

THE SOMM JOURNAL

X FACTOR

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES'
HERITAGE COLLECTION PUTS
WINEMAKERS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT



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HIGHLANDS VIRTUAL HAPPY HOUR

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2018

CHARDONNAY



2018

PINOT NOIR



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HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

94 TASTING PANEL 2017 CHARDONNAY / 90 WINE SPECTATOR 2017 CHARDONNAY / 91 VINOUS 2017 CHARDONNAY / 91 WINE ENTHUSIAST 2017 PINOT NOIR
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The Anatomy of a

GOOD VINTAGE

PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFI



**DESPITE CHALLENGES, 2015
YIELDED EXCELLENT BRUNELLO
DI MONTALCINO FOR BANFI**

by Lours Leicht

*Banfi's estate vineyards in Montalcino surround
the medieval castle of Poggio alle Mura.*

PHOTO: LUIGO GEISI



ne of the many beautiful aspects of the wine world is its ability to surprise. Case in point: the 2015 vintage of the renowned Brunello di Montalcino. For this special DOCG, a “good vintage”

involves essentially the same elements that it does everywhere else in the world: abundant spring rainfall, moderate summers with hot days and cool nights, and, perhaps most importantly, clear weather throughout autumn to allow for gradual harvest as grapes reach phenolic ripeness. After all, winemakers are farmers first, and while bad wine can easily be made from good fruit, good wine can never result from bad fruit.

In 2015, Mother Nature undoubtedly delivered good fruit for Brunello di Montalcino, but she avoided perfection in favor of coloring outside the lines. Ample rainfall during winter and spring eventually gave way to a dry and pleasant autumn, but



PHOTO COURTESY OF BANFI

Family proprietor and CEO Cristina Mariani-May stands in front of Banfi’s innovative hybrid fermentation tanks, which are made of both oak and steel.



first press



what about that moderate summer? Not so much. Precipitation arrived in August but didn't return until harvest, making diurnal shifts from high daytime temperatures to cool nights that much more crucial.

These drought-like conditions provided tension between fruit character and acidity. If it had been even drier, the resulting wines would have been jammy and concentrated, as they were in 2012; cooler weather, meanwhile, would have imparted higher acidity levels akin to the 2013 vintage. Instead, 2015 struck an incredible balance of both elements.

One of the estates best prepared for these conditions was Castello Banfi. Located in the southern reaches of the denomination, Banfi invested in decades of clonal research to find the ideal variant of Sangiovese out of thousands across Italy and hundreds in Montalcino alone. The goal? To produce what it refers to as

a "more consistently excellent" Brunello. In lesser vintages, Banfi earns bragging rights to better-than-average Brunello (as well as Rosso) di Montalcino, but in years like 2015, it easily obtains the maximum five-star rating judicated by the Consorzio Brunello di Montalcino.

The 2015 Brunello, released this spring, embodies a perfect storm of variables for Banfi. Among them were a grape with high natural acidity; soils that remained hydric due to spring precipitation; hot days and cool nights during summer; followed by a moderate autumn; and, finally, a meticulous approach to zonation that optimizes vineyard management technique and rootstock/clone selection based on factors like soil types and microclimates. "Mother Nature controls about 75–80% of the game," says family proprietor Cristina Mariani-May, who serves as Banfi's CEO. "With what little we have left to influence,

we must work hard to get it right."

When Banfi planted its first vineyards in Montalcino in 1978, it was the newcomer among several dozen historic producers in a relatively unknown denomination; worse yet, in the consideration of many locals, it was American owned. But thanks to its entrepreneurial spirit and the know-how of its locally hired management team, Banfi began producing wines that could compete with those from neighbors that had been farming the land for generations. It gained respect—quickly from some, grudgingly from others—for its research-driven approach and can be credited for sparking a renaissance that elevated the consorzio's membership to over 200 today.

As Banfi integrated itself into the fabric of the local community, it changed the inherent winemaking culture of Montalcino. It was the first winery in the world to be recognized by the International Organiza-



*Banfi agronomist
Gianni Savelli.*

PHOTO: VANVA BERERZKIN

“
**2015 GIFTED US
 ELEGANT, FRUITY,
 COMPLEX, AND WELL-
 BALANCED WINES. THEY
 HAVE FRUIT CHARACTER
 [THAT’S] INTENSE,
 FRESH, AND SPEAKS TO
 US OF THE VINTAGE.**

—Banfi
 cellar master
 Gabriele
 Pazzaglia

tion for Standardization for the trifecta of environmental stewardship, social and ethical responsibility, and customer satisfaction. Banfi made unprecedented moves that were first considered audacious but proved auspicious, including registering its agricultural findings and sharing its winemaking innovations. “All ships rise with the coming tide,” says Mariani-May. “My family has always believed in giving back, in educating, in sharing. My grandfather taught me that nobody can appreciate a diamond if you hide it in your pocket.”

Part of Banfi’s success in rising to the

challenges of 2015 can be attributed to its integrated approach to Brunello. What might have once been considered simply a cascading declassification has proven to be a veritable three-tiered system that’s represented by a classic style with softness and elegance in the estate’s Castello Banfi label; a house style that blends power and finesse under the Poggio alle Mura label, which embodies Banfi’s aforementioned approach to clonal research and zonation as well as its technique in the cellar; and a consummate expression of terroir in its Riservas, including the single-vineyard Pog-

gio all’Oro and the cru Poggio alle Mura.

Critics and competitors readily point to the estate’s size to explain its production choices. After all, Castello Banfi is not only the largest estate in Brunello—of which it is a leading global marketer—but also among the biggest in Italy. Yet only one-third of its 7,100-acre property is planted to vine, maintaining the highest ratio of forest to cultivated land among European wine estates while also encompassing plum and olive groves, organic wheat fields, hunting preserves, and irrigation lakes, not to mention two restaurants, a wine bar/enoteca, and a luxury hotel.

The winery was state of the art when it was dedicated in 1984, and after a series of renovations, it remains so to this day. At the heart of Banfi’s winemaking approach are hybrid fermentation tanks combining optimal contributions of stainless steel and oak that have been developed, patented, and shared publicly by the Banfi team, much like the estate’s agricultural research on Sangiovese clones. The winery’s aging regimen, meanwhile, relies on custom-coopered 350-liter barrels and 60-, 90-, and 120-hectoliter casks made of French oak, which has replaced the traditional Slavonian oak. Banfi uses different blends of the two vessels to age its three styles of Brunello. “Wood should be a tool, not an ingredient,” says cellar master Gabriele Pazzaglia.

Banfi agronomist Gianni Savelli notes that because his team was well prepared for the climatic conditions of the 2015 vintage, they “were able to harvest excellent Sangiovese grapes to make outstanding Brunello wines”—and while agronomists and winemakers often battle over recognition for the final product, Pazzaglia was more than happy to give credit where it’s due. “2015 gifted us elegant, fruity, complex, and well-balanced wines,” he said. “They have fruit character [that’s] intense, fresh, and speaks to us of the vintage. The wines are well structured and enjoyable now, and, above all, they will also stand the test of time.” [S](#)

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DANTE

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A custom-labeled bottle from Dante's Martini program.

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Concepted and written by *Tasting Panel* Managing Editor Ruth Tobias, this series aims to highlight hospitality professionals who are responding to the industry crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic in particularly creative and conscientious ways. To read the unabridged version of this interview, visit sommjournal.com.

Linden Pride

DANTE, NEW YORK, NY

IN 1915, CAFFE DANTE opened in New York's Greenwich Village. In 2015, the storied neighborhood fixture came under the stewardship of Australian transplants Linden Pride and Nathalie Hudson. In 2019, Dante, as it's now called, was named the best bar on the planet not once but twice, nabbing the top spot both on the World's 50 Best Bars list and at Tales of the Cocktail's Spirited Awards.

And in March 2020, it was forced—like virtually every other restaurant and bar in the nation—to close its doors. But given that Dante *isn't* like any other bar in the nation, I thought it appropriate after interviewing Pride to let him tell the story of how he and his wife-partner are handling the ordeal in his own words.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANTE

Q: Ruth Tobias: Could you tell us a bit about the special place your establishment holds in New Yorkers' hearts?

Linden Pride: It's a very unusual responsibility to be the business owner of such a [Greenwich Village] institution. People have a sense of ownership. We hadn't done too much [renovation], given it a lick of paint, but people would walk in the door and say, "We've been coming here for 30 years; what have you done to Dante?!"

Because we couldn't afford to hire staff yet, we were working every day, literally handing our daughter off to each other in the street between shifts. But being there so much meant we were meeting everybody [in the neighborhood], and so we were able to . . . prove to them that Dante hadn't been abandoned but given a new injection of life. Especially in Greenwich Village, where people live in these tiny apartments, it's an extension of their living room. That was what they were worried would be taken away from them, and instead we were able to build on it.

Though we've been recognized internationally . . . it's been that community that we turn back to and that turns to us in this crisis. And it's incredible—now people walk in and say, "I've been coming here for 30 years, and it's just as I remember it!" [Laughs.]

Q: RT: How did you arrive at the decision to stay open for takeout and delivery when dining rooms closed?

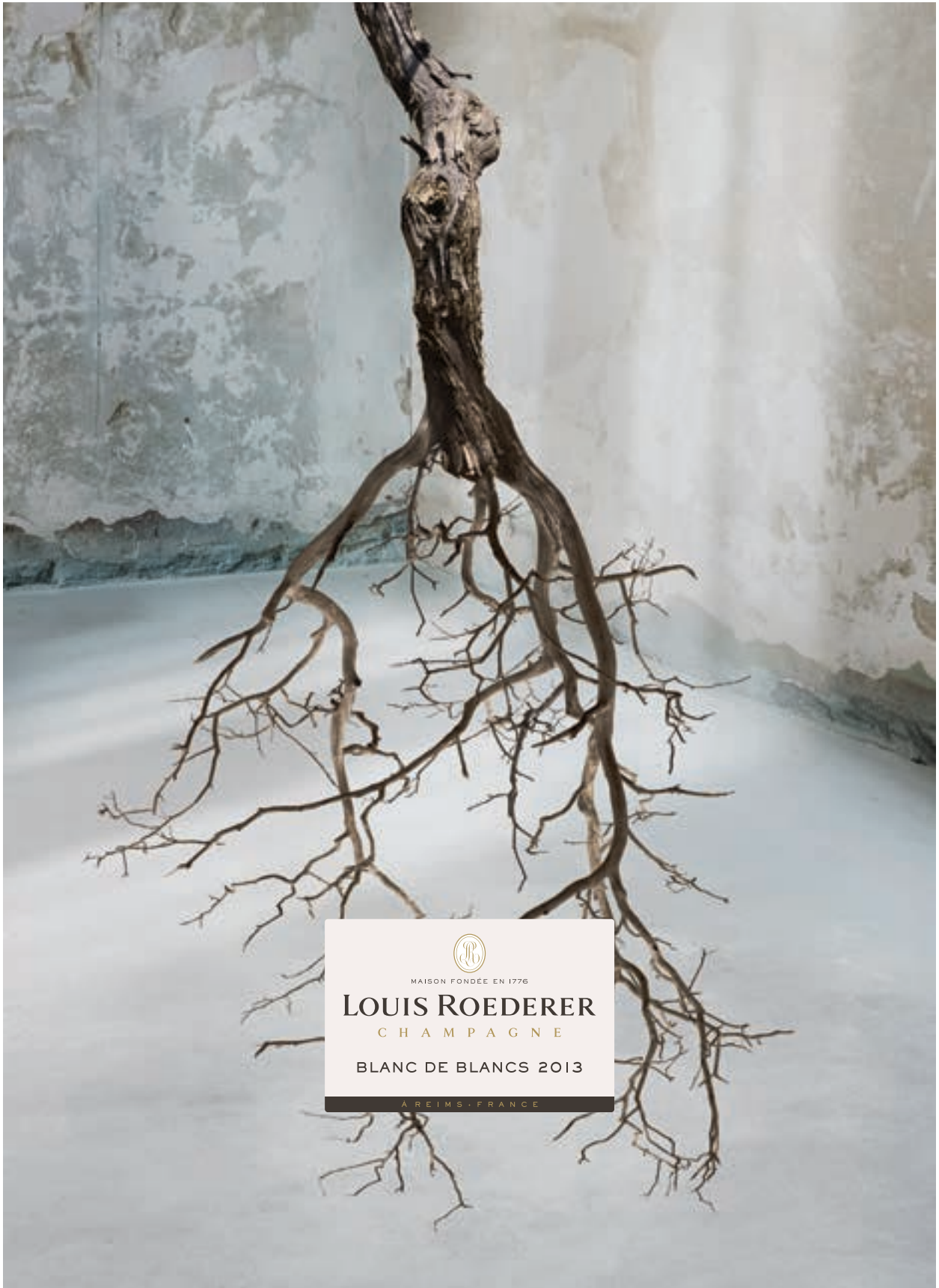
LP: [Dante] was always a family-run business, and it still is. In five years, we were able to employ 50 staff in this 900-foot space—and then we had to lay off 35 of them. But there was . . . a sense of responsibility for our staff: If we closed up shop and terminated everybody, which was the advice, we would no longer be able to pay health insurance. I have one staff member who's pregnant, another with a preexisting condition. They would have been left out in the cold. We have visa holders, and they'd have been given a number of days to leave the country. . . . So we made the

commitment to pay health insurance for our staff and provide work for people who want to work.

Q: RT: Walk us through operation since the pandemic.

LP: It was basically restarting a whole new business, getting everything online. . . . There are all these factors we never had to deal with before, all these new concerns—it feels like we're back at day one again. We're just trying to survive.

What we have also been able to do . . . is make hospital meals—about 250 a week to NYU, to Columbia, Mount Sinai. Delivering to doctors and nurses just above cost, I can continue to bring in food, pay people, and nourish people on the front lines. . . . That's the core of what we're about. And the program is expanding; we've [already] rehired 15 of our staff. We're also doing a family meal . . . for anyone in hospitality who's out of work. It's a chance to reconnect with our community on whole new levels. **SJ**



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First MW, Next WM

AS WINE PROFESSIONALS SEEK TO EXPAND THEIR SPIRITS KNOWLEDGE, **THE COUNCIL OF WHISKEY MASTERS** FILLS A CRITICAL EDUCATION GAP

by Jörn Kleinhans



GROWING DEMAND FOR premium products is proof positive that interest in whisk(e)y is continuing to rise the world over; but the spirit's appeal hardly ends with consumers: Seeking to expand their knowledge base, sommeliers and other wine professionals increasingly find themselves drawn to the category due to its high-quality, highly differentiated products with lengthy histories and interesting brand stories. In other words, its merits and potential parallel those of wine, yet whisk(e)y has lacked the educational infrastructure that's long existed in the enological world.

Established in 2019, the Council of Whiskey Masters fills that void as the first organization to offer an accessible, rigorous, and affordable program dedicated to whisk(e)y. In the wine industry, the title of sommelier signifies knowledge and reliability, and the Council aims to give the Master of Scotch and Master of Whiskey certifications the same cachet and legitimacy with help from the nearly 30 esteemed experts who constitute the organization's advisory board.

The Society of Wine Educators and the Wine & Spirit Education Trust are respected organizations that offer spirits-

related certifications, but the complexities of whisk(e)y—among them its methods of production and critical standards of appreciation—can only be mastered through specialization. Just as a broad education in science would not make you a nuclear physicist, a general awareness of distillation processes will not impart the insight needed to fully grasp the depth of the whisk(e)y category and share that expertise with the general public.

The program consists of four levels, the first two of which are based on distance study and multiple-choice exams that can be completed remotely in a controlled online environment. At Level I, students can pursue a focus on either Scotch or bourbon, and candidates who pass a 100-question online exam will receive a corresponding title of Certified Scotch Professional (CSP) or Certified Bourbon Professional (CBP). Level I graduates who decide to progress to Level II will venture beyond Scotland and the U.S. to the broader world of whisk(e)y, exploring key production areas like Ireland, Japan, and India as they work their way toward a Certified Whiskey Specialist (CWS) diploma.

The next phase leads to the respected Master of Scotch (SM) designation, obtained at Level III. Participants must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of classical Scotch producers by passing a practical exam; conducted in either Kentucky or Scotland, it involves blind tasting 36 different Scotch expressions. Those who earn the title of Master of Scotch can then expand their mastery to the global level by earning the Master of Whiskey (WM) title; this path culminates in a two-day process that involves a blind tasting of 36 global whisk(e)y's as well as a comprehensive oral-theory examination.

It's clear that the Council of Whiskey Masters program has arrived at a pivotal time: As the market expands and consumers' tastes become more sophisticated, there's a surging need for knowledgeable, effective communicators to work in various facets of the industry. Those who have attained a whisk(e)y-specific certification will stand out as distilleries, distributors, restaurants, and retailers alike assess prospective employees.

For more information on the program, visit whiskeymasters.org. **SJ**

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Martin Sinkoff.

Wine Marketing Goes Bespoke

DYNAMIC DUO MARTIN SINKOFF AND ROGER BOHRMICH, MW,
JOIN FORCES AT MARTIN SINKOFF ASSOCIATES by Mark Stock

AMONG THE MOST respected duos working in the wine industry today are Martin Sinkoff and Roger Bohmrich, who are now a year into a joint venture that specializes in marketing outreach and strategic guidance for navigating the American market.

Their business model for helping brands, importers, and other clients break into that domain in style comes from decades of industry experience, which includes a shared job title: Both once served as the marketing director of New York-based importer Frederick Wildman. Bohmrich, a Master of Wine, brings a tried-and-tested palate to the table, not to mention plenty of floor experience; Sinkoff, meanwhile, is heralded for his successes in wine sales and marketing as well as for his acumen in the realm of French wine.

Last year, the pair began collaborating as Martin Sinkoff Associates, with a focus on attracting international clients like storied Burgundian house *Domaine du Cellier aux Moines*. Despite dating back to 1130, the label isn't well known, but Sinkoff and Bohm-

rich are more than convinced of its quality. "This is truly a diamond among Burgundian estates," Sinkoff says. "To put it in very quick terms, it's the mirror image of *Clos Vougeot*, but it happens to be in *Givry*."

Considering that Burgundy is his favorite region, Bohmrich was particularly drawn to *Domaine du Cellier aux Moines*.

"When you see [the property] and taste the wines, you say, 'Why isn't this known already as one of the great stars and historic estates of Burgundy?' It's not yet known that way, although it was once upon a time," Bohmrich says.

Given their prior experience with importers, both Bohmrich and Sinkoff were well versed in the challenges overseas wine labels face. Many don't know how to approach their strategy for entering the U.S. market, had a bad experience the first time they attempted to do so, or mistakenly believe that they can avoid working with an importer and instead partner directly with a national distributor. The problem, however, is that distributors' portfolios are notoriously

set in stone and often lack space for new labels, especially smaller ones.

The greatest challenge facing labels now, of course, is the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unknowns still far outnumber the knowns. Courtesy of its team's vast experience in the field as well as its remote structure (while they have offices in New York and Tel Aviv, Bohmrich and Sinkoff are apart more often than not), Martin Sinkoff Associates seems engineered to outlast the worst of the storm. "The fact that we can't be in close proximity physically in no way interrupts our business activity," Bohmrich says.

Fortunately, with recent developments like the aforementioned addition of *Domaine du Cellier aux Moines*, excitement outweighs uncertainty, and they're forging ahead with translating an age-old French label with a fair amount of domestic prestige into a name that can readily attract a fresh audience stateside. "This is the time to plant the seeds," Bohmrich says. "Later they will sprout and bear fruit." **SJ**

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Facing the Future

REDEFINING “CLASSIC” REGIONS IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

by Aubrey Terrazas

CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE affects the wine industry at all levels: Customers are increasingly seeking organic wines or other seals of sustainability such as Napa Green; wineries are responding to social pressures to adopt eco-friendly practices; and, as their tasting-group fellows confuse Sancerre with New World Sauvignon Blanc, sommeliers are questioning if their extensive study of classic wine styles will even be applicable in the coming decades.

In the vineyard, meanwhile, viticulturalists see threats ranging from inconsistent rainfall and rising temperatures to early ripening and increased water stress. Data shows this trend will continue: Calculations by NASA scientist Ben Cook and Master of Wine Martin Reyes project that Napa Valley will be a Region V on the Winkler Scale by 2040, putting it on par with Jerez, Spain. But as climate change threatens the viability of established winegrowing areas around the world, their respective producers have started exploring a myriad of solutions.

Napa and Bordeaux Make Changes

While you aren't likely to see Tempranillo blended into Saint-Émilion anytime soon, Bordeaux is taking steps to acknowledge looming environmental pressures: In 2019, the Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur AOPs became the first French wine regions to approve new varieties (seven, in this case) “of interest for adapting to climate change,” according to the Conseil Interprofessionnel du Vin de Bordeaux (CIVB). The organization expects that the classic red blend's components will continue to dominate the vineyards, but the move allows producers to add a small proportion of heat-resistant varieties to maintain the Bordelaise style.



*Larkmead Vineyards winemaker
Dan Petroski.*



The research block at Larkmead Vineyards.

PHOTO: JIMMY HAYES

PHOTO: BOB MCCLENNAHAN



*Spottswode
President & CEO
Beth Novak Milliken.*



An organic vineyard at Spottswode.

In 2013, Bordeaux producer Château La Tour Carnet planted 75 new varieties and performed microvinification to test their efficacy in the local climate. This was part of a measured approach to preparing for the potential effects of climate change rather than an immediate response to increased temperatures, according to Arnaud Delaherche, the enologist who leads research and development for Bernard Magrez Grands Vignobles, which owns Château La Tour Carnet and Château Pape Clément. That said, Delaherche considers himself among the wine professionals in Bordeaux who believe that the evidence supporting climate change is compelling enough to incorporate sustainable practices at all levels in the winery, regardless of the direct influence on finished wines and overarching house styles.

In Napa Valley, meanwhile, respected wineries such as Spottswode and Larkmead Vineyards are also testing new varieties for traits such as delayed ripening and drought resistance. Like in Bordeaux, winemakers don't anticipate making immediate changes to their approach: "We recognize that Cabernet still has a very long life here in Napa Valley," says Spottswode President & CEO Beth Novak Milliken. "It's not like the vines are going to be torn up." But, in the words of winemaker and Vineyard Manager Aron Weinkauf, producers "need to be prepared and have a greater spectrum of observations that

will help [them] make intelligent decisions as each challenge arises." In addition to experimenting with different varieties, winemakers have begun to scout cooler sites outside of Napa Valley that could potentially produce world-class Cabernet as temperatures reach new extremes.

Cultivating Resilience


As they join thousands of their peers in reducing their carbon footprints and increasing resilience in their vineyards, these forward-thinking winemakers are proving that they see these efforts as essential to maintaining the longevity of their brands and regional styles. "The idea of resource conservation has touched every decision that we've made," Weinkauf says.

In addition to adopting organic farming methods, conscientious vineyard managers are reducing tilling while increasing cover crop plantings and biodiversity. Winemakers use these regenerative efforts in part to maintain quality standards, but an impactful reduction in emissions requires equally extensive changes in the winery. Many producers are now employing eco-conscious tools like solar power, recycling, and water reduction, yet many express concerns over moving away from heavy bottles or natural cork, as these materials are associated with quality. Larkmead winemaker Dan Petroski notes, "We can do things to mitigate [the effects of climate change in] the vineyard, but at the end of the day, wine is put into

glass, which is shipped around the world." Considering that 85% of the emissions from wine packaging can be attributed to glass, according to the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, there's a pressing need for more sustainable options.

A Shared Responsibility

While classic wine regions can likely maintain their respective styles and level of quality for years to come—most winemakers agree, for example, that the higher-alcohol trend can be attributed to consumer demand rather than rising temperatures—viticultrual tradition itself will continue to undergo serious changes. Vineyard managers will dig for solutions to further ensure the survival of their brand, but the responsibility doesn't end with them: Consumers will also need to be more open-minded about what makes a "wine of quality" as standards shift, and sommeliers will have a unique opportunity to educate and form trends, in part by destigmatizing alternative packaging materials and unfamiliar grapes.

As global awareness of the consequences of climate change continues to mount, true disruption of the status quo will require a comprehensive shift in mindset and consumer behavior. As Novak Milliken states, "We've been taking from Mother Nature's bank account since the Industrial Revolution and have made very few corresponding deposits; eventually, we are going to run her dry." 



by Randy Caparoso

Endangered Species

FOUR SOMMELIERS SOUND OFF ON HOW COVID-19 HAS IMPACTED THEIR CAREERS

WHEN IT WAS RELEASED in late February, the National Restaurant Association's annual State of the Restaurant Industry report projected \$899 billion in sales in 2020, up 4% over 2019. It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed all that. In 1978, my first year as a working sommelier, one of my mentors took me aside and told me, "Always expect the unexpected." For four sommeliers across the country, this lesson has taken on entirely new context as the virus threatens the trajectory of their careers.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARRIE LYN STRONG

Carrie Lyn Strong was coming up on three years as the wine director of tony Manhattan restaurant Casa Lever when it shut its doors on March 15. The staff was laid off indefinitely, and Strong, marooned in Pennsylvania after traveling there to visit her fiancé's family, has been left struggling financially. Reflecting on the 13 years she's spent in the New York restaurant industry, Strong says, "I am fearful that being a sommelier will no longer be the occupation it once was. I question if we will be able to create the experiences for our guests that we have so earnestly been trained to give. I may have to change professions, but I'm not sure *how* as of yet."



PHOTO COURTESY OF TIFFANY TOBEY

Dallas-based Tiffany Tobey was one of the sommeliers caught in the middle of transition at the onset of the pandemic. She had just left the Hilton Anatole for The Ritz-Carlton in downtown Dallas when the hotel instituted a hiring freeze. "So not only do I not qualify for unemployment, I also have no guarantee that the position will reopen," Tobey says. "I'm told it's eliminated until 'luxury dining comes back.'"

Tobey was set to take the Certified Sommelier exam in New York in June, but she canceled the trip to save money and avoid travel risks; her consulting gigs also vanished, except for an appearance in a documentary on Texas wine. "I usually study at least three to four hours a day, but I'm not going to lie—the wind has gone out of my sails," she says.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JIENNA BASALDU

In San Francisco, Jienna Basaldu's eight-year career as a sommelier and wine director reached a new milestone when she gained her Advanced Sommelier certificate in March. Currently serving as lead sommelier at The Morris, Basaldu says she's thankful that her job is safe, even though she hasn't been working during the city's shelter-in-place mandate. "The bright side of this whole situation," she adds, "is that I have considerable time to allocate to studying, working toward a few certifications, and conducting regular wine training with my staff via Zoom." That said, Basaldu suspects that many restaurants won't survive the pandemic, and while "there will probably still be jobs for sommeliers, [they'll] more than likely [be] considerably fewer and farther between."



PHOTO COURTESY OF SETH WILSON

When, in Seth Wilson's words, "all hell broke loose" in March, the veteran Chicago-based wine director had just been assigned to Texas by industry powerhouse Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises. "A few weeks away from opening our new restaurant in Austin," he says, "our 8,000 employees all got the message that we were on furlough—sobering news for a profession that typically doesn't traffic on sobriety!" Wilson has since had time to reflect on his own relationship with wine: "Society and the world economy are now in a situation where there's not much room for posturing or vanity—the need for peacocking labels has given way to pajamas and a [sense of] calm, to enjoying wine . . . in a way that brings back simplicity." **sj**



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Flight Upgrade

ONE OF WASHINGTON, D.C.'S BEST WINE BARS OFFERS A LESSON IN RESILIENCE by Jessie Birschbach

SWATI BOSE AND KABIR AMIR once viewed owning a wine bar as a labor of love they'd undertake later in life after saving up enough capital. But in the late 2000s, when Bose was on track to become a lawyer and Amir was working nonstop as an investment banker, a series of unexpected circumstances altered their trajectory.

During Bose's last year of law school, she developed severe chronic migraines. The couple's lives were upended as they spent the next several months in and out of hospitals, seeking a cure. As Bose coped with the debilitating pain, she graduated law school and maintained a clerkship while continuing her quest for relief. "I read about these 'migrainers' and how they lived; a lot of it [involved] defining life on your own terms," she recalls. "So, I did a lot of soul-searching, and it became more about what made us happy. Then I sort of got obsessed with this wine-bar idea."

A WSET class, a restaurant-management diploma from the International Culinary Center, and a few restaurant jobs later, Bose convinced Amir to give up his demanding career and move from New York to Washington, D.C., so they could open their own place. He originally planned to work behind the scenes, but when they attracted bigger crowds than they'd expected when they opened Flight in 2014, he "was on the floor from day one," says Bose. She proudly adds that "he's now a Certified Sommelier and our wine encyclopedia. He knows all 700 wines we carry inside and out."

According to Bose and Amir, there weren't a lot of wine bars in D.C. when they arrived, let alone a bar like Flight. Over the past six years, the beloved hang-out has evolved—particularly in terms of selections, from 80 to the aforemen-



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLIGHT WINE BAR

Swati Bose and Kabir Amir are the owners of Flight Wine Bar in Washington, D.C.

tioned 700—alongside the tastes of the broader local market. The type of wine it sells, however, has mostly remained the same. "Our philosophy is low-intervention, terroir-driven, small-production wine from all over the world," Bose says. (She adds that Amir gives her a hard time for her reluctance to call Flight a natural wine bar, considering that the category usually falls within these parameters.) Their food menu, meanwhile, aligns with the award-winning wine list by offering seasonally driven, locally sourced fare.

The couple had originally planned on naming the bar Purple Feet, but while the space was being constructed, they made a strategic—and clever—adjustment to reflect what would become one of their most successful offerings: Amir says they featured as many as 32 themed flights at one point, and while that number has been reduced, Flight's ambition is surely one of the reasons why it made the James Beard Award semifinalist list for Outstanding Wine Program earlier this year.

In March, just as Flight was finally earning this long-overdue recognition, the coronavirus pandemic arrived. "We were really hitting our stride, and then this sudden shutdown

happened," Amir says. After "several crying sessions" and having to let go of seven full-time employees, they closed their doors on March 16, later reopening for takeout on May 10. On June 1, after several weeks of staff training to ensure a safe and relaxing guest experience, they opened for on-premise service under city guidelines that allow for socially distanced patio seating.

What the reimagined business will look like post-pandemic is an ongoing discussion for the couple, but regulars who have steadfastly supported them along their journey are surely confident that they'll turn this flight delay into a first-class experience. **RS**

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by Ruth Tobias

Moving Mountains

COLORADO
HOSPITALITY WORKERS
RALLY TO SUPPORT
THEIR COMMUNITIES

IN LATE MARCH, as restaurants and bars shuttered across the nation, *SOMM Journal* Managing Editor Jessie Birschbach and I launched an online series called “Profiles in Resilience” to shine a light on the courage, creativity, and compassion with which the nation’s hospitality professionals were facing the coronavirus crisis from coast to coast.

Among them are Linden Pride of New York City’s Dante, who’s featured in a Q&A on page 10. But to date, we’ve also profiled two people from my home base in Denver: One is Elliot Strathmann, Wine Director of Italian haunt Spuntino, which he owns with his talented chef-wife, Cindhura Reddy. Their successful pivot to takeout and delivery has allowed for total staff retention—thanks not least to Strathmann’s flair for service, whether he’s writing up elaborate tasting notes for his to-go wine flights or filling Easter orders in a pink bunny suit. The other is Jen Lordan, who was hired as General Manager at Alon Shaya’s Israeli destination Safta less than a month before Colorado issued its shelter-in-place mandate; for the next eight weeks, her team served up daily hot meals to the city’s laid-off restaurant employees as part of the LEE Initiative, a nationwide industry-relief program.

But there are countless other stories to tell here, few of which *don’t* involve some form of community outreach. Even as they tirelessly strive to innovate their own food and beverage programs, local hospitality workers have launched programs—from Colorado Restaurant Response to the Denver Metro Emergency Food Network—to provide meals and raise funds for frontline personnel and food-insecure populations as well as their hard-hit colleagues. It’s awe-inspiring.

Up in Boulder, the ever-inventive Arcana is offering what it calls “pay-what-you-can food service,” pricing such dishes as lamb fried rice and spice-roasted shrimp with quinoa in black garlic-walnut vinaigrette on a sliding scale between \$20 and, well, \$0. (Meanwhile, selections from its delightfully esoteric beverage list—Biodynamic Saint-Bris, old-vine Jacquère from the Savoie—are going for an almost painful discount.) Co-owner Elliott Toan says that the program is a call to “everyone to trust their community right now: It is one of the last solid pieces of ground to stand on.”

Eric Skokan, meanwhile, is holding his own ground as the owner of Black Cat Bistro and Black Cat Organic Farm, running two stands and a truck that sell everything he grows and raises—from turnips to house-milled flour to heritage-pork lard to sheepskins—as well as prepared dishes and cellar gems like 2001 Château Lafite Rothschild. Watching neighbors gather (carefully) around the truck has been particularly uplifting, he says: “Where we’ve all felt so separate and alone, it’s like this instant pop-up community; handing out bags of arugula and seeing the joy in their faces—money aside, it feeds the soul.”

Back in Denver, Barolo Grill’s spectacular wine cellar has been its calling card for nearly 30 years; in the move to takeout, it has become the Italian institution’s lifeline. “The first couple weeks, it felt like the sky was pink,” says owner Ryan Fletter. “Customers were going, ‘Is this really happening? Well, give me an amazing bottle of Barolo or Barbaresco.’” But nearly two months in, he’s moving more \$40–\$50 bottles and somm’s-choice three-packs, reflecting the ways in which “people’s financial comfort has changed, and they’ve started thinking beyond just tonight”—which means his vast inventory has finally begun to thin. “We haven’t had to buy anything yet . . . but we’re reaching that point,” he adds.

How things will look for him or anyone else by the time this column is published is anyone’s guess. But I certainly hope to have good news to report in the next installment. *SJ*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARCANA



Arcana in Boulder, CO, is offering alcohol to go at a deep discount, while its food is priced on a sliding scale.

PHOTO: DOUGLAS BROWN



Eric Skokan, the owner of Black Cat Bistro in Boulder, CO, and the nearby Black Cat Organic Farm, has turned an old ice cream truck into a mobile farm stand.



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thank you!

To our wonderful teams, partners and customers we want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support. We stand united with you always! Our late patriarch, Stefano Riboli used to say "Sempre Avanti", which in Italian means "Always Forward". We have adopted this mentality through the past 103 years and we would like to share it with you. For now and for when uncertainty comes again, from our family to yours, always move forward and know that we are by your side.

-The Riboli family

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

On the Verge

COVID-19 HAS HIT CRAFT BREWING HARD—BUT THERE'S A FLICKER OF LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL by Jessie Birschbach

I'M HOPING TO return to our regularly scheduled programming next issue, but meanwhile, I can't ignore what's happening to our country's vibrant craft beer industry in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. It's truly one of the few things that makes me proud to be an American these days, and to see it suffer breaks my heart.

At the time of this writing, in Los Angeles, the county has given restaurants the go-ahead to reopen for on-site dining; however, brewpubs, breweries, bars, tasting rooms, craft distilleries, and wineries must remain closed unless they offer "sit-down, dine-in meals," according to the order. It's unclear when that might change, but at the prospect of being able to soon enjoy a fresh beer on tap, I've been reflecting on how my favorite L.A. breweries have been affected—and if they might be forced to close altogether. A national survey released in April by the Brewers Association reported that the average respondent has seen a 75% drop in sales. It also claimed that there's a "high likelihood of large numbers of brewery closings without a swift end to social distance measures ... or rapid government support for small brewers," according to economist and Certified Cicerone Bart Watson.

I'm not sure if what's currently happening constitutes a "swift end," but an attempted return to semi-normalcy does seem to be arriving sooner than many of us anticipated. So, on that note, below is a list of my eight favorite L.A.-

area breweries in no particular order, along with a small update on their status as of publication time. Although I'm honestly not sure if I'll be rushing back into taprooms anytime soon, I'll continue supporting my beloved brewery friends as much as possible while thanking Ninkasi (the Sumerian goddess of beer) that we haven't lost any of them.



PHOTO: KRISTAN VIA ADOBE STOCK

CELLADOR ALES

Location: North Hills

Focus: Sours. In fact, Cellador is one of the rare 100% oak barrel-fermented craft breweries in the country.

Status: Growler fills and pickup only

THREE WEAVERS BREWING COMPANY

Location: Inglewood

Focus: Highly refreshing, balanced, and crushable versions of all levels of IPAs

Status: Online ordering/local delivery and pickup

HIGHLAND PARK BREWERY

Location: Chinatown

Focus: IPAs, but HPB can do it all.

Status: Online ordering and local delivery/pickup (food is also available)

MONKISH BREWING CO.

Location: Torrance

Focus: IPAs, pale ales, and Belgian-style beers. It's perhaps L.A.'s most acclaimed brewery.

Status: Online ordering/curbside pickup. Shipping is available in California.

DRY RIVER BREWING

Location: Pico Gardens

Focus: Sours

Status: Online ordering/open on weekends for pickup

MACLEOD ALE BREWING CO.

Location: Van Nuys

Focus: British styles. It's also a great place to get an old-fashioned hand-pumped cask ale.

Status: Online ordering for delivery or pickup

BROUWERIJ WEST

Location: San Pedro

Focus: Pilsners and Belgian-style beers

Status: Online ordering/pickup/local delivery; preparing to open for onsite consumption, but no date yet

Visit labrewersguild.org/reopen for information on what to expect once taprooms do reopen for onsite consumption in Los Angeles. [sj](#)

Jessie Birschbach is a Certified Cicerone and substandard homebrewer. She's also still learning, so if you have a suggestion or comment, contact her at jabs@sommjournal.com.

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A Leap of Faith

HAHN FAMILY WINES MARKS 40 YEARS OF WINEMAKING

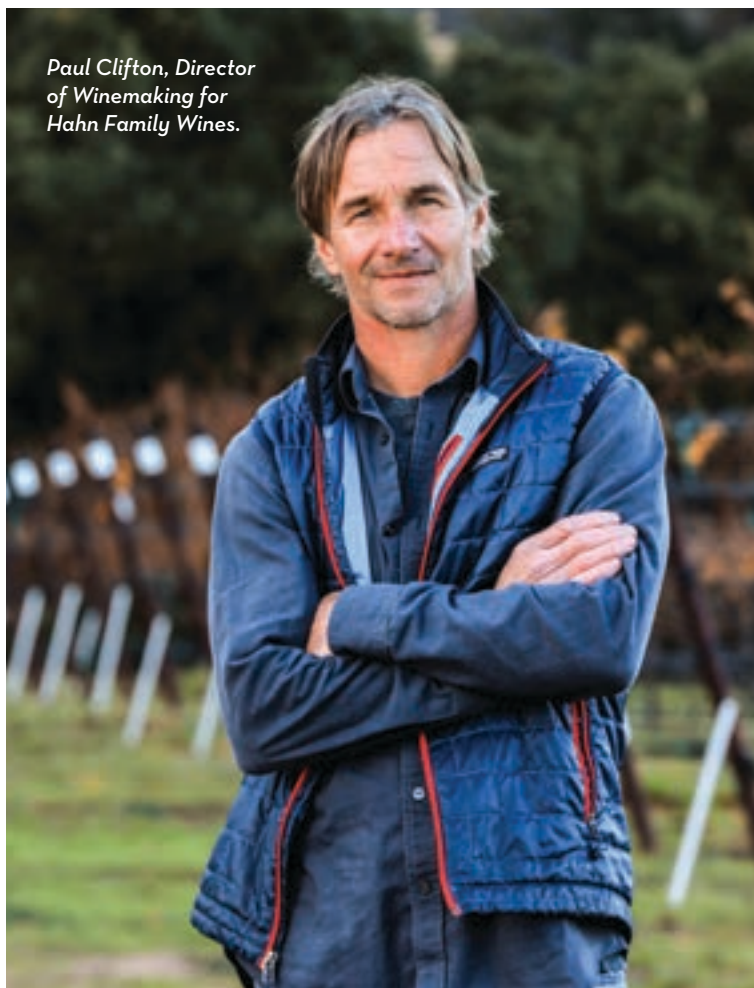
by Jessie Birschbach

THE HAHN FAMILY is undoubtedly one of the foremost pioneers of Monterey County winemaking; in fact, patriarch Nicky Hahn spent three years leading the efforts that earned the Santa Lucia Highlands (SLH) official AVA status in 1991. But as the turn of the century approached, Nicky realized that the potential he first saw in the area in the late '70s had taken on a new hue: His original vision for his Smith and Hook estate vineyards was stained in Bordelaise purple, but when shifted into a different light, it sparkled a Burgundian ruby.

Over ten years after the release of the 1980 Smith & Hook Cabernet Sauvignon—the wine's inaugural vintage—the Hahns pivoted to acquire the Doctor's and Lone Oak vineyards, planting both sites primarily to Burgundian varieties in a great display of faith and open-mindedness. Then, in 2001, a significant investment was made to replant the Smith and Hook vineyards to mainly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, which thrive in the SLH's cool climate.

After the transition, the Hahns had to look elsewhere for Cabernet Sauvignon for the Smith & Hook label. "We discovered other areas in the Central Coast that had phenomenal Cab that not many people knew about—AVAs like the San Antonio Valley or Hames Valley," says Hahn Family Wines Director of Winemaking Paul Clifton, a Salinas Valley native who's been with the winery for 18 years. "But the killer thing is that as a result of this sourcing, we established relationships early on with these really great growers in the Central Coast, who we still work with today."

Another result of this willingness to evolve was the Lucienne Pinot Noir, the crown jewel of the Hahn Family Wines portfolio that debuted in 2007. "I think it was around 2004 when Nicky was like, 'Hey, are we ready to make a showcase



Paul Clifton, Director of Winemaking for Hahn Family Wines.

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL

wine?' And I said, 'Hell yeah! We've got phenomenal fruit,'" says Clifton. "Right about then, all four of our estate vineyards were coming online or back online with the replantings. Lucienne was created to express the character of each property [through four single-vineyard wines]."

Then, upon realizing that their properties could deliver more than just four high-end single-vineyard Pinot Noirs, the Hahn family in 2013 introduced the estate-grown and -produced Hahn SLH label, which comprises a Pinot Noir and a

Chardonnay. The former, a blend of four Hahn estate properties, is arguably the best representation of Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir given that the vineyards span the region from north to south.

This year, as the Hahns mark their 40th vintage, they're sustainably farming more than 650 acres in the SLH—a whopping 10% of the region. And what better way to celebrate how far they've come than with the mid-June release of that aforementioned crown jewel, the 2018 Lucienne wines?

Making SLH Lemonade Out of Lemons

More than two months into California's shelter-in-place mandate, Hahn Family Wines' employees still have their jobs—though for some of them, those jobs aren't quite the same as they were before the pandemic arrived. Clifton says he kept the team from the company's direct-to-consumer tasting room on board by adding them to the production lineup. "They're great people—I just couldn't let them go," he adds. "I thought we could take this opportunity for them to learn the viticultural side of things."

At the end of May, the newbie viticulturalists had just finished shoot-thinning the 12 vineyard acres to which they'd been assigned. Clifton says he plans to set aside an acre for those who want to finish out the growing season and continue learning even after the tasting rooms reopen.

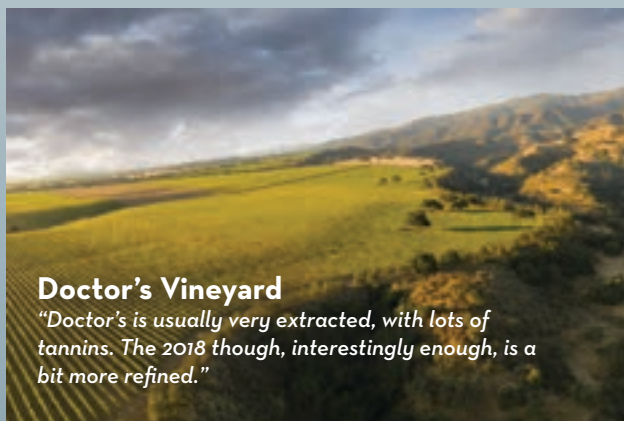
While the DTC staff gets their hands dirty and acquires new skills, Hahn Family Wines' Soledad tasting room has received a bit of an upgrade, including new flooring and a fresh coat of paint. And in addition to offering curbside pickup for wine club members, the company's management team is also hard at work designing a safe tasting experience that allows for social distancing. "Fortunately, we've got a lot of outdoor space already," Clifton says.

Lone Oak Vineyard

"Lone Oak has that silky, super-nice mouthfeel. It's usually more of a delicate style of Pinot, and this year was no different."

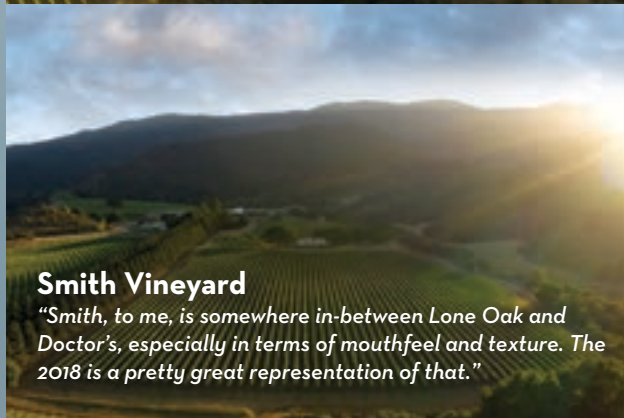
The Spoils of 2018

Thanks to an even-keeled summer and consistently foggy mornings that gave way to sunshine and wind, the 2018 vintage in the SLH turned out to be "very typical," according to Clifton, who weighs in below on how these conditions informed each of the Lucienne wines. SJ



Doctor's Vineyard

"Doctor's is usually very extracted, with lots of tannins. The 2018 though, interestingly enough, is a bit more refined."



Smith Vineyard

"Smith, to me, is somewhere in-between Lone Oak and Doctor's, especially in terms of mouthfeel and texture. The 2018 is a pretty great representation of that."



Hook Vineyard*

"Hook is also usually a big and inky Pinot, as it is in 2018."
*Hook is only available via direct-to-consumer.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HAHN FAMILY WINES



Home Cooking

FOR D.C. SOMMELIERS SHELTERING IN PLACE, HAIKAN'S SHIO RAMEN FEELS LIKE A WARM EMBRACE

by Michelle M. Metter

IN THE SOMM JOURNAL'S NEWEST COLUMN, Pairing Up, we ask a group of sommeliers from anywhere in the country to pair a wine with a different signature dish. Under the most ideal conditions, sommeliers and chefs work in tandem to perfect the pairing process, making necessary adjustments to match the dish's flavor profile with a complementary wine; in turn, that wine will reveal new dimensions of its character through the lens of fat, heat, salt, and acid.

This edition obviously came with its own unique challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic. In times of crisis, we often reach for things that can provide a feeling of warmth and comfort, and Katsuya Fukushima's food certainly fits the bill. As the chef/owner of Haikan in Washington, D.C., he relies on a repertoire of precision, whimsy, and soul to make dishes that feel like home. That includes his exceptional ramen, which I last ate with a group of sommeliers—making it a fitting dish to revisit for Pairing Up.

To make the restaurant's shio ramen, Fukushima begins by adding Kurobuta pork femur bones, ribs, and backbones as well as whole chickens and pig feet to filtered water.



Available at Haikan in Washington, D.C., shio ramen (above) is a specialty of chef Katsuya Fukushima, pictured at left.

He then simmers this rich Chintan stock for six to eight hours, avoiding a hard boil to keep the liquid clear. Onion and kombu, a type of kelp, are used to help round out the abundant umami flavors alongside a medley of Japanese salt, pepper, fish extract, sugar, scallop extract, fresh ginger, fresh garlic, and scallion.

Haikan's ramen noodles are specially made in Sapporo, Japan, from Hokkaido flour, egg, and natural alkaline water from a spring that runs under the noodle factory. Given these origins, it makes sense that this essential ingredient is one of the driving factors behind Haikan co-owner Daisuke Utagawa's wine-pairing recommendation: the **Domaines Ott 2018 Château de Selle Rosé**. "Overall, the [nose and flavors of] ripe peach and apricot plus bitter citrus . . . are a good contrast to the delicate yet rich shio ramen," he says. "This wine accentuates the complexity of the broth and brings out the distinctive taste of the noodles, which are often overlooked."

After Haikan treated four D.C. sommeliers to a bowl of shio ramen to enjoy at home, we asked them which wines they'd pair with this comforting dish.

Jocelyn Cambier, President, TapWines.com

"What stuck with me most [about the dish] is the unctuousness and silky, velvety fatness of the broth, complemented by the supple sweetness of the noodles and pork-umami tones

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOCELYN CAMBIER



counterbalanced by the green onions and the kelp. Pork, being a white meat, allows you to explore a broader spectrum of pairings. Foraging my memory for past encounters with Japanese food and drink,

I decided to go for a youthful yet mineral-based wine with red flowers and fruit tones: the **Vignerons de Bel Air 2018 Beaujolais Villages Gamay**, [which has] aromas of peony and carnation [and flavors of] cherry and plum in a supple, soft tannin structure, with a touch of salt/mineral in the nose and finish. It dresses the dish with a warmer-toned, complementing aura, and Beaujolais is a great friend of pork dishes in general."

Brent Kroll, owner, Maxwell Park

"Benoit Lesuffleur is a wine broker with a passion for cider. He makes **Domaine Lesuffleur La Folletiere** from 12 different varieties of heritage apples grown in his parent's best orchard. It's fermented in the méthode ancestrale, which predates the Champagne method, but is still fermented a second time in the bottle. It spends ten months on the fine lees, which might make it just as suited for a wine drinker as a cider drinker.

This ramen is very savory, which is a great balance with the slightly off-dry cider. The bubbles and acid wash the palate like scrubbing bubbles, so you get a reset [after each sip] to experience the pairing. It has a little Brett/funk, which is great with the gamey meat notes. The fruit profile is like a crabapple reinforced by tartness and tannin, but those flavors layer into the ginger and garlic of the ramen."



PHOTO: JOSUE CASTRO

Lucas Pava, U.S. National Brand Educator, House of Lustau

"Sherry is famous throughout the world for various reasons, [including] its ability to enhance porky, fatty, and salty foods such as the exquisite jamón Ibérico, among many others. It is also well known that the dry wines from the Jerez region in southern Spain

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCAS PAVA



are unparalleled choices [for pairing] with the most extreme umami and savory flavors. Sherry is the classic drink to enjoy with any bone broth, whether added to the dish or as an [accompaniment].

My selection for this dish is **Lustau Oloroso Don Nuño**, a quintessential oxidative

Sherry style from an exceptional producer: Small sips will take you a long way and let you devour large amounts of ramen without making you feel full too soon.

Finally, I like to play with the temperatures too: A slightly cooler Oloroso [served at] 55 degrees Fahrenheit will contrast beautifully with the very hot bowl of noodles."

Winn Robertson, Head Sommelier, Bourbon Steak

"Ramen is loaded with savory flavors, so a wine that can match with those is key. I think anything with bottle age will

PHOTO: MELANIA BATTISON



be a great start. One grape that comes to mind when thinking of savory is Savagnin: The **Rijckaert 2011 Côtes du Jura Les Sarres Savagnin** does the trick at a very nice price point. The wine

has a great ripe-green-apple character, with notes of fennel and sunflower seeds to complement the salty umami notes packed into the broth. Rijckaert holds its wines at the winery until they are ready to drink, so finding older vintages is totally possible!" S|



PHOTO: MARIUSZ SZCZYGIEL VIA ADOBE STOCK

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

When my blind-tasting group last met, the new kid on the block poured a Lambrusco in my flight of six. What gives? While I typically love this style, it's not part of our standard lexicon when it comes to tasting. How would you suggest I deal with the situation if it happens again?

Sincerely,
Blind Leading the Blind

Good Somm

Dear *Blind Leading the Blind*,

While Lambrusco may not be a classic wine for a blind-tasting exam, it's not a total loss, as the experiences you have today can help you in unexpected ways down the line. Maybe the next theory paper you're asked to write will revolve around sparkling wines of the world—you never know!

It's also important to welcome your new study partner and appreciate what they offer. Instead of calling them out or embarrassing them in front of the group, this would be a good time to teach them which wines are "classic" and which are not while introducing them to new producers as well as wine shops and other vendors with exceptional offerings. They may be feeling like a fish out of water right now, so leading by example with grace and gentleness is particularly invaluable during this time.

Lastly, while you seem to be seasoned in blind tasting, there must be a reason why you're inviting new sommeliers to join your group. The very foundation of our community is based on learning from each other and providing mentorship. At the end of the day, if someone wants to be a part of that community, that's a big win for us. Treat them well and this won't be their last contribution.

Best,
Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear *Blind Leading the Blind*,

Lambrusco, huh . . . are you sure it wasn't homemade Beaujolais? And was there a secret camera somewhere? If I were you, I'd be waiting to hear, "You've just been punk'd!"

Signed,
Bad Somm

Dear Good Somm/Bad Somm,

My priest asked me to recommend a red wine to him, and I didn't know what to say. Any advice?

Sincerely,
Turning Water Into Wine

Good Somm

Dear *Turning Water Into Wine*,


Just like with any guest, I would lead with some questions: Is he looking for sacramental wine, or wine with dinner? Something Old World? Something New? Something sweet, dry, or maybe even natural?

You get the gist, but the point is to engage in conversation. Priests are people just like you and me, and it was thoughtful of him to ask for your expertise! Who knows, maybe this simple act will help lead you to the stairway to heaven.

Regards,
Good Somm

BAD SOMM

Dear *Turning Water Into Wine*,

What a relief to learn that salvation comes in many forms. My answer would be thus: "Forgive me, father, for I have sinned. I have suggested the mediocre by-the-glass Cabernet Sauvignon to you, so that I may increase my beverage program's profits . . ." 

Yours truly,
Bad Somm

This column is a parody and does not reflect the views of The SOMM Journal. Follow the columnists at @goodsommbadsomm on social media and visit their website at goodsommbadsomm.com.

SIP ON THE

Bright

SIDE



NEW
LOOK
— SAME —
GREAT WINE



FIVE GENERATIONS
OF FAMILY DEDICATION

◆ — ◆
Redefining Riesling for the Next Century

Paul Coker

CELLAR MASTER AT CANLIS, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON by Michelle M. Metter



PAUL COKER, Elton Nichols, and Nelson Daquip helm the wine team at famed Seattle restaurant Canlis. When the coronavirus pandemic took hold in the city, proprietors Mark and Brian Canlis quickly pivoted the business from a fine-dining establishment to a bagel pop-up and burger joint. What hasn't changed, however, is the team's desire to put community above all else. I caught up with Coker for a progress report on how things are going during this time of transition.

Q: What was the day that everything changed for Canlis?

We announced internally about a week and a half before switching gears [to the new menu], so most of us had some time to process and prepare. The weekend before we announced, I celebrated my birthday by fishing king salmon and watching whales swim around us on Orcas Island with my girlfriend and my family while we spread my dad's ashes. I'm so thankful for that experience and don't know if we would have ever had another opportunity to be together like that. At our last pre-shift, Mark Canlis said, "I'm not done with fine dining here." That moment was very powerful, uniting us to do whatever it takes and tackle this new challenge as a team. ... We're going to get through this, and we'll probably throw one heck of a party when we do.

Q: How have your skills been tested and how do you think your training has helped your team pivot?

Every day is a new challenge and every day we use and learn different skills. I look at mentors from my past and appreciate how [STARR Restaurants Director of Beverage] Daniel Grajewski taught me to focus on silver linings and how to grow throughout challenges. [Advanced Sommelier] Troy Smith taught me what it truly means to ... keep focused on the mission [in the midst of] change. Michael Jordan, MS, taught me to smile and relish every moment of the life we live.

Spending time at resorts also showed me how to operate different styles of service and restaurants synergistically to accomplish more. My last role as a national beverage director for 22 restaurants in six states varied from food-court concepts with wine on tap to fine-casual. ... That taught me how to change hats quickly and wholly.

Q: You have ten minutes and one glass of wine. Who are you with and what are you drinking?

The weekend Washington closed restaurants, my girlfriend and fellow sommelier, Emily Edeen, had planned a day for my birthday and somehow acquired a bottle of 1980 Dom Pérignon Oenothèque. When that day comes and we get to share that bottle, it is going to be one of the best of my life. I know it will happen—and that's a million candlepower floodlight at the end of the tunnel. *sj*

"We're going to get through this, and we'll probably throw one heck of a party when we do."

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Unnecessary Experts?

TWO STEPS TO ENSURE YOUR VALUE AS A SOMMELIER IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

IN PREPARING FOR various sommelier exams, I have answered thousands of study questions about the most minute topics imaginable. I trained myself to remember subregions, residual sugar percentages, harvest densities, you name it, but never once in all my practice quizzes did I see the question: What do you do when you lose your job due to a pandemic?

Given that we represent a fairly expensive labor line item (for a service that is almost useless in the context of takeout and delivery), sommeliers are often the first to be let go and the last to be hired back. It's time to lay bare the disheartening fact that most employers don't recognize the value that a good sommelier has to their operation. Master Sommelier Andy Myers, Wine Director of José Andrés' Think Food Group, puts it best when he says: "I have spent 26 years being an expert on something that isn't needed right now."

Predictions on the future of restaurants in the aftermath of COVID-19 range from



PHOTO: CUMIGERNO SILVANA VIA ADOBE STOCK

grim to dire. While the percentage of businesses that won't survive is being widely debated, one thing is for certain: It will be high. Furthermore, the restaurants that do weather the storm will be looking to run with much lower operational costs. This means that there will be far fewer available jobs than sommeliers seeking employment. Now more than ever, then, it is essential to make yourself invaluable to current or potential employers.

STEP 1: Shift your focus away from all the fun stuff that made you want to become a sommelier in the first place. It's time to roll up your sleeves and concentrate on the boring, unsexy aspects of the job. Get really (and I mean *really*) good at finance and operations. Take advantage of your furlough/unemployment time by taking online finance classes. Make sure you understand concepts like the time value of money, contribution margins, blended cost of goods, and the

relationship between revenue and profit, as well as how all of these impact an operating statement. (On that note, be sure you know how to read an operating statement.)

STEP 2: Prove to an employer that your salary is justified. How? By showing them that without you, they wouldn't make as much money. Practice articulating how your specific financial knowledge can help them maximize revenue and increase profit even after they pay your labor cost. Resist the urge to talk about how your wine knowledge sells wine. Instead, convince them that your holistic grasp of the financial health of a program will allow you to steer guests to higher-margin selections that fit their buying criteria. It is important that employers understand you're more than just a "wine geek." They will need to see that you, and you alone, can accelerate their pathway to profitability. **SJ**

"I have spent 26 years being an expert on something that isn't needed right now."

—Master Sommelier Andy Myers





United Sommeliers Foundation

Many Sommeliers, One Community

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Built for Dessert

GOUDA IS TAILOR-MADE FOR SATISFYING SWEET TOOTH

A CHEESE THAT tastes like a salted caramel is never a hard sell. Americans, by and large, have a sweet tooth, which is why aged Goudas perform so well at cheese counters. They smell like butterscotch and brown sugar and have the texture of fudge. The cloying ones tend to satiate after just a few bites, but the best examples—those that are decidedly more complex—lure you back.

For sommeliers, aged Goudas are a sales opportunity: an excuse to nudge customers toward an end-of-dinner bottle of Port, Madeira, Rivesaltes Ambré, Oloroso Sherry, or off-dry sparkling wine. They're also brilliant with bourbon and Cognac.

Although the Gouda recipe originated in Holland, the U.S. makes some superb versions. The Dutch have never officially certified the name with a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), so it doesn't have a strict definition. By Dutch law, Gouda is made with cow's milk, but that regulation is largely ignored. Variants made with goat's and sheep's milk abound and merit a look.

The conventional recipe calls for curd washing, a technique that involves draining the whey and rinsing the fresh curds with water. By drawing off the lactose-rich whey, the cheesemaker deprives bacteria of the milk sugar they seek to ferment. The result is a lower-acid, "sweeter," and mellower cheese.

Keep an eye out for these Gouda superstars and accompany them with new-crop walnuts, dates, or fig preserves. With the right wine, they make a sumptuous dessert.

L'Amuse: This cow's milk Gouda is widely considered one of the Netherlands' finest. It's made by CONO—the dairy co-op that also produces Beemster—and matured for almost two years under the direction of Betty Koster, a respected affineur with a shop near Amsterdam. A gorgeous amber wedge with a powerful butterscotch aroma, L'Amuse starts out waxy on the tongue but dissolves into creaminess.

Brabander: Another winner whose affinage is overseen by Koster, this goat Gouda originates at a co-op and then moves to a climate-controlled aging facility for six to nine months. Under its lightly waxed rind is a firm ivory interior with an aroma reminiscent of dulce de leche. Brabander has enough acidity to balance that goat-caramel sweetness and is typically creamy enough to shave with a cheese plane.

Beemster X-O: Aged for at least 26 months, X-O is the most mature Gouda in the Beemster line. The name derives from the Beemster

polder, a section of reclaimed land in North Holland that was created by dikes the Dutch constructed centuries ago. Age intensifies everything about this dark-amber, caramel-scented cheese, which is concentrated in flavor with a hint of piquancy. On the tongue, it's dense and fudgy, with abundant protein crystals.

Point Reyes Farmstead Gouda:

In development for several years, this lovely cow's milk Gouda is now produced in sufficient volume to spread the word. You probably already know and admire this California creamery's blue cheeses and snackable Toma; prepare to love its Gouda, too. Matured for two years or more, it has an aroma of pale caramel, cooked cream, and pineapple. Concentrated and creamy yet crunchy due to its protein crystals, this newbie is going places. *sj*

This column was originally featured in the December 2019/January 2020 issue of The SOMM Journal.





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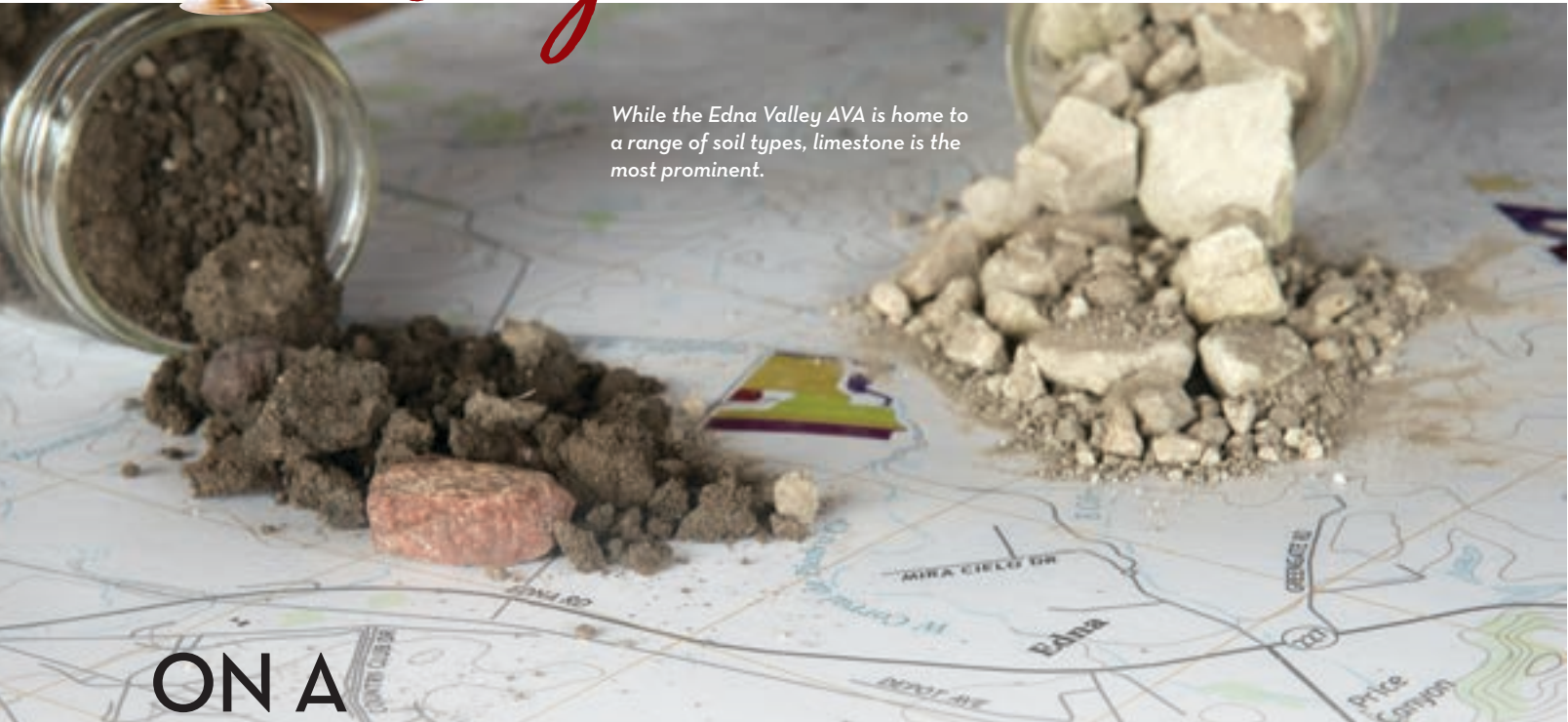
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THE SOMM Journey

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.



While the Edna Valley AVA is home to a range of soil types, limestone is the most prominent.

ON A MISSION

TASTING THROUGH THE 2018 VINTAGE OF TOLOSA'S SINGLE-VINEYARD SERIES

SITUATED NORTH OF the Santa Maria Valley and south of Paso Robles, Edna Valley is one of California's coolest AVAs. Vineyards run northwest to southeast along volcanic hills that are fewer than 10 miles away from the Pacific Ocean.

This area is the home of Tolosa, which crafts complex Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with fruit from its home estate, Edna Ranch, as well as from other sites. Founded by Robin Baggett—who originally considered establishing a cattle ranch there instead—the winery's name pays homage to the Franciscans of Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, who were the first people to plant wine grapes in San Luis Obispo County.

Considering the mission itself is named for Saint Louis of Anjou, once the bishop of Toulouse, France, it was particularly serendipitous when a winemaker from Toulouse, Frederic Delivert, began working with Baggett and his consulting winemaker/partner, Jean Hoefliger, in 2009. During the 2017 harvest, Delivert was hired full-time as Tolosa's head winemaker.

Since then, he's delivered a fascinating array of single-vineyard wines, of which the SOMM Journey tasted various expressions from the 2018 vintage. These small-lot artisanal wines showcase many of California's top growing regions for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay while revealing the beauty of the estate's terroir in Edna Valley. —*Meridith May*



PHOTOS: DUANE HALL

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, El Coro Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$128)

Petaluma Gap is associated with the high winds that blow off of the Pacific. This site, located next to San Pablo Bay, is a 20-acre block of clay loam and gravelly volcanic subsoil; at an elevation of 500 feet, it's the highest point of Keller Estate. Scents of red tea, cinnamon, spiced cherries, and rose petals precede an exciting and elegant entry of mocha, cinnamon, plum, and cranberry on the palate. There's an underlying earthy tone, with leafy notes and saffras. **96**

Tolosa 2018 Chardonnay, Poletti-Edna Ranch, Edna Valley (\$93) Edna Valley relies on its traditionally long growing season, and 2018 was no exception. Aged nine months in 22% new French oak, this Chardonnay shows exceptional ripeness, with aromas of pineapple on a sea breeze that also carries scents of jasmine and tangerine blossom. Vibrant notes of banana cream pie, yellow apple, and almond cast a striking upstroke of lean acidity. **95**

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Hollister-Edna Ranch, Edna Valley (\$128) Located just 5 miles from the Pacific, the sloping Hollister section of Tolosa's estate vineyard requires three separate picks at harvest due to its varying microclimates. The lots are blended together, fermented in stainless steel, and aged nine months in new and neutral French oak. This wine is perfumed with ripe wild strawberry and possesses undercurrents of minerality and earthiness. **97**

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Drum Canyon Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$128) Farmed by the Dierberg family, this Pacific-adjacent site on a steep, southwest-facing hillside experiences strong maritime winds and fog. This Pinot Noir is Tolosa's only single-vineyard wine made from Calera and Swan, both California Heritage clones. The nose leads with cedar and leather, followed by cherry, chocolate, and tilled soil. The palate is vivid and focused: Firm tannins, cinnamon, and roses meld with chocolate malt on a path of velvet before a juicy wash of boysenberry appears on the finish. **96**

Tolosa 2018 Chardonnay, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$93) According to Delivert, "Bien Nacido Chardonnay demands immense patience, as we allow the wine to take its course in the barrel." This world-class site, owned by the Miller family, is situated on the valley floor in a cool pocket 16 miles from the Pacific. The wine is elegant and creamy, with notes of candied pineapple, mango, red grapefruit, and buttered toffee that are preceded by aromas of dill and lime. **95**



Tolosa winemaker Frederic Delivert.

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Solomon Hills Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$128) Another lauded site owned by the Millers, this vineyard is located at the westernmost end of Santa Maria Valley. With the Pacific just 11 miles away, high afternoon winds are an everyday occurrence, and the distinctively sandy soils make the property a pitch-perfect sanctuary for Pinot Noir. Aged nine months in new and neutral French oak, the wine exudes aromas of spiced oak, rhubarb, and tobacco. Stark acidity highlights tart cranberry on the palate alongside a juicy, elegant mouthfeel and a finish of cherry and vanilla. **96**

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Apex Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$128) Because this site sits above the fog line, this was the first of the series' Pinot Noirs to be picked; with extra sun exposure, the fruit shows as luscious and ripe. Farmed by the Francioni family, who are well-known growers in the region, Apex is situated on soils that encourage low yields and concentrated berries. The hedonistic aromas range from sweet plum to dark cherry, with a hint of cedar and vanilla. White-peppered cherries appear on the juicy and focused palate, which features a fine balance of acidity and bright fruit with savory undertones. **97** *SJ*

See page 43 for another edition of the *SOMM Jour*.

{ one woman's view }



by Karen MacNeil

Preconceived Drinking

CONFRONTING AMERICANS'
RED-WINE BIAS

LAST YEAR, Dan Petroski 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 wine-maker 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 drinking habits. My surveys are not scientific, of course, but

I was surprised by one revelation: 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, such 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 a March 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% more likely than their white counterparts to be rated higher than 90 points. Fair? I don't think so.

Summer is now upon us. I, for one, plan on drinking some smashingly delicious and complex white wines—in large glasses. **SJ**

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

This column was originally featured in the April/May 2019 issue of The SOMM Journal.

PHOTO: SPH/VIADOBESTOCK

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The Anosmia Threat

LOSS OF TASTE AND SMELL EMERGES AS A COMMON COVID-19 SYMPTOM

ANOSMIA, OR THE LOSS of one's sense of smell, has previously been identified as an early warning sign of the mild cognitive impairment that can lead to Alzheimer's disease. Now, along with *ageusia*—the loss of taste—it's been cited as one of the most common symptoms experienced by those who have contracted COVID-19.

While they weren't commonly reported in Wuhan, China, during the early stages of the pandemic, these conditions are often the only symptoms experienced by people with mild cases. However, they can develop after other symptoms appear and remain after most signs of illness are gone.

In the United Kingdom, anosmia and *ageusia* have been stronger predictors of COVID-19 than fever. As of April 1, out of 400,000 people reporting one or more symptoms on a mobile tracking app developed at King's College London, 18% had lost their sense of smell or taste and 10.5% were experiencing fever.

Dr. Zara Patel, a Stanford associate professor who researches olfactory disorders, explains that COVID-19 is just one of a variety of viruses that can attack the trigeminal and olfactory nerves and their surrounding tissue. This type of inflammation, either occurring directly around the nerve in the nasal lining or within the nerve itself, is what causes the complete or partial loss of smell.

According to Patel, people who have a family history of neurological diseases are more vulnerable to damage from viral-induced inflammation and may be less capable of recovering from anosmia, *ageusia*, or *hyposmia*, the decreased ability to taste certain types of foods. For this reason, Patel urges seeking treatment, which could include olfactory training as well as medication, as early as possible for

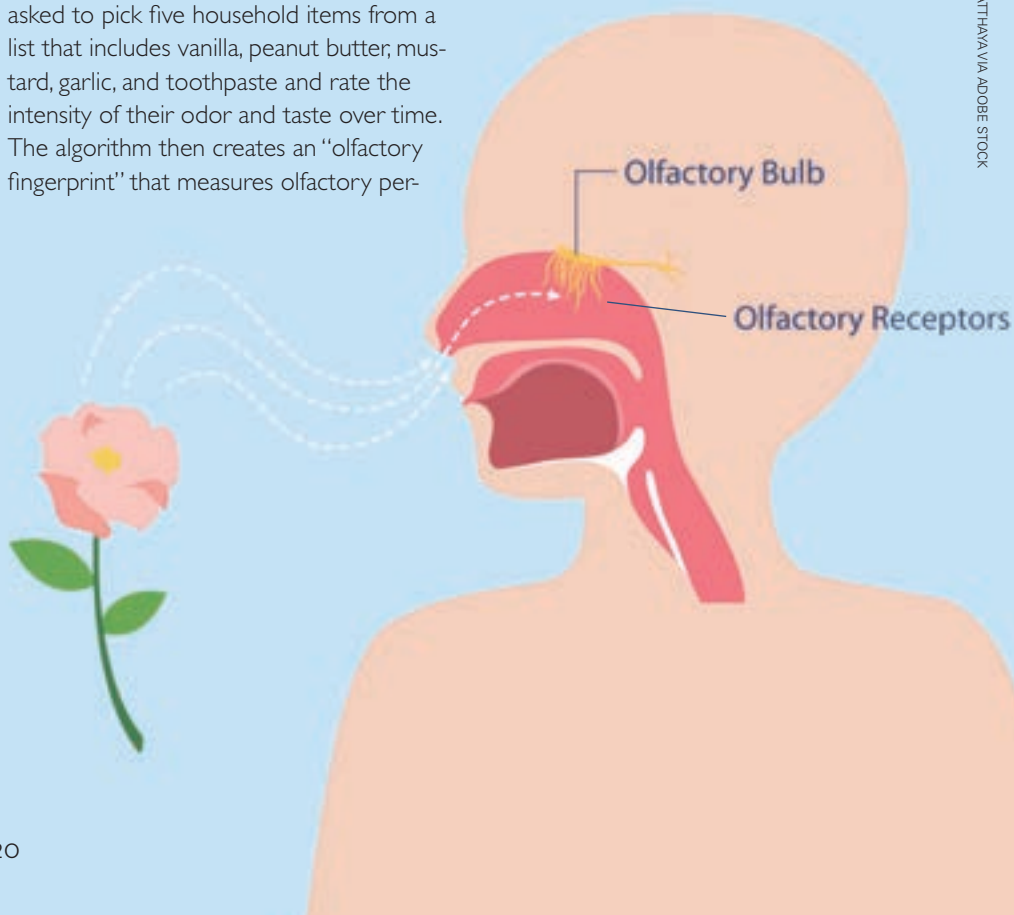
symptoms that persist after recovery.

Anyone who has experienced loss of smell or has recently recovered from an upper respiratory infection is encouraged to participate in the Global Consortium for Chemosensory Research survey at gcchemosensr.org. A joint effort between 500 clinicians, neurobiologists, data scientists, cognitive scientists, sensory researchers, and technicians from 38 countries, the survey aims to help uncover how the virus is transmitted—and how to prevent its spread—by asking participants to rate their ability to smell and taste before, during, and after their illness.

A similar survey called SmellTracker has been developed in neurobiologist Noam Sobel's laboratory at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. Participants are asked to pick five household items from a list that includes vanilla, peanut butter, mustard, garlic, and toothpaste and rate the intensity of their odor and taste over time. The algorithm then creates an "olfactory fingerprint" that measures olfactory per-

ception and mirrors an individual's unique genome to help predict how healthy one's immune system might be. Some scientists estimate that there are at least eight active strains of COVID-19, and Sobel and his colleagues believe that anosmia may be a differentiating symptom.

While the specter of losing our senses of smell and taste, even for a short time, is anxiety-inducing for any wine professional, keep in mind that those who have experienced these symptoms report recovery times spanning ten days to several weeks, with two-thirds of surveyed patients at King's College London reporting improvement in three weeks. [SJ](#)



GRAPHIC: POI NATHANA VIA ADOBE STOCK

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 Profound Cabernets of Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate

PHOTO COURTESY OF BULGHERONI ESTATE



Philippe Melka and Alejandro Bulgheroni.

PHOTO: BRYAN GRAY



Bulgheroni Estate Director Michael Ploetz.

IN THE BUCOLIC woods off of Meadow Lane in St. Helena, California, several hundred yards from Palladian Estate, something quietly profound is taking place in an old stone winery where the first vintages of Bill Harlan's Napa Valley Reserve wines were produced.

Today, the winery and renovated hospitality center are part of the 15-acre Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate, purchased by Bulgheroni in 2012 and helmed by a team so prestigious that it's almost unbelievable. Two of its members, Michel Rolland and Philippe Melka, are recognized by many as the world's greatest wine consultants, and they work together to craft limited-production Cabernet Sauvignon of confounding brilliance with support from longtime assistant Matt Sands.

Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate has made a limited number of three-vintage vertical packs available exclusively to on-premise accounts that Estate Director Michael Ploetz says "resonate with what [the estate is] doing and can tell [its] story." (They had originally planned to showcase the verticals during by-appointment visits, which have been suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.)

The vertical begins with the inaugural 2014 release of Lithology Beckstoffer To Kalon Cabernet Sauvignon and the flagship Estate Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon—a roughly four-barrel selection of the winery's best lots—before progressing to the 2015 and 2016 vintages of both expressions.

These dazzling wines would make a tremendous addition to any serious wine list. For more information, visit bulgheroniwine.com. **SJ**



Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2015 Lithology Beckstoffer To Kalon Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley High-toned red berries mingle with lip-smacking notes of graham cracker crust around a dense core of wild blackberry that's rather light on its feet. Salted dark chocolate and crushed-stone minerality appear on the everlasting finish. **95**

Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2016 Lithology Beckstoffer To Kalon Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley The previous vintage's notes of toasted graham cracker crust and salted dark chocolate appear on the nose alongside explosive aromas of black cherry and ripe blackberry. Marvelously rich and compact, the palate is layered with red, black, and blue fruit, and the lengthy finish of blackberry tart is supported by fine French oak tannins. **98**

Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley A full-bodied wine with plush and round flavors, including beautiful notes of red and white flowers that show the mark of a low-yielding vintage. An astounding mix of white chalk, crushed stone, crème de cassis, milk chocolate, and graphite washes across the palate in waves. **97**

Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley Sumptuous notes of blueberry and salted dark chocolate meld with vivid aromas of earthy wet clay, crushed stone, and red flowers. This wine is a stunner, with gorgeous concentration; fine-grained, cedar-like tannins; and a rich, silken, and seductive mouthfeel with finely delineated layers of blue, black, and red fruit. It's equal parts pure, bright, ripe, long, and layered. **98**

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Team Leader

MASTER SOMMELIER JAY JAMES TAKES ON A MAJOR ROLE IN LARKMEAD VINEYARDS' FUTURE PLANS

CELEBRATING ITS 125TH anniversary this year, Larkmead Vineyards is one of Napa Valley's oldest family-owned producers. So when this historic winery recently named Master Sommelier Jay James as its Vice President and General Manager, it further solidified his status as a leader in the region's wine industry.

Since 1993, Larkmead has been owned and operated by husband-and-wife team Cam Baker and Kate Solari Baker, who aim to work intently with James and winemaker Dan Petroski to introduce their small-lot wines to a new generation of consumers. Meanwhile, as part of the winery's climate-research initiative, Petroski is currently experimenting with different varieties in a special block within the estate's 110-acre vineyard.

With James at the helm of day-to-day operations, hospitality, and wholesale, the Bakers can rely on a wine veteran with decades of experience to expand Larkmead's presence in vital marketplaces. James has worked for major distributors as well as fellow Napa producer Chappellet in top management and sales roles, and his insight into the hospitality industry will also help to determine where exactly the label will fit within the evolving on-premise sector in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"National Sales Manager Joe Corsini and I are focusing on our retail partners with online presence and delivery capabilities. At the same time, our hospitality team has pivoted to [establishing] remote connections with our members and developing web sales," James tells *The SOMM Journal* of the winery's current strategy, adding that they're making sure to stay in close contact with "important [on-premise] customers."

Cam Baker notes that "Jay will play an integral role in every aspect of the operation at Larkmead Vineyards, from wholesale management to trade and consumer marketing to staff development. His experience in sales and distribution will be invaluable for the recognition of Larkmead Vineyards as one of the greatest wine estates in Napa Valley and the world."

James claims that this new chapter with Larkmead is one of his greatest achievements, which is no small statement given his impressive resume. "A senior leadership role with a winery of this pedigree and historical significance is a dream," he says. "I feel that I've been training for this for over 35 years." SJ



Jay James started his career in hospitality at The Ritz-Carlton in Atlanta, Georgia. From there, he served as Wine Director at Peasant Restaurant Group's now-closed flagship restaurant, City Grill; as sommelier and Assistant General Manager at Nikolai's Roof in the Hilton Atlanta; and as Key Account Sales for Atlanta Wholesale Wine. In 1997, James became just the 32nd American to pass the Master Sommelier exam, and in 2005, he joined Southern Wine & Spirits of Nevada, where he ultimately ascended to the post of Vice President of Fine Wine. In addition to his new role at Larkmead Vineyards, he also serves as Chairman of SommFoundation.

Larkmead uses its research block on its Calistoga estate to help determine which varieties will best adapt to the impacts of climate change.

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Pictured from left to right at the Culinary Institute of America's 2020 Summit for Sommeliers and Beverage Professionals: Jeff Cichocki, winemaker, Bonterra Organic Vineyards; Greg Lambrecht, Chairman/founder, Coravin; Sara Maule, Italian Fine Wine Specialist, Frederick Wildman; David Coventry, winemaker, Talbott Vineyards; Bob Bath, MS, Professor of Wine and Beverage Studies, Culinary Institute of America; Nicole Carter, President, Merry Edwards Winery; Gabriel Geller, Director of Public Relations, Royal Wine Corp.; and Brad Hutchison, Senior Business Development Manager, Sanden.



What's in the Bottle?

A “TECHNIQUE VS. TERROIR” SEMINAR SHEDS A MODERN LIGHT ON AN AGE-OLD DEBATE AT THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA'S 2020 SUMMIT FOR BEVERAGE PROFESSIONALS

story by Jonathan Cristaldi / photos by Alexander Rubin

In early March, *The SOMM Journal* enlisted the help of five winemakers and two tech companies gathered at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia to debate whether great wine is made in the vineyard or in the winery. The seminar, dubbed Technique vs. Terroir, was hosted by CIA Professor of Wine and Beverage Studies Bob Bath, MS, as part of the school's 2020 Summit for Sommeliers and Beverage Professionals.

In front of those assembled at the Napa Valley Vintners Theater, Bath addressed the notion that beyond climate, soil, and topography, there's another component that significantly impacts the sense of

place present in a wine—*people*. “I was a skeptic,” the industry veteran said, “but I'm a believer now.”

Bath admitted that his opinion was swayed in part by a quote from Napa legend Warren Winiarski, who founded Stag's Leap Wine Cellars: “Without people, there is no terroir.” “For 8,000 years we've been working on technique, and we've reached a point where we are more polarized than ever [on the concept of terroir],” Bath said, noting that despite technological advancements, there's also been a return to minimalism that's reflected through the natural-wine movement. “[Natural wines

and technology are] polar opposites, so, ‘What is the best interpretation of that grape?’ [becomes] the question.”

Bath then made the assertion that it isn't fair to judge one style or technique as being wholly representative of a particular grape. “We want to put it all in boxes, don't we?” he asked. “Familiar is comfortable. But the idea that a grape can have many expressions works against our capacity to find familiarity.”

While the debate surrounding the relative roles of technique and terroir is unlikely to abate anytime soon, read on to see how the panelists weighed in.

Evolving with Merry Edwards Winery



Merry Edwards
Winery President
Nicole Carter.



Nicole Carter, President of Merry Edwards Winery, recalled that there wasn't "a lot of single-vineyard designation [happening] in California" until the 1980s. Following this shift, she said, winemakers had more opportunities to express the concept of terroir through the lens of a specific site.

Among those winemakers was Chateau St. Jean's Richard Arrowood, whom Carter described as having a reputation for being "fanatical" about imparting a sense of place in his wines. With the intent of crafting a "true expression of terroir," Arrowood set out to produce nine single-vineyard Chardonnays via the same methods, but over time, he realized that some of the wines needed more intervention in the winery to shape them into "what they wanted to be," said Carter.

The notion that certain wines need a bit of help to arrive at an expression that is, for lack of a better word, *tastier* than what might result naturally factored into Carter's answer to a question posed by Bath. When he asked if Merry Edwards Winery's style would change as a result of its acquisition by Louis Roederer last year, she responded, "Wine is always evolving, but the intent is to stay true to the style that [founder] Merry [Edwards] created." She added, "We know that the Merry Edwards wines are all about flavor, color, and texture. Every time you pick up a glass of that wine, you will recognize it."

While the group tasted the **Merry Edwards 2017 Meredith Estate Pinot Noir** from the Russian River Valley and Edwards' first estate vineyard, planted in 1998, Carter noted that the winery is always experimenting in the vineyards. And in terms of production techniques, "Merry is a big proponent of oak," Carter said, adding that its integration plays a major role in their house style.

As for the fruit, "we favor UCD 37," she said of the clone Edwards herself developed, which "imbues wines with good textures, has an earthy component, and delivers mostly black-fruit notes." She continued, "Coming back to terroir versus technique, this is a wine that expresses both, I think—we're always looking for color. Merry says, 'When you look at the wine in the glass, I want your mouth to start watering,' so we do longer cold soaks and more punch-downs because our fermentations are all about extraction, color, and intensity."

Nicole Carter

Sara Maule

Translating Flavor with Talbot Vineyards



Talbot Vineyards winemaker David Coventry considers himself a custodian of flavor. “I take what the vineyard gives me and try to translate that into the bottle,” he said. “On the best days, I do as little as possible.”

Talbot’s famed Sleepy Hollow Vineyard is located in the northernmost part of the Santa Lucia Highlands, the coolest area of an already cool and extremely windy appellation. Abundant in ripe cherry, oak, and spice, the full-flavored **Talbot Vineyards 2017 Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Block 18 South Pinot Noir** is a “hand-crafted” selection of roughly 100 favorite barrels that Coventry selects out of 1,000. He waxed poetic about the vines, referring to them as “a lens that focuses the power” as well as “the flavor and terroir” of the site directly into the fruit.

Sleepy Hollow is no stranger to human intervention: First established in the 1970s, the property has recently been replanted with Old Wente Clone Chardonnay and Martini Clone Pinot Noir. Coventry contended that “the best wines are coming off those new plantings because of [better] rootstock and clonal choices,” which he said in turn help him make more expressive wines.

“Terroir is such an ephemeral thing—it can be obscured in so many ways,” Coventry continued. “If you pick underripe, that green character can obscure terroir, but overripe grapes that are raisinated also obscure terroir. There are sites that have great terroir and some that have horrible terroir, and you use every tool at your disposal to make the wine the best wine it can be.”

*Talbot Vineyards winemaker
David Coventry.*



Jeff Cichocki, winemaker for Bonterra Organic Vineyards.

Embracing Biodynamics with Bonterra Organic Vineyards

While introducing Bonterra Organic Vineyards winemaker Jeff Cichocki, Bath noted that the winery has been a leader in Biodynamic and organic farming for years. “The philosophy of how we farm is part of what we need to think about when we talk terroir,” he added.

But while Cichocki noted that they’re “composting on site, doing [their] preps on site, and [using] the celestial calendar to help make farming decisions,” they “don’t live and die by it.” For example, “if we see rain coming on a pick date,” he said, “we’ll pick before.”

The panelists and attendees were in agreement that Biodynamic preparations like “Process 500”—the shorthand term for packing cow horns with fresh manure, burying them for six months, and then unearthing them to craft a slurry to spray on the land—is inherently a technique

rather than an element of terroir: “There are two ways of looking at this,” Cichocki said. “On one hand is the spiritual side of the technique: The energy and spirit of the cow is transmuted to energy in the vineyard. On the other, there is a practical application: Manure is buried in the vineyard, microbes from the vineyard transform the manure into potting soil, and [that soil is] unearthed, rehydrated, and used to inoculate the farm with microbes that know how to break down the soils of the land.”

We pondered the overarching question of the seminar as we tasted Bonterra’s **2016 The McNab** red blend from Mendocino County; the wine, which largely comprises Cabernet Sauvignon, was crafted with fruit from the 371-acre McNab Ranch vineyard, of which 147 acres are planted with certified Biodynamic and

organic vines. Handpicked at 26.4 Brix to “capture ripe aromas and flavors,” according to Cichocki, the grapes were gently pressed in a small vertical basket, fermented in 3-ton open-top oak casks with select yeast strains, and aged 80% in new French oak for 18 months followed by one year in bottle. Regardless of which aspects of its character could be attributed directly to technique or terroir, the wine was bold, stunning, and energetic, with beautiful black fruit, fine-grained tannins, sweet oak spices, graphite, and a long, earthy finish.

Before Bonterra’s portion of the panel concluded, Bath asked Cichocki whether a wine’s age plays a role in its ability to fully express its terroir. Cichocki posited that terroir simply evolves over time, noting that the beauty of California-made wine is that it’s daringly opulent in its youth yet develops complex nuances with age.



Sara Maule, Italian Fine Wine Specialist for Frederick Wildman.



Weathering Changes with Nino Negri

The terraced vineyards of the Valtellina DOCG in Italy's Lombardy region are composed of stone walls built thousands of years ago—so many walls, in fact, that if you lined them up end to end, their combined length would be nearly equivalent to driving across the United States four times.

"Those walls are part of our terroir," said Sara Maule, Italian Fine Wine Specialist for Frederick Wildman. "Here [in the U.S.], everyone talks about clones, but in Italy, we have Nebbiolo, the king of Valtellina— together with Piedmont, we produce 90% of all the Nebbiolo in the entire world. It's not an easy grape to grow. We cultivate Chianvina, a clone of Nebbiolo, and have several prototypes, but that's about as much as we talk about when we talk about clones." In our glasses, the **Nino Negri 2016 Sfursat Sforzato di Valtellina DOCG** was refreshing and deliciously floral, with gorgeous red fruit and a distinctly saline and earthy character.

After 48 vintages, Maule's father left his post as the Director of Winemaking at Nino Negri. When the new director—a 20-year veteran from Barolo's Fontanafredda—arrived for their first day of work, Maule's father simply left. "There can't be two kings in the same land," she recalled him saying, noting that he didn't want to influence the newcomer's instincts.

The situation prompted Maule to wonder that if each generation establishes and adheres to its own approach to winemaking, doesn't that have an impact on how the wines express terroir? Of all the vintages her father oversaw, "none were ever the same," he'd told her, and the variability that prompted him to adjust his technique accordingly is evolving with the times. For example, climate change is causing grapes in Valtellina to ripen faster, and wineries are increasingly turning to equipment that allows for temperature-controlled fermentation. It begs the question: If the grapes undergo this new process after having been fermented for years in an uncontrolled environment, are the resulting wines a reflection of Valtellina terroir, or something else entirely?

The approach to harvesting has undergone major changes as well. Nino Negri's terraced vineyards are so steep that harvest is now done by helicopter: Grapes are picked by hand and carried to the edge of the terraces to place in large bins, which are then transported to the winery swiftly by air—a much smoother process than being hauled down the precipitous cliffs. Sure, it takes a few hours to accomplish what previously demanded a week of work by a trained team, but at what cost, or to what benefit, in the name of terroir?

A Decade of Herzog

Gabriel Geller, Director of Public Relations for Royal Wine Corp., made use of his time on the panel to talk about the Herzog family, who share a winemaking history that dates back nine generations. After the Herzogs arrived in the U.S. from Czechoslovakia in 1945, they began producing wine in upstate New York before moving to California in 1985. Today, they produce some 250,000 cases per year, from entry-level \$10 wines to "the finest blends of Cabernet Sauvignon from the best AVAs in California," said Geller. "The model . . . is to source the best grapes they can to make their wines."



Gabriel Geller, Director of Public Relations for Royal Wine Corp.

For a decade, the Herzogs have overseen their own grape-growing operation; they currently own four vineyards spread across the Clarksburg, Napa, and Lake County appellations. Geller said that while "the terroir gives us the grapes and we have to do our best to tend to those vineyards," the challenge lies in respecting the distinctive characteristics of the fruit and ensuring they're not overshadowed in the winemaking process.

The wine we tasted at the seminar, the **Herzog Wine Cellars 2017 Special Edition Cabernet** from Napa Valley's Rutherford AVA, strikes a balance between "both terroir and technique," Geller said: The rich expression shows a dusty element imparted by vines rooted in the volcanic soils that are characteristic of Rutherford, with "a distinct Dutch-cocoa note on the finish."

Geller also made sure to note that Royal Wine Corp. is the largest importer and producer of kosher wines. "Our wines are great wines," he said, "and for the kosher consumer, they're critical, because we bring them the best from all over the world." That said, he added, "Being kosher has nothing to do with technique or terroir," as kosher wines are the same as their non-kosher counterparts from a technical standpoint. "The difference is a logistical and human perspective," explained Geller. "Wine has an important place in Jewish tradition going back more than 2,000 years; it is poured at every Jewish holiday."



Greg Lambrecht, Chairman/founder of Coravin.

Improving Seamless Service with Coravin

Greg Lambrecht, Chairman and founder of **Coravin**—the popular device that allows for effortless wine extraction without removing the cork—believes that the overarching concept of technique extends to how a wine is served. “Coravin wants . . . to make [wine service] as fluid as possible,” Lambrecht said. “Our product has been used by critics, wineries, distributors, and restaurants—every day is worth a great glass of wine, is my saying.”

Another of his mantras is “I’m not a wine pro. I’m a drinker,” which hints at an origin story that many members of the trade are familiar with by now. At 23, Lambrecht was working in the medical field at Pfizer, where he was tasked with developing needles that would inflict minimal harm to patients’ skin. When he went to open a bottle on a weekday night, it occurred to him to use the needle he’d developed to similarly inflict minimal damage on the cork while mitigating oxidative impact.

The rest, as they say, is history: Today, Coravin is available in 60 countries and its devices have helped pour over 100 million glasses of wine. The latest models are modestly priced: the entry-level Model Three is available for \$199; Model Five, equipped with a new smart clamp, is \$299; and at \$399, the Model Six comes in several colors and with more gas cartridges. For more information, visit coravin.com and contact the company directly for a trade discount.

Staying Fresh with WHYNOT

How wine is cellared undoubtedly factors into its eventual enjoyment, and this is perhaps where technique and terroir overlap: In order to serve as a true snapshot of a given time and place, a wine has to be preserved in its original state until it’s opened months, years, or even decades later.

Heeding the call is Japanese manufacturer Sanden, the world’s largest producer and distributor of chilled beverage machines. Founded in 1943, it recently introduced a new preservation-based product aimed specifically at establishments that serve wine. According to Naomi Oshiro of Sanden’s New York office, the **WHYNOT** machine



Brad Hutchison and Naomi Oshiro of Sanden demonstrate preserving wine with the company’s WHYNOT machine.

enables “perfect prevention of wine oxidation” by “replacing corks with special plugs within a nitrogen gas environment.” Moreover, Oshiro added, “the per-glass serving from the bottle is also performed in a nitrogen gas environment, [ensuring that] the wine never comes into contact with air during the entire process.” Once its cork is replaced with the plug, the wine will remain fresh for up to 11 months.

The company plans to launch a second iteration of the machine, dubbed Eternal Vino, for demo this summer. For more information, visit whynotvin.com or contact Oshiro at oshiro@univaamerica.com. SJ



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X FACTOR

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES' HERITAGE COLLECTION PUTS WINEMAKERS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

by Ruth Tobias

On paper, Trinchero Family Estates (TFE) is nobody's idea of a small business: From the original Napa Valley winery founded by Mario Trinchero in 1948 has sprung an international company with a portfolio of more than 50 brands, encompassing spirits as well as wine. But in practice, its roots as a family endeavor with grit, heart, and a commitment to not only quality but the people who embody it show through. Ultimate case in point: the Heritage Collection.

Established in 2016, the Heritage Collection currently comprises more than 20 luxury brands. They include a top tier of Trinchero Napa Valley itself as well as long-established brands like Mason Cellars and Terra d'Oro, but most are the projects of partnering wineries both domestic and overseas, from Bravium in Anderson Valley and Neyers in Conn Valley to Finca Allende in Rioja, Bieler Père et Fils in Bandol, and San Polo in Brunello di Montalcino. Together, they represent the sort of winemaking integrity that third-generation family member and Heritage Collection Managing Director Carlo Trinchero fears is currently underrepresented.

Bravium founder Derek Rohlffs.



Many worthy producers “were getting lost in the shuffle out there,” Trincherro notes. “I was watching families disappear from the industry. [Without them,] it was losing some of its authenticity. I wondered why we weren’t focusing more on that—on keeping the unique passion that created this industry alive.”

So focus on it they did: Trincherro Family Estates began slowly and carefully building a portfolio of “family-owned wineries with an X factor” so that they could get “the attention and respect they deserved.” Quoting his father Roger Trincherro’s advice to “never take a step longer than your stride,” Trincherro asserts that “it’s OK not to have a million brands. One of the pros of being a family business is that we can make a decision based on how we feel, not just on what’s on a piece of paper. Instead of being good at a lot of things, we prefer to be the best at a few.”

This intuition was validated by a conversation with one of the first winemakers to come on board, the formidable Bruce Neyers of Neyers Vineyards in Napa Valley. “I didn’t know if we could sell a single-vineyard Carignan,” Trincherro recalls, “but Bruce said, ‘I trust you.’ It was very heavy for me personally. This is not ‘let’s move boxes out the door’—this is Bruce’s life’s work.”

In that light, it seemed that the necessary corollary to the ideal portfolio would be a strong sales team in the right markets; as he puts it, “Together with [TFE President/CEO] Bob Torkelson’s leadership, our family makes sure that these people who put their blood, sweat, and tears into these products are taken care of.” Calling “every single person we’ve hired . . . way smarter than I am and unbelievably poised,” Trincherro adds, “We don’t tell experts how to be experts. We don’t tell Bruce how to make wine, and we don’t tell salespeople what to do. Let them be creative.”

Allegrini’s San Polo Brunello di Montalcino is a recent addition to the Heritage Collection.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Representing the third generation of the family business, Carlo Trincherro serves as Managing Director of TFE’s Heritage Collection.

CALIFORNIA DREAMERS

Neyers certainly appreciates TFE’s reluctance to intervene in what he himself considers “a peculiar approach” to winemaking, one he compares to the definition of country music from director Ken Burns’ 2019 documentary that focused on the genre: “It’s three chords and the truth! I haven’t been able to shake that from my mind.” From the simplest of materials—grapes, earth, water—can come something as profoundly complex as the ‘61 Mouton that changed his own life, insofar as he makes wine “with the knowledge that that’s out there and that it’s a benchmark.”

But ironically, it was a much-appreciated intervention by TFE that drew him to the Heritage Collection in the first place. Upon discovering a few years back that Neyers’ youngest son, now 29, was struggling to find a job after a particularly dispiriting layoff, Torkelson hired him virtually on the spot for a position he still holds today. Granted, it also gave rise to a further irony, one of timing: Now that the 70-year-old and his wife, Barbara, were finally ready to slow down, none of his three adult children were available to take

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL



Barbara and Bruce Neyers of Neyers Vineyards.

over the winery. So when Trincherro and Torkelson approached him about a partnership, he thought, “Boy, wouldn’t [it] be great if I could continue to do the things I love about this business and not do the things I don’t love about it?”

And they’ve been earning his trust with their hands-off but deeply personal style ever since. “Isn’t it wonderful,” he asks, “that I now find myself aligned with a company that, in this [coronavirus] crisis, continues to serve as a model to the industry in terms of how they treat their employees and their customers? How’d you like to be involved with a group of people like that?”

Karen Cakebread likes it a lot. Having launched ZIATA as a mostly on-premise boutique label in 2008, she found herself at a turning point in 2016: The pressure to succeed in a market that “more and more brands were flooding” was mounting, but the odds of standing out in a large distributor’s portfolio were as slim as ever. It was then that Trincherro and Torkelson happened to reach out with what she calls a “win-win” proposition in the form of the Heritage Collection. While her reputation would add instant value to their nascent project, their “support not only in sales but distribution, marketing, and production” would allow her to concentrate on her life’s goal “in a nutshell: to go out



The Heritage Collection includes two imprints from Rioja's Miguel Ángel de Gregorio, Finca Nueva and Finca Allende.



Karen Cakebread is the founder of ZIATA.

and source fruit from great vineyards and make great wine that people will enjoy," such as her Cabernet Sauvignon from Coombsville's Meteor Vineyard.

"There's only a finite amount of fruit I can get from that vineyard; I'm making around 3,000 cases," she notes. "But they didn't bring me into the fold to blow up to 100,000 cases." Instead, Cakebread has "been able to grow thoughtfully, slowly"—and "the icing on the cake was [their] converting one of their St. Helena buildings into a small winemaking facility for the little guys."

Another of those "little guys" is Derek Rohlffs, who founded Bravium as a terroir-driven project dedicated to Burgundian varietal wines in 2007. Success came early, and "next thing I know, I'm working at two or three [custom-crush] warehouses around the Bay Area—but I didn't have a true home," he says. Enter TFE. "The whole goal of building a studio winery was to get these people who trusted us all the resources they needed: concrete fermenters, optical sorters, whatever it needed to be," says Trincherro. "If you have the best athlete in the world and you give him a rubber band to work out with, you're not going to be able to showcase his talents."

But "an awesome, state-of-the-art winemaking facility that I get to call home"

wasn't the only benefit to joining the Heritage Collection, admits Rohlffs, who knew that "the only way I was going to be a winegrower, which I really wanted to be, was by expanding beyond California" with the help of TFE's national sales team. "Their feet are on the street every day," he says, "which means my feet are in the vineyard"—in particular Wiley Vineyard, which he was able to lease from Anderson Valley pioneer Brad Wiley within a couple of years of teaming up with the Trincherros. Having purchased 20 adjoining acres as well, he continues, "I'm living my dream of being a farmer and making the wines and being fully in control—and I really couldn't have done it without this partnership. Or at least it would have taken another 20 years."

INTERNATIONAL AND IN-HOUSE BRANDS

TFE is now engaging partners abroad with the same forethought that won over Neyers, Cakebread, and Rohlffs; because, in Trincherro's words, "our shareholders are the people down the hall [from me]—my uncle, my cousin, my dad, and Torkelson"—the Heritage Collection has the luxury of proceeding with extreme care. "We're in no rush," he says. "It's all about finding those gems and shining a light on those

families that have worked so hard for so many generations; more than [worrying about] a case-production number; we want to ensure that we can come to an agreement that works for 100 years."

With that sentiment in mind, in 2019, TFE formed partnerships with Rioja's Miguel Ángel de Gregorio to represent Finca Nueva and Finca Allende as well as with the Fonseca family of Terras Gauda in Rías Baixas and Quinta Sardonía in Castilla y León; just this year, the aforementioned San Polo joined the portfolio. "I've met celebrities before," Trincherro admits, "but I was so nervous to talk to Marilisa Allegrini! But they're great to work with, just as people."

In the meantime, the Heritage Collection team has been creating labels of their own as they see fit. Iron + Sand made its debut in 2019 simply because, according to Trincherro, "we really wanted to execute a Paso Robles Cabernet. My dad says Paso is what Napa was like in the '60s, and I love the fact that it's almost untapped." It doesn't hurt that, in his view, Iron + Sand winemaker Maclain Atkinson "knows Paso better than anybody."

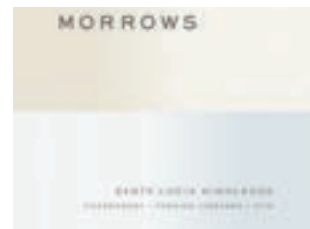
Next year will see the inaugural vintage of *Morrows*, a Santa Lucia Highlands brand crafted by Rohlffs—who will also be releasing Bravium's first sparkling wine with the support of TFE. "Derek is so driven; he just

goes for it," says Trincherro, using a sports analogy for emphasis: "He's one of those people who might not play the position, but we'd throw him in any day of the week."

And the Trincherro family, under Torkelson's leadership, is intent on winning the game—for the sake of all involved. "This

is a tough time," Trincherro says, "but our laser focus is on these people and their passion. We're trying to ensure their stories get all the way through [the supply chain] to the last person, which is the customer." *SJ*

Bravium's Derek Rohlffs is overseeing the production of new Santa Lucia Highlands label Morrows for the Heritage Collection.



PHOTOS: JENNIFER OLSON



ZIATA 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$35)

Winemaker Jennifer Williams sources fruit from five Napa Valley vineyards and ferments the juice in 70% neutral French oak, 20%

new French oak, and 10% stainless steel to produce an exquisite white perfumed with orange blossom, summer pear, and sweet cream. High-toned acidity lifts the jasmine-laced notes of pineapple, peach, and pink grapefruit, seasoned with a pinch of oregano on the finish. A luscious mouthfeel furthers the experience. **94**



Bravium 2017 Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley, Mendocino County (\$34)

Woody aromas are accented by cranberry and cinnamon. Joining ripe, vivid black raspberry and

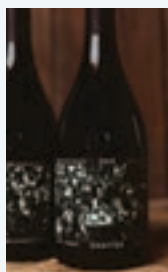
high-toned acidity, deeper, darker notes of tobacco, leather, crushed rock, and orange peel integrate seamlessly into a wine of elegance and finesse. A zing of spice on the finish adds to the textural complexity that identifies this cool-climate Pinot Noir. **94**



Finca Allende 2015, DO Rioja, Spain (\$35)

With an intense canary-yellow hue and an unctuous mouthfeel, this unique white comprises 95% Viura and 5% Malvasia. Its weight is no-

table, carrying a syrup of peach, grapefruit, and balsamic that's reined in by acidity. **90**



Shatter 2018 Grenache, IGP Côtes Catalanes, Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$25)

In the hot, windy valley of Maury in Roussillon just across from Catalonia, grapes

struggle in rocky black schist. This wine is named for the trials they endure; "shatter" is the term for their failure to fully mature, which causes the fruit to thin and leaves smaller clusters with greater intensity of flavor. The result, a collaboration between Joel Gott and Charles Bieler, is a sturdy red that persists. Following an expressive nose of sweet tobacco, wild strawberry, clove, and red tea, rhubarb, vanilla, and spice grace the palate as white pepper weaves through cherry cedar and briar. **93**



Terras Gauda 2019 O Rosal, Rías Baixas, Spain (\$28)

A distinctive blend of 70% Albariño, 15% Caiño, and 15% Loureira makes for a complex white.

Aromas of sea-salted pears and jasmine lead to a mineral-driven palate that strikes a chord of searing acidity. Undertones of anise link to the citrus finish. **91**

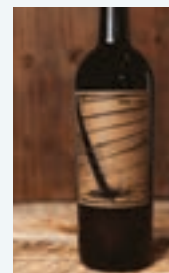


Neyers 2017 Chardonnay, Carneros District, Sonoma County (\$35)

The heirloom Shot Wente in this well-developed white is grown in three different Carneros vineyards. The

selection was first developed in 1938 by the Wente Brothers in the Livermore Valley;

the clone's ratio of skin to juice enhances the flavor profile of the wine, fermented in 100% French oak (30% new). Subtle but irresistible aromas of pear and white flowers persist on the palate, along with lemon, quince, tangerine blossom, and defined salinity. Italian herbs show on the finish. **93**



Iron + Sand 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$30)

Named for two artesian water sources, Iron Spring and Sand Spring, beneath its home in Paso Robles, this upright Cabernet Sauvignon is a nod to the region's potential for greatness. (For more on Paso Robles Cabernet, see page 82.) Sourced from two sub-AVAs—the warmer San Miguel and the cooler, foggier El Pomar District—it exhibits a combination of elegance and grit that begins with aromatics of rhubarb, black cherry, and balsamic. The palate is broad, with a spread of boysenberry preserves. **92**



Trincherro Napa Valley 2015 Mario's Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)

This Cabernet Sauvignon is named for the winery's founder, Mario Trincherro, a Napa Valley pioneer. The valley-floor site it's sourced from surrounds the estate in St. Helena. Though voluptuous, it also possesses elegance and grace, with velvety tannins and a freshness of fruit. Scents range from black cherry to lavender, mocha, and toasted oak. A blanket of dark chocolate envelops the palate, cut by a swath of blackberry preserves. **96**

Tasting Notes by Publisher Meridith May



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PHYLLIS FLYNN OF CANADA'S
LANGDON HALL HOTEL
REVELS IN THE EXPERIENCE OF
**SOMMFOUNDATION'S
NAPA VALLEY CAMP**

FOR ANYONE WONDERING if they should apply to one of SommFoundation's future somm camps, I will attest wholeheartedly that it's well worth the effort; in fact, for myself and many of my fellow campers, it was the trip of a lifetime. Not only did we have access to learning opportunities with some of the most influential figures in Napa Valley's wine industry, we made friendships and connections that will continue to help us grow and become better sommeliers.

We toured locales off the beaten track, among them Chappellet on Pritchard Hill, where Donn and Molly Chappellet began pioneering mountain viticulture after their arrival in 1967. During our visit, we learned about a soil-sample study, heard the story behind the beautiful pyramid-shaped winery, and tasted Chappellet's iconic Cabernets with Master Sommelier Jay James. The takeaway? Mountain wine ages beautifully.

Cardinale winemaker Chris Carpenter leads a tour of the Mt. Brave vineyard in the Mt. Veeder AVA.





It's difficult to name any particular highlight, as everything about the trip was beyond what any of us could have expected. We were all surprised and delighted to be chosen to attend.

Our trip to Frog's Leap Winery, meanwhile, was a testament to the power of organic viticulture and dry farming, the latter of which has taken on new importance in this era of climate change. Getting off of the bus in Frog's Leap's Rutherford vineyard was like stepping into an alternate world full of the buzz of nature's liveliness: From the chickens and beehives to the vegetable gardens, it's a therapeutically special place, and owner/founder/winemaker John Williams' passion for preserving its vitality was clear as he led us through the grounds with a shovel in hand.

Next, Frog's Leap VP Jonah Beer brushed us up on our viticultural studies during a scientific discussion of vine vigor that continued over a lovely meal prepared by chef Peter Hall. All in all, the experience proved that success has not changed the Frog's Leap team, who humbly shared wine and food as well as heartfelt stories that made us all shed a few tears.

We continued shifting gears while visiting our next trio of wineries: During a tasting at Larkmead Vineyards, winemaker Dan Petroski elaborated on how soil composition impacts the style of a given wine, whether its profile is "vertical, horizontal, or circular." Then, in the modern facility of Williams Selyem, our palates were put through their paces during an in-depth clonal tasting of Pinot Noir with Vice President of Winemaking Jeff Mangahas. Finally, spirited conversations ensued during our tour of Sonoma-Cutrer, where we got an inside look at the company's winemaking process and became willing guinea pigs during a blind tasting of Chardonnay with both screwcaps and corks.

Our views on Napa's prowess with that very variety were cemented during a whirlwind tasting at Kistler Vineyards with Director of Regional Sales Brooke Barnett and Director of Sales and Marketing Geoff Labitzke, MW.

The winery's wonderful wines are world-class, and an intimate dinner at its Trenton Roadhouse tasting room closed out another fabulous experience.

A reality check arrived on our final day regarding how Napa is dealing with the threat of wildfires, as all power in the area was shut off as a precaution amid gusty winds. Undeterred, we pressed on: After an informal



Author Phyllis Flynn enjoys a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon during SommFoundation's Napa Valley camp.



SommFoundation Chairman Jay James, MS, made an appearance at Chappellet.

but incredibly informative tasting with Matt Stamp, MW, we ventured to Fantesca Estate & Winery, where our wonderful hosts, proprietor Duane Hoff and Director DLynn Proctor, greeted us like long-lost friends. Over a delightful outdoor lunch, we covered topics both informative and personal as we enjoyed bottlings of the winery's All Great Things Cabernet and King Richards Reserve Pinot Noir and gained insight into Fantesca's winemaking vision.

This intensive and well-rounded camp culminated in a visit to Cardinale led by Chris Carpenter, who, with his deep voice and plaid shirt, seemed just as much a lumberjack as he did a knowledgeable winemaker. After he pointed out the defining characteristics of his three prestigious vineyards, we attempted to compose our own ageworthy version of Cardinale's 2018 vintage during a competitive blending session, using Cabernet from three different plots on Mt. Brave and Merlot.

It's difficult to name any particular highlight, as everything about the trip was beyond what any of us could have expected. We were all surprised and delighted to be chosen to attend, and I know I speak for the group in saying that it was humbling to be treated so well by so many people who have dedicated their lives to wine. The experience definitely made me a better sommelier and I'm grateful for all who had a hand in bringing this camp to fruition—as well as for my new sommelier friends! *sj*

Raw Jack Daniel's spirit drips over 10 feet of charcoal in one of the distillery's mellowing vats.



ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION

THE STORY BEHIND THE
SCRUPULOUS MELLOWING
PROCESS OF **JACK DANIEL'S**
TENNESSEE WHISKEY

by Eric Marsh

WHAT, EXACTLY, IS Tennessee whiskey? Put concisely, it's a spirit that, in addition to adhering to all of the rules of bourbon production, must be charcoal filtered—aka “mellowed”—prior to aging. So, given charcoal's vital role in the production process, it likely comes as no surprise that Jack Daniel's takes this “ingredient” quite seriously: Rather than simply steeping commercial charcoal in the spirit for a short period (a shortcut allegedly taken by some Tennessee whiskey distillers), the brand slowly drips its product over vats packed with 10 feet of charcoal produced at the Jack Daniel's distillery in Lynchburg, Tennessee.

The team there consists of veteran charcoal makers Tracy Matlock and Darren Lipham; with 30 years of combined experience, they're responsible for crafting all Jack Daniel's charcoal, grinding it down, and preparing the vats for mellowing. A typical workday for the pair starts with unloading stacks of sugar maple wood called “ricks” from a flatbed truck. According to Matlock, sugar maple “doesn't have a flavor or smell when it's in charcoal form” and thus removes impurities without imparting flavor. Lipham adds that prior to arriving at the distillery, the wood has been aged for six months, “creating a better grade of charcoal” as a result.

Once the truck is unloaded, Matlock and Lipham transfer the ricks to a controlled outdoor burn area under a fume hood that prevents pollutants from entering the air. They spray the stacks with a special propellant—140-proof raw Jack Daniel's distillate—and then light a wooden match to set the ricks afire.



Stacks of wood known as ricks burn behind Tracy Matlock, a veteran charcoal maker at the Jack Daniel's distillery in Lynchburg, TN.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK DANIEL'S

Charcoal maker Darren Lipham douses what remains of the ricks after they're burned.



The pair continues to fuel the flames until the fire begins “to burn on its own, which usually doesn’t take more than five minutes and a half-gallon of the 140 proof,” says Lipham. After burning for an hour and a half at temperatures of up to 2,000 degrees, the fire starts to die down, signaling that the material has reached the desired state and the embers can be doused with water.

After the charcoal rests overnight and is “cool enough to use,” Lipham says, they “grind [each piece] down to a quarter of an inch.” Within a week, the men pack the material 10 feet deep in a mellowing container, which Matlock notes typically needs “between 16–20 ricks worth of charcoal” to be properly filled.

A Refined Spirit Emerges

Almost as old as fire itself, charcoal has served a myriad of purposes throughout the ages. While Egyptians used it for smelting ores to create bronze as far back as 3750 B.C., Hippocrates is said to have employed it to treat vertigo, epilepsy, and anthrax. It still has medicinal uses today and has also become a ubiquitous ingredient in hygiene products, namely soap and toothpaste. Water filtration is another

ancient application that persists in modern times: If you have a Brita pitcher in your fridge, you likely have charcoal-filtered water in your system right now.

Burning carbon-rich materials like wood, bamboo, and coconut shells at high temperatures creates charcoal with an incredibly porous surface that adsorbs undesirable carbon-based impurities from liquids and gases. In the case of Jack Daniel’s, which has a mash bill of 80% corn, 12% malted barley, and 8% rye, “charcoal mellowing reduces . . . [the presence of a] heavy corn note [in] the spirit,” according to assistant master distiller Chris Fletcher, who tastes Jack Daniel’s at all stages of the production process. These grainy notes are most prominent when the spirit comes off of the still, but after being slowly dripped through the deep mellowing vats, the distillate is virtually bereft of them.

Fletcher notes that other Tennessee whiskeys and bourbons often possess the strong cooked-corn flavor that Jack Daniel’s lacks. “When you remove the heavy cereal-grain flavor, it really allows for a lot of the underlying nuances of the whiskey to be more pronounced,” he explains. “You’re allowing a much more complex spirit to start to come through.”

What particularly comes through is Jack’s yeast strain, which provides distinctive notes of green apple, pear, apricot, and banana, the latter of which is presumably responsible for the emerging trend of tiki cocktails that showcase the brand. “Jack Daniel’s has found itself in many great cocktails over the years,” says U.S. Brand Ambassador Eric “ET” Tecosky, who travels across the country to see how bartenders are featuring the spirit in their establishments. “The subtle banana note really lends itself to tiki drinks, so it’s been cool to see bartenders discovering that ‘secret’ as well.”

While Matlock and Lipham say they enjoy their occupations and are proud to fill a critical production role, it’s undoubtedly difficult work—especially on a humid summer afternoon under the Tennessee sun. When I ask for their own preferred methods of enjoying Jack while winding down after a sweltering day, Lipham says that a cold Jack and Ginger or Jack and Lemonade is always refreshing. Matlock opts for further simplicity, joking that he enjoys it most “right out of the bottle.” On a more serious note, though, he pleasedly adds, “Anywhere you go in the world and see a bottle of Jack Daniel’s, [we] made the charcoal for it.” *SJ*

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THE SOMM JOURNAL'S GEOGRAPHICAL DIGEST SERIES
CONTINUES WITH **THE WINES OF FRANCE**

Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, France encompasses major rivers and mountain ranges as well as a richly diverse ecosystem of flora and fauna. From a viticultural perspective, it expresses similar variability: A thorough survey of the country's winegrowing regions yields a vast array of aromatics in their respective wines.

In the Loire Valley, where its eponymous river winds through the countryside, the wines showcase the alluvial soils through pronounced salinity. In Champagne, fossilized seashells transformed into chalk granules appear as a prominent aromatic marker, while Bordeaux wines are known for earthy noses often defined by graphite, tobacco, and cigar box. Expressions that hail from vineyards planted along the Mediterranean Coast possess particularly powerful aromas, with herbes de Provence—namely sage, rosemary, and thyme joined by lavender—playing a dominant role.

In the inimitable Burgundy region, internationally renowned grapes find their most classic expressions: Chardonnay yields scents of just-ripe orchard fruit and blossoms, while Pinot Noir delivers sour cherries and fresh rose petals. And in eastern France, which experiences a more continental climate than the rest of the country, Alsace produces fragrant wines from varieties high in terpenes; the Jura and Savoie, meanwhile, often turn to oxidative winemaking for the distinct aromatics it imparts.

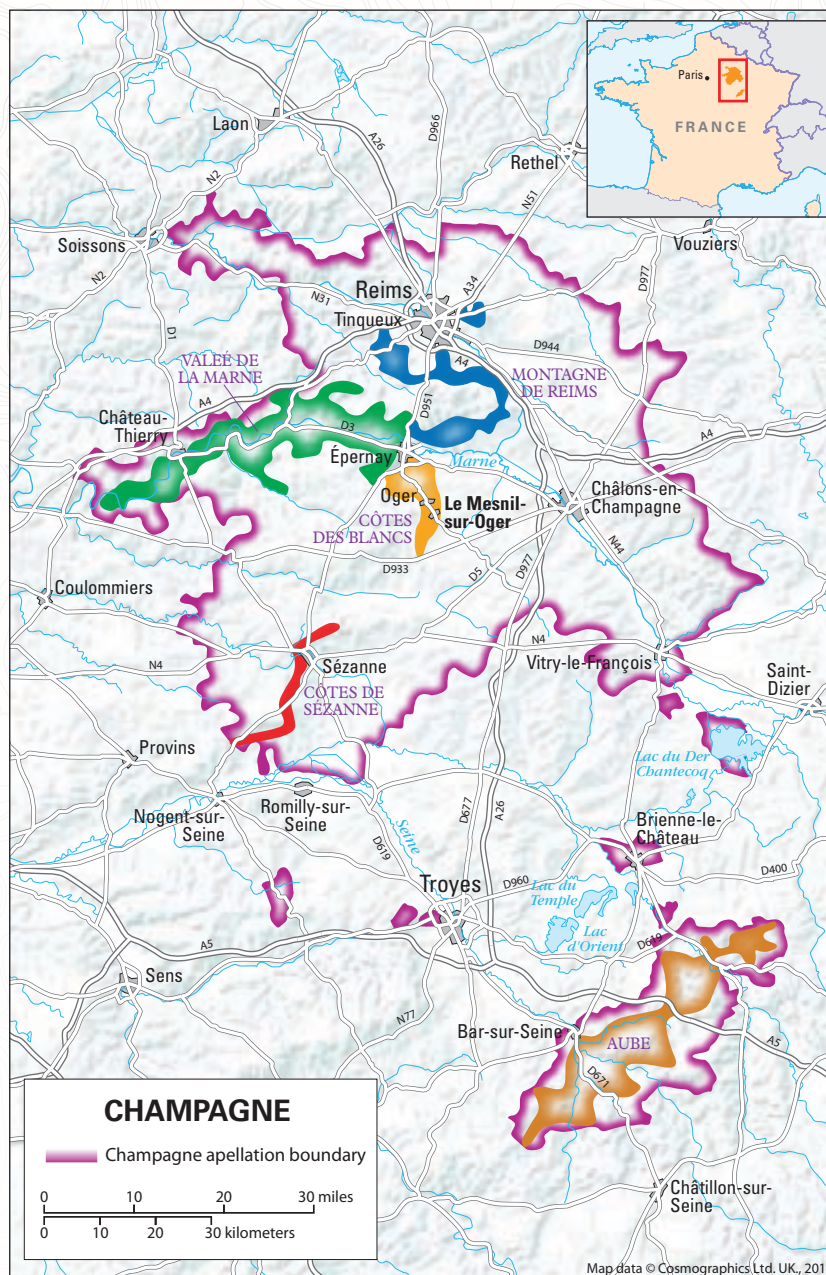
But, of course, aromatics are merely one aspect of what makes France's wine culture so fascinating. Read on for an in-depth exploration of the country's iconic regions, supplemented by tasting notes of wines from exemplary producers.

CHAMPAGNE

Though the Romans were the first to plant vineyards in the chalky soils of what is now the Champagne region back in the fifth century (or possibly earlier), the first wines made here by the French were pale, pinkish Pinot Noirs. The Champenois were envious of the reputation of their Burgundian winemaking neighbors to the south and sought to produce expressions of equal acclaim; however, their cooler climate made red wine production challenging. At the extreme limits of viticulture, the grapes struggled to ripen fully, and the resulting wines were thinner than Burgundy and bracingly acidic. Furthermore, cold winter temperatures often prematurely halted fermentation in the cellars, leaving dormant yeast cells that would awaken in the warmth of spring and start fermenting again, imparting unwelcome effervescence.

Eventually, however, the Champenois began to produce sparkling wine deliberately (preceded by their compatriots in Limoux). While they continued to prefer still wines, the British were developing a taste for their bubbly, and it soon caught on with royals and wealthy classes around the globe.

Today, Champagne is divided into five districts—Aube, Côte des Blancs, Côte de Sézanne, Montagne de Reims, and Vallée de la Marne—which together produce 200 million bottles a year. These wines can age for decades, depending on how they were made and stored. You can still drink 60-year-old Champagne, and you would do well to stock up on the 1996, 2002, and 2008 vintages, as they are collectors' items. —Terry Owyang, *Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits*



CHÂTEAU DE BIGNY: A SHINING STAR IN THE CÔTES DES BAR

Among Champagne connoisseurs, the Côtes des Bar of the Aube is garnering a lot of attention right now—and Château de Bligny, a historic property housed in a magnificent stone castle, stands tall among its most picture-perfect avatars. The house, run today by the third generation of the Rapeneau family, produces estate-grown sparkling wines that testify to the region's softer, rounder style: Take the fine-bubbled Grande Réserve Brut, a 50/50 blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay redolent of violets, hints of mushroom and pear, and the same white stone fruits that also abound on the generous palate alongside gingerbread spice.

Château de Bligny also makes a Blanc de Blancs, a Rosé, and a blend featuring all six of Champagne's permissible grapes—the Cuvée 6 Cépages—for a lineup that exemplifies why the Côtes des Bar richly deserves the reputation it's gaining as a hotbed of forward-thinking, risk-taking viniculture.



Cuvée Grand Esprit Marquis de la Mystériale Champagne (\$45)

Mostly Chardonnay with some Pinot Noir; this is an affordable Champagne for by-the-glass lists. Soft bubbles and floral aromatics lead to notes of sunflower and lemon blossom along with a sweet nuttiness.

TREASURY WINE ESTATES



Champagne Louis Roederer 2009 Brut (\$50)

Composed of 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Chardonnay, it offers rich, yeasty aromas, followed by notes of brioche, plum, pear, gingersnap, cranberry, and roasted nuts.

Champagne Louis Roederer owns more than 590 acres

within the three best subregions of Champagne—Montagne de Reims, Vallée de la Marne, and Côtes des Blancs—215 of which are farmed Biodynamically. With seventh-generation winemaker Frédéric Rouzard at the helm, it remains a family-owned house to this day.

Champagne Alfred Gratien Makes a Stateside Splash

Though Champagne Alfred Gratien can be found in most Michelin-rated restaurants in France, its extremely small production—limited to 300,000 bottles annually—made it a well-kept secret among U.S. sommeliers until just a couple of years ago. Founded in 1864, the house sources primarily from Grand Cru and Premier Cru vineyards.

The Jaeger family has been making Alfred Gratien's wines since 1905; Nicolas Jaeger, who took over as fourth-generation winemaker in 2007, was voted the best winemaker in Champagne in 2017. He ferments entirely in Chablis oak barrels and eschews malolactic fermentation so as to maintain the original character of the grapes, preserve aromas, and retain freshness with age.

BORDEAUX



Familiar to all wine drinkers is France's largest appellation, Bordeaux. Located in the west-central part of the country, it's home to many subregions of varying size, some of which overlap. The Gironde River divides the AOC/AOP in two; on the Left Bank are Médoc and Graves, while Libournais, Bourg, and Blaye are on the Right Bank.

In the southern Médoc, known as the Haut-Médoc, lie the celebrated subzones of Saint-Estèphe, Pauillac, Saint-Julien, and Margaux, as well as the lesser-known Moulis and Listrac. Graves includes the subappellations of Pessac-Léognan and Sauternes, which in turn includes Barsac. The Libournais is home to Saint-Émilion and Pomerol, among others. In between the Left and Right Banks is the Entre-Deux-Mers, so called because it lies between the Garonne and Dordogne rivers, which combine to form the Gironde. It offers great values as well as sweet wines from Cadillac and St. Croix de Mont.

Whether red or white, Bordeaux is almost invariably blended. The permissible grape varieties in red Bordeaux are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Petit Verdot, and Carménère; while styles vary, the rule of thumb is that Left Bank wines are predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, while Right Bank wines are Merlot-based. Whites are composed of Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon; a legendary—and legendarily expensive—example is Château d'Yquem, a dessert wine from Sauternes. Try the 1967 with foie gras or Stilton. Crémant de Bordeaux can also be stellar.

The Classification of 1855 was devised to distinguish Bordeaux's best wines as First Growths, Second Growths, and so forth. The Classification changed once in 1973, when Château Mouton Rothschild was upgraded to a First Growth. Graves and Saint-Émilion have employed a similar approach with their own classification systems, and while Pomerol does not classify its wines, it's home to one of the world's most expensive bottlings, Château Pétrus. —Terry Owyang



Maison de Grand Esprit 2016 L'être Magique Bordeaux (\$20)

This value blend of 70% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8.5% Cabernet Franc, and 0.5% Malbec hails from a vintage that saw a summer of sunshine and cool nights, allowing its expressive personality to shine. Ripe red cherry and strawberry show immediately on the nose, with an echo of

mocha and dark earth. Spiced cedar and white pepper season the round, juicy mouthfeel.

TREASURY WINE ESTATES



Maison de Grand Esprit 2015 Grand Esprit Saint-Estèphe (\$45)

Aromas of blue-fruit skin and graphite offer a clue of what's to come in this rich, full-bodied, and tannic red. Edgy and earthy on the palate, it has a robust, powerful presence.

TREASURY WINE ESTATES

Château Cantenac Brown 2009

Margaux (\$125) Considered by many to be an excellent vintage, this Bordeaux possesses an inky blue-black hue and aromas of plum skin and slate. Tannins are intense, chalky, and drying. Blueberries in earth deepen as the wine opens up, showing moderate richness and exceptional finesse.



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LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

As prices for the red wines of the Rhône Valley soar, this long-overlooked region of southern France is finally getting its due as a high-value alternative—which makes sense given that its robust red blends comprise key Rhône grapes, namely Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Carignan, and Cinsault. Here are some appellations to know:

Corbières: More than 33,000 vineyard acres produce primarily reds from the aforementioned varieties as well as some Lledoner Pelut (Picpoul and Grenache Gris may also be added to make rosé). These wines convey rustic charm amid scents of garrigue.

Côtes du Roussillon: It's most famous for its sweet fortified wines, including Banyuls and Rivesaltes, but this appellation is increasingly sought out for the spicy intensity of its dry reds.

La Clape: Considered among the Crus du Languedoc since 2015, La Clape is reputedly one of the sunniest—and most windswept—places in France. Its reds often display notes of black olive, pepper, and licorice.

Minervois: The red blends here are similar to those of Corbières, though they show a tad more elegance than richness.

Domaine Thunevin-Calvet 2017 Côtes du Roussillon Villages Hugo (\$50) A blend of Grenache and Carignan with heady aromas of grilled meat, tar, and bramble. Intense and rich on the palate, which offers more meaty notes alongside ripe black cherry and soy sauce; white pepper, rosemary, oregano, and rhu-barb dot the tongue. Tannins are round and supple but structured nonetheless.



YOUNTVILLE WINE IMPORTS



**Château Saint-Roch 2017
Chimères, Côtes du Rous-
sillon Villages AOP (\$18)**

Overdelivering on every level, this blend of 40% Grenache, 30% Syrah, and 30% Carignan grown on rocky, black schist soils near Maury is a true find. Earth and balsamic meld with blackberry and tar on the nose. A silky entry morphs into a chewy texture with dry tannins, mouthwatering blue fruit, and a hint of black pepper. Ripe cherry and plum liqueur make an appearance on the finish.

EUROPEAN CELLARS

**Domaine René Rostaing 2013 Puech
Noble, Coteaux du Languedoc (\$25)**

Grower René Rostaing made his name in the Rhône Valley and purchased Puech Noble (then called Puech Chaud) in the late 1990s. Located in the higher-elevation Côteaux du Languedoc, the property is covered with the same rounded stones—known as *galets roulés*—that are found in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Composed of Syrah grown on limestone soil, this robust red also contains small amounts of Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Rolle (better known as Vermentino). It's energized by its density and notes of crushed violet, coffee, plum, and defined graphite. White pepper and flowers wrap around an iron core.

RARE WINE COMPANY



**Les Vignerons de Fontès
2018 Prieuré Saint-Hip-
polyte Rosé, Languedoc
(\$10)**

Enologist Corinne Pastourel oversees 30 growers at the cooperative winemaking facility that makes this blend of 70% Syrah and 30% Grenache, which is fermented and aged in stainless steel and has more weight than most rosés. Its deep carmine blush and scents of peach and watermelon are vivid. The palate is silky, with a tempered cinnamon-strawberry sweetness; the unctuous texture rolls on the tongue while slate licks the savory notes on the dry finish.

DM VINEYARDS AND PARTNERS

ALSACE

Alsace is located in eastern France in a valley along the Rhine River, which separates the country from Germany. On the other side of the river is Baden, which produces wines in a similar style.

The two main regions in Alsace are the Bas-Rhin to the north and Haut-Rhin to the south, which lies on the low slopes of the Vosges Mountains. Picturesque villages, steep vineyards, and quaint restaurants abound in each; both French and German are spoken, and sauerkraut and sausages paired with Crémant d'Alsace and Pinot Gris are the go-to for lunch.

Here you can also find Pinot Blanc, Gewürztraminer, and dry Riesling that will make you weak in the knees, especially if it comes from the Grand Cru vineyards—Brand, Geisberg, Kaeferkopf—that make up a mere 4% of Alsace's total production. Alsatian Muscats can be mind-boggling, but the sleeper might just be Sylvaner from the Grand Cru vineyard Zotzenberg. As for reds, the region's Pinot Noir is improving. Sweet wines are Vendanges Tardives and the botrytized Sélection de Grains Nobles. If you see the terms Gentil, Edelzwicker, or Klevner on a bottle, it's likely a blend.

Alsatian wine is all about aromas—floral and peachy scents fly out of the glass—as well as texture: Many are unctuous enough to pair nicely with fowl like roast quail. The majority of producers do not use oak aging to add spice and richness; instead, they rely on a balance of ripeness and alcohol. —Terry Owyang

**Domaines Schlumberger 2017 Riesling Grand Cru Saering
(\$30)**

As the largest Grand Cru producer in Alsace, Schlumberger produces only estate-grown wines; 75% of its vines grow on steep, terraced slopes that must be worked by horse. With an altitude exceeding 900 feet, the Saering vineyard has soils of marl, limestone, and sandstone, making for a most delicate Riesling. Aromas of tangerine blossom, the clean scent of gladioli, and a hint of beeswax lead this fleshy white, which offers notes of salty lime and spicy ginger as well as a slight bitterness from the mineral base.

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES



Gustave Lorentz 2018 Riesling Reserve, Vin d'Alsace (\$22) A beeswax-dominant nose with minerality and sweet pear. After a steely entry, tightrope acidity is calmed by white tea, white flowers, and lush apricot.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

Domaines Schlumberger 2018 Pinot Blanc Les Princes Abbés, Alsace (\$20)

The fruit for this expressive white hails mostly from the Schlumberger estate's Grands Crus. Seven months' maturation on the lees allows for a textural adventure. The scintillating nectar of peach and apricot is spiced with lemon zest; acidity is in high gear; and the fragrance and flavors of white flowers and citrus peel dotted with white pepper are thoroughly enjoyable.

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES



LOIRE VALLEY

Truly one of the most scenic regions in France, with castle after castle as well as orchards and vineyards lining the banks of the river it's named for, the Loire Valley comprises about 800 square miles dotted with such notable towns as Orléans and Nantes. The latter is home to the oyster wine, Muscadet, made from the Melon de Bourgogne grape; it's light and refreshing, literally tasting of seashells and the ocean.

Indeed, white wines dominate production in the Loire's 80-plus AOCs. Vouvray and Savennières are made from Chenin Blanc to yield incredibly complex and high-acid whites tinged with notes of honey, and Sauvignon Blancs from Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé are famed around the world as fresh, bright, refreshing, food-friendly wines. But red wines made from Cabernet Franc are also widely esteemed; Chinon and Bourgueil are light-bodied yet tannic examples that see little oak and are made to pair with the local cuisine.

In addition, the Loire Valley produces more bubbly than any other region in France except Champagne; Saumur and the Crémant de Loire AOC both produce excellent sparkling wines that are great values as well. Rosés and dessert bottlings add to the region's stylistic diversity, but its wines are prized overall for their crispness and purity of fresh fruit. —Terry Owyang



Ladoucette 2018 Pouilly-Fumé, Touraine (\$45) Clay and limestone soil influence the delicately salty nature of this Sauvignon Blanc. Matured from three to six months on natural lees, the wine is blended about eight months after harvesting and stored in glass-tiled tanks. Exotic notes of kiwi match with salted pear. Richness and super-charged acidity are perked up by an underlying chalkiness, while sweet tangerine and lychee come through with elegance.

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

Denis Jamain Domaine de Reuilly 2018 Les Pierres Plates Blanc, Reuilly (\$22)

In the central Loire, Reuilly is known for its chalky soil (similar to that of Chablis) that also harbors fossils and seashells. This weighty 100% Sauvignon Blanc offers notes of salted caramel and cashew. The perfume of lemon, lime, and white flowers mingles with a wet-stone character.

KERMIT LYNCH

Domaine Pellé Menetou-Salon, Morogues (\$24) This 100% Pinot Noir comes from vines averaging 30 years old that grow in the Menetou-Salon village commune of Morogues; located in the easternmost sector of the Loire Valley, the area benefits from a cool continental climate. Soils comprising Kimmeridgian marl and hard limestone impart a vivacity and dominant minerality in the wine, which ferments in wooden vats for three to four weeks. There's earth on the first nosing, along with cinnamon, tomato, and rose petals. After slate comes through on the first sip, red flowers and raspberry wash over the palate, which remains light on its feet while showing a savory elegance.

POLANER SELECTIONS, NY



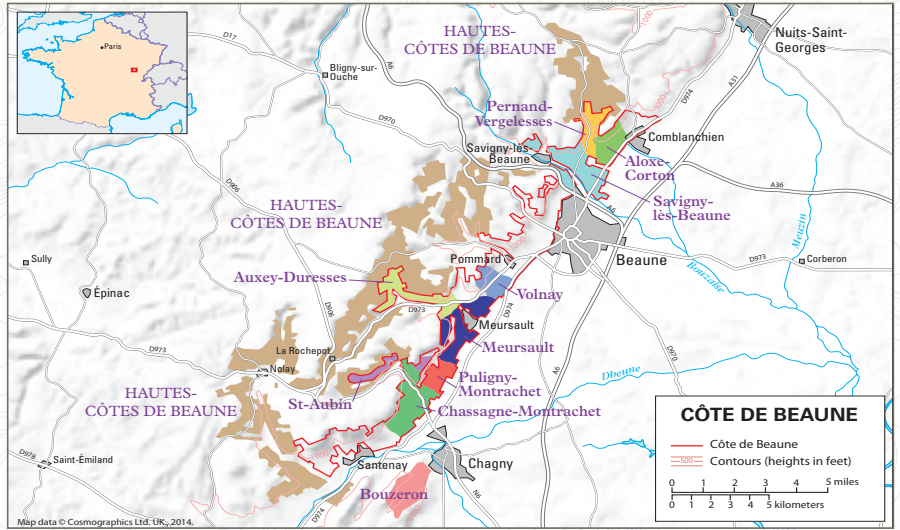
J. de Villebois 2017 Sancerre Les Silex (\$53) This delicious Sauvignon Blanc is named for the *silex* (flint) that

comprises 20% of Sancerre's soil; by capturing and reflecting heat from the sun, it aids early ripening and contributes steely acidity. Lush aromas of lemon biscuit and salted caramel precede a lean, flinty entry that's marked by creamy tones of key lime custard.

VINEYARD BRANDS



Located between Saumur and the Centre-Loire, Touraine is one of the largest appellations in the Loire Valley, encompassing over 12,000 acres from the Loire River to the Cher River. Its most important grape, Sauvignon Blanc, overperforms for its price, though Sancerre is becoming more expensive.



BURGUNDY

In the wine world, Burgundy enjoys a mystique unlike any other region. Chardonnay and Pinot Noir producers everywhere inevitably compare their bottlings to those of Burgundy, which grace the shelves of the finest merchants and headline the lists of renowned restaurants. The best is difficult to find and expensive to buy, yet demand over the past decade has continued to soar.

Due to the number of its growers, the diversity of its climats, and the variability of its climate, Burgundy is a complicated region to study. The wines of the Côte d'Or convey a distinct sense of place. Reds range from the powerful Pinot Noirs of Chambertin, Vosne-Romanée, Clos Vougeot, Échezeaux, and others to the silky elegance of Chambolle-Musigny and Volnay. White Burgundies—especially Puligny, Chassagne, and Meursault—combine grace with power.

There is no substitute for visiting the region when it comes to understanding its spirit, its history, its land, and its people. From Montagny to Montrachet and Mercurey to Musigny, the experiences it offers are infinite. —*Terry Owyang*



Harvest at Domaine de la Vougeraie.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOISSET COLLECTION



Maison de Grand Esprit L'être Magique Crémant de Bourgogne Brut (\$20)

One of the most charming aspects of this bubbly is its floral-to-citrus elegance—there's almost a touch of sweetness on both the nose and palate, imparted by tangerine and lemon blossom against a backdrop of subtle marzipan. A creamy and bright blend of 60% Chardonnay, 20% Gamay, and 20% Pinot Noir, it's made in the méthode champenoise and ages in bottle for 12 months.

TREASURY WINE ESTATES

Domaine de la Vougeraie is a collection of vineyards throughout Burgundy that were brought together by siblings Nathalie and Jean-Charles Boisset to reflect a common winemaking philosophy and style. According to the Boisset family, a commitment to organic and Biodynamic viticulture is fundamental to bringing Burgundian terroir to life. In the winery, the family works with different techniques and barrel types to highlight the elegant and expressive purity of each vineyard plot.

Le Clos Blanc de Vougeot is a monopole, or undivided property—it's one of the few within the Côte de Nuits to be planted almost entirely to Chardonnay. BOISSET COLLECTION



Louis Jadot winemaker Frédéric Barnier.

Maison de Grand Esprit 2017 L'être Magique Bourgogne (\$25) A lovely array of rhubarb and raspberry with the right touch of spice defines this easy-drinking, good-value Bourgogne rouge, combining predominantly Pinot Noir with Gamay. Mushroom and cinnamon lend extra aroma and flavor.

TREASURY WINE ESTATES

Louis Jadot 2018 Pouilly-Fuissé, Mâconnais (\$32) Aromas of butterscotch, white flowers, and red apple lead to a palate of cashew and peppered lemon blossom with a creamy, graceful mouthfeel.

KOBRAND

Louis Jadot Domaine Clair-Daü Rosé de Marsannay, Beaune (\$39) Situated in the northernmost section of the region, Marsannay is the most recent addition to the appellations of the Côte de Nuits. This deep salmon-hued expression shows aromas of rose petal and persimmon. Fresh and juicy flavors of watermelon join notes of spice cake and salted raspberry before the dry finish.

KOBRAND

Vincent Girardin 2017 Meursault Vieilles Vignes, Côte de Beaune (\$82)

The stone-fruit aromatics of this vibrant Chardonnay with chalky undertones are fresh and alert, and the mouthfeel is elegant—a glide of unctuous cashew and white-peppered pear in its own juice.

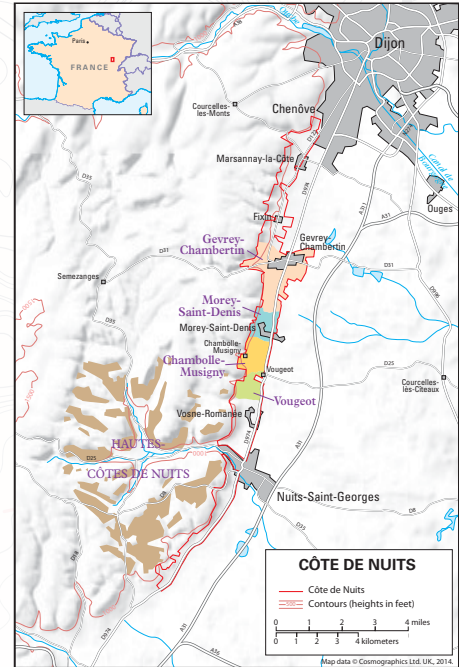
VINEYARD BRANDS



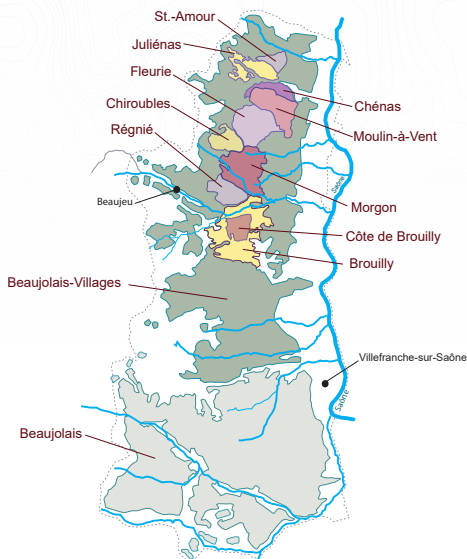
Vincent Girardin 2017 Puligny-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes, Côte de

Beaune (\$94) A stunning Chardonnay with a focused lemon-drop entry and high-toned acidity that's sleek and vivid. Spiced melon meets keen minerality.

VINEYARD BRANDS



BEAUJOLAIS



Copyright: The Society of Wine Educators 2016

Although Beaujolais is part of Burgundy, it's far different from the rest of the region. Firstly, at 34 miles long and no more than 9 miles wide, it's nearly a monoculture: 98% of the grapes that grow here are Gamay. Although varieties like Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Aligoté, and Pinot Gris are allowed, you won't find many plantings of them.

The three major classifications of Beaujolais are Cru Beaujolais, its most highly regarded; Beaujolais Villages AOP; and Beaujolais AOP, the largest of the trio. It's worth noting that the cru and village designations are all sourced from the area north of the Nizierand River, where you'll find predominantly granite and schist soils. Most of the Beaujolais AOP is produced in the southern reaches where limestone-clay marl prevails, and over half of its production is Beaujolais Nouveau, the glou-glou you're meant to drink fresh just weeks after harvest; that's partly in thanks to Beaujolais Nouveau Day, which is held the third Thursday of November.

Although those wines aren't meant to be taken seriously, all ten of the Beaujolais crus deserve our utmost attention. Moulin-à-Vent tends to be the broodiest, while Fleurie and Saint-Amour tend to be the lightest. —*Jessie Birschbach*

Georges Duboeuf Domaine des Rosiers 2018 Moulin-à-Vent, Beaujolais (\$22) This 100% Gamay was grown on pink granite with veins of manganese. Defined aromas of plum and crushed purple flowers are followed by sturdy and grainy tannins; bold, bright black raspberries; and undertones of roasted coffee beans. Juicy blackberry coats the superb mouthfeel, and the dark-chocolate finish has grip.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

Large, round stones known as galets surround the vines at Château La Nerthe.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KOBRAND

RHÔNE VALLEY

First planted around 600 B.C., the vineyards of the Rhône Valley, the second-largest winegrowing region in France, thrive on both sides of its namesake river. Located south of Burgundy, the Rhône is divided into the Northern Rhône and the much larger Southern Rhône, which make very different wines. In the Syrah-driven North are the famed regions of Château-Grillet (a single-winery AOC), Condrieu, Côte-Rôtie, Cornas, Saint-Joseph, Hermitage, and Crozes-Hermitage. The best wines include Hermitage Rouge, a mind-blower that easily ages for decades. Côte-Rôtie can be co-fermented with Viognier; it's gorgeous either way. Cornas is Syrah in its purest form—very meaty and rustic yet complex. Some of these wines can be as expensive as Grand Cru Burgundies.

In the Grenache-dominant South are Châteauneuf-du-Pape—France's first AOC, recognized in 1936—along with Vacqueyras, Cairanne, Lirac, Gigondas, Tavel, Beaufort de Venise, and Côtes du Rhône. Wines from the Côtes du Rhône appellation are made throughout the Southern Rhône and constitute half of its production, the rules of which allow for 21 different grapes in blends or as monovarietals.

—Terry Owyang



Copyright: The Society of Wine Educators 2019



Famille Perrin 2018 Gigondas La Gille (\$39)

This blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah

was sourced from a vineyard that covers 22 acres in Gigondas, including a clos (Clos des Tourelles) located just below the estate; 70% of the wine matured in casks and 30% in one-year-old barrels for 12 months. Crushed violets and rhubarb emerge from the glass as meaty flavors with iron filings accompany dark cherrywood. A finish of cigar leaf and black pepper arrives on a texture of pure velvet.

VINEYARD BRANDS



Château La Nerthe 2017 Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$60)

Spanning 225 acres, Château La Nerthe's vineyards occupy a single block that has been certified organic since 1998. Their sandy clay soils boast a surface layer of the famous large, round stones called *galets*. All 14 of the appellation's permitted varieties are planted here, though 62% of the vines—which average over 40 years

old—are Grenache. Offering focused aromas of rhubarb, orange peel, and iron, this spiced expression has abundant personality defined by cinnamon and cranberry: It's juicy, fresh, and vibrant, with a chewy texture and an earthy nature.



Delas Frères 2017 Hermitage Domaine des Tourettes (\$100)

Aged in new and used French oak, this dynamic wine was made with grapes grown on south-facing vineyards on the famous hill that overlooks the town of Tain, where the soils are granite with alluvial delta deposits and Pliocene marl. Aromas of grilled meat and cedar are apparent, as are scents

of cigar leaf and black cherry. The tannins are velvety yet well structured, and flavors of blackberry are spiced with black pepper and leather. SJ

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

KOBRAND

For the Love of
BOURGOGNE ALIGOTÉ

HAVING LONG PLAYED SECOND FIDDLE TO CHARDONNAY, BOURGOGNE'S OTHER WHITE GRAPE IS FINALLY GETTING ITS DUE



by Courtney Schiessl



PHOTOS: BMB/JESSICA WUILLAUME

An Aligoté bunch on the vine in Bouzeron.



TO many, Bourgogne is defined by its Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, but another white variety is notably winning over sommeliers and consumers alike: the lively, versatile Aligoté from the Bourgogne Aligoté appellation.

A true Bourgogne grape, Aligoté was first discovered in the region in the 17th century and shares its origins with Chardonnay (both are crossings of Gouais Blanc and Pinot Noir). But while Aligoté vines produced bigger, more plentiful grapes, they were largely replaced by their nobler sibling when phylloxera struck Bourgogne's vineyards in the late 1800s. Today, the grape comprises 6% of the region's total plantings.

While some villages, namely Bouzeron, have gained prominence for their Bourgogne Aligoté wines, the Bourgogne Aligoté AOC—created in 1937—covers the entire winegrowing region from Chablis to the Mâconnais. As winemakers and growers help realize its potential by giving it more attention and care in the vineyard and cellar, the spectrum of styles available of this incredibly terroir-expressive wine grows wider: Bourgogne Aligoté brims with mouthwatering acidity and salinity as well as a nose driven by green apple, peach, lemon, and white flowers, yielding expressions that can range from light and refreshing to rich and ageworthy.

This versatility and thirst-quenching vibrancy are precisely why wine lovers are embracing Bourgogne Aligoté as a pairing with dishes ranging from oysters to aged cheese and roast chicken. For these reasons—and many more—sommeliers agree that it should be an essential component of any wine list: Read on to see why ten professionals from across the U.S. are featuring Bourgogne Aligoté in their own programs.

Erik Segelbaum

Founder and Principal, SOMLYAY LLC, Washington, D.C.

Erik Segelbaum has included Bourgogne Aligoté in numerous wine lists over the course of his career. "With bright, focused acidity and the ability to magnify terroir, Aligoté Bourgogne has always been an invaluable tool in my white-wine toolbox," he says. "It pairs so well with so many restaurant dishes."

From summer picnics to pasta nights, Segelbaum rarely finds an occasion where Aligoté doesn't fit—but sommeliers aren't the only ones drinking it during their off-hours. "A well-known vigneron once told me that he makes Chardonnay to pay the bills," notes Segelbaum, "and Aligoté to please his palate."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIK SEGELBAUM



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREA MORRIS

Andrea Morris

Wine Director, Union Square Cafe, New York, NY

For Andrea Morris, Bourgogne Aligoté strikes that perfect middle ground between accessibility and complexity. "When it's well made, it's one of those wines where you can just enjoy drinking it without thinking too much about it," she says, "but if you pay attention to it, there's actually a lot going on." It also has many of the qualities that Union Square Cafe guests are looking for. "I often introduce them to Aligoté when they want something crisp, lemony, and minerally and are looking for great value," Morris says. "It always delivers!"

PHOTO: KYPO KARAMAS



James Sligh

Sommelier and Education Coordinator, Compagnie des Vins Surnaturels, New York, NY

According to James Sligh, "When treated with respect, Aligoté can express terroir almost more articulately than Chardonnay." Due to the aforementioned variation in styles, he recommends doing a bit of research to know exactly which side of Bourgogne Aligoté you're getting in the bottle, whether it's a lean expression that could substitute for Chablis or a rich cuvée that could offer value to fans of high-end white Bourgogne.

PHOTO: DAVID TURNER



Jennifer Wagoner

Wine Director, Sepia and Proxi, Chicago, IL

At Sepia, "Bourgogne Aligoté is always a staple, as it adds a bit of dimension to the French white section," Jennifer Wagoner says. "It is one of those selections that guests don't realize they love until it is recommended." She finds that many people want to enjoy Bourgogne wines without feeling the need to splurge on the region's top Chardonnays. "Bourgogne Aligoté is a great introduction . . . for guests that are beginning to educate themselves about the region," she adds.

PHOTO COURTESY VANESSA REA-MARCEL



Vanessa Rea-Marcel

Wine Director, Eastern Standard, Boston, MA

"Bourgogne Aligoté is a charming and approachable wine," says Vanessa Rea-Marcel, who offers a variety of expressions from different producers in the cellar at Eastern Standard. She enjoys recommending them to guests who want to drink well without going over budget, and no matter their preferences, it's often a good fit. "There are wines that showcase an array of styles: distinct mineral qualities, precise and focused acidity, [and] warm and round texture," notes Rea-Marcel.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVEN McDONALD



Steven McDonald, MS

Wine Director, Pappas Bros. Steakhouse Houston Galleria, Houston, TX

Anyone who doubts the affection that Steven McDonald, MS, proclaims for Aligoté can refer to his YouTube channel, Space City Somms. In a song titled, naturally, "Aligoté," he summarizes the grape's appeal: "Aligoté is my go-to when I can't splurge on the Grand Cru." McDonald notes that trying Bourgogne Aligoté from famous white Bourgogne producers has become a hobby because "it can offer a window into a [label] that would otherwise be unaffordable. Producers seem to be capturing a younger consumer that can then graduate up through their more premium wines."

PHOTO: ALIZA ELIAZAROV



Chris Struck

Sommelier, Crown Shy, New York, NY

Chris Struck is yet another somm who's pleased to have witnessed Bourgogne Aligoté's star rise in the U.S. market in recent years. "I get really excited when I see a good one by the glass somewhere," he says. "It's relatively affordable and totally distinct from Chardonnay." Struck notes that he uses the category to introduce guests to something new without making them stray too far from their comfort zones. "If you see it [available] by the glass in a restaurant, give it a go!" he adds. "Aligoté could be your next favorite grape."

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOBBIE BURGESS



Bobbie Burgess

Wine Director, Eat Local Starkville, Starkville, MS

Bobbie Burgess has found Bourgogne Aligoté to be a valuable asset in a wine list centered around guest education. "Aligoté is a unique variety that a lot of people are unfamiliar with, so, for my restaurant program, it is a great conversational wine," she says. To endear Bourgogne Aligoté to new consumers, Burgess not only regularly shares samples but also includes it in wine flights and tasting menus.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TORI CIAMBRIELLO



Tori Ciambriello

Assistant General Manager, Gage & Tollner, New York, NY

Bourgogne Aligoté is a go-to for Tori Ciambriello both personally and professionally. “From an economic standpoint, Bourgogne Aligotés are typically killer values, and you need bottles like that on your list,” she says. “From a personal standpoint, it’s simply delicious.” Like Segelbaum, she’s found that it’s also a good match for many occasions, from casual, family-style meals to fine-dining tasting menus. “For somms, it can be a secret weapon,” adds Ciambriello.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JACOB BROWN



Jacob Brown

Sommelier, Lazy Bear, San Francisco, CA

“I love top-end Burgundy, but my wallet does not,” jokes Jacob Brown. “Bourgogne Aligoté allows me to drink some of [the region’s] greats without having to check my bank account first.” Like McDonald, he finds it exciting that Bourgogne’s most well-known producers take as much pride in their Bourgogne Aligoté as they do in their top cuvées. But given the category’s appeal, Brown doesn’t believe that it will stay under the radar. “Try it and show it off now,” he says, “because I don’t think it will be around at these price points for much longer.” SJ

SELECTIONS CURATED BY PUBLISHER MERIDITH MAY

Domaine Rollin Père et Fils 2017

Bourgogne Aligoté Half of the vines that produced the fruit for this elegant and nervy wine are 50 years old. The nose is flinty, with fresh, vivid flavors of white flowers and white melon.

ROSENTHAL

Marcel Giraudon 2018 Bourgogne

Aligoté Vibrant ripe fruit, apple tart, and mandarin orange appear on the nose and palate, where they meld with Italian herbs and gardenia. Minerality pops on the finish.

WINE TRADITIONS LTD., FALLS CHURCH, VA

Louis Latour 2017 Bourgogne

Aligoté Average vine age is 30 years. Aromas of almond, quince, and white flowers precede melt-in-your-mouth flavors of lemon drop. Bright acidity and minerality remain in harmony alongside a generous splash of just-ripe pineapple.

Guy Amiot et Fils 2017 Bourgogne

Aligoté From 80-year-old vines planted in clay and limestone soil. Chamomile, lychee, and lanolin perfume the glass. The mouthfeel is luscious and rich yet has a steely core defined by tangerine, key lime, kiwi, and cashew butter.

SUMMIT SELECTIONS, NY

Domaine Chevrot 2018 Bourgogne

Aligoté Cuvée des Quatres Terroirs

The perfume that exudes from this graceful wine ranges from tangerine and lime to golden flower petals. The steely entry bursts with white flowers and linen before giving way to a juicy mid-palate.

Vignerons de Buxy 2018 Bourgogne

Aligoté Cuvée Silex Aromatics of brioche and green apple are enhanced by a clean and lively mouthfeel. Reined in by lemongrass, hazelnut lands on a slightly creamy mid-palate.

REGAL WINES

BOWLER

Domaine Sylvain Langoureau 2018

Bourgogne Aligoté Mineral-driven aromas lead to a chalky yet broad mouthfeel. Honeyed pear and exotic floral tones meet a zingy snap on the finish.

Domaines Albert Bichot 2018

Bourgogne Aligoté A minerally nose melds with sweet toffee and floral scents that carry over to the palate with notes of almond, making for a vivid and edgy white with zing.

ALBERT BICHOT USA LLC, HENRICO, VA

T. EDWARD WINES

Guilhem et Jean-Hugues Goisot

2018 Bourgogne Aligoté Made with fruit grown in soils comprising dense clay and fossilized oyster shells. Following aromas of tarragon and lemon verbena, dried herbs, lime blossom, and jasmine excite the palate. The texture becomes richer midway, expanding to a creamy finish. Jean-Hugues Goisot was among the first Bourgogne producers to practice Biodynamic viticulture.

POLANER SELECTIONS

Domaine Bernard Defaix 2018

Bourgogne Aligoté The flinty, tart nose exudes green citrus and the entry is racy and sleek, with a saltiness surrounding Asian pear and tarragon. Aged on fine lees for eight months.

WINEBOW

Jean-Philippe Fichet 2018 Bour-

gogne Aligoté From a producer known for its Meursault, this wine offers a seductive aroma of creamy orange custard. Flint and stone fruit band together with a dot of ginger root and a salinity that stays sharp on the finish.

THE RARE WINE CO., BRISBANE, CA

Ventoux

THE SOUTHERN
RHÔNE VALLEY'S
EASTERN AOC
IS EXPERIENCING
A SURGE

FINDS ITS GROOVE

by David Ransom

JUST OUTSIDE OF AVIGNON, you'll find one of the Southern Rhône's most exciting wine regions: the Ventoux AOC, which is nestled at the foot of the imposing mountain east of Carpentras that gives this up-and-coming appellation its name.

Not familiar with Ventoux? Here's a primer: Its production area covers just over 5,700 hectares, sprawling from the southern side of the Dentelles de Montmirail range southeast of Gigondas down through the Vaucluse plateau on the north side of the Luberon AOC. As in much of

the Southern Rhône, Grenache dominates here; reds make up 56% of the region's production, followed by rosé at 38%.

While Ventoux has a history of wine-making that, like much of the Rhône, dates back to Roman times, its focus on making quality terroir-driven wines has been a fairly recent development. "For longer than not, Ventoux was known for mass-produced, inexpensive wines," says vintner Corinna Faravel of Domaine Martinelle, which lies within spitting distance of the Dentelles. "But that's changing now, as we've finally

embraced the uniqueness of our region and what it allows for our wines."

Climate-wise, Ventoux is impacted by the Mistral, but due to the region's easterly position and relatively high elevation, the influence of the Rhône Valley's signature wind isn't as strong as it is in more centrally located areas. Further distinguishing Ventoux from the rest of the Southern Rhône is its namesake peak, which funnels cool air down from the Alps; this in turn creates an evening diurnal shift that counters the heat of the day during the growing season. "Our

Olive trees stand tall in a vineyard in Ventoux, where polyculture is a trusted practice.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF INTER-RHÔNE



Lavender fields grow at the foot of Mont Ventoux.

climate is definitely more moderate and this works in our favor, as it allows even Grenache, our signature red grape and my main focus, to show elevated freshness and acidity,” says James King, owner of Château Unang, a 1,200-year-old property located deep in the Vaucluse forest.

Ventoux’s climate is just one of the factors attracting a new generation of winemakers, who name the relative affordability and availability of land and an abundance of variation in the soils as other enticing elements. Many are French,

like Domaine de Fondrèche’s Sébastien Vincenti, Château Juvenal’s Anne-Marie and Bernard Forestier, and Domaine du Colibri’s Olivier Legranger; while others—among them Faravel, King, and Clos de Trias’ Even Bakke—are foreigners who are now helping to guide the direction of the region’s wines.

“Ventoux is the latest-ripening area of the Southern Rhône and as such presents freshness and acidity on a scale not seen in other areas. With freshness a goal of so many regions now, we are ideally situ-

ated to make a real impact in the Rhône lexicon,” says Frédéric Chaudière, owner of Château Pesquié, one of the AOC’s oldest and most prominent wineries. “I would say the Ventoux is booming, and all this new interest and investment is a good thing for everyone.”

This newfound vitality present in the region’s wines has not gone unnoticed by the U.S. sommelier community, a group constantly searching for exciting finds to present to their clientele. “Value is definitely something that I think the region has going for it, as Ventoux wines sometimes drink well above their price category, making them a good option to pour by the glass,” says Keri Levens, Wine Director at Chefs Club in New York City. “I also find the cooler-climate style a plus, as it makes these wines easier to pair with a wider variety of dishes.”

Sommelier and Meilleur Ouvrier de France honoree Christophe Tassan, who runs the wine program at The Battery in San Francisco, agrees: “As someone who grew up in nearby Avignon, Ventoux holds a special meaning for me,” he adds. “I’m delighted to see these wines finally starting to get recognition in the market.” SJ

An almond tree in bloom at the start of spring in Ventoux.



Preroll pairings are part of the dining experience with author Rachel Burkons' company, *Altered Plates*.

NO 420 IN 2020

THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY BRACES FOR LASTING CHANGES IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

by Rachel Burkons

While the impact of COVID-19 on the bar and restaurant industry has been devastating, there's a group of hospitality professionals that has been mostly left out of the conversation: cannabis chefs, event producers, and operators whose livelihoods have been upended by canceled events and bookings for the foreseeable future.

Because their businesses operate outside of the licensed cannabis market (no "cannabis chef license" exists, even in legal states), there is no path to financial recourse for these workers like, say, the Paycheck Protection Program or assistance from the Small Business Administra-



SOMM Journal Cannabis Editor Rachel Burkons.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALTERED PLATES

tion. And while several states did deem dispensaries essential businesses as part of their stay-at-home mandates, cannabis companies are barred from federal aid.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that if you'd asked any member of the cannabis sphere before the onset of the pandemic what April 2020—aka four full weeks of 420—would hold, they would have described their plans as, in a word, "epic." Chefs and event producers had the month booked solid with gatherings ranging from pop-ups and brand partnerships around major industry shows like Hall of Flowers to the usual dinners and parties, including infused Passover seders (my company, Altered Plates, typically does at least one a year).

Like their mainstream counterparts, cannabis hospitality professionals have scrambled to explore new models through Instagram Live discussions, Zoom cooking classes, and meal delivery kits, to name a few. But beyond working to keep its businesses afloat in the short-term, the industry is taking steps to prepare for how consumers will want to experience

cannabis in a post-pandemic world. Here are three key changes I predict we'll see moving forward.

✦ **No more sharing.** This one seems relatively obvious and, frankly, a bit late to the game. For some reason, the deeply ingrained "puff puff pass" nature of stoner culture has been hard to shake at events, where passing a joint or vape from person to person is still second nature ("Don't bogart that joint, man" is a cornerstone of our lexicon, after all). This mentality obviously should—and undoubtedly will—go the way of the dodo, and cannabis hospitality operators should be prepared to ensure there's enough product for everyone to sample without a side of their neighbor's saliva. Which leads us to . . .

✦ **The rise of the mini-joint (aka dog-walkers).** Thanks to the above, 1-gram, 1.5-gram, or oversized 2-gram joints may lose favor, paving the way for half-grams or even smaller mini-smokes. For

events, these are a no-brainer; but we can expect this trend to similarly take root on the retail side as people seek options for individual consumption.

✦ **The establishment of safe serving standards.** With no formal license available for their craft, cannabis chefs are regulatory orphans who have been left to devise their own best practices for food safety and dosing. Programs like ServSafe are not required for these operators, who often work in home kitchens rather than professional spaces. In terms of the safe handling of cannabis, new programs such as the American Culinary Federation's Cannabis Chef Certification aim to standardize procedures and techniques, but until such certifications become widespread, the ways in which cannabis chefs work with their star ingredient will vary—as will quality and guest experience. Furthermore, the safe sanitization of items like bongs and pipes will require different standards of care than other serveware. *sj*



Due to health concerns over sharing joints and vapes, "puff puff pass" may soon be a thing of the past.

SURROUNDED BY

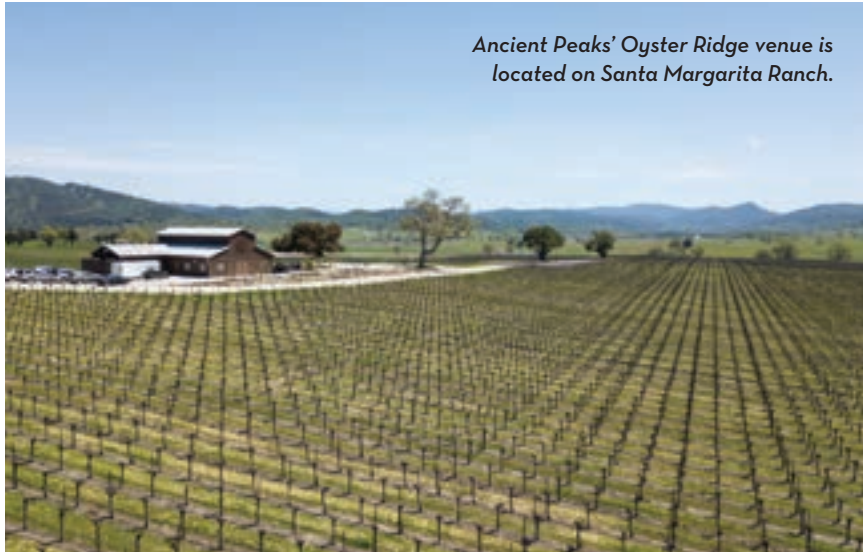
Sustainability

FROM VINE MANAGEMENT TO
COMMUNITY SUPPORT, MEMBERS OF
THE **PASO ROBLES CAB COLLECTIVE**
REVEAL HOW THINKING GREEN
BUILDS BETTER BUSINESS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PASO ROBLES CAB COLLECTIVE

*A dog wanders
through Castoro
Cellars' vineyard.*

Ancient Peaks' Oyster Ridge venue is located on Santa Margarita Ranch.



by Stacy Briscoe

Paso Robles traces its wine history as far back as the late 1700s, but it truly came into its own when Dr. Stanley Hoffman and André Tchelistcheff planted some of the region's first Cabernet Sauvignon vines in the 1960s. By the time Paso Robles gained AVA status in 1983, local pioneers Jerry Lohr, Gary Eberle, and Justin Baldwin (to name a few) had crowned Cabernet as the regional king.

Though varietal planting has since expanded, Paso Robles' wine-growing backbone remains solidly rooted in the potential it harbors for Bordeaux grapes, largely due to the diverse soil types, topography, and microclimates that define the region's landscape of rolling hills: Thanks to this variability, no two vineyards grow the same grapes in quite the same way, and no two winemakers produce identical wines.

Dedicated to promoting this storied winemaking tradition is the Paso Robles CAB Collective (PRCC), whose members aim to produce not only high-quality wines but also expressions that wholly embody their unique piece of Paso Robles. For several of them, a key component of that mission is sustainability.

J. LOHR VINEYARDS & WINES

Sustainability has been a central part of the J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines story since founder Jerry Lohr arrived in Paso Robles in 1986. Having grown up on a farm in South Dakota in the 1940s and '50s, he wasn't accustomed to using chemicals or irrigation, according to his son Steve Lohr, who now serves as CEO of the family-run winery. "Soil health was always important and dry farming was the norm," he notes of his family's approach.

While a farmer's intuition may have launched the J. Lohr name, the company's modern success is tied to the family's tireless promotion of environmentally sound practices in all sectors of their business. J. Lohr's wineries in Paso Robles and Monterey County are both solar powered, and much of the work in the vineyard has been focused on soil and water conservation. "When we came to Paso Robles in the 1980s, it was believed that there was a limitless supply of water available. Even though the region was dry, we were sitting on top of a large aquifer," Steve recalls. But over time, the water table dropped, and farmers were forced to be more mindful of their water usage.

According to Director of Winemaking Steve Peck, the J. Lohr viticultural team has adopted the best available tools for monitoring and controlling vine water stress during the growing season in order to drive conservation and wine quality,



J. Lohr Director of Winemaking Steve Peck.

Those tools go beyond soil-moisture measurement, ranging from a labor-intensive pressure-chamber reference method that directly measures the vines' water stress to new Tule Technologies evapotranspiration sensors that continuously evaluate the moisture flowing into the atmosphere from the vineyard. "It's all about how much water is available to the plant," Peck says. "The system measures moisture in the wind currents that go through the vineyard [and] how much water is escaping from the vines, the cover crops, and even the bare ground underneath the vines." These

tests zero in on the specific water needs of individual blocks and inform every decision the company makes regarding irrigation.

Other sustainable initiatives implemented by J. Lohr include the utilization of permanent cover crops without tilling to increase biodiversity, keep the soil moist, and mitigate dust; the winery has also upgraded from diatomaceous-earth filtration to cross-flow filtration, which does not require replacement sheets or cartridges that then must be disposed of responsibly.

The list extends beyond grape growing and winemaking to permeate the

J. Lohr's Shotwell Vineyard is located in the El Pomar AVA.

RIBOLI FAMILY WINES

Riboli Family Wines' new tasting room in Paso Robles.

company's culture as well. Thanks to its commitment to long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability, J. Lohr received the Green Medal Leader Award for 2020, confirming its "ability to balance multiple objectives . . . with sustainability being clearly integrated into the overall business."

"It's about inspiring others around you," Steve Lohr says. "When we're sharing best practices, it makes for better wines and a better environment overall."

J. Lohr 2017 Pure Paso Proprietary Red, Paso Robles The inaugural release of this royal purple-hued blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petite Sirah (with small amounts of Merlot, Petit Verdot, and Malbec) is a nod to the winery's 30-plus years of grape growing in Paso Robles. Aged 18 months in barrel (20% new), it's a silky beauty that exudes aromas of cedar, blueberry, and ripe, spiced plum. Dusty tannins develop into a juicier texture as it opens up to lip-smacking notes of ripe black fruit and dried violets. Most of the grapes were sourced from the El Pomar District, which Peck calls "the sweet spot of Paso Robles."

The family behind Riboli Family Wines has been part of the Paso Robles wine industry for more than a century. The winery was officially certified sustainable by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance in 2019, but according to fourth-generation owner and winemaker Anthony Riboli, it had essentially been in compliance for several years beforehand as part of a wider initiative focused on sustainability.

In 2016, Riboli Family Wines completed construction of its first estate winemaking facility designed with energy efficiency in mind; it's outfitted with a night-cooling system that turns off refrigeration and brings in external air to keep the building cool as well as a wastewater-treatment system and solar paneling.

In terms of winemaking, Riboli says that having a facility designed for proper sanitation is important for both wine quality and employee health and safety. Good drainage and properly coated concrete floors equate to less buildup of spilt juice and wine and, thus, less need for chemical cleaners. Then, regarding layout, he says

they "tried to create an open space that's easy for driving forklifts and foot traffic. Basic things make a difference—not just in how the employees feel but in how efficient they can be."

Riboli continues, "When we moved away from custom crush in 2016, the first harvest in the new winery, the wines were different—there's a new level of aromatics and complexity, and a lot of that is due to cleanliness."

Riboli Family San Simeon Estate Reserve 2016 Stormwatch, Paso Robles

We have closely followed (and admired) this masterful Bordeaux-meets-Robles red from vintage to vintage. The 2016, which blends 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Malbec, 15% Merlot, 10% Petit Verdot, and 3% Cabernet Franc, features heady and bold aromas of black licorice, dark chocolate, and black plum. It's chewy, fleshy, and broad-shouldered on the palate, with cocoa-powdered tannins and a weighty mouthfeel. Leather and black fruit join forces on the finish.





Castoro Cellars' tasting room is nestled within its estate vineyard.

A field of solar panels on the Castoro Cellars estate.

CASTORO CELLARS

Castoro Cellars was one of the original 13 wineries to participate in the Sustainability in Practice (SIP) pilot program back in 2008; today, all of its estate vineyards are certified organic through California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF). “We’ve always tried to be good stewards,” says Castoro Cellars founder Niels Udsen. “As we acquired and developed more land, we always had that in mind.”

Although Udsen has been making and selling his wine under the Castoro Cellars label since 1983, he and his wife and co-founder, Bimmer Udsen, purchased a vineyard and winery in 1991. He found the certification process for SIP and CCOF to be fairly straightforward. “We were already [performing the necessary practices], but it was nice to see that someone would quantify and qualify those efforts,” he adds.

The Udsens admit that fully implementing organic farming on all of their properties was a significant investment, but “as we got better at it, it didn’t end up costing that much,” Niels says. And in the long run, he notes, practices like water conservation, solar energy, and replacing synthetic chemicals with natural nutrients have actually saved money.

Castoro Cellars is also farming Biodynamically on some sites. “We are learning a tremendous amount and seeing many benefits,” Niels says. “One of our vineyards that’s farmed Biodynamically is so much [healthier than it was]. . . . Everything is so much more vibrant, and that [equates] to happy grapes.”

For Niels, the health and wellness of his employees is just as important as that of his grapes, a principle he says is particularly em-

braced by the SIP program. “SIP [considers] how you treat your employees [as part of sustainability]: If people feel good about what they’re doing, they’re going to do a better job every day,” he adds. “That’s an element often forgotten about in other programs.”

Castoro Cellars 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles

Winemaker Tom Myers sources 20% of his fruit from Whale Rock Vineyard in the Templeton Gap, where old sea bones can still be found in the soil. This cooler sub-AVA contrasts with Cab from the Estrella District, whose warmer temperatures impart ripeness and color in its wines. Aged 14 months in small oak barrels, this expression possesses firm tannins, sumptuous fruit, and a unique flavor of poppy seed that’s layered amid the fruit and savory notes.



Niner Wine Estates runs entirely on solar power.

NINER WINE ESTATES

Niner Wine Estates was the first winery on the Central Coast to achieve a LEED certification for its production and hospitality buildings, which run entirely on solar power. But while energy efficiency is a major component of the winery's sustainability efforts, President Andy Niner notes that water conservation is equally critical: "Generally, in Paso Robles, you have to think about water sustainability as an ongoing process. You're never at a point where you feel comfortable."

With this in mind, the tasting room's rooftop features a rain-collection system;

in the winery, meanwhile, wastewater reclamation captures water from cellar drains. What's accumulated from both sources is then redirected into ponds that serve as a source for vineyard irrigation. In all, the estate is able to save more than 1 million gallons of water each year.

Niner Wine Estates has also started its own composting program with harvest waste, combining must, stems, and MOG (aka "material other than grapes") with woodchips and microbes to create an ideal formula for vine nutrients. "We're trying to test whether a strategy of compost tea

plus no tilling will work in our vineyard," Niner says. "Specifically, if we can establish a good microbiota and preserve it by not breaking up the soil, will that result in greater disease resistance and healthier vines?" He notes that they're only in year one of a five-year-long experiment, so he and his team still have a lot to learn.

Niner Wine Estates 2016 Fog Catcher, Paso Robles Meaty, juicy, and big-bodied, with chalky tannins; aromas and flavors of plum liqueur, heather, and violets; and a luxurious, silky mouthfeel.

Niner Wine Estates' Heart Hill Vineyard in the Willow Creek District AVA.

ANCIENT PEAKS WINERY

Ancient Peaks Winery co-founder Doug Filipponi reclaimed ownership of his Margarita Vineyard property in 2005 when the Mondavi family sold their business to Constellation Brands. According to Filipponi, several sustainable initiatives had already been put in place by the Mondavis, but over the past 15 years, he and his team have implemented additional measures for the betterment of his vines—and, as a result, his wines.

In the vineyard, for example, the frost-protection sprinkler system has been reconfigured to reduce its water use by roughly one-third, with newly installed wind machines now serving as the primary tool for combating spring frosts. “It’s beneficial in more than one way. Not only do the wind machines save water, the use of sprinklers for water protection actually produces excess canopy growth that will eventually have to be removed,” Filipponi says. Mitigating this growth means decreasing the number of tractor trips through the vineyard for pruning, which in turn reduces diesel usage. It also prevents soil compaction, which would have to be addressed with more diesel-fueled trips for tilling.

Other initiatives Ancient Peaks has carried out since 2005 include adding a wastewater facility, installing solar panels in both the vineyard and the winery,



Mike Sinor is Director of Winemaking at Ancient Peaks Winery.

composting must and pomace, and even racking less—a technique that he says conserves water while improving wine quality due to less oxygen exposure.

“One of the three legs of sustainability is that you have to be able to make a profit: If you’re not, you’re not sustainable,” Filipponi adds. “It’s important that the company can sustain itself and that the things you do improve both the profitability and the health of the vineyard.”

Ancient Peaks 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles Just 14 miles from the Pacific, the southernmost AVA in Paso Robles is also its coolest, boasting the region’s longest growing season. Director of Winemaking Mike Sinor’s thoughtful blend of 88% Cabernet Sauvignon with small percentages of the other four Bordeaux varieties offers structure, vibrancy, and dimension. Inviting aromas of sweet earth, black olive, and blackberry precede a sumptuous mouthfeel with polished tannins and a backdrop of heather. There’s a line of chalkiness inherent to the terroir that works in tandem with balanced acidity and flavors of spiced cedar, espresso, and ripe plum.

The lush Santa Margarita AVA, where Ancient Peaks Winery is located, is nearly a monopole, as most of the land under vine there belongs to the winery’s estate.

ALLEGRETTO WINES

Allegretto Wines owner Douglas Ayres is a huge proponent of Biodynamic farming, which he sees as the central ethos of his company's approach in the vineyard and winery. While he isn't intent on seeking an official Biodynamic certification, he already goes above and beyond the formal farming requirements. "There are a lot of aspects that I



The Allegretto Vineyard Resort's bell tower peaks over the estate vineyard.

dive into that aren't always mentioned in Biodynamics, mainly about setting up a line of communication and interacting with the vineyard," Ayres says of making decisions on everything from vine spacing and row orientation to canopy management. "I'll inquire and be granted permission from the land before I do anything."

The 40-acre Willow Creek Vineyard in the Willow Creek sub-AVA is dedicated to Cabernet Sauvignon, while the 7.75-acre Allegretto Vineyard in the Estella District sub-AVA is planted to select French clones of Cabernet, Malbec, and Tannat as well as Vermentino and Viognier. "Where each is planted is totally chosen by the land and the varietal. There's a specific place where the vine wants to go, so I adhere to that," Ayres explains. "And the formation of what unfolds—the geometry and the layout—is just amazing." The benefit of this approach, he notes, is that he pays more attention to every detail in the vineyard. "Nothing goes unobserved," Ayres says.

Allegretto 2016 Ayres Family Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Allegretto Vineyards, Paso Robles Chocolate, rhubarb, and mountain brush are sweet and savory on the nose. Enveloped in crushed violets, plum, and leather, chalky tannins persist alongside focused acidity that wakes up the fruit while creating a sense of balance. *SJ*

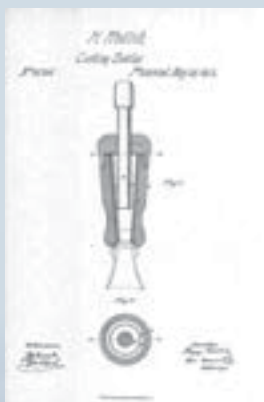
Sunset in the Willow Creek Vineyard.



Adapting to Change

NEW DOCUMENTARIES HELP ENOPHILES EXPERIENCE **THE WINE HISTORY PROJECT** FROM HOME

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE WINE HISTORY PROJECT



◀ This illustrated patent is part of the Wine History Project's corking tool collection.

▶ Venerated SLO winemaker Tom Myers is the subject of *Tom Myers: Made in Paso*.

ESTABLISHED IN 2015, the Wine History Project is staffed by historians and museum professionals who collaborate with a diverse group of individuals to document and preserve the viticultural legacy of San Luis Obispo County. Central to this mission is the process of interviewing influential growers and winemakers, whose testimonies augment archival photographs, documents, videography, and recordings to tell the expansive story of SLO County's wine history.

The organization oversees numerous exhibitions and artifacts, such as its beloved collection of corking tools, at various locations. But as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to keep the world at home, the Wine History Project has opted to release two documentaries through Vimeo that were originally set to premiere at several venues throughout SLO County in March. Both films were directed by Wine History Project founder Libbie Agran and produced by Tom Clott and Noel Resnick of Partners 2 Media.

91 Harvests centers around the Dusi family, who have grown grapes and produced wine in Paso Robles for nearly a century. The story of their eponymous Dusi Vineyard began in the early 1920s, after Sylvester and Caterina Dusi emigrated to the area from northern Italy. Three generations after they planted the land with Zinfandel—one of the first plantings of its kind in California's Central Coast region—their great-granddaughter Janell Dusi carries on their legacy through her label, J Dusi Wines.

The second documentary, *Tom Myers: Made in Paso*, features SLO winemaking expert Tom Myers, whom colleagues have described as the ultimate "winemakers' winemaker." In the film, Myers shares how he got his start in the industry and details his scientific approach to crafting world-class wines, among other topics.

Both documentaries can be rented or purchased, with all proceeds supporting the Wine History Project. Additional docs and short films will be added in the coming months to the organization's Vimeo channel at vimeo.com/channels/winehistoryproject.

The Wine History Project has applied for nonprofit status and is seeking donors to support various research and educational projects. Those interesting in contributing can contact Heather Muran at heather@winehistoryproject.org or 805-439-4647. \$|

PHOTO: JULIA PEREZ

SUSTAINING

Rosé

FROM VINE TO TABLE,
PROVENCE READIES
FOR THE FUTURE

by Christy Canterbury, MW

ROSÉ IS HERE TO STAY—and not just because it's beloved by consumers. Even before the excitement surrounding the category began to crescendo, Provence vigneronns were hard at work on embracing sustainability in both the vineyard and the winery in an effort to minimize the environmental impact of agriculture while preserving biodiversity.

Provençal rosé producers have long invested in protecting the environment and preparing for climate change, but the future has quickly become the present as the need for sustainable practices grows increasingly urgent. According to the Cabinet d'Agronomie Provençal, average temperatures in Provence increased 1.4 degrees Celsius/2.5 degrees Fahrenheit over the course of the last century, and they're expected to surge an additional 2–6 degrees Celsius/3.6–10.8 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100.

This ladybug in Cotignac represents just one of many characters present in a biodiverse vineyard.

Suited to Sustainability

Provence is well suited to sustainable viticulture thanks to its hot and dry climate, with the legendary Mistral winds mitigating summer humidity and harvest rains. As of 2019, 19% of Provençal vineyards were certified organic; additionally, 13% have converted to a national sustainability program called Haute Valeur Environnementale (HVE), which translates to “High Environmental Value.”

The HVE farming philosophy centers around four goals: plant protection strategy, fertilization management, water resource management, and biodiversity preservation. That last goal is particularly important in the case of Provence, which is the second-largest forested region in France and is highly biodiverse due to its small parcels and polyculture systems.

Provence aims to have 60% of its vine-

yards either certified as organic (noted as “AB,” or Agriculture Biologique, in French) or in adherence with HVE by 2024. A goal of 100% is set for 2030. Other common certifications in the region include Demeter, Vin Méthode Nature, and Terra Vitis.

Evolving Vineyard Practices

Provence’s historic *restanques*, predominantly found near the Mediterranean coast, serve as a shining example of how the region protects and promotes the health of its vineyards. *Restanques*, the term for the terraces that run perpendicular to a vineyard’s slope, not only minimize soil erosion but also reduce compaction because machines typically cannot be used.

Forests cover almost half of the region’s surface area and house a richly diverse array of species. Plots in Provence are fragmented with hedges and groves to

conserve this biodiversity and foster resilience, which ultimately helps reduce the use of pesticides.

The process of conceptualizing and planting a new vineyard is the optimal time to plan for the future while simultaneously reflecting on Provençal viticulture traditions. Vignerons can consider options like the following, which must be in accordance with the Provence Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) standards:

- Planting higher-elevation or north-facing sites
- Changing the row orientation for trellised vines to avoid the highest levels of sun exposure
- Reducing vine density to lessen hydric stress (this can also be done within existing plots simply by removing vines)



PHOTO: ZOE LEMONNIER

A horse tills a vineyard in Fox-Amphoux.

Of course, most winegrowers are working with established vineyards. To preserve biodiversity and adequately prepare for the future, vigneron can take steps to reassess their approach to vineyard management in two main areas: the soil and the water supply.

Cover crops are integral to soil management, as they reduce water evaporation, prevent erosion, allow machinery to pass through the vineyard after rains, and promote humidity retention underground when not tilled under. Still, to avoid making the vines compete for water, mowing or planting cover crops every few rows may be ideal. Transitioning to the use of grazing animals is also beneficial, as the carbon emissions that result from turning under the cover crops are reduced or eliminated; the animals also help fertilize the vineyard. Similarly, crops like clover and vetch contribute beneficial nitrogen to the soil.

Irrigation use, meanwhile, continues to evolve in Provence. Ten years ago, the practice was not allowed, and while restrictions have been modified, it is strictly monitored. Provençal winegrowers are working with local institutions to improve their approach to water management through the use of drip systems and even underground irrigation in order to preserve local groundwater and minimize the impact on the newly extended Canal de Provence. Some wineries also maintain ponds or lakes in which rainwater—and sometimes recycled winery water—is collected for vineyard use.

Sustainability in the Cellars

Whereas managing the vineyard requires some energy use, the cellar is an insatiable energy consumer. The process of reducing consumption starts with winegrowers harvesting as early in the morning as possible to bring grapes in at cooler temperatures; this reduces the electricity required to cool them for pre-fermentation maceration and also keeps the grapes from overheating in their tanks, which damages the delicate aromas of rosé.

The pursuit of freshness in rosé does not occur solely during the winemaking process. Aging, bottling, storing, and shipping wine requires temperature control



Flowers grow in a vineyard in Cotignac.



PROVENCE INVESTS IN GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH

When planting a vineyard, growers are increasingly taking into consideration which grapes and rootstocks can thrive in the midst of heat and drought. Naturally, the varieties currently planted in Provence are already well adapted to both conditions, but seeking out more drought- and disease-resistant grapes will ensure that the need for vineyard irrigation and treatments is lessened.

In that vein, a revolutionary Rosé Research Center program unfolding in the EDGARR genetic lab is assessing the potential of new varieties that would preserve the current style of Provençal rosé well into the future. The lab aims to develop varieties best-suited to rosé production in terms of aromatic optimization as well as disease and drought resistance by crossing grapes immune to mildew and oidium with Vermentino and Cinsault.

The EDGARR program commenced at the same time as an InnovitiRosé study, which focused on maintaining grape diversity in Provence as the region responds to new environmental challenges. A third program, RESDUR Rosé, launched in 2019; it aims to evaluate some of the new varieties created by the National Agricultural Research Institute in previous RESDUR programs and their employability in quality rosé production, with a goal of minimizing the use of additives during the winemaking process.

In addition, the Côtes de Provence winegrowers syndicate may ask the Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité (INAO) to consider adding new grapes to the official winemaking tool kit of Provençal rosé. Such a petition was recently made with two existing local varieties, Caladoc Noir (a Grenache-Malbec cross) and Rouseli RS (an autochthonous variety); it's hoped that both will be approved by 2022 at the latest. This first stage will be followed by the introduction of five new international grapes that could be approved by the INAO within a ten-year period.

Rootstock selection is also a major consideration when planting a vineyard. Currently, just 5% of the rootstock types authorized in France make up 75% of what's used, but dozens of other types currently in use around the globe could be added to the French repertoire in the future. Groundbreaking (pun intended) research lies ahead!

A TRIO OF PROVENÇAL PRODUCERS

every step of the way; for this reason, producers have spent the last few decades building cellars underground or in hillsides while incorporating natural light into their work spaces and using gravity flow rather than machinery to reduce energy use wherever possible. Moreover, Provence's climate makes it an ideal place for the installation of solar panels and wind turbines, whose clean-energy production can be directed to the cellar.

A surprisingly large consumer of energy are wine bottles themselves. The 2016 launch of Ecoscience Provence has provided an important source of environmental relief, as the organization collects bottles and removes their labels before washing and distributing them back to participating wineries via a channel called La Consigne de Provence. (Note that it takes four times less energy to wash and reuse a bottle than it does to recycle it!) In February 2020 alone, La Consigne de Provence washed 8,000 bottles, saving an estimated 4 tons of waste and 968.5 kilograms of carbon-dioxide emissions.

While in some ways better suited to handle climate change than other wine-growing regions, Provence has nevertheless distinguished itself as a leader in researching and employing ways to sustain its vines and modernize its cellars. This ensures Provence's winemaking longevity in the years to come while protecting the health of its ecosystem and the biodiversity of its grape varieties. *s|*

To learn more about the groundbreaking research happening in Provence, visit vinsdeprovence.com and centredurose.fr/en.

These three producers are shining examples of the sustainability-related efforts being made within the winemaking community of Provence.

Château Cavalier

- Earned Terra Vitis certification in 2009
- Began soil-preservation efforts with the installation of cover crops over 20 years ago
- Installed rainwater tanks to irrigate its vines in the summer months
- Avoids the use of herbicides on 95% of the vineyard surface and refrains from pesticide use
- Makes fertilizer from homemade compost fermented with local manure and hay

Château Léoube

- Has been committed since 1998 to a responsible agricultural approach
- Uses chamomile as a vineyard cover crop
- Avoids the use of pesticides, herbicides, and chemical products
- Exclusively utilizes organic fertilizers
- Introduced beehives to improve pollination in the vineyard

Chamomile cover crops at Château Léoube in La Londe.

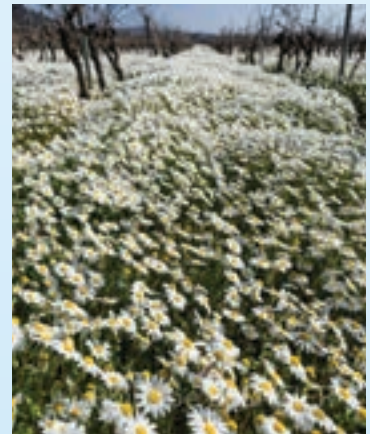


PHOTO COURTESY OF CHÂTEAU LÉOUBE

Château Duvivier

- Certified in 1992 under Delinat Bio Garantie, a product label with standards based on biodiversity
- Conserves vineyard biodiversity with cover crops, agroforestry, bocage hedges, and insect hotels
- Employs a permaculture system
- Invests in the research and cultivation of disease-resistant grapevines
- Aims to obtain energy self-sufficiency by 2021



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHÂTEAU DUVIVIER

"Insect hotels," pictured inside a wine barrel at Château Duvivier in Ponteveyès, help promote biodiversity.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHÂTEAU CAVALIER

Château Cavalier in Vidauban uses basins like this one to collect rainwater.



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2016

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BUIO
2017



