVES A BREAKDOWN OF THE REGION

like Chianti Classico and Soave did in the 1980s and '90s, it's now experiencing a true renaissance of quality, specificity, and recognition.

It's also truly unique—not the “Italian Champagne,” as some wine writers refer to it. Prosecco isn't made the same way, nor with the same variety. The Glera grape is better-suited for the tank or Charmat method, and what Prosecco Superiore DOCG wines lack in yeasty, brioche-like aromas—which come from extended aging on the lees—they make up for with fresh citrus and ripe peach notes, not to mention refreshing drinkability.


A candidate for a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation this year, the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG is nestled between the Italian Prealps to the north, the Piave River to the south, the township of Valdobbiadene to the west, and another town, Conegliano, to the east. The area consists of a geomorphological formation known as a “hogback,” a series of parallel hillsides. These steep slopes provide good drainage, preventing grapes from losing their vibrant acidity, while southeast-facing aspects help the grapes receive the sunlight they need to fully ripen.

The region's wine is produced in three main styles:

- Standard Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG is exclusively made with grapes harvested from the hills of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene zone. These wines are made with a specific blend (or “cuvée”) of Glera grapes from various microzones within the area, with each winery specializing in a different

style that reflects its own distinctive philosophy. They're made in brut, extra-dry, and dry versions depending on the residual sugar left in the wine.

- Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG with a designation of “Rive” (hillside) must be made from grapes grown in a specific commune or hamlet within the 43 sanctioned Rive. The grapes are hand-harvested and the vintage must always be stated on the label. When drinking wines from a single Rive, one can explore the many microclimates of the Conegliano Valdobbiadene zone.
- Valdobbiadene Superiore di Cartizze DOCG, the area's top wine, exclusively uses grapes from the Cartizze subzone within the commune of Valdobbiadene. Characterized by its golden hue and notes of citrus, apricot, and rose petal, Cartizze is typically complex and delicate. These wines represent the apex of what great Prosecco Superiore can be.

What all of this ultimately means is that instead of getting a highly manipulated, homogenized product that tastes exactly the same bottle to bottle, year after year, the consumer is drinking a wine that specifically reflects the time and place from which it came. The opportunities to integrate these wines into a menu or wine list are endless. 

Cheers!

*Evan White, Sommelier at
Babbo Ristorante e Enoteca in New York*



The Man Behind the Brands



METHYL ANTHRALINATE EXPOSES DIFFERENCES IN EXPERT AND CONSUMER LIKEABILITY—BUT LESS THAN YOU'D THINK



PHOTO BY BEERT FOLSOM VIA ADOBE STOCK

The Not-So-Great Divide

by Deborah Parker Wong

A JOINT STUDY recently conducted at Cornell University and the University of California, Davis, illustrates significant differences in what consumers and self-described experts find likeable in wine. The research was conducted using six pairs of unoaked Chardonnay that had been doctored with increasing amounts of the compound methyl anthralinate (MA), which gives some of the United States' native *vitis labruscana* grape varieties their "grapey-ness."

"Grapey" is *labruscana* winegrowers' preferred synonym for the more common descriptor "foxy," which is used to characterize the distinct, often pungent aromas associated with certain varieties—most notably the Concord grape. The term is also used when describing the characteristics of *vitis vinifera* varieties like Riesling and Torrontes; as such, it defines a quality that isn't always viewed negatively by experts or consumers.

According to researcher and Ph.D. student Demetra "Demi" Perry, the study was "meant to address reasons for the [low market value] of *labruscana* grapes reflected in price per ton." It hypothesized that expressions with high concentrations of MA would be largely rejected by wine experts in California who view the

compound—found only in *labruscana*—as a fault. Consumers from California and Pennsylvania, which has 30,000 acres of Concord under vine, were asked to join the experts in rating their preferences against a control wine.


As anticipated, the experts were far more likely to reject the MA-spiked wines. Their rejection threshold (130.3 nanograms/liter) was significantly lower than that of the non-experts (1704.9 ng/l), yet contrary to the belief that those in the know disdain *labruscana* characteristics, neither group wholly rejected the samples with the highest levels of MA.

When consumer subjects were further divided into low- and high-interest groups, no wine was "too grapey" for the former. The acceptance of grapey aromas in wine by consumers in Pennsylvania—where Concord jam, jelly, and grape juice are commonplace—can be attributed to our propensity to like the familiar, a phenomenon known as mere exposure. The more familiar you are with an odor, the more likely you are to rate it as pleasant.

Interestingly enough, not all wines described as "grapey" or "foxy" exhibit high levels of this compound. MA may be an important aromatic constituent in some native varieties, but their characteristic

grapey flavor can't be solely attributed to its presence. As an isolated compound, MA—which is also found in gardenias and jasmine—is described as fruity and musty with a floral, powdery nuance that includes hints of orange blossom.

Non-*vinifera* wines also have higher concentrations of compounds with vegetative and earthy aromas—clove, freshly cut grass, and eucalyptus, to name a few—such as the pyrazines 3-isobutyl-2-methoxypyrazine (IBMP) and 3-isopropyl-2-methoxypyrazine (IPMP). Concentrations of IBMP and IPMP in these wines have been measured well above those reported in physiologically ripe *vinifera* grapes. The result is seemingly an entourage effect that creates *labruscana*'s distinct aromatic signature.

If, as the study hypothesizes, MA is universally viewed by experts as an indicator of lower-quality wine, it's surprising that those who participated in this research failed to reach a complete rejection threshold. While that question wasn't explored, it's easy to surmise that even at the highest concentrations tested, experts are aware that MA is an inherent varietal characteristic and, unless it detracts noticeably from wine quality, its presence wouldn't constitute a fault. 



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The Upper Resurgence

ALTO PIEMONTE (Upper Piedmont) might be one of Italy's lesser-known northern wine regions, but it's also one of the most fascinating. The area has certainly faced its share of adversity: The majority of its vineyards were desolated in the 1800s by phylloxera as well as downy and powdery mildew, and after World War II, the remaining Alto Piemonte vineyards were abandoned when more workers left the countryside in favor of higher-paying jobs in the city.

This period of transition set back both the vineyards and the preservation of native varieties, with roughly 40,000 hectares of plantings ultimately reduced to as low as 600 due to a lack of labor resources. Within the past two decades, however, Alto Piemonte has undergone a profound transformation that has revived the region's dedication to its native grapes.

The main variety in all of Alto Piemonte's appellations is Spanna, a biotype of Nebbiolo which, in combination with specific conditions, contributes to light, austere, perfumed, and earthy wines that can age for decades. Unlike those crafted with Nebbiolo in the Langhe region, expressions produced with Spanna in Alto Piemonte are most often blended with other indigenous grapes, including Vespolina, Croatina, and Uva Rara.

Referred to as the offspring of Nebbiolo with less tannins, the low-yielding Vespolina is, in my opinion, perhaps the most promis-

A REAWAKENING OF **ALTO PIEMONTE** BRINGS US ATTAINABLE NEBBIOLO **by Laura Donadoni**

ing of these varieties. In recent years, winemakers have attempted producing monovarietal wines with some remarkable results, delivering expressions rich in tannins, acidity, and cherry aromas with notes of balsamic, herbs, red flowers, and black pepper.

The most dominant influences on Alto Piemonte's terroir are the region's proximity to the Alps and the lasting geological effects caused by the eruption of an ancient supervolcano in Valsesia millions of years ago. (The geological composition of the area is so unique that UNESCO designated the Sesia Val Grande geopark in northwestern Piemonte as one of its Global Geoparks in 2015.) The soil content is mainly rose porphyry covered by gravel, which produces highly acidic, full-bodied, and sapid wines. The most famous appellations are arguably the Gattinara DOCG, Ghemme DOCG, Boca DOC, Bramaterra DOC, and Lessona DOC, but you can also find true gems among the broader Coste della Sesia and Colline Novaresi DOCs.

As this region has continued to revitalize its vineyards and elevate its winemaking standards, several of its producers have drawn even more focus to Alto Piemonte. Check out Travaglini, Cantina Castaldi, Antoniolio (established in 1948, it was the first winery to bottle cru wines in Gattinara),

and Mazzoni, whose roots trace back to the 1300s in the province of Ghemme.

One of my favorite places in the area is off the beaten path in Cureggio: Owned and operated by Gianluca and Raffaella Zanetta, the La Capuccina winery is housed in a 16th-century monastery that's been transformed into a *cascina* (farmhouse). Their farm-to-table restaurant serves La Capuccina's authentic wines alongside elegant interpretations of the local cuisine. I suggest trying the Novarina Vespolina, a wine with vibrant acidity from the Colline Novaresi DOC; grown on alluvial sandy soils, it undergoes spontaneous fermentation and ages in stainless-steel tanks before emerging with a delightful nose of red cherries, black pepper, and cardamom. The Faren Spannas, meanwhile, features notes of violets with firm tannins and an intriguing balsamic finish, and the complex Opera 32 expression offers hints of licorice and riper berry flavors. **SJ**

Follow wine journalist and educator Laura Donadoni on Instagram @theitalianwinegirl.

A sub-Alpine vineyard in the Upper Piemonte region, which once had 40,000 hectares planted under vine.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LA CAPUCCINA WINERY

CG

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Spring Flowers Inspire Gin Cocktails



The Bluebonnet Gimlet

1½ parts Calamity Gin
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¾ part lime juice
¾ part simple syrup

Shake over ice and strain into coupe glass. Garnish with a lime wheel and blueberries.



Calamity's Garden

1½ parts Calamity Gin
½ part pink grapefruit juice
½ part lemon juice

¼ part hibiscus syrup
Ginger ale
Rose water

Add first four ingredients to a cocktail shaker with ice and shake until chilled. Strain into a double rocks glass filled with ice and top with ginger ale. Garnish with a pink grapefruit wheel and a mist of rose water.



Wildflower

1½ parts Calamity Gin
½ part violet liqueur
½ part lemon juice

¼ part ginger liqueur
3 dashes peach bitters
Club soda

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker with ice and shake until chilled. Strain into a small wine glass filled with ice and top with a couple ounces of club soda. Stir gently and garnish with an edible white flower.



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Sniffing out Defects

REVIEWING THE BASICS OF TASTING **EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL**

by Orietta Gianjorio

WHILE CALIFORNIA IS responsible for 97 percent of the olive oil produced in the United States—the rest is divided between Texas, Arizona, and Georgia—the state supplies less than 10 percent of the national demand. As a result, most American consumers buy olive oil from abroad: Based on factors like cultural background and personal preference, they'll pick out Italian, Spanish, or Greek products that they'll proudly introduce to their friends as “the best in the world.”

An array of laws and regulations, both domestic and international, require producers to ensure their extra-virgin olive oil is free of sensory defects—but what are these defects, and why are they so important? Defects, in sum, form the fingerprint of the oil: They are undesirable aromas and flavors that show that something went wrong during production and, as a result, prevent the oil in which they appear from being labeled as “extra-virgin.” For the first time in the history of American food law, sensory evaluation has the same power as laboratory testing, and “extra-virgin” is now a legal term.

One of the most prominent defects seen in olive oil is rancidity, a term used to describe old oxidized oils with aromas reminiscent of stale nuts and Play-Doh; another is “fustiness,” which delineates oils made from olives stored for too long (these products tend to show aromas reminiscent of sweaty socks and gym clothes).

Even if you're not an olive-oil expert, learning certain tasting techniques can help you detect these defects. First, know that color is not an indicator of quality: People often associate green with high-quality olive oil, but in reality, oil will simply be green if the olives were picked green and golden if the olives were picked black.

On the California Olive Oil Council, we use the “four S's”: swirl (warm the oil to release the aromas); sniff (note the aromas' intensity and attributes); slurp (take a sip and inhale while pretending to smile, a technique that helps you connect with different retro-nasal aromas); and swallow (to assess bitterness and pungency).

We not only smell and taste to detect defects but to describe positive attributes. High-quality olive oils should be “fruity” (re-



PHOTO: TAMMY NUGENT

Held in the palm, a professional olive oil-tasting glass warms the oil and allows thicker aromatic compounds to volatilize.

niscient of green and/or ripe fruit) and have some bitterness and pungency. Pinpointing these attributes can help you determine how to pair the oil with a certain recipe and, eventually, a final dish with the right wine. A high-quality, extra-virgin product will alter the dish, and as wine and beverage specialists, it's important to be familiar with the fascinating world of sensory characteristics in olive oil in order to make informed decisions. **S**

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

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Full Circle Beverage Conference is a wine and spirits conference exclusively for 100 top retail and restaurant buyers, wine directors, journalists, and sommeliers. In its fifth year, the program will take place on **September 4 - 6** at the beautiful **Drake Hotel** in **Chicago, IL**. The three-day conference is a wonderful networking opportunity for you to attend educational workshops, lunches and breakout sessions led by an esteemed team of Master Sommeliers which include **Evan Goldstein, Tim Gaiser, Keith Goldston, Peter Granoff, John Szabo, and Madeline Triffon**.

Attendees can expect over **20 master classes, lunches** and **tastings** featuring leading wines and other beverages from around the world including: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, England, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, United States, and Uruguay. On the second day of the conference on Thursday, September 5th from 3:30 - 8:00PM, a large-scale tasting called **Full Circle Around the World Tasting** will feature a global selection of over 300 wines curated by Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein.

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8:00pm at **AroundTheWorld2019.eventbrite.com**
Tickets cost \$70 each, use code **TASTE** for 40% off

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DAY 1 – SEP 4, 2019

PROGRAM STARTS AT 3PM

SEMINAR 1

Unexpected Gems From Around The World

SEMINAR 2

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

SEMINAR 3

Whiskey and Whisky: Does Terroir Really Matter?

DAY 2 – SEP 5, 2019

SEMINAR 4

Wines of Roussillon: Banyuls and Beyond

SEMINAR 5

Patricio Tapia's Best of Descorchados 2019

LUNCHES:

Terroir and Style: A Universe of Pinot Noir

Extreme Chile: Pushing Boundaries

Salt and Grit: Volcanic Wines

SEMINAR 6

Many Faces of Touriga Nacional from Portugal

SEMINAR 7

Franc(ly) Speaking: Global Cabernet Francs

WALKABOUT

Trade & Media Tasting | Consumer Tasting

DAY 3 – SEP 6, 2019

SEMINAR 8

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

SEMINAR 9

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

SEMINAR 10

France's Hidden Corner: Discover Wines from Southwest France

LUNCHES:

Right Bank Rules: Saint-Emilion, Pomerol and Fronsac

Explore Portugal at Table

Três, tres, tre, three: Alentejo, Rioja, Tuscany and Washington

SEMINAR 11

Maturity Counts: Old Vine Chenin Blancs of South Africa

SEMINAR 12

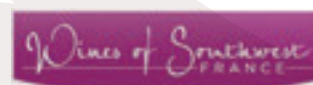
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PROGRAM ENDS 5:30PM ON DAY 3

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SIMPLE *Pleasures*

FEUDO ZIRTARI'S MODERN TAKE ON TWO OF ITALY'S NATIVE GRAPES

by Deborah Parker Wong

ITALIANS KNOW THAT great-tasting food and wines don't need to break the bank as long as they're made with quality, authentic ingredients. Feudo Zirtari embodies this belief in its approach to winegrowing, yielding expressions meant to be enjoyed by all.

Standing at the highest point in the vineyards of Feudo Zirtari at 820 feet above sea level, you can see the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, which lies just 30 minutes to the southwest. The winery and estate vineyards are situated between the communes of Menfi and Sambuca di Sicilia in the province of Agrigento, an area designated for the production of high-quality Sicilia DOC and Terre Siciliane IGT wines.

The region's warm climate is quite dry, but the Feudo Zirtari vineyards and those around them benefit from the altitude and the moderating influence of a nearby reservoir known as Lake Arancio, as well as the wind and fog that makes its way from the coast. Ancient marine fossils and sedimentary marl composed of limestone, clay, and silt define the soils of the lower elevations; at higher elevations, by contrast, the soil is rockier.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FEUDO ZIRTARI

The vineyards of Feudo Zirtari.

Flanked on the west by the pine, cypress, and oak trees of the Risinata Forest, the landscape surrounding Feudo Zirtari is planted to a diverse polyculture of vines, olive groves, and almond orchards overlooking the lake, which hosts migratory birds in spring and autumn as well as grey herons and cormorants during the winter months.

Winegrowing is an ancient practice in Agrigento, as evidenced by some of Sicily's oldest *palmenti*: the gravity-fed wineries the ancient Greeks carved into the hill-sides, where the island's native capers and wild asparagus now grow on rocky outcrops. Although the region's long history of winegrowing is attributed to the arrival of the Greeks in the eastern part of Sicily in the 8th century BCE, according to native grape expert Ian D'Agata, indigenous varieties like Inzolia (Ansonica in Tuscany) and Nero d'Avola are genetic natives.

The Happy Fate of Native Grapes

Due in large part to modern winemaking, the fate of native or autochthonous grapes that tend to be lower in acidity—like Inzolia, once primarily used for the production of Marsala—now have a new lease on life. While the variety is grown almost exclusively in Sicily and found in almost every Sicilian appellation, its resistance to drought means it's particularly well-suited to cultivation in Agrigento.

Inzolia is a rare example of a naturally tannic white variety, making up for what it might lack in acidity. Modern viticultural practices and blending with international varieties like Chardonnay produce wines that have more structure from extract; flavors of citrus, yellow apple, pear, apricot, and nuts nuanced with spice; and a soft, mineral finish.

At Feudo Zirtari, this marriage of indigenous and international varieties is particularly successful, resulting in a style that's both contemporary and authentic to the region. The Feudo Zirtari Bianco is a roughly 50-50 blend of Inzolia and Chardonnay grown at an elevation of up to 1,550 feet above sea level on pebbly clay with a good amount of limestone.

Chardonnay ripens early here, and its affinity for that soil type helps maintain acidity in the grapes while providing the backbone of the blend. Inzolia, meanwhile, turns golden yellow as it ripens, and the floral and fruit-driven character of both varieties is protected by anaerobic wine-making practices at cool temperatures.

The winery's Rosso is an unoaked blend of Syrah and Nero d'Avola grown on clay

both delicious and accessible runs second only to his vision of revitalizing North Beach—one folded slice of Neapolitan pizza and glass of Feudo Zirtari at a time. "Over the last 15 years, the neighborhood had begun to lose traction," he said. "Some of it was due to generational change and that it was no longer a top destination for younger consumers."

Covucci's focus on casual, authentic




The barrel room at Feudo Zirtari.

soils with some limestone. This soil profile generates more intensity in the grapes, producing flavors of dark cherries, sweet spices, licorice, and cocoa that complement the grape's signature high acidity. When blended with Syrah, the resulting wine is floral with both red and black fruit and a fresh, lean minerality.

San Francisco restaurateur Francesco Covucci, a Calabrian native who's displayed his gift for the cuisines of southern Italy at several locations in the city's North Beach neighborhood, is a proponent of both wines. "My lists are devoted solely to Italian wines and my cuisine to Italian ingredients and dishes," he says. "In practice, the success of this wine style is undeniable; it more than satisfies a traditionalist like me and is very accessible for consumers."

Covucci's desire for dining experiences

cuisine (most notably through his use of freshly made fior di latte mozzarella, mozzarella di bufala, and imported burrata) has made Il Casaro, which occupies the former Steps of Rome, a destination since it opened in 2014. Il Casaro is just one member of his and partner Peter Fazio's family of restaurants, which also includes Barbara Pinseria & Cocktail Bar, Barbara Express, and Pasta Pop-Up (a fifth location is in the making).

Covucci's motto is "Pizza is for everyone," and he views wine with the same pragmatic idealism. "I want to serve the domestic wines of Italy, the wines that remind me of what I grew up with," he says. "Wine is a natural partner with pizza and, like pizza, it needs to be a simple pleasure—one that can be enjoyed by everyone," Covucci adds. 

{ culinary spirit }

On the Cutting

Edge

GUILLOTINE HERITAGE VODKA
PUTS A REVOLUTIONARY SPIN ON
CLASSIC COCKTAILS

story by Jesse Hom-Dawson / photos by Cal Bingham



Amir Vahdani, Director of Food and Beverage for the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills, CA, uses Guillotine's barrel-aged Heritage Vodka to transform a Moscow Mule into what he calls The Seventeen89, named for the year the French Revolution began.

Amir Vahdani, who says he appreciates the uniqueness of Guillotine Heritage Vodka, also features the spirit in his Black Magic cocktail alongside Carpano Antica Vermouth and black walnut bitters.

The Seventeen89

Created by Amir Vahdani

- ▮ 2 oz. Guillotine Heritage Vodka
- ▮ 3 oz. ginger beer
- ▮ ½ oz. fresh lime juice

Serve in a copper mug and garnish with candied ginger and a sprig of fresh rosemary.


Black Magic

Created by Amir Vahdani

- ▮ 2 oz. Guillotine Heritage Vodka
- ▮ ½ oz. Carpano Antica Vermouth
- ▮ 1 dash black walnut bitters

Serve in a coupe and garnish with a lemon twist.

Vahdani also uses Guillotine Heritage in his Black Magic cocktail with Carpano Antica Vermouth and black walnut bitters; however, he doesn't discourage serving the aged vodka by itself. "Its complex flavors and smooth finish make it perfect for a range of sophisticated cocktails, but Guillotine Heritage is one of the few aged vodkas that can be enjoyed on its own, so I frequently suggest experiencing this wonderfully aged vodka neat or over ice," he explains.

Whether you enjoy this spirit on the rocks, neat, or in a cocktail, one sip of Guillotine Heritage will prove you're tasting something revolutionary. 

WHILE CLASSIC AMERICAN spirits like bourbon and rye have had their time in the spotlight, expressions that think outside the box have been taking the stage as of late. Leading this revolution is Guillotine Heritage Vodka, the amber-hued, aged sibling to Guillotine Originale.

Made with Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay grapes from a village in the Champagne region of France, Heritage rests in Cognac and Armagnac barrels made from Limousin oak. The result is a smooth, golden liquid with notes of caramel and spice and hints of mandarin orange and licorice, ensuring Guillotine Heritage completely defies the traditional notion of vodka.

Following Guillotine Heritage's U.S. release this year, mixologists around the country have begun experimenting with the spirit in a range of cocktails. At Culina in the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills, California, classic Italian food is served with a modern twist in a luxurious setting. It's no wonder, then, that Guillotine Heritage has found a home behind the bar in the

experienced hands of Amir Vahdani, the hotel's Director of Food and Beverage.

"We wanted to have this spirit that's definitely a cut above the rest," Vahdani says. "One can't help but notice that Guillotine Heritage is different from all other vodkas. First of all, its amber hue is totally unique and a great conversation starter. People want to know why the vodka is brown, which allows us to delve into its amazing story." Vahdani also cites the fact that Heritage, like Guillotine Originale, is vegan and gluten-free, which are important selling points when accommodating the discerning clientele who visit the Four Seasons.

The brand borrows its memorable name from the device that became a symbol of the French Revolution, so Vahdani drew on this time period for his cocktail, The Seventeen89. Named for the year the revolution began and served in a copper mug, this inventive take on the Moscow Mule makes use of the full-bodied flavor of barrel-aged Guillotine Heritage to elevate itself above drinks made with standard vodkas.



The barrel-aged sibling of Guillotine Originale, Guillotine Heritage Vodka is named for the device that came to define the French Revolution.



Somm
Foundation

A Letter from SommFoundation Chairman Jay James, MS

PHOTO COURTESY OF SOMMFOUNDATION



“Our cellar is a precious and unique resource in that it allows SommFoundation to share the world’s greatest wines with students of the vine who cannot always afford to access the greatest benchmarks of our industry.”

Dear *SOMM Journal* Community,

It has been just over 18 months since I last wrote you in these pages as I introduced our partnership with *The SOMM Journal* and described the mission of SommFoundation. Since then, we’ve continued to raise funding and cultivate sponsors for four specific areas of benefit: scholarships, enrichment travel, educational experiences, and the SommFoundation cellar.

We have been able to advance our efforts in all of these areas, and *The SOMM Journal* has helped us pursue our mission by giving us a platform to share the stories of our work with the sommelier community. We are grateful for the magazine’s generous efforts and we look forward to our continued relationship.

We’re also nearing the launch of our new website this spring at sommfoundation.com. This portal will provide a more modern, comprehensive way to keep up with the enrichment trips, scholarships, and other opportunities available through SommFoundation. Please check it out soon and make sure to provide your current contact information under the “Stay Connected” link—we don’t want any of you to miss application deadlines, SommFoundation event announcements (would you like to drink some old and rare wine from our cellar?), and information on some very exciting projects we’re working on.

A word about “other opportunities”: The SommFoundation leadership has been working on some new tools, features, and resources for the beverage community that we plan to announce over the course of the next year. Keep an eye on the website and our social-media outlets for updates (@sommfoundation on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter).

Last July, our Cellar Master and co-founder, Jay Fletcher, MS, wrote about the SommFoundation cellar: its origins, our efforts to grow its collection, and how we use it to further our mission. This spring, we are entreating great winegrowers, producers, importers, distributors, and private collectors to join the numerous patrons who have supported SommFoundation over the years in making regular donations of wine.



Selections from the SommFoundation cellar like those pictured above are shared with students who might not otherwise get the opportunity to taste wines of their caliber.



SommFoundation co-founder Dan Gulbronsen passed away last year on Christmas day. He will be sorely missed.

Our cellar is a precious and unique resource in that it allows SommFoundation to share the world's greatest wines with students of the vine who cannot always afford to access the greatest benchmarks of our industry.

Finally, and with great sadness, I must report the passing of one of our co-founders, Dan Gulbronsen. Dan was an instrumental

force in the earliest days of The Guild of Sommeliers Education Foundation—before *GuildSomm.com* and SommFoundation were created out of our successful efforts. He served as a shepherd for us, joining forces with other organizations he was involved with to benefit the foundation and establish a solid footing, one from which we're still growing today.

This year, SommFoundation will be creating a memorial scholarship to honor Dan and his invaluable contributions to the sommelier community. While we continue to look forward, remembering our origins and the people who made SommFoundation possible remains an important responsibility. We are here because of the selfless efforts of Dan and many others like him. He will be missed.

We look forward to sharing many new educational opportunities and exciting developments with you this year. Watch these pages and our website for updates, and thanks to everyone for your continued support!

In Vino Felicitas! 

Dan James, MS

Jay James, MS

The Crockpot Theory

PHOTO: RICHARD GREEN



Winemaker Adam Lee.

ADAM LEE THOUGHTFULLY ASSEMBLES GRAPES FROM TWO SITES FOR HIS NEW PINOT NOIR LABEL, **CLARICE** by Meridith May

AFTER ADAM AND DIANNA Lee sold Siduri to Jackson Family Wines four years ago, they were free to start a project of their own. Adam still consults for the brand, which the couple started in 1994. (They were married in 1995, “after the grapes were picked,” he told *The SOMM Journal*.) Adam admitted during his visit to our offices in March that “JFW is doing a great job with Siduri, but Dianna and I wanted to keep our hands in the dirt.”

Dianna, who was co-winemaker at Siduri, has released 500 cases of her sparkling Brut, Flaunt. Made with Chardonnay (52%) and Pinot Noir (48%) from Sonoma County, it lacks sweetness on the finish and tartness on the palate; the acidity, however, is delicate, complementing clean notes of chamomile and lemon drop as well as a hint of yeast on the nose.

Adam, meanwhile, has his own label to introduce: Clarice, named after his teetotaling late grandmother, who was born in 1896. (Topped with screwcaps, Adam’s preferred closure, the bottles are outfitted with labels that evoke this time period.) “This was my excuse to get back into making Pinot Noir,” he said. “Although not a wine drinker, my grandmother was a great cook and taught me about slow-cooking in a crockpot: something you can add ingredients to, let simmer, season, and wait.”

In the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA of Monterey County, Adam follows this “crockpot theory” while producing his Clarice Pinot Noirs with grapes from the Rosella’s Vineyard, which is solely owned and farmed by Gary Francioni and his family, and the Garys’ Vineyard, a site co-owned by the Francioni and Pisoni families. “I choose from two sections that ripen two weeks apart for both vineyards: Field blends exist in many places, but picking different sections such as this is a bit different,” Adam explained. “The hope is that the resulting wines will be more complex, as some of the fruit will be riper while other portions will be distinctly less ripe.”

Clarice 2017 Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$80)

Expressing itself through earth, cranberry, and rose petals and using 50% whole cluster, this wine is a blend of fruit from the Garys’ and Rosella’s vineyards: It combines the structure of the 2017 Garys’ Vineyard with the fruit-forward character of the Rosella’s. Notes of cherry, chocolate-blueberry, and dried herbs make this a stunner. **94**

Clarice 2017 Garys’ Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$80)

The fruit for this wine was picked two weeks before a heat spike in early September. (“I was really lucky,” noted Adam.) Energetic acidity and a juicy vibrancy show as red fruit surges on the palate. High-toned bright cherry and mocha-oak keep the flavors going through the finish. **95**



Clarice 2017 Rosella’s Vineyard Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$80)

Situated closer to the ocean, this fruit was picked after the heat spike but remained vivacious (in more of a savory way). Brooding with a salty finish and a tannic character, it positions cigar leaf and dark fruit alongside grilled meat and soil. Vive la difference: “Nature is truly in control of the whole thing,” Adam said. **93**



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{ cover story }

*Jean-Charles Boisset
collaborated on his new
JCB Passion Collection
with Baccarat, the oldest
crystal maker in France.*

ELEMENTS OF

Style



The JCB Passion Collection glassware series features a “diamond” stud in the center of each stem.

JEAN-CHARLES BOISSET TAKES ELEVATED SERVICE TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH HIS JCB PASSION COLLECTION

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Alexander Rubin

In

the realm of wine-country creativity, few can hold a candle to Jean-Charles Boisset, the inimitable mastermind, raconteur, inventor, and creative genius behind Boisset Collection. From his Old World family roots in Burgundy to the legacy he's created in the New World, “JCB,” as he is affectionately known, isn't slowing down his noble crusade to elevate every aspect of wine culture.

The next milestone in that quest is the introduction of the JCB Passion Collection, a culmination of more than a decade of research and development. Conceived by Boisset and produced by Baccarat, the oldest crystal maker in France, the set features two signature decanters—including one specifically designed for sparkling wine, the first product of its kind—and three glasses.

Those familiar with Boisset's passion projects know his aim is to make the everyday extraordinary. Just spend one afternoon at Raymond Vineyards in St. Helena, California, and you'll see his creative revolution in phantasmagorical real time. From the Theatre of Nature, a walkaround snapshot of Biodynamic farming, to the Corridor of Senses, Crystal Cellar, and the sensual, velvet-draped Red Room adorned with Baccarat crystal chandeliers, it's a shrine to passion—a place to indulge in the emotion of the moment and, above all, a nudge from Boisset to tap into your inner creative soul and dabble in what he calls the “ceremony of the senses.”

Given these lofty ideals, it should come as no surprise that Boisset seeks to elevate the dining experience at every fine restaurant and hotel in America. *The SOMM Journal* had the distinct honor of visiting with Boisset in the Red Room at Raymond Vineyards to experience his crystal creations firsthand.

{ cover story }

"I dreamed of creating a wine glass that would be the one and only glass you'd ever need," Boisset explained as he carefully positioned the two decanters and three precision-made, handblown glasses—one for sparkling wine, a Martini glass for cocktails, and another remarkably versatile glass for red, white, and rosé wines—in front of us. "I'm not a fan of having 17 different glasses for all your various varieties. We have attempted to create the perfect glass. It's made for all sizes of hands as well as mouths; it imbues elegance, power, and

dignity; and it is the highlight of grace."

An homage to the high-society dining scene of the 18th century, the distinctive glassware is gorgeous to behold, with beautiful hexagonal stemware; seductive and wide bases, which anchor each item on the table; and a profoundly elegant yet sturdy feel. They won't break in the dishwasher, and they're not made of the kind of featherweight glass you can snap in half with your fingers. With their solid weight, they encourage guests to focus on what they're holding, but above all, Boisset

believes they're going to inspire—and perhaps directly help—sommeliers to sell more expensive wines.

"If I'm in a restaurant and spending \$150 to \$300 on a wine," posited Boisset, "and they don't bring me a fantastic glass, I'm surprised. Why am I paying so much?" Even taking into consideration the sound the wine makes as it's poured into the glass, Boisset thought through every aspect to devise what he said is the "perfect aromatic expression, the perfect lip opening to guide the wine, and the

A TRIBUTE TO SENSORY REVELATIONS

The coffee table book to end all coffee table books, Jean-Charles Boisset's large-format, velvet-encased *The Alchemy of the Senses* (\$395) was released late last year. Editor Teresa Rodriguez writes in its introduction, "Let's consider these pages not as a book, but as a stage, and what comes next is a performance. Jean-Charles is the director, the conductor, the creator, and lead actor."

In typical JCB fashion, the emotion and depth that's channeled through wine is displayed in a stunning array of forms in *The Alchemy of the Senses*. Serving as much more than a book to simply leaf through, it was designed to help readers seek a deeper connection to life and each other through sensory experiences, particularly the enjoyment of wine and art. For more information, visit alchemyofthesenses.com.

perfect directional to hit the palate, allowing the wine to grow expansive in the mouth, bringing balance and coating your palate beautifully.” “Rarely does a wine glass achieve all of this,” he added.

“The Theatrics of Dining”

Boisset admitted the collection will not be a fit for every venue given its cost: \$380 per set of two wine glasses and \$860 for each decanter (a favorable discount is available, however, for members of the

JUST SPEND ONE AFTERNOON
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VINEYARDS IN ST. HELENA,
CALIFORNIA, **AND YOU’LL SEE
HIS CREATIVE REVOLUTION IN
PHANTASMAGORICAL REAL TIME.**





SERVING UP JCB SPIRITS

In 2018, the Boisset Collection released its first line of spirits: a project 15 years in the making. Comprising three vodkas (classic, caviar-infused, and truffle-infused) and a gin distilled from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay sourced from the Côte-d'Or in Burgundy, the collection was produced in the historic Nuits-Saint-Georges distillery, which is owned by the Boisset family. The vodka and gin each carry an SRP of \$125, while the caviar-infused and Périgord truffle-infused vodka cost \$150.

Truffle Vesper

*Available at Eat Street Social,
Minneapolis, MN*

2 oz. JCB Gin

½ oz. JCB Truffle Vodka

¼ oz. Lillet Blanc

Add ingredients to an ice-filled shaker, shake until cold, and serve up with an orange twist.

Caviar Gibson

*Available at Branch Line,
Emeryville, CA*

2 oz. JCB Caviar Vodka

½ oz. dry vermouth

Stir ingredients with ice and serve up. Garnish with three cocktail onions and a spoon of Shaseta or Osetra caviar.

trade). The Martini glasses have yet to be priced but will likely be similar to the wine glassware. But if regular service at a given fine-dining restaurant means pouring bottles typically in the triple-digit range, climbing even into quadruple digits, "how can you serve \$400 wine without the right decanter and glass?" wondered Boisset. "How can we put a \$4 glass without presence and personality in a restaurant? Our aim is to combine beauty and functionality with emotional experiences."

There's no denying that a younger generation of diners increasingly surmises that jeans and T-shirts are suitable even for Michelin-rated restaurants—it's the casualization of fine dining as we know it. Of course, trying to convince every patron to don the finest items in their wardrobe is a losing battle, even when appropriate, but what about shifting the experience to encourage more ceremony? That's a concept Boisset refers to as "the theatrics of dining."

"We need to transcend and elevate the simple pleasures of life," he said. "I'm countering the casual phenomenon—if you want to be casual, be theatrically casual! Pay attention to everything you are doing and make it nice and enjoyable, regal, and majestic. It's not about creating more expenses—it's about being fashionable. We are losing the formality and elegance of the wine world. Let's inspire people to bring it back!"

In the theme of theatricality, one of the most striking features of the JCB Passion Collection glassware is the "diamond" stud in the center of each stem. Interrupting the reams, it's a fascinating placement that provides a tactile experience while almost eschewing the typical practice of swirling a glass. "Wine is our diamond," Boisset said proudly. "Instead of eight guests at a table all spinning their wine around, they'll caress the diamond, feel its edges, and be seduced by its beauty."


While its very existence conveys indulgence, the glassware is hardly lacking in practicality: The still and sparkling wine glasses are each designed to act as mini-decanter if wines are not decanted before arriving tableside. Of course, Boisset's

custom decanters complete the ceremonial circle so that the wine can simply be enjoyed from the glass one luxurious sip at a time. "Champagne needs to be decanted because you have millions of bubbles that need to be released," Boisset said of the impetus for the sparkling decanter. "They've been cooped up in the bottle so long, and you want about 10 million to say goodbye immediately, leaving nothing but elegance and the right amount of bubbles to dance on your tongue."

To achieve this balance, Boisset drew inspiration from one crystalline bead of Champagne, giving rise to the bubble-shaped decanter. "We wanted a clear and polished surface, so you can see the bubbles rise up and escape, and everything is driven by all the senses—you can really hear the sound hitting the middle as a gorgeous, fine-layer of foam forms," he said. "You don't want sparkling wine on the first sip to be too carbonated or too strong—you want to be tantalized."



The design of the sparkling decanter was inspired by a crystalline bead of Champagne.

While the leadup to the JCB Passion Collection's release has been lengthy, Boisset said working with Baccarat, which was founded in 1764, has fulfilled a longtime dream of his. "I met with CEO Daniela Riccardi and her top people in France and worked on every aspect of these handblown glasses," he added. After 69 iterations, they arrived at the impeccable shapes that define this set of crystal, now available from Boisset Collection. Sommeliers are encouraged to inquire directly; for more information, visit jcbcollection.com. 



THE SILKY SEDUCTION OF *Raymond Vineyards*

In honor of the 40th anniversary of Raymond Vineyards' first vintage in 1974, the winery released a select line of powerful, opulent wines with reimagined labels made of velvet. Director of Winemaking Stephanie Putnam and consulting winemaker Philippe Melka have refined their approach, working with estate vineyards in Napa Valley, Rutherford, St. Helena, and Jameson Canyon. The feeling of silkiness the labels impart is meant to provide a playful yet sensuous experience, Jean-Charles Boisset said.

Raymond Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$45)

Black currants mingle with bright red berries and violets in this round, rich, and plush wine. Mouthcoating notes of dark fruit, brown spices, creamy oak, and velvety blueberry compote give way to a long finish.

Raymond Vineyards 2016 Merlot, Napa Valley (\$30)

Vibrant and fresh cassis meets Tahitian vanilla and acai berry. Densely packed but light on its feet, this wine shows notes of ripe red plum and cocoa complemented by baking spices atop satiny tannins. The finish is long and dark-fruited.

Raymond Vineyards 2016 Red Blend, Napa Valley (\$40) Sporting a midnight blue label, this new release is set to debut in June.

{ sense of plate }

Los Angeles-based chef Chad Colby holds a Japanese reed loom, which he uses like an Italian pettine (comb) to make garganelli pasta.

PHOTO: BEN FISCHINGER

His Own Place

CHEF **CHAD COLBY** IS SET TO OPEN **ANTICO** IN LOS ANGELES THIS SPRING

by S. Irene Virbila

FOR CHAD COLBY, the chef behind new restaurant Antico in Los Angeles, wine came before cooking. While working toward a hospitality degree at California Polytechnic State University, he won a scholarship to study wine at Villa Banfi in Tuscany for three weeks. Thoroughly hooked, he spun those three weeks into six, exploring the wine and food of the region on his own. When the chef at Poggio Antico in Montalcino made him bucatini all'Amatriciana, Colby had a revelation: The pasta was so simple and delicious he thought he might be able to make it, too.

Soon after, Colby left academics and talked his way into a job as a line cook at Campanile in Los Angeles before spending a year cooking his way around Italy, which solidified his connection to the country's cuisine. When Nancy Silverton, the award-winning chef behind Pizzeria Mozza, tapped him to open Chi Spacca back in L.A., he developed a salumi program among the best in the nation—and in Italy. At the meat-focused restaurant, he mastered “live fire,” cooking everything over a wood grill or in a wood-burning oven.

Chad Colby has collected brass pasta and ravioli cutters for years.

PHOTO: BEN FISCHINGER



Now Colby is poised to open his own place in May within walking distance of his personal garden in L.A. He says the rustic Italian food at Antico will be based on his travels all over the country, particularly the South, and that the restaurant will have a giant hearth, or “60 cubic feet of freedom to cook with fire.” The chef envisions churning out dishes like butterflied whole fish, flatbreads, *spiedino* (skewers), chops, ribs, and sausages.


Before developing Antico, Colby consulted for several restaurants and spent more time in Italy. Cooking a series of dinners for Italian wine producers (Quericiabella and Emidio Pepe, among others) prompted him to realize there’s a reason the food and wine from a particular region work so well together: To put it simply, “They’ve grown the grapes to match the food, [and] they’ve evolved their food to match the wine,” he explains.

While the chef prefers to riff on certain classic flavor profiles on the food side, he’s found that sticking close to a region’s



Chad Colby carefully prepares corkscrew pasta.

indigenous grapes and styles in terms of wine is almost always the best choice. For a pasta with lamb and tomato ragù from Calabria, for example, his favorite match is a red from Cirò made from the ancient Gaglioppo grape. “I was blown away by how sophisticated this wine is,” he says. “It just wouldn’t make sense to serve a dish like this with such plebeian roots with a big Tuscan or Piedmontese wine.”

That said, the list will certainly have some of those trophy wines as well. To ensure a special experience, Colby has brought in Kevin Caravelli of New York’s NoMad as Antico’s General Manager/ Wine Director. The selections will be eclectic and unexpected, with a reserve list handwritten in an old ledger. “For any amazing Brunello or Barolo, there’s going to be a dish to match,” Colby says. 



Mt. Beautiful
NORTH CANTERBURY NZ
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2018 Rosé

92 POINTS

The Tasting Panel, Meredith May

The uniqueness of 35% Pinot Gris added to the remaining Pinot Noir adds a light-touch fruitiness, an echo of pear. Aromas of rosemary-kissed raspberry are delicate and fragrant. Slate adds depth to the sweetness while a hint of sage and salinity give the wine strength and texture.

91 POINTS ★★★★★

The Real Reviews, Bob Campbell MW

Silver Medal | Top Value

Orange-tinted, flavoursome rosé with cherry, raspberry, anise and spice flavours. Weighty wine with good mouth-feel and an impressively lengthy finish. Bone-dry but not austere. Good food wine.

mtbeautiful.co.nz



Eat, Drink, and Be Playful

J. WILKES WINEMAKER WES HAGEN REMINDS US
THAT PAIRING FOOD AND WINE SHOULD BE FUN

by Michelle Ball

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. WILKES



Wes Hagen, Winemaker and Brand Ambassador for J. Wilkes Wines.



AS THE WINEMAKER and Brand Ambassador for J. Wilkes Wines, based in California's Santa Maria Valley, Wes Hagen is a natural when it comes to provoking discussion. "Great wine should lead to a conversation about everything except itself," says Hagen, who's always quick to curtail the dissection of a given wine by reinforcing its true purpose: pleasure.

Hagen, who often refers to wine as an essential factor in the development of our ideals, culture, and philosophy over centuries, is uniquely qualified to inspire and educate. After an early career as a high school English teacher, Hagen spent 20 years in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA, where he worked as both Winemaker and Vineyard Manager at Clos Pepe Vineyards.

In 2015, he was hired in his current role at J. Wilkes by the Miller Family Wine Company, which owns the famed Bien Nacido Vineyard. The winery has expanded quickly over the last four years, producing a wide selection of varieties—including Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Lagrein—from sites throughout Santa Barbara County and Paso Robles.

In terms of stylistic approach, Hagen prefers to avoid extremes, as these wines are intended to both stand on their own and complement a wide range of dishes at affordable by-the-glass price points. "We certainly try to make wines that show beautifully at the table and have life, verve, and good structure," Hagen says.

Winemaker Wes Hagen leads a reference tasting comparing acids, tannins, and sugars.

“Dinner and a Show”

In accordance with his dual title, Hagen spends harvest at the winery and the majority of the rest of the year on the road. Time off is a rarity, so when I heard he would be continuing his food and wine pairing classes at Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria, I quickly registered for a spot.

Training future winemakers and industry professionals, the campus is home to one of a handful of bonded college wineries in California. The two-part, three-day class—held over two weekends in February—was described by Hagen as “dinner and a show” as he flexed his kitchen skills and prepped our palates with small bites. In attendance were tasting room associates, restaurant staff, and wine enthusiasts as well as students enrolled in the college’s viticulture and enology programs.

While wine and food pairing can be intimidating, repetition has made the process somewhat intuitive for those of us who have worked in restaurants for years. When it comes to training new staff, however, it’s important to remember that things don’t come as easily without experience.

One exercise that fostered confidence in the students was the pairing speed round. We each tasted ten different variet-



PHOTO: MICHELLE BALL

ies, and with each wine, every person in the room had to describe what they might pair and why. That repetition helped students relax as they heard other ideas, and things got a little easier with each round. “You need to try; you need to make mistakes,” Hagen told us.

The winemaker also stressed that we need to do away with stodgy, traditional

pairing ideas that can intimidate the average Joe or make them feel like they’re wrong to have white wine with their steak. As he put it, “I want wine to be more playful, I want it to be more fun, I want it to be more engaging, and I want it to be more satisfying. To me, another Cabernet with a medium-rare steak is [expletive] delicious, but what have I learned?”

Wes Hagen’s Quick Tips on Wine Pairing

When asked what a sommelier’s most important role is, Hagen expanded on the word *pontiff*, saying, “I think that great somms should be pontificators in the sense that they build a bridge from what they know to what the person at the table needs to know so they can make a decision to find a delicious wine.”

A few notes to consider:

- Match the intensity of the wine to the intensity of the dish. For example, high-acid foods should pair with high-acid wines and sweet desserts with even sweeter wines.
- Match the level of fat in the dish to the level of structure in the wine. Fatty dishes deserve high-acid and/or high-tannin wines.
- In congruent matches, discerning flavors in the food echo flavors in the wine (e.g. an earthy Pinot Noir with chanterelle mushrooms).
- Pairings that adhere to the concept of molecular bridging are based on molecules shared between the food and the wine that have a positive impact on the palate. For example, seaweed and Cabernet Sauvignon have the same flavonoids.
- Contrasting matches prove that opposites do attract, like fatty foods with high-acid wines (e.g. steak au poivre and Sauvignon Blanc). These tend to be interesting pairings, as they allow both the food and wine to speak while elevating each element.
- Hagen cautioned that creating pairings is “a process” that should happen “slowly.” “I don’t want to go from being uptight about wine to encouraging people to make crazy choices without learning how to make a solid, safe choice first,” he added.

PHOTO: MICHELLE BALL



Hagen’s students prepare a three-course tasting menu paired with wines.



SOMM|CON[®]

YOUNG LEADERS SUMMIT

Walking the hall last November during SommCon's West Coast Conference in San Diego, the excitement was contagious. The verve was perhaps felt deepest by the circle of Young Leaders who had gathered to meet alongside their mentor for the day and sponsor of the program, Meridith May, publisher of Tasting Panel and SommJournal.

SommCon, which is held annually in both San Diego, CA, and Washington, D.C., invites young professionals under 30 to apply for the Young Leader's Summit in which rising stars are granted hosted scholarships to SommCon, invitations to special dinners, and tasting experiences led by industry legends and top educators.

With applications currently open for the Young Leader's Class of 2019, we sat down with past recipients to learn more about their experience.



Our first roundtable includes:

- Megan Bauer, Sommelier, Rosewood San Hill – Mountain View, CA
- Caitlin Carter, Wine Sales Supervisor, Stave Wine Cellar at Pebble Beach Resorts – Monterey, CA
- Cassandra Felix, Head Sommelier, The Breakers Palm Beach - West Palm Beach, FL
- Allison Gabdois, Beverage Manager, Triple Creek Ranch – Lindstrom, MN
- Edward Lee, Hospitality Sales Manager – Mandarin Program, Treasury Wine Estates - American Canyon, CA
- Caitlin Taglia, Wine Buyer, Holeman and Finch Bottle Shop – Atlanta, GA

Q: Why did you apply for the Young Leader's Scholarship at SommCon?

Caitlin Taglia: As one of the leading beverage conferences in the country, SommCon was high on my list to attend. Engaging with likeminded people in the industry makes me a better Sommelier. I jumped on the opportunity to attend in the most cost effective way. The Atlanta Sommelier community is small, but growing. I wanted to gain knowledge and connections to somms in other communities.

Cassandra Felix: I was encouraged to apply by MW Geoff Labitzke of Kistler, after participating in the Chaine des Rotisseurs Young Sommelier competition. There were some definite room for improvement in certain areas of my performance and I knew that if I had the opportunity to attend SommCon, I would learn a lot. I was excited to bring my wine knowledge to the next level by attending seminars led by the best in the business.



Q. Did you have a favorite session?

Edward Lee: The topic by Scott Barber, co presented by Anthony Muller, Napa Valley with Burgundy Mentality. At events like these, you can tell that there are professionals taking the time to distill their lifelong learning into insightful messages. It helped me better position Napa Valley when I am out talking to my brands.

Caitlin Taglia: Sandy soils with Will Costello. Will taught us about the many ways that the specific soil would affect the wine. His incredible level of knowledge on the subject was inspiring and intertwined the whole course with a level of fun and humor that made it even more enjoyable.



Q. What tools did SommCon provide you with in your professional career?

Allison Gadbois: SommCon was crucial in my passing of the Court of Master Sommeliers Certification. I was studying for my Level Two when I attended and as a result I am proud to say I am now a Certified Sommelier. SommCon gave me the opportunity to taste and learn about so many wines, I know it gave me an advantage in studying.

Cassandra Felix: SommCon was very helpful in preparing for the Advanced Sommelier Exam, specifically with the blind tasting portion. Breaking down grape varietals with the Blind Tasting with MWs seminar, Honing in on Cabernet Franc with Master of Wine Geoff Labitzke and Garnacha with Master Sommelier Bob Bath, and competing in the Game of Wines competition was a great way to get in gear for the exam.

Q: What advice do you have to 2019 Young Leader's Scholarship winners during SommCon?

Caitlin Carter: Listen, drink and write down everything! Sit through each lesson with pride and remember you have been granted this amazing opportunity to learn so much about your field of choice. The people that have been selected with you will become lifelong friends and colleagues so appreciate the amazing bond you all share. Have a blast!



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

The Tuscan Empire of Marchesi de' Frescobaldi

"WE MAY BE one of the most complicated wine companies to understand," Lamberto Frescobaldi said as we sat down together at the *SOMM Journal* offices to taste through some of his estate wines. "What is Frescobaldi? First, we are solely winegrowers—no négociant here. We control all our [Tuscan] properties with the idea to enhance the uniqueness of each place. We are cultivating Toscana diversity."

While not all wines in the portfolio carry the Frescobaldi name, the family oversees seven Tuscan estates: Tenuta CastelGiocondo, Tenuta Perano, Tenuta Castiglioni, Castello Nipozzano, Rè mole, Castello Pomino, and Tenuta Ammiraglia.

The last estate added to the portfolio, Tenuta Perano, lies in the heart of Chianti Classico; its first Gran Selezione, carrying the 2015 vintage, will be released this spring. Lamberto, who had no prior desire to purchase land in this region, was nevertheless enamored when he first set his sights on the property in 1992. "It was too expensive, and at the time I was too young to take the chance on it," he says. "I went back again in 2008, but the price was still outrageous. It was in 2014, however, that a broker called me and told me the estate was bankrupt. I opted to rent it first for four years and then bid for it at auction, and it was finally ours."

With 140 acres of south-facing vineyards planted, the estate sits at an elevation of about 1,600 feet above sea level. "I love to talk about how the property lies within two valleys; about how the vines catch the sun; about how the elegant, structured, and fruity wines are a result of elevation, exposure, and hands-off winemaking," Lamberto said. "Winemakers' egos should not get in the way of special terroir—there is no heavy-handed approach to these wines."



The Tenuta Perano estate in Chianti Classico.



Lamberto Frescobaldi at home with his companion, Brunello.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARCHESI DE FRESCOBALDI



Tenuta Perano 2015 Chianti Classico (\$25)

This wine shows such freshness through its fruit that it cleans the palate with each pass. Aromas of plum, brown sugar, and red licorice lead to a lean, gorgeous palate where an equilibrium of acidity, fruit, and structure elevates flavors of red tea kissed with wild cherry. A thread of savory olive tapenade comes in on the finish. **94** —Meridith May

Located in southwest Montalcino, the Tenuta CastelGiocondo estate ranges from 700 to 1,200 feet in elevation. Because the fruit is dry-farmed, rainfall and the area's cooler climate have an important influence.

The growth of light-skinned Sangiovese grapes, which crack easily, is aided by a successful soil management project that included replanting; this increased density from 1,000 to 6,000 vines per acre. "The cleaner, deeper skins are stronger during maceration," Lamberto explained. "We are able to pick later in the season and we don't undercrop the plants."



**Tenuta CastelGiocondo
2013 Brunello di Montalcino
(\$75)**

This expression offers up a ripe, expressive nose of perfumed fruit. Aged mostly in cask (with some barrels) for three years, the juice is transferred to concrete vats for another year and a half before bottling. "The concrete evolves the wine without the woodiness," Lamberto noted. The wine's elegance shows itself in a texture that drenches the mouth, thanks to brilliant acidity and a defined freshness. Like the rhythmic lope of a horse, the liquid is smoothly paced from start to finish. **96** —M.M.

Gorgona, the smallest island in the Tuscan Archipelago, has housed a prison since 1869. As part of a collaboration that aims to help participants reintegrate into society with new skills, the inmates have been part of the Marchesi de' Frescobaldi viticultural and enology team since 2011—giving fresh meaning to the vinous term release.

A small, organically farmed vineyard planted to Vermentino and Ansonica paved the way for the first vintage of Gorgona in 2012. Volcanic soils and a maritime climate lead to a beautifully textural white wine: The **Gorgona 2015 Costa Toscana IGT (\$140)** is heady on the nose with aromas of pear and persimmon. White tea blossom, marzipan, and butterscotch-apple tart play on the palate. **96** —M.M.

Frescobaldi is imported by Shaw-Ross International Importers, LLC.

Lucas & Lewellen: Buzzworthy Wines at a Buzzworthy Price

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL



Megan McGrath Gates serves as Director of Winemaking for Santa Barbara County-based Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards.

THE ANCESTORS OF Megan McGrath Gates, an eighth-generation Californian, farmed the state's land long before she grew up in the suburbs of Riverside County east of Los Angeles. When her own desire arose to get her hands in the soil, she was advised to attend California Polytechnic State University, which has a strong agricultural program. Before the school's enology department was established in 1999, Gates took a class in soil science. "I thought this was the key discipline for the meaning of life," she said during a recent visit to the *SOMM* Journal offices.

Now in her 12th vintage at Santa Barbara County-based winery Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards, Gates answered our query on what keeps her signature style fresh after all these years. "You mean why do they empower

me?" she responded with a laugh. "It's because I continue to smell things: I can spot an underlying flaw or a scent from a distance." Owning up to a masterful sensitivity, Gates added, "I am analytical but I can also see the big picture."

Sourcing from 400 acres of estate-planted vineyards throughout Santa Barbara County, Gates works with 24 varieties and confessed that she "make[s] as many as 50 different wines a year."

Lucas & Lewellen 2016 Chenin Blanc, Santa Barbara County (\$20) This wine is a nod to the Loire, with nerve and saline minerality seeping through lanolin and caramel-peach. **91** —M.M.

Lucas & Lewellen 2016 Goodchild High 9 Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara County (\$35) The fruit for this wine comes from a 9-acre block in Santa Maria with some high-profile neighbors, as well as estate vineyards in the Los Alamos and Santa Ynez valleys. Tobacco and black pepper add depth to this earthy red, aged sur lie in French oak. Only 616 cases were produced. **93** —M.M.

Lucas & Lewellen 2016 Cote del Sol Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Ynez Valley (\$36) These grapes hail from the Valley View Vineyard, a site with fine sand and gravelly soils alongside the Santa Ynez River. With its meaty nose and earthy richness, this cofermented blend of 92% Cabernet and 8% Syrah features mouth-filling, expressive notes of olives and Worcestershire. **92** —M.M. **81**



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCAS & LEWELLEN

IBERIAN *Neighbors*



At the recent Sommelier Summit, The SOMM Journal's panel of experts convened at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia in Napa to discuss terroir and flavor profiles from diverse regions throughout Spain and Portugal. From left to right: Lorea Amatria, Area Manager, Bodegas LAN, Rioja; Nicole Andrus, European Sales Director, Trinchero Family Estates; Colin McNeil, California Sales Manager, J. García Carrión; Jean Hoefliger, Consulting Winemaker, Perinet, Priorat; Bob Bath, MS, moderator and Head Beverage Professor at the CIA at Greystone; Evan Goldstein, co-founder of Full Circle Wine Solutions, representing Wines of Alentejo; Paul Hodges, SoCal Manager, Vineyard Brands; and Joshua Blissett, Northern California Area Manager, Frederick Wildman & Sons.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL COME FACE TO FACE AT THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA'S SOMMELIER SUMMIT IN NAPA

STORY BY JOHN BUECHSENSTEIN / PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RUBIN

YOU'RE ALMOST ALWAYS within reach of a wine region in Spain and Portugal. With their diverse soils and microclimates, these neighboring countries share a link that's readily apparent in their wines. Our panel at the recent Sommelier Summit, held at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia in Napa, was moderated by Master Sommelier Bob Bath, who serves as Head Beverage Professor at the CIA at Greystone in St. Helena. Here's how we connected the dots between the expressions and winemaking styles presented:

CASTILLA Y LEÓN, DOURO RIVER VALLEY, SPAIN

Wine: Quinta Sardonía 2014 Red Blend, Castilla y León

Presented by: Nicole Andrus, European Imports Sales Director, Trinchero Family Estates

For adventurous winegrowers willing to think outside the box of traditional terroir, proximity to regions with established identities can be key. Perhaps Peter Sisseck was seeking to prove this notion when he founded Quinta Sardonía within the "Golden Mile" of the Douro River (which stretches across northern Spain) just outside the limits of the Ribera del Duero DO. Though very familiar with Ribera wines, he felt constrained by the limited grape cultivars available for blending, and his team now experiments with Bordeaux varieties.



Nicole Andrus is the European Imports Sales Director for Trinchero Family Estates.

Winemaker Christian Rey uses a Biodynamic approach in Quinta Sardonía's vineyards to "ensure the utmost quality and attention to detail in each and every bottle," according to Nicole Andrus, who serves as the European Imports Sales Director for Trinchero Family Estates, the winery's parent company. Expressing its calcium-rich limestone terroir, the 2014 Red Blend is handcrafted from fruit planted 1,600 feet above sea level and less than a mile from the banks of the Douro River.

Winemakers often tweak their terroir expression through the craft of blending. In this case, Rey utilized a mix of indigenous French and Spanish clonal selections, with Tempranillo acting as the backbone of the wine; the addition of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Syrah, and Malbec imparted layers of spicy complexity. The clusters were handpicked and harvested at the peak of ripeness before undergoing spontaneous fermentation with wild yeast strains in concrete eggs. The blended wine then aged in French oak barrels for 19 months.

RIOJA, SPAIN

Wine: Viña Lanciano 2012 Reserva

Presented by: Lorea Amatria, Area Manager, Bodegas LAN

The classic aphorism “location, location, location” is the best description of Bodegas LAN’s terroir-expressive vineyard-designate site, which is responsible for the vivid flavors of the Viña Lanciano. The qualifier “Reserva” signifies the patience exercised in the winery as these flavors developed and came alive during *lavantamiento* (the French say “*élevage*”) and bottle aging.

The name LAN is an acronym based on the initials of three provinces that form Spain’s DOCa Rioja: Logroño (currently part of La Rioja), Alava, and Navarra. The vineyard land is looped by a river which, together with the forces of climate over millennia, formed pebbly, well-drained soils that allow vine roots to dig deep into the earth. Meticulous crafting has allowed Bodegas LAN to present a mature, expansive, food-friendly wine in which Tempranillo (90%), Graciano (8%), and Mazuelo (2%) combine seamlessly.

The philosophy at Bodegas LAN is that winemaking starts with winegrowing. For the 2012 Viña Lanciano Reserva, hand-harvested fruit was sorted to yield clusters of prime condition and ripeness before proceeding to small-batch fermentation in stainless steel followed by lengthy post-fermentation maceration. Fourteen months of malolactic in small French Tronçaise barrels preceded eight months of aging in barrels from the Caucasus region and an additional 20 months in bottle.

In the words of the winery team, Viña Lanciano offers “aromas of mature red cherries and black fruits . . . enclosed by the minerality that is the hallmark of all wines that come from the estate. Its silky, round, elegant palate [is] complex and balanced with integrated tannins, and it has a persistent and pleasant finish.”



Lorea Amatria is the Area Manager for Bodegas LAN.

PRIORAT, SPAIN

Wine: Perinet 2015 Priorat DOQ, Spain

Presented by: Jean Hoefliger, Consulting Winemaker, Perinet (and Winemaker for Alpha Omega, Napa)

If you ignore architectural clues, a first glance at the vineyards of Priorat gives a solid impression of hilly winegrowing sites similar to those seen elsewhere in the winemaking world. But when you stand in the vineyards with their steep slopes and varied aspects, sensing the cool Mediterranean breeze as flinty stones crackle under your feet, it's no exaggeration to say that the terroir comes alive.

Priorat wines were first developed by Carthusian monks in the 12th century (the term “priorat” means priory). Surrounded by the Montsant Mountains of Catalonia, the area does resemble a “stairway to God”—or *escaladei*, the original Latin name—with its elevation changes.

Consulting winemaker Jean Hoefliger reminded us that while “Priorat was the ‘poster child’ for emerging wines of Spain, now its potential is being realized. Here wine is not considered a luxury good as it still is in most of the U.S., rather a part of the culture and day-to-day life.”

Perinet’s three estate vineyards are characterized by their varietal mix as well as their slope and aspect. The north-facing Mas d’en Xes furnishes Cabernet and Syrah while its northeastern slope supports Garnatxa and Carinyena (alternative spellings for Garnacha and Cariñena, respectively). Other sites wrap around to sunnier southern exposures, and the steepest slopes are found in the northeastern-facing Pendants vineyard, which is strongly influenced by cooling Mediterranean winds.

For the Perinet 2015 Priorat DOQ, careful hand-sorting was done in the vineyards and at the winery, where Winemaker Toni Sánchez had the fruit “gently destemmed and crushed directly [into] small open-top tanks and large neutral barrels for fermentation,” Hoefliger said. “Most lots were cold-soaked for two days. Fermentation started slowly, with punch-downs by hand daily. Depending on the lot, macerations lasted from 10 to 21 days, and at the completion of maceration, free-run wines were transferred to barrel. The wines were aged in 90% new French oak before being bottled without either fining or filtration,” he added.

The resulting blend of Garnatxa (33%), Carinyena (25%), Syrah (25%), and Cabernet (17%) brings the Perinet terroir to the glass with black cherries, plums, violets, tobacco leaves, and forest floor. The palate supports the nose with full-bodied extract and a touch of minerality.





RIBERA DEL DUERO, SPAIN

Wine: Viña Arnáiz 2015 Crianza

Presented by: Colin McNeil, California Sales Manager; J. García Carrión

The Ribera del Duero DO follows the Douro River, linking scores of towns and villages along its 115-kilometer “sphere of influence.” Much of the winemaking world’s terroir follow rivers through their valleys, and, fittingly, *ribera* translates to riverbank.

Over the course of millennia, the river has deposited the literal foundation of Ribera del Duero: an array of diverse soils ranging from clay and limestone to sand and alluvial. The high altitude (770 meters, or roughly 2,525 feet) and the continental climate contribute to the diurnal shift from warm days to cool nights, resulting in firm, supportive acidity. The average annual rainfall of 18 inches amounts to what would be considered drought conditions in California, but the limestone-rich clay soil guards the water, making its reserves available to support vine ripening and flavor development through the dry, hot weeks of summer. Vine vegetation is limited, thus heightening the flavors of the high-quality grapes.

Three strengths intertwine in the Viña Arnáiz 2015 Crianza: distinctive terroir, a micro-climate that drives it, and the use of Tempranillo, the superbly evolved indigenous grape that makes up 90% of the blend (and 95% of grapes grown in Ribera). Locals in Ribera del Duero have referred to it as “Tinta del País,” differentiating it from variations of Tempranillo existing elsewhere in Spain. Its name is derived from the Spanish word *temprano*, meaning early, which is fittingly how it ripens—making it perfect for coping with the DO’s extremely hot summers. When fully ripe, it provides the classic color, aroma, and body of Ribera’s wines.

Also featured in the Viña Arnáiz Crianza are Cabernet Sauvignon (7%) and Merlot (3%), approved for use by the DO’s Governing Council. Harvesting was performed by hand, with fermentation following in stainless steel and French oak casks. Both French and American oak barrels were used for aging.

A bright, deep cherry color with a garnet rim, the wine shows a delightful youthfulness. Notes of red and black fruit with ripe intensity reminiscent of fruit leather establish the aromatic profile, which expresses hints of rosemary and other Mediterranean herbs. Marked with gentle tannins, elegant nuances of spice and vanilla complete the rich and well-balanced palate.



CIMA CORGO AND DOURO SUPERIOR, PORTUGAL

Wine: Churchill's Vintage 2011 Port

Presented by: Joshua Blissett, Northern California Area Manager; Frederick Wildman and Sons

Once again, location proves key in this elegant vintage Port. John Graham, who founded Churchill's in 1981 and named the company after his wife, acquired a terraced vineyard in 1999; known as Quinta da Gricha, it possesses all of the requisite assets in terms of its microclimate, elevation, mix of grape varieties, vine age and vineyard density, soil composition (including schist and granite), level of productivity, and quality of vineyard upkeep.



The estate field blend of traditional, 50-plus-year-old Port cultivars forms the backbone of Churchill's wines and includes Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Francisca, and Tinto Cão. The north-facing vineyard affords cooler ripening conditions, which lead to higher-than-average acidity in the grapes at harvest.

According to Joshua Blissett, Northern California Area Manager for importer Frederick Wildman and Sons, the winery's Vintage 2011 Port possesses "a 'lift' that's obvious on the nose [and is] a clear expression of the vineyard," as is its higher acid level and firmer structure. The Churchill's team favors costlier vinification methods and still utilizes foot treading in granite lagres, believing that this intimate approach results in improved flavor for high-quality Port. Fermentation is allowed to progress a bit further toward dryness than usual to allow for more tannin extraction, and ultimately less brandy fortification is needed. Aging progresses from stainless-steel tanks to larger seasoned oak tonéis for six months before finishing in smaller barrels.

According to Graham, his style is "less sweet [and] more on the dry side." "I prefer to make wines with longer fermentation, which gives wines more structure—a good structure is essential for all wines," he said. "My Ports are made with as much natural fermentation and with as little fortification brandy as possible. I like to make wines in the most natural way—above all, I look for balance. I believe I brought this balance to Churchill's Ports."

DOURO SUPERIOR, PORTUGAL

Wine: Quinta Do Ataíde 2015 Red

Presented by: Paul Hodges, Southern California Manager; Vineyard Brands

The classic image that springs to mind when describing the Douro River region is that of steep, terraced hillsides with a dizzying view of the water below. Proceed into the Douro Superior to the northeast, however, and the surroundings evolve dramatically into a flatter, desert-like landscape lacking in maritime influence.

The remote Vilriça Valley, once an agricultural zone dominated by a variety of fruits and nuts, features undulating terrain made up of schist-based soils mixed with some alluvial clay. This soil composition is able to conserve moisture from the rainy season to serve the vines during the hot, dry months of June and July.

In order to maintain biodiversity, the Symington family employs organic farming methods on their 200 acres of vineyards. Plantings of the mainstay Touriga Nacional—which has emerged as a signature Portuguese grape, especially in northern Portugal—are supplemented by Touriga Franca, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, and Tinto Cão.

Fruit for the Quinta Do Ataíde 2015 Red was handpicked and transported to the Adega de Reservas Winery in 20-kiloliter containers. The clusters were then hand-sorted and gently destemmed into small containers, which were hoisted and dumped into fermenters to avoid pumping. Maximum flavor extraction was accomplished through a medley of punch-downs, pump-overs, and *délestage* (rack and returns) depending on what each tank required. Post-fermentation maceration, meanwhile, assured the extraction of mature, soft tannins.

Following ten months of aging in French oak, the blend was assembled in stainless-steel vats and bottled. Fully extracted with notes of complex, ripe red fruit as well as plum and black cherry, it also shows discrete hints of vanilla and pine needles with spicy, expressive tannins and a long, satisfying finish.




ALENTEJO, PORTUGAL

Wine: Adega de Borba 2015 Vinho Tinto Reserva

Presented by: Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein, President, Full Circle Wine Solutions; owner, Master the World

Looking for wines that are off the beaten path with names in a language many struggle to pronounce? Evan Goldstein, MS, recommends visiting Portugal, which ranks ninth in the world in vineyard acreage and 11th in wine production. Its vineyards are planted seemingly everywhere, from roadsides to backyards; southern Portugal's Alentejo region covers about 30 percent of the country's landmass. Across its eight distinct subregions from north to south, the climate varies from cooler continental to warmer Mediterranean, and more distinct cultivars exist here than in any other wine region in Europe.

Like in northern Italy and Castilla y León in Spain, winegrowers in Alentejo are free-spirited and seek to avoid the restrictions of local wine regulations—they simply want to make great wines. Adega de Borba (Adega means “wine cellar”), a wine cooperative in the subregion of Borba, made the 2015 Vinho Tinto Reserva from low-yielding old vines of two classic local cultivars, Trincadeira and Aragonez, and two “immigrant” grapes, Castelão and Alicante Bouschet.

Planted in clay and schist, the fruit was destemmed, crushed, and fermented over the course of roughly two weeks at a relatively cool temperatures (24 degrees Celsius/75 degrees Fahrenheit) in order to extract the greatest yield of aromatics and flavors; post-fermentation maceration, meanwhile, resulted in complex polyphenolics and structured tannins. Malolactic fermentation occurred in stainless-steel vats prior to a 12-month aging period in passive French oak barrels. The resulting wine is fine and elegant with jammy notes of black fruit and supportive yet soft tannins. 



“You’re almost always within reach of a wine region in Spain and Portugal.”



Andrea Dlugos; Evan Goldstein, MS; and Goldstein's business partner, Limeng Stroh, with their Master the World blind-tasting program.



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This fall, the Culinary Institute of America will offer its first master's degree in professional studies with a concentration in beverage studies.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

Becoming Tomorrow's Leaders

OPTIMIZING A CAREER PATH IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

by Christie Dufault

EDUCATORS OFTEN DEBATE the relative worth of different types of knowledge. Exactly which skills will prepare our students to live lives of meaning and value, contribution and reward? In today's complex, globalized world, the answer is not always obvious.

Hiring for the hospitality industry poses unique challenges. Unlike the workforce in many other professions, not everyone in hospitality attends higher-learning institutions; in fact, many only receive on-the-job training. As a result, the industry overall faces a shortage of qualified workers who have both service skills and related knowledge.

To meet this challenge, some ambitious hospitality organizations create progressive training programs and promote in-company growth opportunities for employees. Still others make an effort to hire prospective employees based on qualifications some might consider uncon-

ventional. In his 2006 book *Setting the Table: The Transforming Power of Hospitality in Business*, New York-based restaurateur Danny Meyer explains that his company, Union Square Hospitality Group, values emotional intelligence, or E.I., as one of the most important traits prospective employees can possess—so much so that his team is willing to teach them the remaining technical skills they need as long as they meet E.I.-related requirements.

In developing its new program, the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) is taking an approach similar to Meyer's. This fall, the CIA will offer its first master's degree in professional studies with a concentration in beverage studies. This unique degree is a fast track to a career in the wine and beverage world: As part of the nine-month curriculum comprising ten courses, students will participate in field trips, attend guest lectures, and taste thousands of products.

The mission of the CIA is to educate its student body in the myriad complexities of the hospitality industry. The college trains cooks to become chefs; wine enthusiasts to become beverage directors; and passionate service personnel to become food and beverage directors and entrepreneurs. In its 73 years of operation, the CIA has developed multiple programs to ensure its students will have access to a variety of career paths.

With this new master's program, the CIA recognizes that the ability to synthesize information and think critically is paramount. Candidates will be required to demonstrate wide-ranging product knowledge, management and leadership traits, and beverage-industry business acumen. And because the CIA is a college that focuses on culinary experiences, emphasis on genuine hospitality will remain at the core of the degree. For more information, visit ciachef.edu. ☞

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Middle-Earth from North to South

HOW CLIMATE PLAYS A ROLE IN WINEMAKING ON NEW ZEALAND'S ISLANDS

by Peter Wilke

SPANNING FROM LATITUDE 34 to 47 degrees south, New Zealand is in an ideal position for growing top-notch grapes that yield expressive wines. Though the country is best known for Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, its climatic conditions guarantee quality across the board. In fact, New Zealand's two main islands are so distinct in terms of climate that a vibrant array of varieties is thriving.

If you've ever visited Northland or Auckland on the North Island, you know they represent a quintessential wild paradise: Amid the dense palms, ferns, and moss-covered trees, you get the sensation of traversing a Jurassic forest. The moderating effect of the Pacific ensures that daytime temperatures don't climb too high while allowing for comfortable nightly breezes—conditions particularly conducive to growing excep-

tional red Bordeaux and Rhône varieties. There's also, of course, a smattering of New World Chardonnay for good measure.

As you head south toward Hawke's Bay, the palms and ferns give way to deciduous and coniferous forest. Hawke's Bay is both the highest-producing and driest region of the North Island, with monthly rainfall averaging around 2 inches during the summer; Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Merlot have found a home in the region's distinctive terroir.

Crossing the 14-mile Cook Strait brings you to the northern tip of the South Island, where the grinding of the Australian and Pacific plates resulted in a massive string of mountains that span its length. Known as the Southern Alps, these peaks create a rain shadow along the island's eastern edge.

More than 60 percent of the country's

vineyards are planted in Marlborough, and the wines speak for themselves: The vibrant style of Sauvignon Blanc coming from this appellation has turned heads for decades and is the driving force behind its success. Here along the northeastern side of the South Island, a combination of moderately dry summers, abundant sunshine, and maritime winters yield a climate where vines thrive, leading some producers to start experimenting with lower yields, terroir-expressive wines, and uncommon varietal plantings.

Central Otago, meanwhile, lies at the southernmost edge of the world's winegrowing belt. Its vineyards find shelter along the eastern edge of the mountains, which protect delicate buds from harsh rains and shelter them from Antarctic winds coming from the Southern Alps and the Pacific. From the southern border of quality wine production to the northern subtropics, New Zealand deserves more than a second look. **—SJ**





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WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH CBD?

**THE INDUSTRY'S MOST
TALKED-ABOUT INGREDIENT
HITS A WALL IN CALIFORNIA
AND NEW YORK**

BY RACHEL BURKONS

ARRIVING AT THE moment recreational cannabis was officially legalized in California and in the midst of Canada's great adventure in legal weed, 2018 was the (un)official Year of CBD: the quasi-legal, non-intoxicating cannabinoid cousin of THC. With baristas and bartenders alike clamoring to use it, athletes singing its praises, and wellness professionals advocating for its potential benefits, CBD was well on its way to becoming a national trend across a variety of industries.

But suddenly, last July, CBD had a target on its back—in California, of all places—with the hammer coming down where it hits hardest for all of us *SOMM* Journal readers: in the beverage alcohol space. In the midst of the burgeoning CBD-cocktail boom, then-Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 2914, which expressly prohibited alcohol license holders from selling cannabinoids, regardless of their source. In sum, the state doesn't care if you're in possession of the finest hemp-derived CBD with THC content under the legal maximum of 0.3 percent; drop it in your Old Fashioned, though, and you could lose your license.

As that buzz-killer stopped a trend dead in its tracks in the Golden State, the rest of the country continued its love affair with CBD. Fast-forward to March, when Martha Stewart—yes, *the* Martha Stewart—announced she would be launching a line of

CBD cocktails have been banned in California and the City of New York.



CBD products with Canadian cannabis corporation Canopy (a company that already had our attention after receiving an investment of \$4 billion from Constellation Brands in August 2018).

But just a few weeks before Stewart cemented her place in the realm of high hospitality, another shake-up hit the culinary scene when the New York City Department of Health banned the use of CBD in all food and drink. The threat of a fine might not be enough to completely quell cannabinoid-fueled action in the city that never sleeps, but we can't help but find it strange that hospitality powerhouses like California and New York—once at the forefront of exploring the possibilities of culinary cannabis—have been stopped dead in their tracks when it comes to experimenting with CBD.

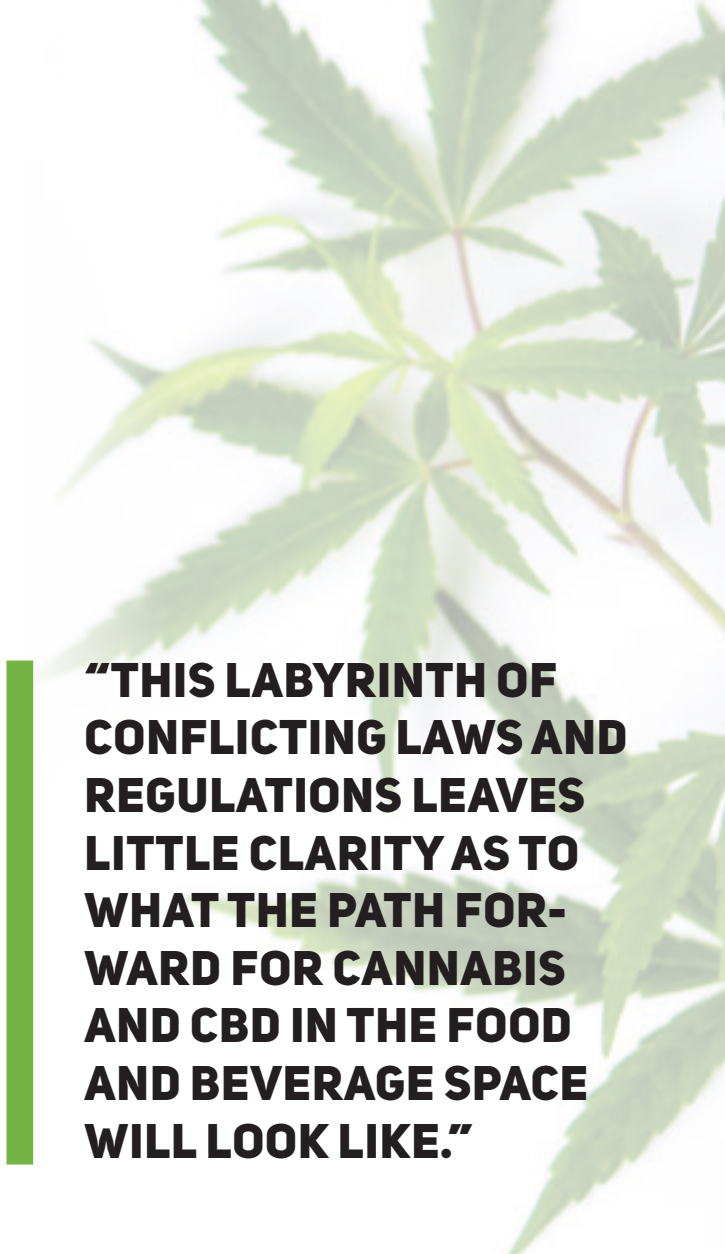
And while I haven't seen a CBD cocktail on a menu in California in months, it's not for lack of interest. "I want the opportunity to be able to learn more about CBD in cocktails and how to use it responsibly because I know it can be such a healing, beautiful thing. It can be more than a current fad if people are given the chance to take time with it and see what works and what doesn't," says Christine Wiseman, Bar Manager at Broken Shaker in downtown Los Angeles' Freehand Hotel. (The bar pulled its popular CBD cocktails shortly after AB 2914 took effect.)

But what about the Farm Bill, you might ask? Didn't its passage come with all sorts of "legalized CBD" fanfare? Well, sort of. The signing of the \$867-billion bill by President Donald Trump last December symbolized another big moment for CBD in 2018, and while it did remove industrial hemp from the list of controlled substances—creating a pathway for the plant as a lawful agricultural commodity—the bill also exposed a problem that lies at the very root of the culinary cannabis space. Because Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines dictate anything labeled as medicine cannot also be food, the law still disallows the use of CBD in food and beverage.

But is CBD medicine? If you ask millions of cannabis users around the globe, the answer is "yes." For the FDA, the answer is also "yes" thanks to another mid-2018 milestone: the agency's approval of Epidiolex, an oral CBD medicine designed to treat seizures associated with rare forms of epilepsy. All other non-FDA-approved cannabinoid extracts, even hemp-derived CBD, are still considered Schedule I narcotics.

To make matters even more complex, GW Pharmaceuticals, which owns Epidiolex, also owns the patent on CBD and other cannabinoids (including THC) for several additional medical-related uses, including cancer and mental health treatment as well as pain management. Longtime cannabis activists can't help but wonder how a pharmaceutical company can "own" the patent on plant-derived medicine, but this development provides insight into how the FDA plans to regulate cannabinoids in the future.


If you're having a hard time following along, I don't blame you; it's a complicated landscape. To recap: Cannabis has been legalized in multiple states across the country yet is still illegal at the



"THIS LABYRINTH OF CONFLICTING LAWS AND REGULATIONS LEAVES LITTLE CLARITY AS TO WHAT THE PATH FORWARD FOR CANNABIS AND CBD IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SPACE WILL LOOK LIKE."

federal level. Industrial agricultural hemp—and the CBD it produces—is legal, but not for use in food and beverage. And while California allows for the sale of "illegal" cannabinoids through the state's legal dispensary sales model, it prohibits the addition of hemp-derived CBD—which is so readily available it can be purchased on Amazon—to any alcoholic beverage.

This labyrinth of conflicting laws and regulations leaves little clarity as to what the path forward for cannabis and CBD in the food and beverage space will look like. For now, restaurateurs and retailers nationwide are dancing in the gray area of the status quo, continuing to sell CBD-infused food and beverages regardless of whether the FDA considers the substance more medicinal than meal-worthy. And until local municipalities crack down on CBD—and have the ability to enforce such bans—this trend will continue to make inroads well beyond urban outcroppings on the coasts of California and New York.

As the groundswell for cannabis continues, we can only hope that legislation catches up. There's no stopping the CBD train, and we predict it won't be long before CBD-infused wine, beer, and cocktails make their grand (re)entrance on the culinary stage. 



{ gaillac }

The town of Gaillac.

Southern EXPOSURE

MOVE OVER, LANGUEDOC: THE WINES OF
GAILLAC ARE WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

PHOTO BY ARTAIKA VIA ADOBE STOCK



Wines of Southwest France Ambassador André Compeyre, Clément Serres from Domaine la Croix des Marchants, Chloe chef/owner Haidar Karoum, and Alain and Brigitte Cazottes at a recent Gaillac luncheon in Washington, D.C.

“THE APPEAL OF
THESE WINES CAN
MORE OR LESS BE
SUMMED UP IN
THREE DESCRIPTORS:
WILD DIVERSITY,
INDIGENOUS
GRAPES, AND
VALUE.”

Not familiar with the wines of Gaillac? You will be, as this appellation in Southwest France is one to watch. Admittedly, its output is a fraction of that of the country's best-known regions: The 100 or so growers and two major co-ops there are responsible for producing 20 million bottles per year, a mere tenth of what Burgundy produces.

Gaillac, however, has a few secret weapons the others can't claim. It's an “up-and-coming region [that] produces every style of wine you may think of with reasonable prices, and most of the farming is sustainable,” says André Compeyre, a Wines of Southwest France Ambassador and Sommelier/Manager at Aldo Sohm Wine Bar in New York. (Compeyre is also a native of Toulouse, which lies just 40 miles from Gaillac.)

Up and coming as it may be, Gaillac is actually home to Southwest France's oldest vineyards: Known as one of the two Grand Crus of ancient Rome's Gaul, the region has been producing wine for 2,000 years. Evidence of its vibrant history and culture includes Corde sur Ciel, a village that dates back to 1222; the Château de Castelnau-de-Lévis, the ruins of a castle that stood from the 13th to the 15th century; and the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec in Albi, an art museum devoted to painter and illustrator Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

Today, production in Gaillac is truly diverse, encompassing white, red, and sparkling styles made from mostly indigenous varieties (some international grapes are thrown in for good measure). Compeyre is especially complimentary of the terroir, which he describes as comprising a “mix of plain landscapes without monotony and mountains without harshness” as well as numerous rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water. Growing conditions benefit from the Mediterranean warmth combined with humidity from the Atlantic and the warm, dry Autan wind that originates in Africa.

AOC Gaillac Dry White and Gaillac Premières Côtes, which have been in existence since 1938, now account for 3 to 4 million bottles annually; they're vinified in a signature style that's fruity and subtle with a gentle structure. Mauzac, the main grape, tends to have pear and apple aromas and flavors of honey, quince, and candied fruit. (Astute enophiles will recognize it as the workhorse for *méthode ancestrale* bubbly—more on that later.) It's joined by Loin de l'Oeil—grown both for dry, aromatic, low-acid wines and honeyed sweet expressions with notes of exotic fruit—as well as by grapey Muscadelle. Of lesser importance are elegant and complex Ondenc and zesty Sauvignon, which can be used in blends or bottled varietally.

The Gaillac Red appellation was created in 1970; today, the region makes between 9 and 11 million bottles of AOC red wine per year. These wines are generally blends of raspberry- and cassis-scented Braucol; spicy and peppery Duras, which offers fine tannins and boosts color; and

Syrah, which can show great structure and fruit along with a spicy licorice and violet character. They're joined by three well-known grapes—Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot—and one that's not so familiar, the grippy, structured, and black fruit-tinged Prunelart.

And then there's the sparkling wine. The aforementioned *méthode ancestrale* is actually the original method for producing bubbly (take that, *méthode traditionnelle*), whereby still wine is chilled and bottled before fermentation is complete, leaving the yeast in a state of limbo until the temperature warms up enough for it to finish the job and create effervescence. The AOC for this style of wine was established in 1938, and yearly production has reached half-a-million bottles—all made with Mauzac in dry, semi-dry, or sweet styles.

When I said Gaillac was versatile, though, I meant it: Other categories include *perlé* (a semi-sparkling wine), late harvest, rosé, primeur red and white, and Côtes du Tarn, an IGP since 2009. As far

as what's trending, Compeyre looks to Prunelart as the most promising. This predecessor of Cot, or Malbec, is now seeing a revival of interest, he says.

Of course, the fact that a wide range of grapes is planted here doesn't mean each variety succeeds everywhere. The gravelly soil on the left bank of the Tarn, extending 10 miles around the villages of Técoü, Cadalen, and Lagrave, is lean and acidic with great exposure; it's most favorable to reds. On the Tarn's right bank is a plain that extends for a width of 4 miles, gradually forming a hillside. "The southern exposure overlooking the Tarn valley and the forests of Grésigne and Sivens generate a privileged microclimate," Compeyre says. "Clay-limestone hillsides give their character in the whites and reds." And the Plateau Cordais, which extends over northern Gaillac beyond Cahuzac sur Vère, has a southern exposure, high altitude, and clay and limestone soils that lend finesse to white wines.

Some classic food pairings for Gaillac wines include charcuterie with slightly


Gaillac has a few secret weapons that the others can't claim. It's an "up-and-coming region [that] produces every style of wine you may think of with reasonable prices, and most of the farming is sustainable," according to Wines of Southwest France Ambassador André Compeyre.





The ancient village of Corde sur Ciel in Gaillac harbors some of France's oldest vineyards.

frizzante perlé or primeur red, a Gamay-based wine made using carbonic fermentation (like some Beaujolais). Accompanied by potatoes, pork ragout cooked with pink garlic from Lautrec partners well with a Braucol like the Cuvée Florentin from Domaine du Moulin, which sources grapes from both the right and left banks of the Tarn. And traditional apple, prune, or grape croustade goes well with a méthode ancestrale sparkling wine—though Gaillac's bubbly is versatile enough for pouring with all kinds of global cuisine, not just that of Southwest France.

Compeyre believes the appeal of these wines can more or less be summed up in three descriptors: wild diversity, indigenous grapes, and value. Indeed, Gaillac is more than ready for its close-up. 

Kelly Magyarics, DWS, is a wine, spirits, travel, and lifestyle writer in the Washington, D.C., area. She can be reached through her website, kellymagyarics.com, or on Twitter and Instagram @kmagyarics.

A vineyard in Tarn.



{ revered wines }

An International VOICE

THE **KOSHER FOOD AND WINE EXPERIENCE**
ENLIGHTENS AND EDUCATES IN LOS ANGELES

story by Meredith May and Jessie Birschbach / photos by Devin Berko



Pictured from left to right at the Los Angeles stop of the Kosher Food and Wine Experience: Adrian Ruiz, VP of Merchandising for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (SGWS); Joseph Herzog; James Bradney, VP/GM of SGWS of California; David Herzog; Mordy Herzog; and Frank Santangelo, VP of Chains for SGWS of California.

The Kosher Food and Wine Experience (KFWE) is the country's leading kosher wine festival, and it's only getting bigger. When *The SOMM Journal* attended the festival's Los Angeles stop in mid-February, we soon ran into Mordy Herzog, Chief Executive Officer for Royal Wine Corporation. The company, which is one of the foremost importers of kosher wines in the U.S., was running the event, and as Herzog stood at the back of the crowded main floor in the Hollywood Palladium, he looked like a man contentedly basking in the fruits of his labor: "We've worked our way to Tel Aviv, Paris, London, New York, and now our last stop here in Los Angeles. After today, I'm going home for six months to relax," Herzog said with a smile.

Now in its 14th year, KFWE featured more than 300 wines from California, Israel, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, and Australia. "Every year we see more people who want to get educated. More so than the incredible food and wine, KFWE has become about the level of interest," Herzog explained. "We also have more producers than ever because the show has gained notoriety over the years and people realize now that this is the place to get their product out there. At the end of the day, we make a product that's about stories, but there's a big glass window between us and the consumer. KFWE is our opportunity to bring the glass down."

Read on for producer highlights from the festival after a quick primer on kosher wine:

Understanding Kosher Wine

The notion that kosher wine is of lesser quality than non-kosher wine is a dated one. As seen in full force at KFWE, most kosher wines are indeed well-made expressions that can garner high scores and critical acclaim. Kosher wine grapes experience the same viticultural upbringing in the vineyard and élevage in the winery as those sourced for non-kosher wines.

In fact, the only two major differences between the categories are that kosher wine must be handled by religious Jews only (though they're not required to be blessed by a rabbi), and their additives, including fining agents, can't be derived from animal byproducts (this includes casein, isinglass, and gelatin). Egg whites are permitted as long as each egg is opened and checked by a rabbi.

In Israel, however, additional levels of agricultural laws have been in effect for roughly 4,000 years; some are in accordance with the traditions of *shmittah* (the sabbatical year), which dictates that vineyards must be allowed to rest every seven years. These rules, however, do not impact quality.

HERZOG WINE CELLARS

The winemaking roots of the Herzog family date back more than 100 years to Slovakian winemaker Philip Herzog, whose wines (both kosher and non-kosher) were so appreciated in the Austro-Hungarian empire that he was deemed a baron by Franz Joseph I of Austria. After arriving in the U.S. in 1948, the family eventually moved to Santa Barbara, where they established two labels, Baron Herzog and Herzog Wine Cellars, in 1985.

Today, the Herzog family and Herzog Wine Cellars remain the preeminent authority in California kosher-wine production. Assistant Winemaker Barry Henderson was in attendance at KFWE, where he poured Baron Herzog; made with grapes sourced from Clarksburg, the label's wide range of expressions include Cabernet Sauvignon, Chenin Blanc, Merlot, old-vine Zinfandel, Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, and even a Gewürztraminer.

Henderson attributes the slowly ripening nature of the fruit—which yields lower-alcohol wines, a style the Herzog team prefers—to the region's soil content. "The heavy soils in the Sacramento Delta area tend to [make the fruit] grow a little bit slower than if you have, for instance, a shallow loamy soil," he explained.

After 21 harvests with Herzog, Head Winemaker Joe Hurliman said he feels like he and his colleagues have "been able to vault kosher wine to another level." "We really focused on going out and finding the best-quality grapes and making the wine in a way that is going to respect the grapes and allow them to talk," he added.

Baron Herzog 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$11) Likely the best value at KFWE, the Sauvignon Blanc exudes a varietal typicity while offering notes of green apple, ripe white grapefruit, and wet stone. **90**

Herzog Wine Cellars 2016 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$44) One of Head Winemaker Joe Hurliman's favorite Herzog offerings, this wine offers dark red fruit, blackberries, wood spice, and dollop of vanilla. **92**



Head Winemaker Joe Hurliman has been with Herzog Wine Cellars for more than two decades.

TERRA DI SETA

After seven years of running the organic Terra di Seta winery in the heart of Tuscany, where he soon took note of the lack of Italian kosher wines, proprietor Daniele Della Seta went all in on the category in 2008. "Our production is fully kosher because we feel we offer the same level of quality as the non-kosher wines. We also sell our wines in the non-kosher market," Della Seta said.

Terra di Seta 2013 Assai Gran Selezione Chianti Classico (\$50) Medium-bodied and almost silky in texture, this feminine Sangiovese offers cherries, cherry tomatoes, and a smattering of green herbs. **93**

CAPÇANES

In 1995, Barcelona's Jewish community approached Celler de Capçanes, a Montsant-based cooperative, to request it begin making kosher wines in addition to its non-kosher portfolio. The winery has since garnered critical acclaim, adhering to a higher standard of winemaking via kosher law.

At KFWE, Capçanes Winemaker Jürgen Wagner addressed the challenge of not being able to filter the wine. "You have two options:

You can accept that the wine is not perfect, or you have to be perfect from the very first moment," he said. "Then you get into a different level of winemaking."



Capçanes Winemaker Jürgen Wagner with the large-format Peraj Ha'abib.

Capçanes 2016 Flor de Primavera Peraj Ha'abib, Montsant (\$65) A dense, ripe, and earthy blend of Grenache, Cariñena, and Cabernet Sauvignon with excellent aging potential. **92**

JEZREEL VALLEY WINES

Yaakov Shuchatowitz, a partner at Israeli-based boutique winery Jezreel Valley Wines, feels strongly that Mediterranean varieties are well-suited to conditions in Israel, adding that "they of course pair well with Mediterranean food." Offering single-varietal expressions like Carignan and Syrah along with a selection of blends and a rosé, Jezreel Valley was also one of the first producers to offer the native Israeli grape Argaman as a varietal wine.

Jezreel Valley Wines 2014 Adumim, Israel (\$29) A peppery and rich blend of Syrah, Carignan, and Argaman from Galilee that's balanced by soft yet vibrant red fruits. **92**

BINYAMINA

Founded in 1952, Binyamina is now one of the largest producers in Israel. The winery, located in a town of the same name, offers five tiers of wines made from classic growing regions across Israel, including Upper Galilee, Golan Heights, Kadesh Valley, and the Judean Hills.

After Binyamina's Wine Ambassador, Eliyahu Ben Aroya, listed what seemed like an endless lineup of offerings at KFWE, he arrived at The Cave, which he described as "one of the most famous wines to come out of Israel." "It's a unique blend: 68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, and 7% Petit Verdot aged in 200-year-old caves in the Carmel Mountains," Aroya added proudly.

Binyamina 2014 The Cave, Israel (\$85) Made with fruit from select vineyards in Upper Galilee, this well-made and full-bodied Left Bank-style blend shows blackberries, cedar, and a touch of licorice. **92**

TULIP WINERY

Established in 2003, Tulip Winery is located in Kfar Tikva, a community in northern Israel for people with special needs (Kfar Tikva translates as "village of hope"). Equally dedicated to social responsibility as it is to making high-quality wine, Tulip employs roughly 40 village residents. Charismatic winemaker David Bar-Ilan describes its wines as "New World international varieties, so quite modern." The Black Tulip Bordeaux blend has received critical acclaim.



Winemaker David Bar-Ilan with the Tulip 2016 Reserve Syrah.

Tulip 2016 Reserve Syrah, Israel (\$45) Briary, rich, and ripe red and black fruit strikes a balance with gravelly minerality and savory spice in this Syrah with 5% Petit Verdot added. **94**

The Sweeter Side of **KFWE**

When it comes to sweet kosher wines, Manischewitz was and perhaps still is the dominant force. But with all due respect to the brand that made kosher wine mainstream, the **Bartenura 2017 Moscato** from Asti, Italy, as well as the **Morad Winery Passion Fruit Wine** offered more complexity when we tried them at KFWE.

In the semi-sweet yet crisp and refreshing Bartenura, notes of pear and white peach are lifted by acidity. "Moscato d'Asti is the best terroir for the Moscato flavor," said Claudio Manera, the winery's General Manager. Mourad's charming proprietor Gershon Bodner, meanwhile, told us that the "wine that [Morad makes] is honest to the fruit that it comes from"—a sentiment that rang true in the tangy and viscous Passion Fruit expression.



*Morad Winery proprietor
Gershon Bodner.*



Winemaker Amica Lourie of Israel's Shiloh Winery.

SHILOH WINERY

The vineyards of Shiloh Winery, located just a half hour north of Jerusalem, lie on ancient terroir once home to the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel and Jacob, the Jewish forefather. While wine production has been recorded in this region for thousands of years, Dr. David Chomer founded Shiloh much more recently in 2005. Since then, Winemaker Amica Lourie has crafted wines from grapes grown at elevations exceeding 2,900 feet above sea level.

The strong winds and huge diurnal swing in the Judean Desert offer warm to hot days and persistently cold nights. Bordeaux varieties perform particularly well in the terra rosa and volcanic limestone soils.

Shiloh Winery 2016 Mosaic (\$60) Winemaker Amica Lourie's chef d'oeuvre, this wine is only made in the best vintages. Merlot-based with Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Cabernet Sauvignon added, it's a small-production red with intense notes of cedar, mocha, and earthy blackberry. The varieties are vinified separately, spending a year in French oak before blending and an additional six months of aging. **93**

GOOSE BAY

While Goose Bay was founded on New Zealand's South Island in 1992—one hour west of Marlborough in Nelson—it wasn't until the early 2000s that it became its home country's first kosher winery. Winemaker Spencer Jones also oversees Pacifica, his family's high-elevation property on the border of Washington and Oregon, east of Portland and adjacent to the Hood River:



The Jones family owns Washington's Pacifica Wines and New Zealand's Goose Bay.

Pacifica 2017 Evan's Collection Riesling (\$19) Jones' first vintage shows beautifully in this wine, which is named for his brother. Its jewel tones and lush body depict an elegant nature with delicate acidity and a fruity finish. **90**



Psâgot founder/CEO Yaakov Berg with Export Manager Eli Sales.

PSÂGOT

Meaning “peak” in Hebrew, Psâgot is a winery at the top of its game. After founder/CEO Yaakov Berg and his companions found an ancient coin depicting a wine press and amphora in a cave in the mountains north of Jerusalem in 2003, Berg used the artifact as inspiration for a bottle seal.

“The coin is proof of Israel’s age-old winemaking history,” Berg said. “The inscription reads ‘For the Freedom of Zion.’ The Jews showed their independence from the Romans with their own coin, and the

fact that it centered its message around winemaking gives us reason to believe it was an incredibly important part of the times. This find was my impetus to start Psâgot.”

Psâgot SV Cabernet Sauvignon, Judean Mountains (\$75) Aged 13 months in French oak, this single-vineyard wine features high-toned, brushy blackberry and white pepper threading through tightly structured tannins. **94**

FLAM WINERY

Flam Winery’s vineyards are planted in the Judean Hills of Upper Galilee with a low yield-per-acre ratio at elevations reaching 2,500 feet above sea level.

“We are devoted to producing the best possible wines that are balanced and elegant with a local soul,” said Gilad Flam, who established the winery with his brother Golan and their mother, Kami.



Flam Winery co-founder Gilad Flam.



Flam 2016 Classico (\$35) This world-class blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, and Petit Verdot is rich, ripe, and statuesque with lush tannins and notes of black fruit and spiced cherrywood. **94**

SEGAL AND BARKAN

An annual production level of 15 million bottles puts Segal and Barkan on the map as Israel’s largest vintners and leading exporter. They source from more than 2,500 acres of vineyards throughout the country, allowing them purchasing power for high-quality fruit.

“Israel can fit into Indiana four times,” Winemaker Zach Metzger noted as we tasted through the portfolio together. “The country is smaller than New Jersey and has such a diverse selection of terroir.” Lifting a bottle of Barkan Special Reserve, he added proudly, “Barkan is the most-awarded Israeli winery in international wine competitions. We are so humbled.”



The Segal label is made from the bark of mulberry trees.

Barkan 2016 Special Reserve Chardonnay, Judean Hills (\$25) This wine draws its lilting minerality from limestone soils. Equally expressive is the racy acidity and gloriously rich apple and pear notes. Oak is virtually hidden in both the texture and taste. **92**

Now a boutique winery, Segal is a Galilee pioneer with a 230-year winemaking history. We were particularly impressed by the **Segal 2016 Petit Unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon (\$52)**, with its distinctive paper label made from the bark of mulberry trees. This is a powerful red with flavors of cigar leaf and dark-fruit complexity. Dry, dusty tannins show off an earthy, Bordeaux-style underbelly. **93**



Zach Metzger serves as Winemaker for Barkan and Segal.

TEPERBERG

One of Israel's top four wineries, Teperberg ranks second in total volume with more than 5 million bottles produced annually. Founded in 1870 by Avraham Teperberg in Jerusalem's Old City, it was the country's first family-owned winery in modern times. Today, the facility is located in the Judean Mountains and utilizes state-of-the-art technology.

Teperberg 2014 Malbec, Judean Foothills (\$37) Open and generous with notes of fennel root and wild cherries. The luscious mouthfeel lacks tight, Cahors-like tannins and weediness, instead showing sun-kissed, elegant fruit. **93**

Teperberg 2016 Legacy (\$70) This Cabernet Franc is sourced from two distinctive sites in the Judean Hills and Ephraim Mountains near Jerusalem. Jasmine and red roses perfume the expansive fruit notes as supple tannins accentuate the flow of rosemary and oregano, seasoning purple plum on the finish. **94**



OR HAGANUZ

Or Haganuz, which translates as "the hidden light," operates as a modern-day *kibbutz* (much like a cooperative) in Upper Galilee, heightening a sense of community among both employees and residents of the area. "The winery belongs to the people who live there," said Ofer Amit, who runs operations at Or Haganuz. "We want people to taste the flavor of the Galilee, and that's what we represent."

Or Haganuz 2014 Marom Cabernet Sauvignon (\$30)

Sourced from the Marom vineyard, this blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc aged two months in barrel. Ripe with red and blue fruit as well as a touch of vanilla bean, this bright, shiny penny could pair with most dishes thanks to its keen acidity. **90**

Or Haganuz 2013 Namura Single Vineyard Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$90)

This broad-shouldered, dynamic red exudes inky plums and new leather. Made with fruit from the Namura vineyard, which is situated at the foot of Mount Meron in northern Galilee, it aged in 500-liter French oak barrels for 24 months before maturing further in bottle. **95**



The grapes used to make the Or Haganuz 2013 Namura Single Vineyard Special Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon grew at elevations higher than 2,500 feet above sea level.

CHÂTEAU FOURCAS DUPRÉ

The Pagès family oversees the production of Bordeaux wines at Château Fourcas Dupré, located at the highest altitude in the Listrac-Médoc AOC. Vines have been growing there since the 18th century on 80% graves pyrénéennes soil; unique to Médoc, it comprises clay, chalk, and clay-limestone. Situated between Margaux and Pauillac, the estate is planted to more than 85 acres.

Château Fourcas Dupré 2015 Cuvée Hautes Terres (\$29)

Aged in French oak for 12 months, this Merlot-dominant wine has some Cabernet Sauvignon blended in. The mineral-based core of graphite and leather sets the tone for bold soil notes and sweet tobacco as the wine glides toward the finish. **94** **SJ**



Ghislain Pagès of Château Fourcas Dupré with Doug Simon, National Sales Manager for Royal Wines.

A Greener WINE

A common sight
in Biodynamic
vineyards: a cow horn
filled with manure.

THE RISE OF HEALTH-
AND ECO-CONSCIOUS
CONSUMERS IS
DRIVING INNOVATION
IN THE WINE INDUSTRY

by Eric Hemer, MS, MW

AS CONSUMERS GROW increasingly conscious of their personal health and that of the environment, these shifts in perception are driving innovation across various industries. From winegrowing practices to packaging, the world of wine is hardly exempt from these changing norms.

ALTERNATIVE VITICULTURE

The trend toward all things green has completely revolutionized farming techniques in the wine business, with a growing number of vineyards employing organic, Biodynamic, and sustainable practices in accordance with stringent guidelines.

Organic farming forbids the use of agrochemicals, a term that encompasses fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides. In their place, natural elements like sulfur and copper sulfate are utilized as fungicides; compost and manure serve as natural fertilizers; natural insect predators and plant oils act as pesticides; and specific plowing and cultivation techniques replace weed killers. If a wine is labeled 100 percent organic, it must exclusively contain organically produced ingredients—not counting added water and salt—with no added sulfites.

In addition to adhering to organic practices, Biodynamic farming is governed by the fundamental idea that a Biodynamic farm is one self-sustaining, self-regulating organism. It follows a Biodynamic calendar in which seasons, phases of the moon, and farming practices are harmonized.

To be certified as Biodynamic, a farm must meet the requirements of a three-year transition process, which emphasizes personalized solutions for disease, pest, and weed control as well as in-depth specifications around water conservation and biodiversity. Wineries following Biodynamic principles can be found in countries all over the world, including France, the United States, Italy, and Chile.

Sustainable farming, meanwhile, entails meeting objectives of being environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially responsible not only regarding one's own land and employees, but the greater community.



Alternative packaging,
including keged wine, is
increasing in popularity
across the U.S.

In Sonoma County, 89 percent of vineyard acreage is currently certified as sustainable with a goal to reach 100 percent by 2020, according to the Sonoma County Winegrowers organization. Consumers are clearly responding, with Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits (SGWS) reporting that its sales of sustainably produced Sonoma wines increased 68 percent from 2017 to 2018.

As of December 2018, 143 wineries producing nearly 70 percent of California's total wine output are named Certified Sustainable by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA), as are 1,398 vineyards farming 149,922 acres—25 percent of statewide wine acreage. According to the Sonoma County Winegrowers, another 15 percent of that acreage has been certified by other sustainability programs in the state, including Fish Friendly Farming, Lodi Rules, Napa Green, and Sustainability in Practice (SIP).

In Oregon, meanwhile, more than 50 percent of all acreage is now certified sustainable, and in New Zealand, a sustainability policy requires that all wine be made from sustainably grown grapes in fully certified winemaking facilities.

ALTERNATIVE PACKAGING

Packaging has also played a critical role in

the rise of environmentally friendly wine trends, which are being driven largely by young consumers. Canned, bagged, boxed, and keged wine are all packaged in easily recyclable and reusable containers.

These light materials also conveniently hold greater volumes than traditional glass bottles; for example, a 3-liter bag-in-box contains the same volume of wine as four glass bottles yet weighs less and takes up half the space, considerably reducing shipping costs as well as a respective product's carbon footprint.

Intended for by-the-glass sales in restaurants, bars, and hotels, keged wine may have the most environmentally friendly packaging of all, as empty kegs are returned to be sterilized and refilled countless times by the winery. Sales in this category for SGWS continue to show steady double-digit growth across the country. Kegged wine was originally available from just a few big California producers, but the concept has taken off in establishments nationwide, with New Zealand wineries as well as French and Italian rosé producers emerging as some of the most earnest adopters.

Kegs provide a consumer-friendly way to serve wine by the glass, as they ensure consistency in terms of freshness and serving temperature. It's much easier for

servers in banquet-style settings to go to a station and pour a fresh glass out of a keg than to walk around with trays.

And with so many craft brewers now selling their beers in a can, consumers have come to trust the quality they're getting as the packaging continues to rise in popularity. This has carried over into the wine industry, with sales of canned wines seeing incredible growth. Some examples include Underwood, produced in Oregon, and Francis Ford Coppola's Diamond Collection, which experienced high triple-digit growth in sales over the past 12 months for SGWS since being introduced in 2017. In addition to its environmental benefits, canned packaging also has the advantage of being able to go places that glass can't—from the beach to the pool to picnics. **\$**

Eric Hemer, MW, MS, is the Senior Vice President and Director of Wine Education for Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, which has made significant investments to position itself as a leader in wine education. The company has more certified wine experts than any other North American wine and spirits distributor, with its employees having successfully completed nearly 8,000 wine, sake, and spirits education programs from introductory to master-level achievements.

Wind turbines help support sustainability efforts.



PHOTO BY AMPHOTO.NET VIA ADOBE STOCK

A Grandiose Celebration

AN AWARDS CEREMONY AND GRADUATION KICKS OFF
WSET'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY by Roberta Staley

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WSET



At the Wine & Spirit Education Trust Awards and Graduation Ceremony, keynote speaker Sarah Jane Evans, MW, told graduates that a diploma “is an exceptional achievement.”

THIS YEAR'S Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) Awards and Graduation Ceremony commenced a year of events commemorating the UK-based organization's 50th anniversary as the world's premier wine educator.

The setting was London at its medieval best: the 600-year-old Guildhall, a cathedral-like edifice that serves as the city's administrative center. On January 21, a crowd of more than 500 new graduates and their guests sat in red leather chairs surrounded by grandeur—lavish chandeliers, Gothic stained-glass windows, ancient banners, and enormous statues of British national heroes Admiral Lord Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, and Sir Winston Churchill.

WSET's genial Chief Executive of 17 years, Ian Harris, opened the ceremony by welcoming the 2017/2018 graduates, who hailed from 40 countries. He also introduced keynote speaker Sarah Jane Evans, MW, a U.K.-based wine writer and broadcaster, as “one of the most influential people in the wine industry.”

In her address, Evans congratulated the graduates, who are now part of an exclusive club of less than 10,000 WSET diploma holders around the globe. “To pass the diploma is an exceptional achievement,” Evans said.

Evans, who is co-chairman of the Decanter World Wine Awards, spoke of the international network the graduates were now a part of. “The WSET has built a common language across our very different cultures and traditions; in particular, it has established a way to define a wine and talk to each other confidently about it. You have mastered not only the language of wine

Guildhall, the administrative center for the City of London, is a cathedral-like edifice that sits atop an ancient Roman amphitheatre. It also hosts all WSET graduation ceremonies.

but the most intimidating aspect of all—blind testing,” said Evans.

Each of the 2017/2018 graduates who attended the ceremony (268 out of a total of 532) were formally introduced by Harris. They then walked across the stage to take a photo with WSET honorary president Steven Spurrier; author, wine producer, and co-founder of the Decanter World Wine Awards.

A special ceremony was held in the evening for winners of the Vintners' Cup for highest overall mark, Educator of the Year, Outstanding Alumni Award, and Lifetime Achievement, among other recognitions.


In a wide-ranging interview with *The SOMM Journal* before the ceremony, Harris ticked off the events that the trust is planning as a way to commemorate WSET's auspicious half-century anniversary. One of the highlights is the publication of a book, tentatively titled *Fifty Years of WSET and a Century of Wine and Spirit Education*, which will be available mid-year (Harris is writing several chapters).

WSET is also organizing a Wine Education Week set for September 9–15. There are more than 800 WSET-approved program providers around the world who

will be organizing events, such as food and wine pairing sessions for the public, Harris said.

The organization is preparing for an equally successful next half-century by nurturing the next generation of wine and spirits professionals. The industry itself, Harris added, will see dramatic shifts in the coming years; on the positive side, this includes an increase in wine tourism. “More people are organizing their travel around vineyards. I'm very impressed by what is happening in California and South Africa,” he said.

On the negative side, however, climate

change will have such a profound effect on wine-growing regions that the WSET will have to adjust its teaching materials, according to Harris. The industry will also have to embrace sustainability in order to mitigate the plastic pollution overtaking the world's oceans. “We are looking at creating sustainable materials where we aren't adding to the problems of plastic pollution,” Harris said. 

Further details about WSET's 50th-anniversary activities will be announced on wsetglobal.com. For a full list of graduates and award winners, visit graduation.wsetglobal.com.



WSET graduates wait to be called onstage.

NEAT OR NOT

A SPEED-TASTING PANEL EXPLORES THE VIRTUES AND VERSATILITY OF TEN SPIRITS AT **WEST HOLLYWOOD'S BARBETTE** story by Mara Marski / photos by Devin Berko



The panelists from left to right: Greg Simons, Beverage Director at the Marina Del Rey Hotel; Charity Johnston, Beverage Director for The Madera Group; Mara Marski, SOMM Journal contributor and bartender; Sarah Mengoni, Bar Manager at Hotel Palomar/ Kimpton Hotels; Aaron Polsky, Bar Manager at Harvard & Stone; and Jen Avina, General Manager at Barrette.

Bartenders understand that sommeliers can be purists: You've devoted your careers to learning how to pinpoint a wine using nothing but your wits, and you're rightfully proud of that. You can taste the grapes, the growing conditions, and the care that went into maturing the liquid in front of you. It's an extraordinary skill, and though bartenders share a similar respect for the sacredness of the undiluted spirit, perhaps our appreciation for versatility makes it a bit easier for us to mix things up when the opportunity arises.

In that vein, *The SOMM Journal* recently assembled a panel of bar managers and beverage directors from some of the most innovative and awarded cocktail programs in Los Angeles for a spirit speed tasting. Over the course of an afternoon at Barrette in West Hollywood, we tasted neat pours of select spirits—as God and the distiller intended—alongside spring-inspired cocktails crafted by local mixologists to showcase their surprising versatility.

The panel comprised James Huertas, Food and Beverage Director at Ysabel; Sarah Mengoni, Bar Manager at Hotel Palomar/

Kimpton Hotels; Charity Johnston, Beverage Director for The Madera Group; Greg Simons, Beverage Director at the Marina Del Rey Hotel; Aaron Polsky, Bar Manager at Harvard & Stone; and Jen Avina, General Manager at Barrette. Their tasting notes—which appear here alongside those of our Publisher/Editorial Director, Meridith May—serve as a testament to the purity of the neat pour while also highlighting how creative collaboration can elevate the character of a spirit.

To see the recipes for the featured cocktails, view the full story on sommjournal.com.



Also on the panel were James Huertas, Food and Beverage Director at Ysabel, and SOMM Journal Publisher/ Editorial Director Meridith May.

SAGAMORE SPIRIT CASK STRENGTH RYE

Sagamore Spirit Cask Strength Rye might be one of the best expressions of its kind currently flying under the industry's radar—unless you happen to be on the East Coast. Clocking in at 112 proof, this 80-20 blend of high and low mash bills intends to bring Maryland rye—a sweeter, easy-drinking, pre-Prohibition style of America's spiciest spirit—back to the forefront of the whiskey scene. Distilled in a 42-foot copper pot still and aged four years and ten months to elicit notes of orange blossom, lemon oil, and warm baking spices, Sagamore is an exceptionally sippable whiskey built for neat pours.

Of course, that's not to say it can't factor into a delicious cocktail. Clear proof of that can be found in the Easterly Traveler, mixed up by Sagamore Spirit Key Account Manager Brian Ponzi and David Kinsey of San Diego's Kindred. The drink, a Manhattan riff made with Curaçao, sweet vermouth, Fernet, and orange bitters, showcases Sagamore's deep citrus notes and sweetness; its high proof and rye spice, meanwhile, provide a strong backbone that keeps the drink well-balanced and true to its Maryland roots.



Brian Ponzi is the Key Account Manager for Sagamore Spirit.

TASTING NOTES

"Orange and green cardamom with a rich mouthfeel and long finish." —Aaron Polsky

"A rye with high spice that lets the sweet corn come through. Nice, long, peppery finish." —James Huertas

"Sweet orange and peach notes with lots of spice, nice body, and long-lasting flavor." —Charity Johnston



Contigo Tequila is featured in the Ranch Water cocktail, a riff on the Paloma created by Bonnie Wilson, Spirits Manager for Don Sebastiani & Sons.

CONTIGO TEQUILA

With a name that translates as "with you," it's no surprise Contigo Tequila was designed with on-premise employees in mind. This wood-fermented, copper pot–distilled blanco expression draws its bright, citrusy characteristics from estate-grown highland agave; its savory vegetal flavors, meanwhile, come from lowland plants. The tequila was originally designed as a high-quality cocktail spirit, but its complex blend of delicate salinity, green pepper, bright citrus, and a touch of chocolate ensures that it's eminently enjoyable neat as well.

To display Contigo's versatility in the ever-growing market of agave-based cocktails, veteran mixologist Bonnie Wilson of Don Sebastiani & Sons served her Ranch Water highball. An elegant yet simple—and sugarless—riff on a Paloma, it incorporated hand-squeezed lime and grapefruit to echo the citrus notes of the highland agave; fresh basil to enhance the rich, herbaceous qualities imparted by the lowlands; and a heavy pour of sparkling mineral water sourced from Monterey, Mexico.

DON SEBASTIANI &
SONS

TASTING NOTES

"Black-pepper spice and herbaceous mint make this a great, aromatic mixing tequila." —J.H.

"Light agave taste with good salinity, earthy minerality, and nice honeyed notes." —Sarah Mengoni

"A buttery nose with sharp green pepper and a hint of raspberry and earth. Creamy on the palate with a round mouthfeel and medium finish." —A.P.

UNCLE VAL'S RESTORATIVE GIN

The Uncle Val's line of gin combines the passion its namesake, Zio Valerio, had for gardening and traditional Italian botanicals with a distinctly American approach to distilling. The Restorative expression, which features a delicate mix of juniper, cucumber, coriander, and rose, brims with bright rays of Meyer lemon and citrus oil. Softened by juniper pine and a hint of eucalyptus, the spirit possesses a complex, floral character that makes it approachable despite its slightly-above-average proof of 90.

Ryan Silva, Bar Lead at downtown L.A.'s Otium, chose to show off exactly how versatile the Restorative gin can be with his inventive take on an industry classic, the Gin & Tonic. Made with Silva's hazelnut *aigre-doux*—a shrub-like compound usually created by reducing vinegar and fruit, but in this case made orgeat-style with toasted hazelnuts and Sherry—salted-cacao “air” (foam), and a hint of bubbles, it's probably unlike any gin-based cocktail you've tried before.

Despite the perfumed and verdant nature of Uncle Val's Restorative, Silva's cocktail uses its light foam, nutty warmth, and jammy fruit notes from the Sherry to play up the subtler hints of dark spice that can be overwhelmed by the bright botanicals. Although the drink oozes rich flavors of chocolate, vanilla, dates, and hazelnut, the technique behind it keeps the mouthfeel light while ensuring the gin itself isn't lost or overpowered.

3 BADGE BEVERAGE



Ryan Silva, Bar Lead at Otium in downtown L.A., brought out the flavors of lavender, rose petal, and orange peel that define Uncle Val's Restorative Gin in his cocktail, My Cousin Val.



TASTING NOTES

"This is a really gorgeous gin that exists between fresh and masculine and yields both botanical and dry properties." —C.J.

"Lightly juniper-styled gin that allows both herbaceous sweetness and floral notes to come through." —J.H.

"Almost gives off citrus blossom as well as coriander and black pepper. Very perfumed and elegant." —A.P.

"With the edible hibiscus and the salted cacao, this drink is a standout for a gin that offers up a beautiful, concentrated perfume of inspired botanicals."
—Meridith May

MICHTER'S US*1 RYE

Modern-day Michter's owes its legacy to hundreds of years of American whiskey heritage, with Master Distiller Pam Heilmann ensuring that each bottle of the brand's US*1 Rye is crafted to the standard that, as legend has it, earned the patronage of George Washington himself. Michter's is barreled at a surprisingly low proof of 103—the typical entry proof in the category is 125—as this was the historic benchmark for Kentucky-made spirits.

While this approach yields less liquid per barrel, the Michter's team believes it allows for better absorption of the concentrated sugars in the wood. The brand also sets itself apart by heat-cycling its barrels and using individually tailored filtering processes for each vessel rather than employing carbon filtration, which runs the risk of stripping the nuanced flavors present in the rye.

Served neat, US*1 brims with citrus oil, caramel, and amber honey, with Mercado's Easy Ryder cocktail further dispelling the notion that rye is relegated to the realm of oak and spice. Made with pineapple, lemon, Campari, honey, and Angostura bitters, the well-balanced drink pairs bright tropical fruit with rye warmth before finishing on a delicately bitter note.

MICHTER'S DISTILLERY



The Michter's-based cocktail, Easy Ryder, pairs the whiskey's warmth with tropical fruit.

TASTING NOTES

"The nose yields white cardamom, orange peel, motor oil, bacon, and toffee. The palate is dry and classic, and the char of the oak really shines through on the finish." —A.P.

"Nutty notes of praline and brittle with spice and cinnamon dominate this whiskey while sweetness comes in the form of honey, raw sugar, and light vanilla." —S.M.

"An energetic, stately rye that isn't afraid to show corn, which balances the spirit for a sweeter palate of stone fruit and brown-sugared apples." —Greg Simons

RON IZALCO

Before Karthik Sudhir founded Ron Izalco, he was a software engineer with an eye for detail and a love of expertly crafted rum. This passion eventually led him to the rarefied and succulent sugarcane that grows in mineral-rich black soil in the shadow of the Izalco volcano, and a blend of Central American sugarcane now forms the base of Ron Izalco's rum.

After the blend matures in charred American oak for ten years, it emerges as a rich and lusciously dense rum; with an ABV of 43%, it bursts with notes of dark cacao, Madagascar vanilla, and ripe orange as it dances across the palate.

Sudhir is an unstoppable powerhouse when it comes to representing his brand, going so far as to create his own cocktail recipes for those who prefer their rum mixed. The Izalco Noir drinks like a variation of a Manhattan, with Aztec chocolate bitters accentuating the cacao notes as a delicate interplay with Amaro Averna hints at a light fruit presence without obscuring the spirit.

TASTING NOTES

"Spanish-style rum with beautiful orange notes. The blend is balanced and charred bourbon barrels provide delicious vanillin." —J.H.

"Barrel selection and notes of banana and brown sugar make this a great rum for sipping." —C.J.

"Toffee and caramel notes upfront transition to a smooth and long ending with vanilla and brûlée." —Jen Avina



BALCONES BABY BLUE CORN WHISKY

Balcones Baby Blue was the first Texas whisky* introduced to the market after the repeal of Prohibition, and true to the state's reputation, its makers do things their own way. The independently owned operation distills its whisky from roasted blue corn sourced from within the state, lending sophistication and depth to this classic American spirit.

Baby Blue is distilled in copper pot stills before maturing for six to 12 months in the brand's facility in Waco, where the volatile climate helps the whisky age rapidly; to avoid flavor stripping, it's never chill-filtered. These processes culminate in a high-proof whisky that can't help but evoke the South through its notes of kettle corn and sweet tea.

To showcase the whisky, Balcones representative Barbara Silk whipped up a straightforward yet balanced cocktail she calls June Bloom. Made with lemon wedges, simple syrup, fresh mint, and soda water, it's primed to make imbibers yearn for hot summer days spent on porch-anchored rocking chairs.

**Balcones omits the "e" in its spelling of whisky.*



The June Bloom cocktail delicately enhances the notes of peppered peaches, Asian pear, and melted butter present in Balcones Baby Blue.

TASTING NOTES

"The whisky has a yummy, grainy texture—like running your hands through freshly milled flour—and nutty notes of toasted cashew butter." —S.M.

"Reminiscent of sweet tea. Toffee notes on the nose transition to woody kettle corn on the palate." —J.H.

"Toasted caramel on the front with a long, tall finish. Aromas of cashew and mocha with a palate offering a buttery viscosity." —M.M.



Crop Organic Vodka makes up the backbone of the No Brainer cocktail.

CROP ORGANIC VODKA

While most vodkas are produced to minimize impurities in the bottle, the Minnesota-made Crop Organic Vodka takes things a step further. The spirits company exclusively produces USDA-certified organic expressions made with non-GMO grain farmed without the use of artificial pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and irradiation. Mother Nature seems to appreciate the brand's care, rewarding it with a lightly sweet vodka that expresses hints of corn and honey.

Los Angeles-based bartender Marisa Mercado showed the panel that Crop is a no-brainer for vodka-based cocktails in her drink of the same name. Her self-described modern Highball with fresh lemon, yuzu honey and bitters, elderflower, and soda water offered a refined and refreshing take on a classic, in which bright effervescence and tart yuzu notes perfectly complemented the vodka's natural sweetness.

CHATHAM IMPORTS

TASTING NOTES

"Crop has a medium-plus mouthfeel with no bitterness or astringency and is surprisingly rich." —A.P.

"Very light with a sweet, buttered-cornbread start. Finishes dry with sidewalk-licking minerality." —S.M.

"The nose carries a slight sweetness and hints of candy notes. Simple and elegant finish." —J.A.

BÄRENJÄGER

Considering it wasn't originally created for human consumption, Bärenjäger may have one of the spirit industry's most unusual origin stories. This German honey liqueur was first produced in the 18th century to help *bärenfänger*s, or bear trappers, lure their honey-crazed prey, but the nectar was so tasty it became their drink of choice as well.

While the liqueur is still produced in Germany, Bärenjäger's recipe has gone international: The high-quality honey used is sourced from the Yucatán Peninsula, yielding an extremely viscous spirit abloom with notes of white flowers and nutty undertones.

Regardless of whether your patrons identify as bear trappers, an impressively intricate drink created by Harry Chin, Head Bartender at Here's Looking at You in L.A.'s Koreatown neighborhood, proves that Bärenjäger has limitless possibilities both as a sweetening agent and a base spirit. In the Nutty Nectar, a split-base drink made with mezcal, dry gin, amaretto, and orange bitters, the amaretto lends extra complexity to Bärenjäger's existing nuttiness as the mezcal lends depth.

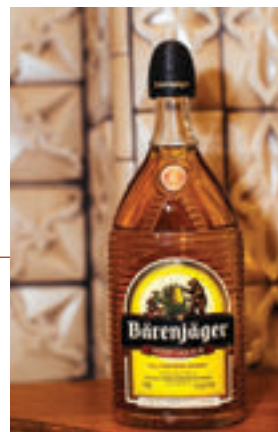
NICHE IMPORTS

TASTING NOTES

"Really beautiful floral-clover qualities and a level of sweetness that is useful in cocktails." —A.P.

"Vegetal notes on the nose lead into nuts and light honey. I love the texture and body." —C.J.

"Aromas of cashew butter and lemon oil. The honey is seductive." —M.M.



STROH 160 RUM

It's always a feat for a brand's age to be higher than the proof of its spirits, especially if that spirit weighs in at a whopping 80% ABV. But Austria's Stroh 160, now in its 187th year, has surpassed even that mark.

Due to its home country's lack of sugarcane, Stroh was originally distilled from beets and colloquially referred to as "inlander rum." While the current distilling team is tightlipped about their recipe, sugar beets are still featured in this aromatic spirit.

With its high alcohol content, Stroh is tailor-made for baking and serving as an ingredient in warm drinks like hot buttered rum. When featured in cocktails, it can benefit from components that cool it down, which Chin demonstrated through his tiki-inspired Staggering Stag creation. By using Cynar to balance out the flavors of methanol, grapefruit, pineapple, and papaya, Chin transported the panel to the tropical Polynesian-Alpine paradise of their booziest dreams.

NICHE IMPORTS



TASTING NOTES

"Deeply aromatic with huge butterscotch flavors." —J.H.

"Very butterscotch-forward. A highly viscous spirit with a buttery finish." —G.S.

"A complex and very interesting spirit with lots of flavors: fruit, amaretto, nuts, and chocolate. Reminds me of dessert." —C.J.



Harry Chin, Head Bartender at Here's Looking at You in L.A., with his Staggering Stag cocktail.

AZUÑIA REPOSADO TEQUILA

For a brand that's only a decade old, Azuñia Tequila has an impressive resume. It's one of the last "single-estate" brands in the category, meaning that it sources every ingredient—from raw agave to water—from Rancho Miravalles, Azuñia's 55,000-acre Tequila Valley estate in Amatitán, Jalisco. After they're harvested by hand and cooked slowly in traditional clay ovens, the agaves are shredded and their juice is extracted; the liquid then undergoes natural fermentation with wild-borne yeast in open-air tanks. Azuñia Tequila is distilled twice and bottled for Blanco or aged in used American oak barrels for the aged expressions. The Reposado rests for up to eight months in barrels before bottling, and both it and the Blanco are certified as organic by the USDA through BioAgriCert.

The estate's mineral-dense volcanic soil, as well as a profusion of mango, citrus, and peppercorn trees in the surrounding area, help yield the spirit's flavor profile of fresh citrus, bright florals, gentle salinity, and clean vegetation. The Ring My Bell, created by L.A.-based bartender Mike Nardelli, seamlessly combines fresh lime, tangerine, bell pepper, ginger, and agave: The fresh pepper places the lowland terroir at center stage as the ginger echoes the spirit's spice notes, leaving the fruit to pull all of the elements together.




The aesthetically pleasing Ring My Bell featured Azuñia Reposado Tequila alongside fresh tangerine juice and slices of bell pepper.



TASTING NOTES

"Strong nutty notes alongside vanilla and honey. An herbaceous finish provides a beautiful tequila great for sipping or mixing. Fantastic culture and ethos within the company." —J.H.

"There's a slight salinity in the spirit that reminds me of swimming in the ocean in Baja. Finishes with the sweetness of sitting in the sun for too long." —J.A.

"Round caramel notes and good salinity. The agave is still very present but nicely balanced with the barrel notes—vanillin especially." —S.M. 



Pictured from left to right, wine editor Marissa Ross, Master of Wine Christy Canterbury, Advanced Sommelier Rania Zayyat, and moderator Senay Özdemir discuss the many paths to wine knowledge during the inaugural Wonder Women of Wine Conference in Austin, TX.

Wonder Women of Wine

AN INAUGURAL CONFERENCE IN AUSTIN HIGHLIGHTS AND EMPOWERS **WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY** story and photo by Lori Moffatt

A SOLD-OUT CROWD of more than 200 wine professionals gathered in Austin, Texas, on March 2–3 for the inaugural Wonder Women of Wine Conference, founded by Advanced Sommelier and wine educator Rania Zayyat to foster gender equality in the \$62-billion wine industry.

“Women represent 60 percent of wine buyers in the U.S., yet the percentages of female sommeliers and leaders is much smaller,” Zayyat said of the impetus for the event. “I want to see more female mentors, mentees, bosses, and entrepreneurs. And I want to see balance in tasting and study groups, sommelier teams, exams, seminars, conferences, and educational trips.”

The all-star lineup of more than 20 presenters and panelists included Karen MacNeil, author of *The Wine Bible*, of which more than a million copies have been sold; Corison Wine founder Cathy Corison, the first woman to work in a Napa Valley

cellar; and Certified Sommelier Victoria James, who was 21 when she earned her pin. Topics discussed included financing, self-advocacy, motherhood, certification, untraditional routes to wine knowledge, and honoring family legacy. There also was, of course, plenty of wine on hand: At Sunday’s four-hour tasting, more than 79 wineries with female ownership or wine-makers were represented.

“Language is powerful,” MacNeil told attendees during her powerful keynote address. “We hurt ourselves when we minimize our roles or successes.” Women need to quit choosing likeability over ambition, she observed, before summing up with a call to action: “Give a lot. Ask for a lot. Don’t second-guess yourself. Dress and act the part. The best revenge is being at the top.”

After being introduced to wine while working at Pappas Bros. Steakhouse in Houston, Zayyat moved to Austin to work

with superstar Texas sommeliers Vilma Mazaite and June Rodil. A few years ago, she co-founded a wine education and consulting company, Vintel, which has provided everything from cellar inventories to public and private wine education. Her experiences teaching classes drove home the point that wine is not only a social lubricant but a professional one, too—and that she could help set women up for success by helping them take charge of wine lists.

Zayyat’s mission, however, ventures far beyond the realm of wine. “My long-term goal,” she says, “is to have a forum to speak to younger women. I want women to know that they matter; they have choices, they are equal. And I want to help them learn to advocate for themselves.

“Our communal love for wine should be driving the industry and the culture, bringing us together,” she continues. “I don’t want women to dominate—I want there to be more balance.” **■**

{ sommelier summit }



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DURING THE **SOMMELIER SUMMIT** AT THE
CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA AT COPIA

This notable group was organized by SOMM Journal Publisher/Editorial Director Meridith May (fourth from right in olive green). Also pictured from left to right: Lars Leicht, Director of Education and Brand Development, Banfi Vintners; Lisa Brown, Brand Manager-LVE & Import Portfolios, Boisset Collection; Michael Eddy, Director of Winemaking, Louis M. Martini Winery; Kristina Sazama, Wine Educator, Santa Margherita USA; Bob Bath, Master Sommelier and Head Beverage Professor, the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone; Master Sommelier Gillian Ballance, National Education Manager, Treasury Wine Estates; Cristian Vallejo, Chief Winemaker, VIK; and Jon Emmerich, Winemaker, Silverado Vineyards.



story by John Buechsenstein

photos by Alexander Rubin

Supported by its panel of experts, *The SOMM Journal's* nationally touring seminar Digging into Unique Global Terroir made a stop at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia during the Sommelier Summit to unite wines from around the world. Led by Bob Bath, Master Sommelier and Head Beverage Professor at the CIA at Greystone, this encounter provided a thorough and entertaining exploration of the concept of terroir despite running a mere hour and 45 minutes.

LUGANA DOP, ITALY

Wine: Cà Maiol 2017 Lugana

Presented by: Kristina Sazama, Wine Educator, Santa Margherita USA

The rich history of Cà Maiol's Lugana expression reaches back to an 18th-century farmhouse and is heavily influenced by the area's agricultural past. It conveys not only the story of a site located near a moderating body of water, but that of a tried-and-true traditional white grape transparent enough in flavor that it can transmit nuances of terroir when nurtured by modern-day winegrowers.

Lugana is a white wine—only DOP situated at the bottom of the Lake Garda valley; scraped out by glaciers and ringed by mountains, it shields vineyards from harsh northerly winds. (The glaciers' movement resulted in clay soils with calcareous layers.) According to Kristina Sazama, Wine Educator for Santa Margherita USA, the resulting "climatic paradise for traditional grapes" is located on the same latitude as Portland, Oregon, yet reaps the benefits of a warmer Mediterranean influence that allows for commercial lemon production as well as grape growing.

The Cà Maiol Lugana is made with Trebbiano di Lugana, a native grape locally referred to as Turbiana that's a biotype of the Verdicchio grape. (The "verdi" in Verdicchio implies the occasional yellow/green tint found in young wines.) Farmed sustainably and organically, the grapes are trained on traditional Sylvoz and Guyot systems with a trend toward restraining yields, and every care is taken to optimize the flavor production needed for the grapes to fully express their terroir. Manual harvest, soft pressing, and temperature-controlled cool fermentation help ensure the wine's distinctive characteristics and unmistakable freshness.

In terms of flavor, some describe Trebbiano di Lugana as resembling the hypothetical offspring of unoaked Chardonnay and Italian Pinot Grigio, namely due to the smoothness and tartness these wines possess. This fresh white displays juicy-fruit fermentation esters; a slight, youthful yeastiness; and traces of wet-stone minerality with citrus and melon.



VOUGEOT 1ER CRU, BURGUNDY, FRANCE

Wine: Domaine de la Vougeraie 2015 Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot

Presented by: Lisa Brown, Brand Manager for LVE & Import Portfolios, Boisset Collection

Little did Austrian scholar Rudolf Steiner—the father of Biodynamic farming—envision that his philosophy would eventually spread to a special plot of land in the middle of the Côtes de Nuits in Burgundy. All the more extraordinary is the nature of the wine produced: Like a diamond set in the center of rubies, the site is known as “the White Vineyard” and exclusively produces white wines despite being surrounded on all sides by prestigious reds.



Planted in the early 12th century by the monks of Cîteaux, who needed white wine for the sacraments, the property was in the abbey's use for nearly 700 years. Now part of the Domaine de la Vougeraie, it has always been planted to white grapes and has remained a monopole; today, the vineyard primarily comprises Chardonnay with a touch of Pinot Gris (4%) and Pinot Blanc (1%).

Biodynamic practices govern management of the slightly sloping, east-facing site, which sits on calcareous soils overlaid by silty clay. The winemaking team employs strict selection of clusters in the vineyard and again during the sorting process to achieve a pure expression of terroir. After whole-cluster pressing, the must ferments in stainless-steel vats and finishes in oak. Both the primary and secondary fermentations are carried out by indigenous microbes and the wine rests for about 15 months in medium-toast Allier and Cîteaux oak barrels, of which a third are new.

While racking is not performed, bâtonnage is practiced twice a month in accordance with a lunar calendar; only light fining and soft filtration precedes bottling. Pale straw with just a hint of green, this wine shows stone fruit and apple with a pungent pop of sur-lie yeast complexity. The palate reveals a fleshy core accented by crisp acidity and a hint of butter.

COOMBSVILLE AVA, NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Wine: Silverado Vineyards GEO 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon

Presented by: Jon Emmerich, Winemaker, Silverado Vineyards

Silverado's Mt. George vineyard site near Napa has been farmed for grapes since the 1880s. To further its estate-grown model, the winery acquired this vineyard in the 1980s, and its mix of Bordeaux varieties—Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec—has been a regular contributor to Silverado Vineyards wines ever since.



Jon Emmerich is the Winemaker for Silverado Vineyards.

Located in the vicinity of the new Coombsville AVA, this west-facing site with volcanic-loamy soil also has proximity to the San Francisco Bay, which provides foggy air conditioning on summer mornings before yielding to mild to warm days. Diligent attention in the vineyard helps maintain crop balance while providing consistent grape quality.

This focus on continuity is key to understanding, developing, and maintaining the terroir expression of a vineyard site, and Silverado Vineyards Winemaker Jon Emmerich has nearly 30 years of perspective in this arena. “[The winery] understands that the vineyards are the real story and they are what makes the wine,” Emmerich said during the seminar.

Cabernet Sauvignon is the sole grape featured in a special wine crafted for the 20th anniversary of Silverado's first harvest from the vineyard: the appropriately named GEO, meant to symbolize both the Greek word for earth and a shorthand for George. The 2015 vintage saw the requisite ripeness reached in mid-September; after the fruit was gathered for a 16-day maceration, it spent the subsequent 17 months in a combination of French and American oak.

This purplish-red, deeply extracted wine expresses forward fruit notes with herbaceousness. “Real Cabernet should be herbaceous with berry character, and Coombsville gives us that,” Emmerich said. “A unique contribution of the vineyard is a mid-palate that is mouth-filling but not overblown, allowing tannins to come through. Our job as winemakers is to enable expression of the uniqueness of the soil and site every year.”

MILLAHUE VALLEY, CHILE

Wines: VIK 2013 Viña VIK Red Blend, VIK 2012 La Piu Belle Red Blend, VIK 2014 Milla Cala Proprietary Red

Presented by: Cristian Vallejo, Chief Winemaker; VIK

When establishing VIK, Alexander Vik searched for the precise location to plant his envisioned vineyard. In this quest for an optimal site certain to produce high-quality fruit, Alexander and his wife, Carrie, assembled a team who examined thousands of soil studies. Soil type alone, however, does not define terroir; so it was necessary to broaden their research: According to VIK Winemaker Cristian Vallejo, "Climate conditions were taken under careful consideration, weather stations were installed, [and] experts intensely researched all elements of the terroir," including sun and wind exposure, thermal amplitude, and geographic orientation.

When all important considerations were triangulated, they eventually selected a site in Chile's Millahue Valley. In hindsight, it's perhaps unsurprising that the indigenous Mapuche group named this valley "Millahue," or "place of gold": The vineyard created on this special site is the agricultural component of a truly "holistic" enterprise, all aspects of which are ultimately interconnected with and inseparable from the resulting wines made with Cabernet Sauvignon, Carménère, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot.

An established vineyard requires careful management, so Vallejo said he keeps a close eye on irrigation "to get good ripeness but not overripeness, to keep the vines balanced." "A balanced vine yields balanced grapes—when nature is in balance, wine is in balance," he added. "It is our work as wine-makers to interpret nature and assure that the personality of the vineyard shows forth."

Considering the vineyard encompasses 11,000 acres of land dispersed across 12 expansive valleys, this requires a lot of diligence. Only after almost ten years of business did the team release its premier wine, the VIK 2011. In subsequent years the portfolio was increased to include two additional wines: the Milla Cal in 2016 and La Piu Belle in 2017.

Vallejo and his team vinify each lot separately, and when the desired maturity level is reached in the vineyard, grapes are manually harvested in the cool nighttime hours. Reception at the winery includes meticulous sorting, with the uniqueness of each cultivar and block maintained by gravity delivery to separate stainless-steel fermenters. Pre-fermentation maceration for up to six days at cool temperatures is followed by alcoholic fermentation with multiple daily pump-overs in an effort to concentrate color and heighten tannin extraction. Two years of aging in French oak follow until the blend is crafted and returned to cooperage to marry, and up to two years of bottle aging occurs before release.



Cristian Vallejo
is the Chief
Winemaker for VIK.



The Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant 2013 VIK (imported by Guarachi Wine Partners) also comprises Cabernet Franc, Carménère, and Merlot; displaying dark purplish to red as well as black fruit, it shows a lingering spiciness. Generously extracted, well-structured, and velvety tannins support the mouthfeel.

In the elegant VIK Piu Belle blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Carménère, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Syrah, the Cabernet (50%) adds aromatics of blackberry and plum as the Syrah (4%) imparts lavender and violet. Spiciness from the Carménère (35%) and notes of mocha and dried fruit developed from two years spent in toasty new oak round out the aromatic profile; the palate is soft and silky with a finish that lingers.

The VIK 2014 Milla Cala, meanwhile, is a young red blend with a complex and refined nose: a delightful mélange of strawberry, cassis, and blackberry followed by plums, almonds, and a spicy touch of black and white pepper. This bouquet comes from a crafted blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Carménère, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Syrah; as you might expect, Cabernet takes center stage, but nearly two years of aging in barrel helps bring everything together seamlessly on the palate.

BAROSSA VALLEY, AUSTRALIA

Wine: Penfolds 2014 RWT Shiraz

Presented by: Gillian Ballance, MS, National Education Manager, Treasury Wine Estates

This sumptuous Shiraz may have started out as a Red Winemaking Trial (RWT), the name given to the project internally when developmental work began in 1995, but it's now a mainstream offering in the Penfolds single-region portfolio. Nearly 20 vintages have been presented since the RWT Shiraz launched in May 2000 with the 1997 vintage.



"Speaking as a somm, don't we really like a wine that tastes like the place that it comes from? We taste it and think, oh yeah, I know this place!" said Master Sommelier Gillian Ballance, Treasury Wine Estates' National Education Manager. "The place" in this case is Australia's Barossa Valley, and according to Ballance, Penfolds presents the wine as an "alternative to the multi-regional sourcing and American oak maturation that are hallmarks of Grange, instead expressing single-region Barossa Valley Shiraz matured only in French oak."

The long and storied history of Penfolds began in the mid-19th century with iron-rich tonics and fortified wines, but after legendary winemaker Max Schubert created Penfolds Grange in the 1950s, the winery's artistry expanded into the modern era—as did its reputation for innovation and the making of "wines of provenance and cellaring potential," Ballance said.

To express Barossa Valley flavors through his wines, Chief Winemaker Peter Gago spends much of his time in the vineyards among the "own-rooted" Shiraz vines ("The phylloxera louse doesn't like to travel in the sandy-clay-loamy soil of the Barossa," Ballance explained). There, Gago ensures that world-class viticultural techniques are aligned with the production of optimal-quality fruit production as he seeks to assess the nuances and aromatic potential of each site.

This purplish-ruby Shiraz displays cassis, pepper, and an exotic floral note, opening up on the palate with deeply extracted and juicy black fruit with a touch of savory salinity. According to Ballance, Gago wants his Barossa Shiraz to have the "precision, concentration, persistency, and balance to age for many years."

VALPOLICELLA CLASSICO, VENETO, ITALY

Wine: Bolla 2009 Le Origini Amarone della Valpolicella Riserva

Presented by: Lars Leicht, Director of Education and Brand Development, Banfi Vintners

The terroir of Valpolicella involves more than just marble-filled soil with volcanic elements and clay or the contribution of various sun exposures and aspects of the area's many valleys. Amarone production has roots in a bygone era: When the original Roman vintners needed a wine for commerce that was sturdy enough to survive transport around the empire, the solution was elevated alcohol, though not from fortification. Instead, the grapes were left to dehydrate on mats so they could ferment to a higher-alcohol recioto style and still have a sizeable amount of sugar remaining: something approaching Port sturdiness without the brandy. The indigenous grapes of Verona uniquely lend themselves to this process, called *appassimento*.

From time to time, certain barrels would ferment to dryness, resulting in an ABV in the 16-plus percent range; it's the opposite of sweet, which in Veronese culture is also called amaro, or bitter—hence the name Amarone. Bolla patriarch Alberto Bolla cherished this dryer style, "the big bitter [dry] one," and his grandchildren first bottled it for him in 1953 for his 80th birthday. So began, or should we say continued, a tradition merging culture and terroir.

To make Le Origini, Bolla harvests Corvinone, Corvina, and Rondinella grapes early and carefully places the intact clusters in basket-like plastic crates that allow aeration of the grapes—the modern replacement for wood or straw mats—where they gradually lose moisture over four months. Pressing in January is followed by maceration; a long, slow fermentation; and a five-day post-maceration. The coo-perage regimen involves a year in French oak followed by 36 months in Slovenian oak casks; the wine then undergoes roughly two years of additional aging in bottle before hitting the market. Violet and garnet colors glint as dried-fruit notes of cherry and plum show alongside hints of cedar: Everything about this wine says "savory!"



Lars Leicht is the Director of Education and Brand Development for Banfi Vintners.

SONOMA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Wine: Louis Martini 2014 Monte Rosso Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Presented by: Michael Eddy, Director of Winemaking, Louis M. Martini Winery



The terroir potential of the Monte Rosso vineyard, situated at the southern end of Northern California's Mayacamas Mountains, was recognized in 1938 by Louis M. Martini (he purchased it just a few years after starting his winery in another fortunate place, St. Helena). The vineyard, which sits above the fog line and faces the west and southwest, absorbs lots of direct light in the afternoon when the grapes are warmer and can profit from it.

While low-yielding vines concentrate flavor in the fruit, the chemistry of the iron-rich, red volcanic soils has its own special effect. The developing fruit seems to inhale aromatic details from various elements of the terroir: California bay trees, perfumeey native plants, and the presence of a mint-like herb in the vineyard. "Monte Rosso is a place that ignites all of your senses," Michael Eddy, Director of Winemaking for Louis M. Martini Winery, said. "Even if all the vineyards were to disappear, the place would still feel special; the air would still smell different."

It's important to note that the Monte Rosso Cabernet is made in a "micro-winery" within the larger Martini facility. This small-scale approach allows for special attention: Hand-harvested by block and sorted at the winery, the fruit is gravity-fed into small fermenters for a three-day cold soak. Post-fermentation, the free-run wine begins its lengthy 26-month period of barrel aging in a mixture of new and neutral French and American oak.

The combination of distinctive terroir and gentle handling results in a full-bodied, deeply extracted wine; redolent of the characteristic Monte Rosso spice, it surprises the palate with its unexpected softness. Notes of black fruit, fig, and dusty chocolate-espresso add to its complexity and persist in its finish.



Michael Eddy is the Director of Winemaking for Louis M. Martini Winery.



The next Sommelier Summit will be held at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia in downtown Napa March 1-3, 2020. See future issues of The SOMM Journal for more details.



Anarchy (and Peace) in DTLA

DAVID DELUCA, OWNER OF LA WINE
AND HAM AND EGGS, MAKES A NEW
HOME IN LOS ANGELES *by Jessie Birschbach*

IF YOU'VE HEARD of David DeLuca, it's probably because you've been to his punk-rock dive bar, Ham and Eggs, in downtown Los Angeles. The beer and wine list is inexpensive, and the vibe is warm and chaotic by design. Maybe you've met DeLuca there while enjoying an \$8 glass of wine and live music, or maybe he's responded candidly to one of your Yelp reviews, but these days you're more likely to find him in his new joint nearby, Chinatown's LA Wine.

Opened in fall 2018, it's a tad mellower, comparatively, and the wine list—also affordable, though a pricier reserve list is available—is DeLuca's love letter to California. While he probably wouldn't approve of that analogy, he certainly wouldn't deny his love for wine: The Florida native can trace his roots in the industry to his grad-school days in New York, where he worked at a Brooklyn wine shop called Blanc Et Rouge.

In true punk-rock fashion, DeLuca bought a van on an impulse in 2005 and drove it to Sonoma. For more than six years he worked in various roles at MacRostie Winery & Vineyards, until the pull of downtown L.A. (nicknamed DTLA) compelled him to open Ham and Eggs in 2011. "Around 2010, downtown was so weird and exciting to me—its potential was undeniable," says DeLuca. "It was a little island within L.A. that didn't have normal things and needed community."

DeLuca commuted from Sonoma to the city while getting Ham and Eggs off the ground, and although he hopes to one day own a vineyard in Santa Barbara, he now lives in L.A. full time. After working in every facet of wine from retail to production, DeLuca tried to check off all the boxes at LA Wine, with its highly allocated wine list, retail component, and modern, wine country-esque interior design. If Ham and Eggs helped fill a need for the bar-going community in DTLA, perhaps LA Wine can do the same—albeit a bit more peacefully. *—SJ*



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Industry Advice

"Don't react for 24 hours. Stay calm and work through it."

—David DeLuca

David DeLuca's Top Five Faves:

1. The Russian River on a foggy day
2. TSA PreCheck
3. Driving in Burgundy
4. Being on my little boat on the lake while drinking Bud Light Lime and playing terrible pop-country
5. Dive bars that sell barbeque

David DeLuca's Top Five Pet Peeves:

1. Wine that tastes like a science experiment or kombucha
2. Influencers
3. People who "hate" Chardonnay or Chianti—come on!
4. "Live, Laugh, Love" signs in tasting rooms
5. An unorganized kitchen

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