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## VINEYARD FOCUS: CHARDONNAY

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**Product Review:** The Next Generation of POS Software

> Tech Survey Reveals Increased Investment in E-commerce

Barrel Tracking Systems that Cater to the Small Winery

#### Plus:

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## month in review

## On Deploying New Technology

**A LITTLE OVER A** year ago, I attended a marketing conference where wine marketing and technology executives exchanged ideas. There were roughly 150 industry professionals in attendance, most of them were folks working in wine marketing or sales. During a discussion about e-commerce, a speaker asked for a show of hands to indicate how many people were "happy" with their point-of-sale (POS) systems. Nobody in the room raised their hand.

Why weren't any hands raised? There are many possible reasons. Some systems are built on legacy platforms managed by small teams; other systems aren't made to meet the unique needs of wineries. Outdated technology can be a factor, but it's difficult for any system to cover all the needs of any business, let alone the needs of wineries. There are trade-offs.

The good news is winery POS systems are evolving, providing wineries with better tools for increasing wine club conversions, average orders and for follow-up marketing. Increasingly, advanced POS products are available and a new wave of integrated and of improved systems are also hitting the market.



Whether for the vineyard, the cellar, the tasting room or for selling wine in an evolving marketplace, part of our mission at *Wine Business Monthly* is to be a resource for wineries and growers as they evaluate and deploy new products and technology.

Since that's part of the mission, it's quite appropriate that this issue includes a product review on POS systems; articles on emerging technology for fermenting wine in small batches; the latest barrel tracking software systems; results from the latest WBM technology survey; a software directory – even an article about how to calculate the financial return associated with investing in new technology.

Here's to making and selling the best wine possible, and to deploying new technology successfully.

Cyril Penn – Editor

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## winemaking





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John Hinman, founder and partner, Hinman & Carmichael LLP, "Supreme Court Strikes Down Tennessee Residency Requirement for Liquor Stores," page 12

"I interpret this to mean that if there are no DTC statutes on alcohol sales and delivery mirroring local retail delivery protocol restrictions, restrictions on out-ofstate merchants selling to the same consumers that similarly licensed local stores sell and deliver to are unconstitutional. The major impact of this decision will be on wine, but the world of spirits was just opened up to the American consumer."

### Mark Greenspan, founder, Advanced Viticulture Inc., "Managing Vineyards with Red Blotch Virus," page 76

"We've lived with leafroll for a long time and, though it can be annoying and eventually economically damaging, it's nothing compared to Red Blotch. If leafroll is a hammer, Red Blotch is a wrecking ball."

David Parrish, founder, Parrish Family Vineyard, "Using Canopy and Shade Cloth to Reduce Sunburn," page 82

"A full canopy is your first line of defense against sunburn."

Chuck House, label and brand designer, Icon Design Group, "Sixth Annual Wines & Vines Packaging Conference," page 100

"I am personally and professionally committed to the concept of 'sustainable enthusiasm."

### Amanda McCrossin, sommelier, The Press, "Sommeliers on Wine Packaging," page 92

"I love the evocative appeal of wax-enclosed bottles, but that love is lost when I have to open the bottle."





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## news



#### Top Stories from WINE BUSINESS.com – In Case You Missed It



## Supreme Court Strikes Down Tennessee Residency Law Requirement For Liquor Stores

Kerana Todorov

**Kerana Todorov** is staff writer/news editor for *Wine Business Monthly*. She can be reached at *ktodorov@winebusiness.com* 

**THE SUPREME COURT WEIGHED** into the 21st Amendment in June, when it handed a win to out-of-state retailers who had challenged Tennessee's residency laws.

But justices ultimately ruled that Tennessee's law requiring a retailer be a state resident for at least two years was unconstitutional. In a 9-2 vote, the court affirmed the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit that had found residency requirements unconstitutional under the dormant commerce clause.

**Samuel Alito** wrote in his majority opinion that the residency requirement is discriminatory against nonresidents.

The 21st Amendment "allows each State leeway to enact the measures that its citizens believe are appropriate to address the public health and safety effects of alcohol use and to serve other legitimate interests, but it does not license the States to adopt protectionist measures with no demonstrable connection to those interests," Alito wrote.

The 2-year residency requirement was "ill-suited to promote responsible sales and consumption practices," the justice wrote, adding "there are obvious alternatives that better serve that goal without discriminating against nonresidents."

The residency requirement only protects liquor retailers in Tennessee "from out-of-state competition," Alito wrote.

"We therefore hold that this provision violates the Commerce Clause and is not saved by the Twenty-first Amendment," Alito concluded.

Concurring were Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

Dissenting were Justice Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch.

The case was a win for **Total Wine & More** and for **Kimbrough Fine Wine & Spirits**, the latter a store owned by former Utah residents in Memphis, Tenn. Neither Total Wine or Kimbrough met Tennessee's two-year residency requirement when they applied for a liquor license about three years ago.

The **Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association**, a trade association representing independent Tennessee liquor stores, in 2018 appealed a lower court decision that the residency law was unconstitutional before the U.S. Supreme Court. Total Wine opened a store in Knoxville in 2018. The wine industry wondered if the Supreme Court case could extend direct-to-consumer shipping rights to retailers as *Granholm v. Heald* had done for producers. The 2005 Supreme Court decision meant that states could not discriminate against out-of-state retailers. Attorneys said the 57-page opinion was a definite win for consumers, while others cast doubt that it would open the door to retailer direct-to-consumer (DTC) shipping.

**John Hinman**, founder and partner at **Hinman & Carmichael LLP** in San Francisco, welcomed the decision, calling it "Son of Granholm."

"This is the most significant Commerce Clause decision affecting alcohol since *Granholm v. Heald* in 2005," Hinman said. "While affirming that the Tennessee residency requirements were unconstitutional because they were protectionist and served no legitimate purpose, the Court articulated a Commerce Clause test for measuring the constitutionality of all commercial restrictions on interstate alcohol sales (not just wine)," Hinman said.

"I interpret this to mean that if there are no DTC statutes on alcohol sales and delivery mirroring local retail delivery protocol restrictions, restrictions on out-of-state merchants selling to the same consumers that similarly licensed local stores sell and deliver to are unconstitutional," Hinman said. "The major impact of this decision will be on wine, but the world of spirits was just opened up to the American consumer."

It is "a red-letter day for the American Consumer," he said.

"This decision allows retailers to attack discriminatory laws; which will open many states that now permit in-state retailers to ship to consumers but prohibit out of state retailers from exercising the same privileges," Hinman said.

"If a state permits in-state delivery of wine and spirits from in-state retailers it must also permit out of state retailers to exercise the same privileges on equal terms," Hinman said.

"The next step, as the wineries started in 2005 after Granholm, is a state by state attack on exclusionary restrictions," he said.

John Trinidad, partner at Dickenson Peatman & Fogarty (DPF) in Napa, said the Supreme Court ruling means that *Granholm vs. Heald* applies to retailers.

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"The end result is that states must now defend any discriminatory or protectionist alcohol beverage laws without the luxury of relying on the Twenty-First Amendment, giving retailers wishing to ship across state lines a leg-up in future legal challenges," Trinidad and attorney Bahaneh Hobel wrote on their DPF blog. Hobel is partner at the law firm.

"Today's decision, however, does not mean that retailers can begin shipping across state boundaries legally," Trinidad and Hobel wrote. "Additional court challenges or legislative changes are needed to fully open the door to retailer direct-to-consumer shipping."

Tim Droske, an attorney with Dorsey & Whitney, said that the court decision means that "going forward, any State liquor laws that discriminate against nonresidents will need to be carefully crafted to address public health and safety concerns in order to overcome the Court's view that such laws are little more than protectionist measures."

"Any state laws that explicitly exclude the out-of-state shipment of wine directly to consumers, while not similarly prohibiting in-state direct-toconsumer shipments, could now be constitutionally suspect, particularly to the extent the State has not done anything to justify the law as bearing a relationship to public health or safety," Droske said.

Other attorneys did not see a broad ruling. "I do see it as fairly narrow at this point," said **Andrew Bayne**, partner with **The Bayne Law Group**.

So did Lindsey Zahn, an attorney with Lehrman Beverage Law, PLLC. "While I agree that the Supreme Court's ruling in *Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association v Russell F. Thomas* is a large win for the alcohol beverage industry generally, the (decision) is very narrow," Zahn said. "At this point, additional challenges to existing legislation or new legislation will be needed in order for retailers to ship directly to consumers throughout many or all states."

"Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association v. Russell F. Thomas will certainly call into question the constitutionality of more state alcohol beverage laws that may directly discriminate against alcohol beverage businesses located in other states," Zahn also said. "However, the extent to which the ruling may apply to potentially discriminatory laws other than, e.g., residency requirements is yet to be determined; we will see more as district courts attempt to unravel and apply the Court's ruling."

Total Wine & More applauded the Supreme Court opinion in a written statement and announced it plans to open a second store in Tennessee. That store is slated to open next year in Brentwood near Nashville, according to the company.

Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA), which includes 370 members across all 50 states said it disagreed with the court ruling:

"The decision of the Supreme Court to strike down Tennessee's right to enforce durational residency laws for licensees erodes the Twenty-first Amendment and primary state authority...Since alcohol is unlike any other consumer good, the Twenty-first amendment was enacted to give states authority to regulate alcohol as they see fit, and that authority remains broad. In exercising that authority, states have enacted the three-tier system to promote accountability, public safety and economic competition."

The association also noted most rules regulating alcohol remain in effect, including the three-tier system.

"Although WSWA disagrees with the outcome of today's Supreme Court ruling, we agree with the Court that the promotion of public health and safety is a primary function of alcohol regulation, with the three-tier system being paramount to the creation of the safest alcohol market in the world," the association said in its statement.

"America's system of beverage alcohol regulation continues to be a global standard—offering consumers unparalleled safety and selection, ensuring cost-effective and efficient tax collection, guarding against counterfeit alcohol and illegal markets, fostering competition, and promoting social responsibility."

The Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association said the majority opinion recognizes liquor "is a unique commodity" and affirms states' rights under the Twenty-First Amendment "to enact liquor-related regulations for the health and safety of residents, even if those regulations might be impermissible in other industries under the dormant Commerce Clause."

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Association v Russell F. Thomas* on Jan. 16. WBM



## Top Stories from WINE BUSINESS.com – In Case You Missed It



#### **Bordeaux Wine Producers OK Seven New Varieties**

The wine syndicate of Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur has approved seven new varieties to adapt with climate change conditions. The varieties are: Arinarnoa, Touriga Nacional, Castets, Marselan, Alvarinho, Petit Manseng and Liliorila. This is a preliminary approval. The governmental body that regulates French agricultural products with protected designations of origin – **INAO** – has to validate the Bordeaux and Bordeaux Supérieur AOC Association's June 28 vote. The first plantations with the seven new varieties are scheduled for 2020/2021. Grapegrowers can only plant 5 percent of their vineyards with the newly approved varieties; wine producers are only allowed to blend up to 10 percent of their wines with the new varieties under AOC rules.



#### **Republic National Distributing Company to Partner with Young's Market Company**

**Republic National Distributing** (RNDC) and **Young's Market Company** (Young's) in June reported they have agreed on a wine and spirits distribution joint venture. RNDC will lead daily sales and operations in 32 states and the District of Columbia while Young's will coordinate operations with RNDC. A board of directors that includes executives from both companies will oversee the joint venture. The agreement is expected to close later this year. It is subject to regulatory approval.



#### Upper Midwest Vineyard Damaged from Extreme Cold

Vineyards in the Upper Midwest were damaged during the record low temperatures late January, according to multiple reports. Minnesota and Wisconsin temperatures dropped to -40°F while Iowa's low was -34°F late January. **Mike White**, extension and outreach viticulture specialist at **Iowa State University**, reported seeing vineyards in Iowa where only tertiary buds were pushing. He saw dead cordons and even dead trunks. **Annie Klodd**, assistant extension professor for fruit and vegetable production at the **University of Minnesota**, said some growers in Minnesota lost vines to the ground.



#### Heitz Wine Cellars Buys Napa Valley Vineyard

In June Napa Valley's **Heitz Wine Cellars** purchased a 50-acre in Rutherford from **Treasury Wine Estates** for about \$25 million, according to public records. A Treasury Wine Estates representative said **Wildwood Vineyard** was "non-core" to the business. The Heitz family founded the winery in 1961 and owned it until April 2018, when family members sold the property and about 400 acres of vineyards to Arkansas billionaire **Gaylon Lawrence Jr**.



#### Longtime Mendocino Grapegrower Barra Dies

Longtime Mendocino County grapegrower and winery owner **Charlie Barra** died June 29 at his home in Ukiah, Calif. He was 92. He was known as Mendocino's "godfather of grape growing." He started producing **Barra of Mendocino** in 1997. He converted all his vineyards in 1989 to organic farming. Barra was a co-founder, past president and a 41-year board member of the **California North Coast Grape Growers Association**. He also served on the **Mendocino County Planning Commission** and on the **Mendocino County Board of Supervisors**. Survivors include his wife of 39 years, **Martha Barra**; daughter **Antoinette Barra**; Martha's children **Shelley Maly** and **Shawn Harmon**; and four grandchildren.



#### Accentuated Cut Edges Technology Machine Accelerates Maceration

**Della Toffola**'s Maceration Accelerator uses Accentuated Cut Edges – or ACE - technology that reduces maceration time by up to 50 percent and extracts more polyphenols and anthocyanins from the fruit than by traditional methods. The machine acts like a blender to fragment grape skins, increasing the number of cut edges from where tannins and color compounds leak, speeding the maceration process. Della Toffola wants to partner this fall with North Bay wineries to conduct trials. **WBM** 

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winemaking

## VINEYARD FOCUS: CHARDONNAY

Lance Cutler has been a working winemaker in Sonoma County for 35 years. He has been a contributing editor for *Wine Business Monthly* for more than 10 years. His unique perspective on winemaking has led to our Industry Roundtable series and our Varietal Focus series. Lance is also the author of four books, including *The Tequila Lover's Guide to Mexico*.

**CHARDONNAY IS GROWN IN** nearly every wine-producing region in the world, with more than 520,000 acres planted worldwide. It is relatively easy to grow and can adapt to different conditions although it seems to do best in limestone, chalk, clay and sandy loam. Chardonnay vines can be vigorous, but the better wines are produced from smaller yields due to either soils, climate conditions or vineyard management techniques. The grape reflects both specific terroir character and the hand of the winemaker who makes it.

According to modern DNA research, Chardonnay was originally a cross of Pinot Noir and the nearly extinct Gouais Blanc grape varieties. There are 34 different "Dijon clones" of Chardonnay in France, and they have been exported all over the world. In California, **Wente Vineyards** developed a clone that was quickly adopted by many California growers and continues to be used today.

Chardonnay's popularity peaked in the late 1980s when the style was ripe, rich, buttery and oaky, a style that often overwhelmed the subtle aromas and flavors of terroir. There was a backlash against those huge Chardonnays with movements like ABC (Anything But Chardonnay) and In Pursuit of Balance. Now, the pendulum has swung back in favor of Chardonnays that reflect their place of origin with the balanced influence of the winemakers who make them. Deciding when to pick is the major choice winemakers have to make in determining style for Chardonnay. The key is to retain as much natural acidity as possible. Winemakers have shifted to more whole-cluster pressing in attempts to preserve terroir-influenced aromas and flavors. Wines are often barrel-fermented sur lie for added complexity. A major consideration is whether to allow the wines to undergo malolactic fermentation, which affects the mouthfeel, texture and crispness of the finished Chardonnay. Malolactic fermentation, especially in conjunction with newer oak barrels, tends to create richer, bigger wines with a definite creamy character. Winemakers that eschew malolactic and use less new oak seek crisper, more mineral-driven wines.

These days, winemakers are so conscious of different terroir influence that they often choose to produce several different Chardonnays, each from a different vineyard. For this Vineyard Focus on Chardonnay we wanted to examine how experienced winemakers preserved the unique character of individual vineyards while still allowing their winemaking techniques to shine through. We selected three renowned vineyards, each of which sells their Chardonnay to dozens of winemakers.

Hyde Vineyards in Napa Carneros has achieved legendary status. We included the family's own Hyde Estate Winery with winemaker Alberto Rodriguez, along with Dan Petroski from Massican Winery and James Hall from Patz and Hall. From the Durell Vineyard, first planted in 1979, we have Ryan Prichard of Three Sticks Wines and Kenneth Juhasz, who makes wine for his own Auteur Wine, as well as Dunstan Wines. Finally, the Sangiacomo family's Green Acres Vineyard is represented by Jim Gaffner of Saxon Brown Wines, Tim Colla from Saintsbury Winery and James MacPhail for their own Sangiacomo Family Wines.

#### HYDE VINEYARDS

Ever since **Larry Hyde** purchased the original 72 acres in Napa Carneros, it has been a family affair. The vineyard was located in a cool growing region that has shallow soils but showed itself to be a prime location for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Hyde was fascinated with farming and welcomed experimentation as he farmed. He sought out the best heritage clones, like Old Wente Chardonnay; and when he discovered there were four different selections of Old Wente, he focused on small cluster selections, supposing they would make the best wine.

The vineyard's shallow soils and cool climate seemed well-suited for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Hyde discovered he could grow wonderful grapes on his property, and he attracted some of the best winemakers in California for his fruit. Not only did he have success with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir; but through careful clonal selection, he was able to grow excellent Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot as well.

The vineyard is primarily VSP and cane-pruned. Minimum irrigation is used, often no more than two or three times a season. Leaves are pulled to encourage air flow through the canopy, along with filtered sunlight. Dead leaves are removed. They can farm organically without high disease pressure. They rarely drop fruit because the clonal selections give smaller berries with lighter cluster weights, providing a more even ripening.

In 2009, the family established Hyde Estate Winery, and the next year they started planting a new vineyard at the winery site. The soil is Haire Clay Loam, and the vineyard sits about 100 feet above sea level. Vine spacing is 7x5.5 feet with a Southeast exposure. The new vineyard uses Wente F1V3 planted on 420 A rootstock. It is organically farmed with minimal irrigation. They will leaf inside of the canopy and fruit drop on short shoots if necessary. Production is 2.5 tons per acre.

Currently, Hyde Vineyards encompasses 200 acres, and more than 30 wineries purchase fruit from the site. Contracts are usually set, so clients purchase individual blocks or pay by the acre, and then those acres are farmed according to the specs of the winemaker. Chardonnay from Hyde Vineyards tends toward high acid and low pH, giving the wines a firm structural character without being sour or hard. There is an elegant and pure mouthfeel, along with green apple and pear character, with a good bit of mineral flavor.





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## HYDE ESTATE WINERY

Hyde Vineyard 2016 Estate Chardonnay, 300 cases, 14.2% alc., \$60

Alberto Rodriguez was working in vineyards as a teenager when he volunteered to help James Hall, who was working late pressing grapes that Rodriguez had helped pick. Hall taught him about winemaking, and Rodriguez learned so well that he was named assistant winemaker of Patz & Hall in 2012. After working with fruit from Hyde Vineyards for many years, Rodriguez was offered the winemaker job at Hyde Estate Winery in 2017.

ACCORDING TO RODRIGUEZ: We want our wine to show off the fruit and soil characteristics of our vineyard. That translates into texture and natural acidity. We do minimal manipulation, allowing the floral, peach and citrus notes of the vineyard to flourish and emphasizing the natural acidity, texture and complexity of the fruit.

We pick based on flavor and balance. Early on, the grapes are too acidic. We wait for that tartness to leave and for recognizable flavors of white peach,

green apple and floral character to appear. We want our wine to show refinement and elegance with minimal oak.

Fruit is picked early in the morning at the coldest time of day. Grapes are sorted in the vineyard, arriving to the winery intact at 55° F. They are whole-cluster-pressed, stopping at 1 bar. We add 50 ppm SO<sub>2</sub> at the press, and then cold-settle for 48 hours at 55° F. We rack from tank to tank, adding nutrients if necessary. No acid additions are needed with this fruit. We rack to barrels where native yeast carries out the fermentation



between 58° F to 64° F. We use 100 percent French oak barrels with 20 to 25 percent new. We will stir lees about twice a month, waiting for some creamy characteristics to emerge. Once that happens, we stop stirring lees.

We top the barrels after primary fermentation. Typically, malolactic will go by itself; but if necessary, we can control the temperature of the cellar to encourage it to finish. We blend in early June and then add a bit of bentonite for some heat stability as we go back into barrels. We do not cold-stabilize the wines. The wine sits in barrels on the lees until bottling. The wine gets bottled using natural cork and receives two years of bottle-aging before release.





#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

**RODRIGUEZ:** There is a lot of complexity with floral notes, white peach, pear and green apples. It is refreshing and elegant with nice balance from the acid. There is good structure, along with some toasty, creamy minerality.

HALL: I get a distinct floral, carnation-spice quality with a touch of cardamom, candied ginger and a bit of grapefruit. There is some orange peel and a leesy, chalky note. The acidity has great flow and supports the palate without being harsh or sour. It is mouth-watering, cleansing and refreshing.

MACPHAIL: The nose is slightly reduced upon entry. I get that flinty character. The palate has a pretty warmed applespice. The finish has strong lemon, grapefruit notes, and I like the weight of this wine.

COLLA: It is honeyed and floral. I get the flintiness; but as it opened, it integrated with the oak and evolved into a character that I like in Chardonnay. There was baked fruit and lots of spice with weight and substance on the palate. It would feel flat if it didn't have that citrus backbone.

GAFFNER: I got that flint, slightly reduced character that went away, and I like that in my Chardonnays. There was some Musqué character and smells sort of like a bee hive. It tasted like it had a higher pH mouthfeel than the other two, which I like.

JUHASZ: This is closed with subdued fruit on the nose. The driving force is sort of dairy, diacetyl. On the palate it is very rich but a bit hot.

**PRICHARD:** Great balance between ripeness and acidity and it shows that chalkiness that the other wines share.





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## MASSICAN WINERY

2017 Hyde Vineyards Chardonnay, 188 cases, 13.9% alc., \$45

**Dan Petroski** grew up in Brooklyn, New York. He spent 10 years in magazine publishing and then took a flier to go to Sicily for a year where he became enchanted with wine as a way of life. Returning to the United States, he made his way to California, landing a harvest internship at **DuMol** winery in 2006 working with winemaker **Adam Smith**. After that harvest, Smith invited Petroski to join him at **Larkmead Vineyards** in Napa, and he was named winemaker in 2012. In 2009 he started making racy, crisp white wines for his own label called **Massican**. Petroski remains founder and winemaker for Massican as well as winemaker for Larkmead Vineyards. He was named the **San Francisco Chronicle**'s winemaker of the year in 2017.

#### ACCORDING TO PETROSKI:

I spent time in Italy, and it was hot, so people drank white wine. It's hot in California, so people should drink white wine here too. Fresh, clean white wines, exuding floral and citrus character, are delightful in warm climates. Those are the wines I try to make. Hyde Vineyards is like a Grand Cru vineyard in California. The fruit is rich and powerful, but it retains freshness and acidity. I



decided to double down, seeking a crisp, acid focus, using these incredible grapes. I try to enhance bright flavors and fresh aromas by picking early to retain high acidity and then using no malolactic fermentation.

While I visit the vineyard often and I taste the fruit, I realize that grapevines are perennial plants. There is a long history at Hyde Vineyards and the vines are pretty set in their ways. So, mostly I pick on feeling, and I closely watch the phases of the moon. The moon exercises a gravitational pull on the grapevines, depending on whether it is in an ascending or descending phase. This helps me predict whether the grapes will be ripening at a faster or slower rate. Typically, grapes come in between 21° and 22.5° Brix and between 3.1 and 3.2 pH.

I will usually let **Chris Hyde** know when to pick a week or two out. I am not set up to take all the grapes at once, so we pick on two different dates, depending on logistics at the winery with my schedule. Grapes go directly to the press where they are whole-cluster pressed. Juice goes to a tank without separating the free run and press components. It gets mixed in the tank and racked immediately to barrels. Half of the wine uses native yeast; the other half gets DV-10. We make no acid additions, nor do we add nutrients. We do not heat- or cold-stabilize the wine.

Fermentation temperature gets up to 65° F to 70° F. Towards the end of primary fermentation, we use bâttonage twice a week. After that, we shift to once a week. Fermentation and élevage occur in 100 percent new French oak in the form of 300-liter Hogs Heads. It will stay in those barrels for approximately six months. We rack for bottling and then sterile-filter because the wine does not go through malolactic. We bottle-age for two months before release.



#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

**PETROSKI:** Floral on the nose, with citrus and honey blossom. The palate carries the citrus theme with a lemon oil-like texture on the front of the palate that creates a medium to light mid-palate while the finish is fresh and structured due to the acidity at the core of the wine.

RODRIGUEZ: There is green tea, orange peel, lemons and herbs. There is a lemon tart character with minerality. It is lean bodied, but I like the complexity.

HALL: There is a leesy, chalky note that works well with the citrus peel pith. A touch of celery and fine herb tarragon that are interesting. There is plenty of Musqué tropical character. Love the acidity and focus, hanging on the palate. More like an Italian white wine with the precision of its forward palate acidity.

**PRICHARD:** This has racy acidity with lime, nutmeg and slate notes. Incredibly complex, almost like a Belgian white beer. It is stylistically bright with nice green apple flavors. It is lean and mean, a unique take on Hyde.

JUHASZ: Really complex nose: oily, orange peel, lemon curd, white peach, lime, fig and honey. It just keeps going and going. On the palate it has good focus and concentration with very juicy fruit and some zest.

COLLA: I like how fruit-centric this wine is. It has this salinity with this honeyed, floral character with white nectarine, melon and a lime zest character across the palate that gives it endless length, without it being lean or thin. This is a linear and long wine.

GAFFNER: I like the wine. I get that lemon zest flavor, and it keeps coming back. I wish there was a bit more weight because I know that Hyde has that power. Part of that might be because it is a 2017 and might still be coming together. It is pretty wine.

MACPHAIL: I found it to be more ruby grapefruit and lime than lemon for me. It had a real citrus zing. I agree that a little more weight in the wine would improve it. It has pretty peach and white rose. It is lean, and I like the length of the wine. Nicely done oak. WHEN QUALITY MATTERS!





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## <u>patz & Hall</u>

2016 Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay, 1,388 cases, 14.2% alc., \$65

James Hall was attending enology and viticulture courses at UC Davis when he went to work at Felton Empire in 1981. He accepted a job at Flora Springs Winery as assistant winemaker in 1983. While there, he began a friendship with Donald Patz, who was the sales manager. In 1988, Hall and Patz, along with Anne Moses and Heather Patz, founded Patz & Hall Winery, where Hall has served as winemaker ever since. Chateau St. Michelle acquired the winery in 2016, retaining Hall as the head winemaker.



ACCORDING TO HALL: Chardonnay has been known as a variety that allows the winemaker to put his stamp on the finished wine. I prefer to make wines that service the vineyard rather than reflect a winemaker's philosophy. I want less winemaking technique to show and for vineyard characteristics to be foremost. Typically, Hyde Vineyard produces wines of elegance and precision, high acidity, minerality and complexity. Aromatically, the fruit is more floral and elusive than overtly fruity. I like hints of reduction and toasted nuts, and it is important to me that these wines reward patient collectors with many years of development.

To determine when to pick, I look at Brix, pH and weather. Sometimes waiting for fruit flavors can serve as a distraction. I wait for the green flavors of celery and cucumber to turn less vegetative and more floral. I look for a flavor of great minerality with cleansing acidity. I would prefer to pick early and keep the focus on acidity rather than certain flavors. Hyde is special in that you can get full maturity with plenty of natural acidity.

We hand-pick our three main vineyard sections more than once so that we receive grapes in five different lots over a period of days. Those lots are fermented separately. Grapes are field-sorted although we have the capability to sort at the winery if necessary. Grapes are 100 percent whole-clusterpressed up to 1.2 bar. We add 40 ppm SO<sub>2</sub> to the free run juice and then cold-settle in a tank for 24 hours at 60° F overnight. Press juice is repurposed and not blended into the free run. We rack the settled tank to another tank to mix the lees evenly and then rack to 228 L barrels, filling them with 45 gallons of juice. All the barrels are French oak, three-year-seasoned staves, and 35 percent of those are new. We use tight grain wood to slow extraction and provide less "woody" flavor.

We use native yeast exclusively, and fermentation begins in barrel usually within five days. We make no acid additions to the free run juice. We will add SuperFood Export at 2 lbs. per 1,000 gallons at barrel down. We may add other nutrients at mid-ferment if necessary. Fermentation proceeds slowly and can take several weeks. The temperature range during fermentation is between 65° F to 72° F. Barrels are stacked in a 58° F room, and we will stir if we add nutrients.

Upon reaching negative Brix, we will top the barrels and then continue to stir and top twice a month. We rack wine out of the barrels in January, assemble the five components to our liking and immediately return them to barrels on top of the gross lees to finish malolactic. Around July we perform a second clear rack to tank, adding a bit of bentonite and chilling



the wine to 30° F. After three to four days, it goes back to clean barrels. The day before bottling we bulldog the wine to a tank and bottle within 24 hours. We never, ever filter. We use 2-inch NDTech corks and bottle-age for one year before release.

#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

HALL: There is floral carnation/daffodil mixed with citrus, common to Hyde Vineyards. It has orange peel, and some oak spice with clove and cinnamon. It has focused acidity with a lot of cut and tension on the palate that drives strong minerality. There is a leesy, chalky component, along with hazelnut and roasted almonds. A touch hard and acidic but should age well for a long time.

**RODRIGUEZ:** This is expressive, pure, clean wine with green apple. It is complex with a nice mid-palate. It is juicy with elegance and wellintegrated acidity.

**PRICHARD:** A step up in ripeness from the Massican but still in a lean style. There is some flinty reduction with a chalky texture and baked bread notes. A fun wine.

JUHASZ: It too is subdued. I get a mishmash of fruit and oak on the nose. There is a bit of fig, along with lemon and lemon curd. Pretty good balance with a bit of heat on the back. The oak is prevalent but not out of control. It is a viscous, impressive, big style of Chardonnay.

**GAFFNER:** I get apple, green apple and some golden delicious, along with honeydew melon. It is pretty wine with a high signature. Tastes like it comes from a warmer region but most likely due to vintage.

MACPHAIL: This has more weight. I get lemon rind, almost bordering on lemon curd, which I really like. There is a nice honeydew melon component that helps with the weight.

COLLA: The fruit profile was more about bright apple and melon character, but there was a definite lemon curd, ripe citrus, creamy character. The palate was plush and broad without being heavyhanded or tiresome. There is some nice spice character to it as well.



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#### DURELL RANCH VINEYARD

**Ed Durell** planted his first vineyard in 1979, naming it **Sand Hill Vineyard**. Durell (and long-time vineyard manager **Steve Hill**) decided to plant Chardonnay and Pinot Noir after studying market trends. They developed a unique type of pre-plant contract, where they would talk to wineries to determine which grapes they needed and then plant those grapes for those wineries. Despite not having written contracts, it was understood that the wineries would purchase the blocks of grapes planted for them.

As it turned out, the sandy soils of Sand Hill Vineyard yielded a Chardonnay full of mineral and saline character, which winemakers found enticing. There was steady growth with ongoing vineyard plantings, especially after the property was purchased by **Bill** and **Ellie Price** in 1997. Currently, Durell Vineyard consists of 60 separate blocks that cover 160 acres. **Rob Harris** was brought in to manage the expansion and care of the vineyards.

The vineyard encompasses three separate appellations: Carneros, Sonoma Valley and Sonoma Coast, bringing warm heat in the day that is cooled by nightly breezes from San Pablo Bay and coastal fog. This allows for the grapes to ripen while maintaining good acid levels. Elevations at Durell range from sea level up to 500 feet. Soil types go from extremely rocky on the valley floor to sandy, Goulding and clay loam soils at more elevated sites. There is wide clonal diversity, but much of the Chardonnay is Old Wente clone. Vine spacing is mixed as are rootstocks, but the majority is 3309, 420 A and 101-14. The vineyard is irrigated, traditionally farmed and certified sustainable.

Harris works with individual winemakers, but for the most part he is entrusted with the care of the vines. Vines are pruned, shoot-thinned and have leaves pulled to create dappled light in the fruit zone. Fruit drop is rarely needed because the low vigor vines yield crops well below 2 tons per acre in most instances. He stays in close communication with winemakers to decide when to pick in accordance with their desired wine styles.

There is historical significance for Durell Vineyard, which has been here for more than 30 years. Winemakers can put their individual stylistic stamp on the wine, but the terroir of Durell Chardonnay is still recognizable. It includes an intensity and a weight, along with big phenolic structure. Fruit profiles can vary, but there is a vein of similarity throughout all the wines. The vineyard stands up to winemaking but can still show its place. There is a stony opulence to all styles of Durell Chardonnay with great minerality but in a lush vibrant package.

In 2005, Ellie Price replanted the 8.5-acre Ranch House Block at Durell. The grapes are dedicated exclusively to producing wines for Dunstan Wines. She partnered with **Chris Towt** in 2008, and the two focused on direct-toconsumer and national sales for their Dunstan Wines.



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## Auteur Wine

Durell Vineyard 2016 Chardonnay, 450 cases, 13% alc., \$50

Kenneth Juhasz started working in wine shops and restaurants and developed a passion for wine. His experiences in Europe, especially Burgundy, led him to the Willamette Valley where he first began making Pinot Noir. He joined Donum Estate Winery in Sonoma Carneros before starting his own winery, Auteur in 2003. He also acts as consulting winemaker for several wineries, including Dunstan Wines, Pali Wines and Attune. For this story Juhasz is winemaker for both Auteur Wine and Dunstan Wines.

ACCORDING TO JUHASZ: Most of all I like

the qualities of a particular site to shine through. With Durell I am aiming for a white Burgundy character that is still firmly rooted in California. I want citrus flavors of lemon and lime before they turn overly tropical, and a wine that is focused on minerality and acidity. I prefer loads of concentration that wallop the mid-palate.

This fruit comes from a parcel adjacent to Fowler Creek, an ancient stream bed that is incredibly rocky with piles of overturned stones, saturating the vineyard. The land is flat, only 50 feet elevation. Vine spacing is 8x4 feet planted to

Old Wente Clone on 3309 rootstock. If necessary, we have irrigation. I like to keep the vines happy until it is time to focus energy into ripening. Then we use deficit irrigation just to maintain vine health. Vines are VSP. We shoot-thin and pull some leaves on the morning side, trying to maintain dappled light, but not enough sun to turn the grapes golden. Most years we are lucky to get 2 tons per acre, so we do not thin fruit.

Over the years I have gotten more and more focused on acidity in my wines. I check the color of the grapes and start tasting around 20° Brix. I look for hard green flavors to subside, turning to lemon with a bit of lime. Once I get some honeysuckle showing, I've got to get the grapes off the vine. That means watching Brix closely, willing to pick with less sugar if it means I get to keep acidity.

Grapes are picked at night and arrive to the winery around 5 a.m. We go straight to press whole-cluster. I go up to 1.8 atmospheres, looking to extract some phenolics for structure. Free run and press juice are mixed together, and we add 30 ppm SO<sub>2</sub> in the press pan. We settle juice in a tank overnight at 45° F to 50° F, adding acid if necessary. We mix juice in tank and then rack to barrels, using approximately equal amounts of



new, one-year and two-year-old French oak barrels. Fermentation is carried out by spontaneous yeast.

Post-primary fermentation, we add 50 ppm SO<sub>2</sub> and top up the barrels, trying to prevent malolactic. We stir lees once or twice a month until we like the mouthfeel and flavors. After that, we stop stirring lees and simply top the barrels. Wine stays in barrels for 14 months. We rack one to two weeks before bottling, use some bentonite if necessary and chill the wine down to 32° F or 33° F. The wine is crossflow-filtered and then sterile-filtered. Bottles are cork-finished and get three months bottle-aging before release.

#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

JUHASZ: I pick up honeydew and lime on the nose with a bit of blanched almonds. There is malic acid in a linear way on the palate, coming across as minerality. Lemon and lemon curd are the dominant characteristics on the palate. It has a deep core on the entry and midpalate. It has texture, is viscous and fruit floats with an almost juicy characteristic.

**PRICHARD:** Nice golden color. I like the weight. It shows Durell's natural intensity. Keeping the malic in the wine mellows out some of that intensity. While there is some apple, lemon and lemon curd available, it's not a specific flavor, but rather a palate weight. The malic is a nice juxtaposition between ripeness, intensity and acidity.

MACPHAIL: I get that same grassiness but with a bit more stone fruit, like pear and white nectarine. It is very floral and pretty. There is some green apple from malic acid.



COLLA: There is pure stone fruit, white nectarine, white floral and some golden delicious, crisp apple. On the palate, I like the texture

and sort of expanded nature, but it didn't have the length of the Green Acre wines for example.

GAFFNER: This seems the truest to the Durell site for me. It has that chalky minerality. There are some tropical tones with white peach, green apple and freshly cut hay. Very nice wine.

RODRIGUEZ: There is a ripe, peachy malic creaminess with butter and caramel. It is nice and soft with some toasty vanilla and savory notes. It is full-bodied and has a clean finish with a bit of astringency.

HALL: I like this wine. It has ripe peach, green apple and pineapple with a marzipan, toasted almond note. Oak is present, not overwhelming but supporting. Smooth, supple and mouth-filling but still has freshness. Rich, powerful style.

## DUNSTAN WINES

2016 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay, 13% alc., \$50

ACCORDING TO JUHASZ: The style here is to have an intensity of fruit flavor with medium-plus acidity and gentle new oak influence. Non-malolactic fermentation is used to retain a brighter malic profile within the medium-plus body. We want a powerful Chardonnay without being too weighty.

Grapes come from the Ranch House Block planted in 2005. Soil is Goulding, cobble clay loam and less rocky than the soils for Auteur wine. The welldrained gravelly soil is densely planted, yielding smaller more concentrated berries. This is one of the coolest sites on the property. Elevation is 200 to 250 feet with 5x6 foot vine spacing. This is Massale selection Old Wente Clone from the original Durell block planted in 1979. Vines have VSP trellising, and leaves are pulled on the morning side. Vines in the Ranch Block are healthier than the Fowler Creek vines, sometimes requiring dropping of fruit. Yield is maintained around 2.5 tons per acre.

Dunstan Wines are made in a similar style as the Auteur wines. They are whole-cluster-pressed, settled overnight and then racked to barrels for fermentation. Only 20 percent are new. Fermentation is carried out at 55° F. After primary fermentation, the wine gets topped with an addition of 50 ppm  $SO_2$  and continues aging in barrel with lees being stirred once a month. Wine is aged for 14 months then racked for minor cold-stabilization. Bentonite is sometimes used. Wine is cross-flow filtered and then sterile-filtered. It is cork-finished and receives six months bottle-aging before release.



#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

JUHASZ: This has more prevalent fruit than the Auteur with lemon, not lemon curd. It has honeysuckle going into honey, and it's flinty. There is lychee fruit. I pick up some white pepper character on the nose. There is some chalkiness in both flavor and texture. The nose is fruity, but there is more minerality on the palate, as if the wine veers in the direction of Chablis.

**PRICHARD:** I get green fruit focus, like green apple, kiwi and a nice mouth-watering juiciness. I get limestone and some weight. It is a bit chalky without over-ripe fruit. I think this would be a great food wine.

GAFFNER: I get that sweet honeydew with oyster shell. The oak seemed a little sweet and not as toasted. It is lean and not too phenolic. It is very pretty and elegant.

MACPHAIL: My first aromatic hit was grassiness, almost like hay. I like that and see it as a site-specific character. There is salinity and lemon zest. I got some pear and peach pit. It is very flavorful. Nice wine.

COLLA: The greenness of the fruit character is really interesting. Not only does it have that lemon zest, lemon curd character and crunchy pear, but even the pineapple is green to me in a fresh, high-toned way. The oak was sweeter and less impactful with spice character, and so it felt lighter and leaner.

HALL: Fresh and lean with green apple notes and high acidity. There is a mouth-watering freshness and a refreshing, bright, acidic quality. I like the style, and it is well done.

RODRIGUEZ: Bright with nutty caramel with anise and some chalk. Good tension and nice bright acid. There is a lot of minerality and some slight bitterness on the finish.

## THREE STICKS WINES

Durell Vineyard 2016 Chardonnay, 675 cases, 14.3% alc., \$55

**Ryan Prichard** first got interested in wine by taking classes at **Cornell University**. After graduation, he worked for a management consulting firm that allowed him to travel some of the world's best wine regions. He worked several harvests at **Boulder Creek Winery** and completed the **UC Davis** certificate program in winemaking. He worked at **Williams Selyem** with **Bob Cabral** and then at **Copain Custom Crush** where he worked with dozens of winemakers. In 2015, he rejoined Bob Cabral as winemaker for **Three Sticks Wines**.



ACCORDING TO PRICHARD: Our goal is to produce a Chardonnay that has a wonderful balance of concentration and texture with enough vibrant acidity to keep the wine fresh as it ages in the bottle. We look for liveliness and weight with a Californian intensity. We carefully select different coopers for our oak program to enhance structure, mouthfeel and spice.

The grapes for this wine come from four separate blocks on the Durell Ranch. Soils are mostly sandy loam, gravelly clay loam, volcanic and cobbly clay loam. Elevations are as high as 400 feet down to 250 feet. Vine spacing is mixed. We use four different clones: Wente, Hyde, Mt. Eden and Dijon 76. Those clones are planted to 101-14, 3309 and 420 A rootstock. Everything is sustainably farmed using deficit irrigation. We pull leaves trying, to create a tunnel in the fruit zone, and we will additionally strip a few leaves on the morning side. There is little disease pressure and good air movement. Production is very low, rarely 2-tons per acre, so there is no fruit-thinning necessary.

To pick, we spend a lot of time in the vineyards, constantly tasting and watching the acids. We want to pick before we notice tropical flavors and before the fruit gets too delicious. We do want green flavors to transform to citrus or possibly mango, but definitely not banana. The key for us is maintaining natural acidity.

Grapes are picked at night and delivered to the winery early morning. We only sort if necessary but haven't needed to in recent years. We whole-cluster-press using no SO<sub>2</sub>. We will press up to 1.5 bar and mix free run and press juices.

We settle overnight at 45 to 50° F, but often mix it up before racking to barrel for fermentation. Individual blocks are fermented separately. One-third of our French oak barrels are new, and the wine stays in them for 15 months. Native yeast carries out fermentation, and we will use a complex yeast nutrient just after ferment kicks off with another hit around 15° Brix. Fermentations are in the mid-60s and take three to four weeks to finish.

We inoculate with malolactic around 5° Brix and move the barrels into a warmer room where we stir and top weekly during malolactic. When it finishes, we add 30 ppm SO<sub>2</sub> and then keep it around 25 ppm after that. We will continue to stir lees about twice a month until we work out our blend, sometime between February and April. Wine is returned to barrel after the blend is made, where it continues to sit on lees but with less stirring.

After 15 months, we will do a clean rack to tank, sometimes do a light bentonite fining and chill the tank for one to two weeks. We do not filter. The wine gets nine months of bottle age before release.

#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

THREE STICKS

CHARDONNAY

**PRICHARD:** It is nice and bright with ripe lemon characteristics. There is good palate weight, but it remains light on its feet. I like how the oak is showing. It is well-integrated, showing some nice toast without overpowering the wine. It finishes with a lemon curd, with a creamy fatness underneath.

JUHASZ: Lychee nut is dominant on the nose. The palate is creamy with nice texture from diacetyl, but it is balanced by good acidity. It is wide on the palate and hits the finish nicely. The fruit has subdued lemon. The wine is balanced, but you do get the oak.

COLLA: It has that chalky mineral quality, but a lot of the aromatics are dominated by more savory, white pepper, earthy characteristics, which I couldn't quite wrap my head around. It is more overtly barrel-influenced. The palate had great density and nice length with sweet spice and baked apple character. It is a more stylized wine.

GAFFNER: I like the wine; however, this is more about winemaker than vineyard. There is a Francois Freres signature and a soapiness coming from the winemaking practice that runs over the Durell site signature. I like the wine and recognize the white peach and fresh-cut hay, lemon oil, the oyster shell and all the things that we know, but the heavyihandedness with oak overwhelms the subtle notes of the vineyard.

> MACPHAIL: I agree, my first thought was brioche. There is an aggressive toasted quality that is the most impactful of the lineup. There is baked apple and spiced compote, like allspice.

**RODRIGUEZ:** I really like this one. There are a lot of floral notes, herb and green apple. There is some orange peel, mango. It is rich with good length and good acidity on the finish, with a nice touch of oak and vanilla.

HALL: Excellent ripeness, almost slightly bruised fruit character. Pear, green apple and surprising acidity, considering the ripeness in the nose. It is lifted with an oak or fermentation character that seems to add hightone quality to the fruit. The oak is very present. Powerful, big wine with lots of drama.

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#### SANGIACOMO GREEN ACRES VINEYARD

**Green Acres Vineyard** was first planted in 1969, using the original Wente Clone. We have replanted since then as needed. There are 163 acres planted on Zamora silty clay loam, and most of that is Chardonnay because it seemed a good varietal fit. The wines made from this fruit confirmed our observations, so we continued to plant this variety.

Elevation is just 30 feet, and the vineyard sits between three creeks. Trees grow along those creeks and help deflect the wind. There is ideal clay to loam to stone soil mixture, leading to optimum grape development. Clones are Wente, Robert Young, UCD 4, Hyde, 809 and 548 planted on 110R, 1103, St. George, 101-14 and 5C rootstocks. The vineyard is irrigated and certified sustainable. The vineyard has east-west row orientation with vine spacings of 5x8 feet, 6x8 feet and 8x12 feet.

Vines are pruned and suckered. Wires are lifted. Vines are leafed on the morning side. Weak shoots and damaged fruit are dropped. Production averages between 2 to 3 tons per acre. Grapes are sold by row, with wineries taking ownership. We have developed a trusted partnership with our winemakers. Communication is key, and cell phones ease that communication. We relay our observations, along with Brix, pH, TA and fruit condition, but winemakers call their pick times. We do our best to accommodate them.

The unique characteristics of Green Acres Chardonnay are texture, along with a balanced citrus, tangerine, orange aroma component. Flavors include white peach, white flower, salinity and a gravel component. Skins can be relatively phenolic when young but soften with time.

We decided the time was right for us to start Sangiacomo Family Wines. Our vineyards were producing the best wines they ever had, and the evolution from grape growing to winemaking was a natural step for our family to take as we looked into the future. We wanted to honor the entrepreneurial spirit of our family while staying true to our roots.

#### SANGIACOMO FAMILY WINES

Green Acres Vineyard 2016 Chardonnay, 79 cases, 14.5% alc., \$65

James MacPhail became an accomplished classical pianist and bagpiper, as well as a competitive swimmer. He successfully swam the Golden Gate in 1983 when he was the youngest person to have completed the crossing. In the mid-1990s, MacPhail began working with wineries and growers in Sonoma County, focusing on the craft of winemaking and Pinot Noir in particular, launching his own brand: MacPhail Family Wines in 2002.

In 2011 MacPhail sold his brand to **Hess Collection**, but kept his winery in Healdsburg. Currently, he consults for several wine brands, including **Sangiacomo Family Wines**. "My winemaking focus has always been to craft New World wines using Old World techniques."

#### ACCORDING TO MACPHAIL:

We have no purposed style; rather the site and clone dictate the style. I do not manipulate outside of this. There is minimal intervention. Green Acres Vineyard is always naturally viscous with tangerine, white peach and white flower character.

We determine when to pick based on taste with a combination of Brix, pH, TA, malic and the weather forecast. We also take into consideration infrastructure at the crush facility and the availability of pickers. We look for the flavors to evolve from green and acidic to tangerine and citrus with a sense of sweetness.



Grapes are hand-picked and sorted in the field. They get sorted again on an incline on the way to the press where they are 100 percent-whole-cluster pressed. We use a long, slow press cycle, usually three to four hours with longer rotations, like Champagne cycles, trying for less phenolic extract. We add no SO<sub>2</sub> until after malolactic. Juice, which is very brown, goes straight to barrel, where fermentation is carried out by native yeast. We use all French oak barrels and 20 percent are new.

We add neither acid nor nutrients, and fermentation temperatures are kept below 72° F. We stir the lees once every two weeks during primary fermentation. Towards the end of fermentation, we will add malolactic starter and top the barrels. The wine will age sur lie for 15 months without stirring. We achieve cold-stability using **CelStab** and heat-stability using bentonite. The wine is cross-flow filtered and bottled using cork closures. We bottle-age for six months before release.



## SANGIACOMO

Green Acres Vineyard CHARDONNAY SONOMA COAST 2016

#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

MACPHAIL: On the nose I get that tangerine, orange, citrus peel. There is a pretty white flower element with some slate, wet stone. There is some white peach on the palate with gravelly, wet-stone. There is nectarine peel and white flower flavor. The oak is well integrated. The wine is viscous with good weight on the mid-palate. Nice bright acidity.

COLLA: Tremendous wine. There is citrus zest, salinity, bright almost caramelized apple, bringing sweetness to the oak integration of the aromatics. I love the structure of the entry. It has nice phenolic architecture that allows the flashiness of the wine to not feel overbearing. It has great length and density. I love it.

**GAFFNER:** There is citrus oil and honeysuckle. It is almost like a young Montrachet. There is some melon. There is nice medium weight, along with pretty oak without being over-oaked. The palate is very long with more white peach. There was a bit of ripe apple that I really like, and it came through nicely.

HALL: There is a rich, very ripe peach, almost pineapple sweetness to the fruit. It is layered with tropical fruitiness. The palate has good acidity. There is an impression of sweetness without actually being sweet. It is clean with some cotton candy notes. Peachy, ripe and rich.

**RODRIGUEZ:** This is tropical with ripe fruit: mango, guava and passion fruit. There is a nice floral minerality and purity that give a sense of place. There is earthiness, and you can taste where the wine came from. Nice and smooth with refreshing acidity at the end.

**PRICHARD:** Some nice richness and fullness on the palate that showcases tropical notes. A hint of acidity balances it out nicely, and the oak integrates well.

JUHASZ: The nose seemed like it would be light and vibrant, but then shifted to butterscotch and Rainier cherry with some salinity, along with white peach. The palate is extremely concentrated and intense. Fruits include honey, honeysuckle and lychee. It is very fruitdriven. Impressive.

## SAXON BROWN WINES

2016 Chardonnay Sangiacomo Green Acres Hills Vineyard, 220 cases, alc. 14.5%, \$60

Jeff Gaffner is a third-generation winegrower who began his career at Chateau St. Jean working with Richard Arrowood. He says Arrowood impressed upon him the importance of temperature on wine fermentations. Gaffner has become a highly sought-after consultant for many artisan labels and produces his own Saxon Brown wines of limited production, single-vineyard bottlings, which reflect his preference for elegantly structured, well-balanced, age-worthy wines.

ACCORDING TO GAFFNER: My target is to make a California Grand Cru, more like a Meursault or Puligny Montrachet than a California butterbomb. I like higher acid in my wines and don't mind some reduction and tightness when the wines are young. There can also be an early "latex" character that I recognize will evolve into the Grand Cru signature that I am after.

I rarely bother looking at Brix anymore. Instead, I look for lignification and a slight droopiness in the canopy. I want the green tones to move toward tropical and orange flavors, and I want the green tannins to soften before I pick. Then I look at the logistics of getting the grapes picked and processed at the winery.

Typically, we do not sort the grapes. We go straight to the press wholecluster and run a very slow press cycle with more tumbling at the end in



hopes of getting my yield up above 135 gallons per ton. SO<sub>2</sub> is added and the juice cold-settles in a tank for three to four days, trying to get solids below 0.5 percent. The juice is racked off the lees to another tank and warmed up slightly. If it needs an acid adjustment, it is made at this time. A day later CY3079 yeast is added to help guarantee that primary fermentation will finish, and the wine is racked to barrel. The wine ferments between 58° F to 64° F for close to 50 days. At 0° Brix we top the barrels and move them to a cold cellar. We perform heavy *båttonage* once a week until the primary fermentation finishes. Once we can smell the autolysis in the wine, we will dose with wine going through malolactic and continue to stir lees once a month until malolactic finishes. At that time, we add 30 to 40 ppm SO<sub>2</sub>.

The wine ages sur lie in French oak barrels (40 percent new) for 16 to 18 months. We will rack off the lees to bottle. If the wine is cloudy, we will cross-flow-filter, but otherwise it is unfiltered. We bottle-age the wine 12 months before release.



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#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

GAFFNER: I get minerality with citrus oil. I get a little bit of almond and hazelnut, along with wet-stone slate, and crushed oyster shell. It has white blossom with a hint of clove. I like the phenolic texture and adore the structural component. It holds onto the acid nicely, and it has that acidic brightness that should help it age out. There are citrus elements coming across the palate again on the finish.

MACPHAIL: Beautiful wine, very reminiscent of Puligny. It is expressive, especially in the aromatics. I get some honeysuckle and a spun sugar sweetness that carries over to the palate that I love. Stylistically, it is beautifully balanced. I love the weight and viscosity. There is a stoniness

and orange rind, but it maintains a beautiful balance between weight and acidity. I would drink this all day long.

COLLA: There is a flinty, matchstick character, which references Burgundian aromatics. I love the balancing of fruit and floral character that is part of the wine. I love the spice. The integration of the palate is oily and saline, but it has that reinforced structure from the phenolics that give it great length and concentration.



RODRIGUEZ: Ripe with a bit of caramel. The oak definitely comes through. It is rich and finishes with pretty tropical fruit flavors. Classic Jeff Gaffner. There is a sweet caramel, a touch of anise and good acidity. Some of the sweetness comes from oak. It has good structure.

HALL: Real ripe fruit quality with green apple and a peach compote, reminiscent of long, slow fermentations, which yield an aromatic signature that I see here. Palate is round with depth and the impression of sweetness. Long, big, mouthcoating expression of wine. A little sweet, but complex and delicious.

JUHASZ: There is honey and maybe some nice Botrytis along with lemon and star fruit. It is rich and fruit-driven. I get oak on the nose,

but it is well-integrated, and I like the barrels he selected. Almost as concentrated as the Sangiacomo with great texture and weight. The alcohol and malolactic are in balance. It's a lot of wine. Impressive.

**PRICHARD:** Some smoky notes that lead into a full, rich palate. Butterscotch and crème brulée make it wide and mouth-filling. The finish is flinty. It is a nice example of a richer style on this vineyard.



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## GREEN ACRES VINEYARD

	<u></u>			
WINERY	Sangiacomo Family Winery	Saintsbury Winery	Saxon Brown Wines	
Wine	2016 Green Acres Chardonnay	2016 Green Acres Chardonnay	2016 Green Acres Chardonnay	
Blend	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay	
Winemaker	James MacPhail	Tim Colla	Jeff Gaffner	
Style Goals	Allow the vineyard to speak for itself. Green Acres always shows viscosity and shines with aromas and flavors of tangerine, citrus, white flower with salinity.	We separately produce 6 different clones from Green Acres and then blend them, looking for the unique balance of citrus, salinity, and viscosity unique to the vineyard.	California Grand Cru in the style of Meursault or Puligny Montrachet. Prefer higher acid in wine and don't mind some reduction when young.	
AVA	Sonoma Coast	Sonoma Coast	Sonoma Coast	
Vineyard	Green Acres	Green Acres	Green Acres	
VINEYARD DATA				
<b>Predominant Geology</b> (soil type)	Zamora silty clay loam	Zamora silty clay loam	Zamora silty clay loam	
Elevation	30 feet	30 feet	30 feet	
Vine Spacing	8x5 feet	8x12 feet, 6x8 feet, 5x8 feet	8x5 feet	
Rootstock	101-14, 110R	St. George, 5C, 101-14	101-14, 110R	
Exposure	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Clones	Old Wente, Hyde	Old Wente, Catarina, 809, 548	Old Wente	
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Irrigation	Irrigation	Irrigation	
Farming (Organic, Biody- namic, Traditional)	Certified Sustainable	Certified Sustainable	Certified Sustainable	
Production	2 to 3 tons per acre	1.5 to 4 tons per acre	2 to 3 tons per acre	
Vineyard Practices	VSP trellis system; Pull leaves to allow for sunlight and air flow; Thin, shoot removal, drop fruit	VSP trellis system; Pull leaves, thin shoots, drop fruit	Pull leaves to open fruit zone	
WINEMAKING DATA				
When to Pick	Combination of taste, Brix, TA, pH, malic and weather; Look for flavors to evolve from acidic to tangerine and citrus with a sense of sweetness	Each lot is picked based on a combination of flavor, acid levels, fruit integrity and Brix; Err on early ripening to maintain natural acidity	Taste and vineyard/vine appearance; Green tones move to orange flavors; Wait for green tannins to soften	
Sort	Sort in field	Sort destemmed fruit, otherwise direct to press	Rarely	
SO <sub>2</sub>	None at press	None at press	None at press	
Crush, Destem, Press	100% whole-cluster press	De-stem up to 40%, balance whole-cluster-pressed	Whole-cluster press	
Settling	None, straight to barrel	24 hours ar 45° F	3 to 4 days to settle solids	
Yeast	Native	Native and CY3079	CY3079	
Nutrients	None	At juice if needed	None	
Acid Addition	None	None	Adjust to .7 TA	
Fermentation Temperature	72° F max	65° F to 75° F peak temps	58° F to 64° F	
Fermentation Manipulation	None	None	Aggressive battonage	
Tank Types	Barrels	Barrels	Barrels	
Barrel Fermentation	100% barrel-fermented; Aged sur lie for 15 months	60 and 128 gallon Francois Freres	100% barrel-fermented, aged sur lie 16 to 18 months	
Barrels Used	Froncois Freres 20% new	Francois Freres, 15% new	French oak, 40% new	
Stir Lees	Once every couple of weeks through primary fermentation	Monthly through ML	Once a week during primary fermentation then once a month until ML finishes	
Racking	Just to bottle	At blending	At bottling	
Cold Stability	CelStab	Traditional cooling	N/A	
Heat Stability	Bentonite	Bentonite	Bentonite	
Filtration	Cross-flow	If ML finished, no filtration	Cross-flow	
Closure	Cork	Cork	Cork	
Bottle Age Before Release	6 months	6 to 8 months	12 to 14 months	


## HYDE VINEYARD

	Hype Fortre Manepy	Derry of Herry Manage	MAGGIGAN MITHERY		
WINERY	Hyde Estate Winery	Patz & Hall Wines	Massican Winery		
 Wine	2016 Hyde Vineyards Chardonnay	2016 Hyde Vineyards Chardonnay	2017 Hyde Vineyards Chardonnay		
Blend	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay		
Winemaker	Alberto Rodriguez	James Hall	Dan Petroski   A bright and fresh style with no malolactic.		
Style Goals		A wine of place, showing elegance and precision with high acidity, minerality and complexity. More floral than overtly fruity with hints of reduction and toasted nuts. Rewards collector who ages the wine.	A bright and fresh style with no maiolactic.		
AVA	Carneros, Napa Valley	Carneros, Napa Valley	Carneros, Napa Valley		
Vineyard	Hyde Vineyards	Hyde Vineyard	Hyde Vineyards		
VINEYARD DATA					
 Predominant Geology (soil type)	Haire clay loam	Haire clay loam	Haire clay loam		
 Elevation	100 feet	100 feet	100 feet		
Vine Spacing	7x5.5 feet	7x5.5 feet	7x5.5 feet		
 Rootstock	420 A	3309	420 A		
Exposure	Southeastern	Southeastern	Southeastern		
Clones	Wente F1V3	Wente F1V3	Wente F1V3		
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Minimal irrigation	Minimal irrigation	Minimal irrigation		
Farming (Organic, Biody- namic, Traditional)	Organic	Organic	Organic		
Production	2.5 tons per acre	2.5 tons per acre	2.5 tons per acre		
Vineyard Practices	Leaf inside of canopy, fruit drop on short shoots if necessary	Prune, shoot-thin, light leafing, short shoot- drop, adjust final crop as needed, pick at night	Leaf inside of canopy, fruit drop on short shoots		
WINEMAKING DATA					
When to Pick	Strive for refinement and elegance through native yeast fermentation and minimal oak to showcase character and power of vineyard	I consult a voodoo witch doctor, specializing in reading entrails and Brix, pH, taste, condition of fruit and weather forecast	Looking to maintain a high level of acidity and end with moderate alcohol		
Sort	Field-sort	Field-sorted; Again at winery if there are issues	None		
SO <sub>2</sub>	50 ppm at pressing	45 ppm at press	None at press		
Crush, Destem, Press	Whole-cluster press	100% whole-cluster press with press cut at 1.2 Bar	Whole-cluster press		
Settling	24 to 48 hours ar 50° F	24 hours at 60° F	6 hours at 55° F		
Yeast	Native	Native	50% Native, 50% DV-10		
Nutrients	Superfood at fermentation	Superfood at barrel down	None		
Acid Addition	None	None	None		
Fermentation Temperature	58° F	65° F to 72° F	65° F to 70° F		
Fermentation Manipulation	None	Stif if we add nutrients	Battonage near end of primary fermentation twice a week		
Tank Types	Barrels	Barrels	300L Hogs Heads		
Barrel Fermentation	N/A	100% barrel-fermented in 228 liter barrels containing 45 gallons of juice	Fermented in 100% new French oak Hogs Heads, 300 L		
Barrels Used	1- to 5-year-old barrels for 10 months	Francois Freres and Sequin Moreau with 32% new and the rest 1 to 2 years old	100% New French oak		
Stir Lees	Twice per month	2 to 3 times a month during malolactic, then once a month till May	End of primary then once per week for four weeks		
Racking	Twice at blending and bottling	Rack at assembly in Jan., second rack in July, final rack at bottling	Once for bottling		
Cold Stability	None	Marginal cooling	None		
Heat Stability	Bentonite	Light bentonite	None		
Filtration	None	None, ever	Sterile-filtered because we do not go through malolactic		
Closure	Cork	Cork, tested for TCA	Cork		
Bottle Age Before Release	2 years	1 year	2 months		

### Vineyard Focus: CHARDONNAY

DATA SHEET

## DURELL VINEYARD

	Three Sticks Wines	Dunston Wines	Auteur Wine	
WINERY	2016 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay	2016 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay	2016 Durell Vineyard Chardonnay	
Blend	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay	
Winemaker		Kenneth Juhasz	Kenneth Juhasz	
Style Goals	Bob Cabral and Ryan Prichard Balance of concentration and texture with	Want to make a powerful Chardonnay	Mineral- and acidity- focused	
	vibrant acidity. Select proper coopers and toast levels to enhance structure and spice.	without being overly weighty. Looking for intensity of fruit flavor with medium-plus acidity and gentle new oak influence without malolactic fermentation.	, ,	
AVA	Sonoma Coast	Sonoma Coast	Sonoma Coast	
Vineyard	Durrell Vineyard	Durell Vineyard	Durell Vineyard	
VINEYARD DATA				
<b>Predominant Geology</b> (soil type)	Sandy loam, gravelly clay loam, volcanic	Goulding, cobble clay loam	Goulding, cobble clay loam	
Elevation	400 feet	200 feet	50 feet	
Vine Spacing	4x8 feet, 4x9 feet and 5x8 feet	5x6 feet	8x5 feet	
Rootstock	101-14, 3309, 420A	3309	3309	
Exposure	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Clones	Wente, Hyde, Mt. Eden, 76	Old Wente Massale selection	Old Wente	
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Irrigation	Deficit irrigation	Dry-farm deficit irrigation	
Farming (Organic, Biodynamic, Traditional)	Sustainable	SIP Certified Sustainable CSWA	Sustainable CSWA	
Production	1 to 1.75 tons per acre	2.5 tons per acre	2 tons per acre	
Vineyard Practices	Drop fruit if necessary, pull internal and external leaves for dappled sunlight on cluster	VSP, shoot-thin, leaf-pull morning side, fruit-thin	VSP, shoot-thin, fruit-thin, leaf-pull morning side	
WINEMAKING DATA				
When to Pick	Pick before tropical flavors but with enough natural acidity	Start tasting around 20° Brix; Looking for balnace of acidity	Start tasting around 20° Brix; Looking for hard green flavors to subside, with some honeysuckle showing	
Sort	Sometimes based on condition of fruit	None	None	
SO <sub>2</sub>	Not until after ML	30 ppm in juice pan		
Crush, Destem, Press	Whole-cluster press	Whole-cluster press	Whole-cluster press	
Settling	Settle overnight then mix for lees inclusion	12 hours at 50° F	12 hours at 50° F	
Yeast	Native	Native	Spontaneous	
Nutrients	Add complex yeast nutrient just after ferment starts. Again at 15 Brix	Nitrogen when needed	Nitrogen when necessary	
Acid Addition	If necessary in tank prior to barrel	None	None	
Fermentation Temperature	Mid 60°s F	55° F	55° F	
Fermentation Manipulation	None	None	None	
Tank Types	Barrels	Barrels	Barrels	
Barrel Fermentation	French oak barrels	French oak, 30% new	French oak, 40% new	
Barrels Used	French oak barrels, 33% new for 15 months	French oak, 30% new for 14 months	French oak, 40% new for 14 months	
Stir Lees	Weekly during ML then back off based on individual lots post-ML	Once per month	Once per month	
Racking	To blend in February with decently heavy solids then back to barrel until bottling	Prior to bottling	Prior to bottling	
Cold Stability	Chill tanks for a couple of weeks	Chilling	Chilling	
Heat Stability	Sometimes light bentonite fining	Bentonite	N/A	
Filtration	Usually not; cross-flow if ML not finished	N/A	N/A	
Closure	Cork	Cork	Cork	
Bottle Age Before Release	9 months	6 months	3 months	

### VINEYARD FOCUS: CHARDONNAY

### SAINTSBURY WINERY

2016 Sangiacomo Green Acres Vineyard Chardonnay, 400 cases, 13.9% alc., \$45

**Tim Colla** took a motorcycle trip through South America after high school and first became acquainted with wine in Argentina. After getting a degree at **Columbia University**, he returned to Argentina and worked a harvest in Mendoza. He moved to Napa Valley and worked at **Chappellet** and **Seavey Vineyards** before getting his first experience with Pinot Noir at **Saintsbury** in 2010 as enologist. In 2013 he was promoted to associate winemaker and in 2015 became winemaker at Saintsbury.

ACCORDING TO COLLA: We approach Green Acres as an opportunity to explore the New World/Old World dichotomy of

California Chardonnay. There are six different clones, and we make each of them separately and then blend for expression. Our foundational components are always the Old Wente and Catarina selections that provide a vibrant, mineral-driven core. We apply the younger Dijon plantings to provide New World fruit and weight. The goal is a wine that has the focus of traditional Chardonnay, with the unique fruit expression we find only in Green Acres.



Each lot is picked based on a combination of flavor, acid levels, fruit integrity and Brix. I err on the side of early ripening to maintain natural acidity and fresh, bright flavors. I look for the evolution of citrus to complex citrus, the weight and texture of the skins, logistics and weather.

Grapes are picked at night by hand. We sort if the fruit will be destemmed; otherwise, it goes direct to the press. We use no  $SO_2$  at the press. We destem up to 40 percent of the fruit to gain more phenolics due to rupturing of the skins. We use a long, gentle press cycle, generating 140 to 145 gallons per ton.

We'll settle for 24 hours at 45° F and add acid if necessary. Nutrients are rarely necessary for Green Acre fruit. We rack to barrel with solids using both native and cultivated yeast for fermentation to give us additional avenues of exploration. Temperatures run between 65° F and 75° F. We use French oak barrels and puncheons with approximately 15 percent new. Fermentation usually takes two to three weeks. At 0° Brix we add malolactic and top the barrels. We stir lees monthly, through malolactic, to build body. Wine is aged in barrel for 10 months and then blended. We don't filter unless malolactic has not finished. We bottle-age for six to eight months before release.

#### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES:

**COLLA:** The salinity, seashell, mineral components of the aromas are present. There is some spice character from both the wine and the barrel regime. I get white flower and some ripe citrus expression, whether it is orange or tangerine. On the palate it shows some rusticity, some phenolic character. There is stone fruit and ripe apple with citrus flavors. This wine always has a savoriness to it. It has good drive and less richness in our attempt to be ethereal and playful on the tongue. It has the weight of California Chardonnay but is still light on its feet.

**GAFFNER:** The wine has a nice golden color that I like. I get citrus and citrus oil with a pretty element of golden delicious apple. There is a yellow melon character, along with the oyster shell and white flower and stone fruit. There is a Champagne yeast-like component that I like a lot. Kudos for that.

MACPHAIL: I got some nougat, almost Champagne quality that was beautiful. I got crisp, green apple from the malic acid. I love the stone fruit, and the flavor is sort of like drinking the actual soil strata. You get that stone fruit and then the gravel and the alluvial flavors, which is kind of cool. Beautiful fruit.

RODRIGUEZ: I get some floral notes and a kind of nutty sweetness. There is some ripe fruit with pineapple and cantaloupe that is sweet, but there is also a savory component. It is refreshing with a nice mouthfeel and good acidity throughout.

HALL: It is ripe with peach, Almond Roca aromas. There is some tarragon, herbal mint that I associate with Carneros. It is rich, with smooth, flowing fine-grain acidity. I like the mid-palate and smooth finish.

PRICHARD: Nice bright acidity with salinity and minerality. There is baked pear and lemon on the finish with toasty wisps on the mid-palate that linger nicely.

JUHASZ: Initially a bit of sulfite on the nose, then some muddled fruit and oak notes. On the palate this is rich and silky without being cloying or fatiguing. One of the best textures of the day. It has a lemon focus, but the real plus of this wine is the texture.

CHARDONNAY SANGIACOMO GREEN ACRES 2016

AINTSBURY



**CHARDONNAY REPRESENTS A BEAUTIFUL** melding of the grape growing and winemaking arts. Dedicated growers can produce fruit that represents true terroir, and careful winemakers can preserve that unique expression as the foundation of any style wine they choose to make. Hyde Vineyards is in a cool growing region and has shallow soils. Carefully chosen clones yield small berries full of luscious flavors tempered with high acid and low pH, giving the wines firm structure and an elegant mouthfeel. Durell Vineyard occupies three distinctive AVAs with a wide variety of soils and elevations, yet all their Chardonnays show a stony magnificence full of great minerality with lush, lively fruit flavors. Green Acres Vineyard provides a textured Chardonnay full of citrus, like tangerine and orange, along with white flowers, salinity and gravel notes.

Chardonnay, as much as any other varietal, can be influenced by the stylistic decisions made by the winemaker, and each of these winemakers certainly has a distinctive style. However, they are all keen to showcase the individual characteristics of each vineyard. They do that by focusing on good acid balance as the primary building block. They often allow the wine to ferment on lees and then usually age the wine on those lees to extract every nuance left from the vineyard terroir while building mouthfeel and complexity. They use restraint when it comes to the French oak to not overpower the delicate aromas and flavors they have coaxed from the vineyard.

The mastery over technique shown by these winemakers to allow individual vineyard terroir to shine was impressive. The Hyde Vineyards Estate Chardonnay made by Alberto Rodriguez was refreshing and elegant while the acidity flowed across the palate with good weight. The Hyde Vineyards Chardonnay from Massican was fresh, racy and complex, but still spoke of Hyde's natural acidity and depth. Kenneth Juhasz was the winemaker for both Auteur Wine and Dunstan Wines from Durell Vineyard. The wines were made using similar techniques, but the wines showcased the differences between the Home Ranch Block and the Fowler Creek Block while reveling in the intensity and weight for which Durell is known. Sangiacomo's Green Acres Vineyard has a unique citrus orange character and natural viscosity, but the Saintsbury Winery Chardonnay shows salinity, mineral and citrus with the weight of California while still being light on its feet. Meanwhile, the Saxon Brown Green Acres Chardonnay takes those same elements and turns them into a California version of Montrachet.

Chardonnay is one of the world's true noble "grape" varieties. After a period of years where winemaking rode roughshod over the nuance and personality of terroir with this variety, it is exciting to see winemakers focused on preserving the unique terroir character and adorning it with their sense of style. Taking the personality of a specific vineyard site and then gently dressing that wine in your personal sense of style is surely what winemaking is about. At least it should be. The vineyards, wines and winemakers in this Vineyard Focus on Chardonnay have figured it out, and the wines are a great example of what is possible in contemporary winemaking. **WBM** 

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### winemaking

## **GOfermentor Jr. Arrives in Time for Harvest**

It's the next step in small batch fermentation tools

**Richard Carey** 

**GOFERMENTOR HAS BEEN A** unique tool for helping smaller wineries with experimental projects and small production runs for several years. Created by **Vijay Singh**, the original GOfermentor was designed to be used in 1,200 L bins that can hold up to 1000 Kg (2,200 lbs.) of grapes. I have been involved with Singh since the introduction of the first GOfermentor as a consultant, offering suggestions and tweaks to this novel approach to winemaking as he developed both a junior (smaller-sized) version and one for larger production.

Recently Singh released the **GOfermentor Jr.**, which is designed to be a new tool for wineries to help in product development, starting with fermentation characteristics and using small volumes that are scalable to full-scale production. This smaller version uses the same system as its larger brother: an inflatable bladder is inserted, in this case, into a specialized 35-gallon drum.

The primary target market for this device is the home winemaker, but commercial wineries will find this smaller version to be a valuable tool when they want to experiment with fermentation methods, yeast trials, nutrient trials or other aspects of wine production where small volumes of scalable product can be used to evaluate the feasibility of process changes.

For new product development or modifying a protocol for an existing wine type, one of the more important issues that need to be addressed is replication of the treatment of the product. Validation of that work requires multiple treatments so that statistical analysis can be used to be sure the protocol reliably produces the desired effect.

Small batch fermentation for the purpose of scaling up experimental levels is one of the more important and more expensive tasks to standardize. It is well-known that small changes in protocol on a batch can magnify their effect in the scale-up process. The larger the batch size, the more expensive the protocol. To minimize costs, wineries may reduce the number of replications, which then has the consequence of increasing the possibility of errors in the results.



FIGURE 1: GOfermentor as it arrives.

In an article on the GOfermentor that I wrote in the August 2016 issue of *Wines & Vines*, I discussed the use of that system for conducting such wine trials. For large wineries, 1,000 L batches are not much of a problem. However, committing that quantity of grapes for experimental treatments can be a significant cost for a small- to medium-sized winery. As a consequence, the smaller winery either doesn't do experiments or doesn't provide the replicate steps. In addition, these types of experiments can be a sinkhole for time.

GOfermentor Jr. addresses many of these issues. It allows any winery to run accurate, scalable fermentation trials on 23 Kg (50 lbs.) to 50 Kg (110 lbs.) of fruit. It will also be very popular with hobby winemakers who don't want to use kit-type products and prefer to make wine out of real grapes.



FIGURES 2A AND 2B: 2A shows the bladder fitted into the barrel. 2B shows the air manifold attached to the bladder ports. The controller supplies the air for punching and pressing.

### How the Junior Edition Works

Singh asked me to trial one of the early versions of the GO fermentor Jr., which gave me the opportunity both to use the equipment and offer suggestions for improving the final release model. During harvest in 2018, I ran a number of fermentations with a unit such as this (SEE FIGURE 1). This unit is an updated version from what I used.

GOfermentor Jr. is delivered by **UPS** as a drum with all of its necessary parts inside. The fermentation vessel is a 130 L (35 gallon) specialized plastic barrel that has had modifications made to support the fermentation apparatus. For fermentation, the barrel is set up in one way; after fermentation is



FIGURE 3: The slit in the fermentation bag allows for easy filling of grapes into the bag. It is best to destem the grapes before filling the bag to avoid damage to the fermentation bag. Whole-cluster fruit can be fermented in the bag.

complete, the unit includes the necessary equipment for removing the wine and pressing the grapes.

The barrel is outfitted with a one-compartment bladder that goes into the barrel first (FIGURE 2A). The top of the bladder is attached to the top of the barrel through holes in the barrel to the outside (FIGURE 2B). An air manifold is connected to those ports on the bladder that delivers air from the controller to mediate the punching and pressing of the grapes.





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A single-use fermentation bag is then placed into the barrel. The bag has an opening along the top that allows it to be filled with the grapes to be fermented (**FIGURE 3**). Whole-cluster grapes can be placed in the bag through this large slit, or crushed and destemmed grape berries can be dumped into the bag. After the grapes are in the bag, it is sealed along that slit with tape and a clamp. The bag has a flap that is folded over, then twisted into a narrow round. A special clamp is put around the twisted bag and sealed in place with nuts on the clamp. Adhesive tape is used to cover the clamp so that it does not puncture the bag during fermentation (**FIGURE 4**).

After the grapes are sealed in the bag, a 2-inch tri-clamp port that is attached to the fermentation bag must be located and brought to the top of the barrel. The port is placed through the barrel's clear lid, with a hole in its center. At this point, the lid rests in its groove on the top of the barrel, with the port protruding. A specialized U-bolt clamp secures the port so it does not fall back into the barrel, and another clamp secures the lid to the top of the barrel. During the fermentation process, the grapes will be emitting CO<sub>2</sub>.



**FIGURE 4:** Once fruit has been added, the slit is folded over and sealed with tape. The bag is then twisted into a tight roll and clampfitted around the roll. Heavy duty tape is then wrapped around the clamp to prevent damage to the bag while in the barrel.





**FIGURE 5:** Here the bag has been secured in the barrel with the barrel lid clamp. The pressure relief valve has been installed, and the sampling port on the top is available for monitoring the fermentation. Removal of the tri-clamp allows the return of sampled juice and the addition of nutrients/malolactic culture during fermentation.

In order to assure that the contents are contained in the barrel and do not push out, the barrel lid clamp must be securely fixed in place. At this point, yeast is added through the port, as well as any amendments such as enzymes and nutrients (FIGURE 2B). In FIGURE 2B, the bag is shown sealed in the drum with its clear top. The clear top allows visual monitoring of the contents of the fermentation bag.

The next step is to insert the sampling tube (**FIGURE 5**). This tube is a perforated stainless steel tube that reaches to nearly the bottom of the barrel. It rejects skins and seeds during the press cycle. At the time of sealing the bag into the barrel, the bag port is positioned to be inserted into the clear lid. The lid is set in place in the groove at the barrel top and secured by the large barrel clamp. A specialized U-bolt secures the port to the lid. A tri-clamp gasket is placed on the top of the port that has been attached to the clear lid. The pressure relief valve assembly is screwed into the side port on the sampling tube. This is a simple relief valve that prevents air from flowing back into the bag, thus preserving an inert atmosphere in the fermentation vessel.

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FIGURE 6: The controller is set up and monitored by the buttons on the front, where the cycles of punch and press are made. The controller can also be managed by smartphone apps.

The unique component of this fermentation system—and a good reason why it should be used on every experimental fermentation-is the GOfermentor controller (FIGURE 6). This device is the major innovation contributed by Singh in that it automates the manual processes of punch-down. It can be run entirely manually, or the winemaker can operate it automatically by setting the number of punch-downs per day from one to eight. All controllers come equipped to connect to WiFi. An Android app is available to monitor and supervise the controller from a smartphone. An Apple version will be available by Fall.

The app has several management tools to allow remote control of the fermentation and also the collective management of multiple fermentation units as a group. The winemaker has the option of changing the number of punch-downs per day at any time. A chart shows the time of day when the punch-downs will occur based on the number of punch-downs chosen.



FIGURE 7: The punch cycle forces the wine up through the cap into the top of the barrel. Relaxing the bladder pressure lets the juice fall back into the barrel. This sequence is controlled by the remote controller.

Once fermentation begins, the bag contained in the barrel inflates like a balloon. The relief valve (FIGURE 5) regulates the pressure and lets excess gas escape, thus protecting the bag structure. At the assigned time for punching down, the controller pumps air into the bladder, which forces the wall of the bladder to the center of the barrel from all sides (FIGURE 7). The squeezing of the grapes into the center forces the juice to pass up through the skins. When fully inflated, the bladder pushes the juice on top of the skins into its upper space in the barrel; there is also liquid on the bottom. The bladder then releases the air in the bladder back to the original relaxed position against the wall of the barrel, allowing the skins to fall into the juice so that they can rise to the top again. This process takes about 10 minutes. The air compressor in the controller is relatively quiet (about 68 decibels).

Wine for analysis can be extracted from the bag by using the special sampling device, which has a quick connect fitting that fits into the top of the pressure relief head. This novel device sucks juice into a small bottle. It is possible that wineries may want to purchase this sampling device for use in other areas of the winery (FIGURE 8). By squeezing the trigger, a vacuum pulls juice through the sampling tube and up into the bottle. The bottle holds about 250 ml of juice when full. The device can be outfitted with a sample tube that can be immersed into the cap of a fermenting wine and draw in juice for examination. When additional nutrients or addition of ML bacteria are needed, the sampling head can be temporarily removed so that nutrients can be added into the grapes through the sample tube.

There are two more upgrades in the works. The first will be a temperature probe. When this upgrade is added, the controller will continuously log the temperature of the fermenting juice so that accurate fermentation curves can be recorded and then optimized on future iterations of those grapes. The second upgrade will be a chill plate to allow temperature control of wines that are getting too warm.

Once the wine has finished fermenting, the GO fermentor can be set up to press the grapes. To do that, the controller is switched to press mode. The pressure relief valve is removed from the sampling tube and the harvest



FIGURE 8: Sampling of wine is done through this vacuum pump that brings wine up through the sample tube into the 250 ml bottle. After sampling, the wine can be returned to the barrel by removing the tri-clamp and then reseating it onto the port.



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**FIGURE 9:** At pressing, a hose is connected to the harvest port. When the controller is activated, it presses the bladder in as if it were punching, but in this case there is an outlet for the wine to rise up from the sample tube, bringing wine without skins from the barrel. Once all the wine is removed from the barrel, the top can be removed, and the last bit of juice can be removed with a pump, such as in **FIGURE 10**.



**FIGURE 10:** This pump is a small diaphram pump that can remove any wine that the GOfermentor press cycle leaves behind.



If there is a small amount of recoverable wine left in the bottom of the fermentation bag that is impossible to push out, a small pump can be used to finish the job. If a winery doesn't have a small pump, **MoreWine** (morewine. com) has one available for less than \$200. It is a positive displacement, variable speed diaphram pump, and it can tolerate temperatures up to 200° F. The only problem with this pump is that the variable speed part is not well-designed. Another solution, which may cost less, is first to look at the design of the pump on MoreWine, then go to Ebay and search for 110-Volt diaphragm pumps that do not have variable speed controls. These pumps are usually under \$100. Then look for a variable voltage or VARIAC with a 500 VA capacity, which should cost about \$50 (FIGURE 10). This will give a very smooth ramp up of speed and control. Any of these pumps will be able to pull out all but the last few drops of wine. These pumps are somewhat sensitive to solids, and so come equipped with a screen to minimize any fouling of the pumps diaphragm. This pump has been outfitted with a 3/4-inch tri-clamp fitting so it can be used elsewhere in the winery. The capacity of these pumps is about 17 lpm. or 4.5 gpm.

At the end of pressing, all that is required is to remove any attachments from the barrel or barrel top, take the bag out of the barrel, put it in the trash and wash down. Then the GO fermentor Jr. will be ready for its next experimental run. **WBM** 



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# Barrel Management Systems for the Smaller Operation

Andy Starr

Andy Starr is an entrepreneur, marketing and strategy consultant, and winemaker with over 30 years experience in new technology and new market development, and in building organizations. His company, StarrGreen LLC (*www.starrgreen.com*) assists clients in the wine, beverage alcohol, and greentech industries. Best known as the Founder of Neocork Technologies, the synthetic cork pioneer, Andy built the company from an unfunded business plan through R&D, manufacturing and marketing, ultimately shipping Neocorks to 19 countries. He has six years of winemaking experience, highlighted by two years as the award-winning head winemaker for Yarden, Israel's first super-premium winery.





**ACCORDING TO A** *Wine Business Monthly* survey that appeared in the December 2018 issue, just 9 percent of small wineries and 35 percent of medium to large wineries use a barrel barcoding system. It's surprising, as there are systems to track these valuable barrels and their contents.

Most wineries still track their cooperage and contents by handwriting on index cards tacked to barrels, making notes on clipboards, then re-entering all that data into an unwieldly spreadsheet. This method is filled with errors, doesn't provide informative reports, and is drudge work that diverts time away from making better wine. On the plus side, ink on index cards is the way they did it in France in the 19th century; so if this is your method, tradition is on your side.

For a small winery, more modern systems are out there and well worth using. Think about it this way: if you're crushing 100 tons of grapes that will need to be barrel-aged, you'll have about 300 barrels per vintage. If 50 percent of those wines are reds and stored beyond the next harvest, then you have 150 more, or roughly 450 barrels, to track by varietal, vineyard block, harvest date, fermentation style, cooper, forest, toast level, barrel age, etc., plus a couple you think may have Brett.

For each of these barrel lots you need to keep tabs on SO<sub>2</sub> levels, topping schedules, time in barrel, and malolactic status. You need to know which are empty, sanitize them on schedule and take them off the sanitizing schedule once refilled. Financially, you must forecast how many barrels to buy, and

how many to retire and sell. If you make a label claim like "30 percent new French oak," you have to make an accurate calculation to back that up.

A barrel management system is a significant piece of an overall cellar management system that covers everything from incoming grapes to bottled wine—so you're really making a production software selection. In addition to the winemaker and finance manager, the selection process should include the cellarmaster and cellar crew as they will use it every day.

I asked **Mike Blom**, a partner at **Top It Off Bottling** in Napa, Calif., who has led barrel storage facilities since 2005, about decision criteria for choosing a barrel management system. He recommends winemakers "define what's important to you," whether it is data to capture for future blends, streamlining everyday tasks or simplifying the interface between production and accounting. Blom cautions that "the greater the level of detail, the greater the level of administrative burden. If you walk out into your cellar and see everything, that may be enough for you."

These are some of the leading barrel management software providers. All of these providers charge users a monthly subscription, sometimes based on winery size, plus a range of set up fees and/or training fees. Some require purchase of a rugged hand-held bar code scanner at \$2,000 to \$4,000 each and dedicated printers that cost \$1,000 to \$2,000, and others let you use your cell phone and your current laser printer.



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### InnoVint

**Ashley DuBois Leonard**, **InnoVint**'s founder and CEO, is a UC Davis graduate who spent 8 years in wine production and managed barrel inventory. DuBois Leonard saw the need for a "mobile production system that can collect data from anywhere in the lab, winery or vineyard, and be retrieved anywhere at any time by anyone." So she started InnoVint, which has grown over the past six years to help more than 600 wineries, 40 percent of whom produce less than 5,000 cases annually.

DuBois Leonard stated her goal is to take out the grunt work and "enable the people in the winery to do their best work." To that goal, InnoVint was designed so that the customer can start using it with only minimal on-boarding and training, and without the need for expensive hand-held scanners. InnoVint's workorder system has many built-in templates, as well as preloaded databases for lists, such as cooper names and forest appellations. DuBois Leonard added that "a small winery can have InnoVint implemented in a day."

Jordan Jeffries is the associate winemaker for Davis Estates in Calistoga, a 12,000-case operation that stores 909 French oak barrels from 15 different coopers. He chose InnoVint after seeing it in use at another winery. He thinks it is user-friendly and intuitive. "It's very easy to figure out what the buttons do. You can teach yourself, and you don't have to walk back to your desk to re-enter data," Jeffries said. He also liked that he didn't need to buy any special hardware.

Getting started with InnoVint was very easy for Jeffries. As new barrels arrive at the winery, the system creates a unique barrel label with a QR code, plus identifying text. When someone fills the barrel, they scan it and claim it as full, and vice versa. Staff use their phones or iPads, and temporary workers use an inexpensive iTouch loaded with the software. "I think it's going great," Jeffries said.

In a small winery, the winemaker is often away from the winery doing sales. Jeffries was travelling when he received an important email from his cellarmaster. As InnoVint is cloud-based, he replied to the email and wrote detailed, unambiguous workorders directly from the system.

Jeffries loves how much data entry time InnoVint's barrel management system eliminated, noting, "I don't have to rearrange a large Excel spreadsheet each time I fill or empty," which frees up a significant amount of time for tasting, blending and quality control. As he walks through the winery to taste barrel samples, he can see all of a barrel's wine information on his iPhone.

**Ronald Du Preez**, general manager/partner at **Sugarloaf Crush** in Santa Rosa, is an InnoVint user as well. Sugarloaf is a custom crush facility, processing 1,500 tons of grapes and storing 5,200 barrels for 40 clients, so data quality, barrel organization and space optimization are the most critical features. A future plan will use the InnoVint's vessel tagging system to indicate a barrel's precise location within the facility. (For example, row 13, stack 3, barrel height #2.) This will make barrels easy to locate and eliminate time wasted trying to find lost barrels. Using InnoVint, he can easily tell his clients when their barrels were last sulfured or topped.

Du Preez likes that he can use his iPhone instead of an expensive bar code scanner but cautions that the phone must be within 2 feet of the barrel. Prior to InnoVint, Du Preez used physical cards on the barrels, lots of ink, and many hours of data entry into Excel spreadsheets. "For a 25,000 case winery, this is a really cool system." When clients "graduate" from his facility into their own winery, they typically continue to use InnoVint.

### Vintrace

Vintrace was started in Australia by Joshua Abra and two "techie friends" in 2007, who saw a market opportunity for an easier to use and remotely accessible system that would allow winemakers to make better decisions. Aside from the drudgery of logging every process done to hundreds of barrels, having your system calculate SO<sub>2</sub> additions takes out much of the error potential from manual calculations. Experimental lots are even easier to track and maintain, as the system will remind you to top, check SO<sub>2</sub>, etc. "With Vintrace, you know where everything is; you always fill or empty the right barrels," Abra said. Vintrace has U.S. clients with programs ranging from just 100 barrels to more than 10,000 barrels.

Abra recognizes that the start-up cost is a big challenge for smaller wineries, so Vintrace can be used with either a smartphone or a rugged bar code reader. Smaller facilities use their phones, while those with more than 1,000 barrels will typically use readers, since readers are quicker, have a longer range than phones, and can be used offline if Wi-Fi is not available.



**Mike Conversano** is the assistant winemaker for **Pine Ridge Vineyards** in Napa Valley, which produces 32,000 cases and has 4,000 barrels in their cellar. Pine Ridge stores barrels in Wi-Fi-killing caves, so offline capability is necessary. Conversano likes that Vintrace merges workorders with cellar work. Once Conversano creates a Vintrace workorder and it is completed by the cellar staff, all wine and barrel history is updated. Therefore, no manual calculations are needed.

He scanned a barrel for me on his rugged bar code scanner, which has a mini touchscreen, and all its contents were, quite literally, in his hands. The system told him the barrel age, capacity, oak type, cooper, toast level and forest. Another screen showed him everything about the wine stored in the barrel, such as vintage, variety, lot and lab analyses. A third screen displayed the list of barrels and gallons in the lot.

Error reduction is a prime benefit for Pine Ridge. In addition to eliminating penmanship and data re-entry errors, barrel scanning helps to overcome language barriers. For red-tagged barrels infected with Brett or VA, a bar code works better than a red dot label (which can fall off), as the system will tell the worker not to fill it.

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### **Orion/Blend**

Jason Curtis is the general manager for Orion Wine Software, a division of software leader Constellation Software (no relation to wine giant Constellation Brands). Curtis has wine industry experience from working at Rodney Strong Vineyards, DeLoach Vineyards and Francis Ford Coppola Winery. Orion's Blend software is used for wine production and barrel management. Their WiMS modules manage inventory, sales and DTC programs. Most of their clients produce 5,000 to 100,000 cases. Blend is currently an on-site server system, with an expanding cloudbased functionality. Curtis explained that winery owners and their financial departments appreciate that "everyone is starting with and using the same clean data." The finance manager has a better understanding of barrel cost per wine, including depreciation. The winemaker can look at the barrel's actual usage by calculating the total number of days that it held wine, rather than just the year the barrel was purchased. Orion's Blend solution has a barrel management module that requires the purchase of both a bar code scanner and thermal transfer printer.

**Brent Egelhoff** is the production coordinator for **Joseph Phelps Vineyards**, a 60,000-case facility in St. Helena, Calif. Phelps uses Orion's Blend

software to organize 3,500 barrels, with about 1,000 new barrels added and retired each year.

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Egelhoff explains that Phelps' main reasons for using a barrel management system are wine quality and traceability. With Blend, they track every single detail down to cooper and toast level. Tasting notes are entered into the system and used for future winemaking decisions and barrel orders. At Phelps, all this well-organized data helps them learn from their winemaking decisions. Egelhoff added that "in an unusual harvest situation, you can say you've 'seen it all before,' but that's only useful if you have the historical data" to go along with it. "Staff training is pretty easy as the lead guy shows the new guy how to scan barrels and attach a work order," he said.

Inventory management and procurement are a big part of Egelhoff's job. The Blend system was especially useful during the massive 2018 harvest, in which they made three extra barrel orders. As the actual lot weights were entered, he was able to project additional barrel needs. "I have very close to real-time data as to what barrels are available as cellar staff is filling them. I don't even know how we'd track without it. It would be a nightmare."

As Phelps sells many "once-used" barrels at premium prices, Blend lets Egelhoff give customers key barrel information, such as how long they were empty, sanitation methods and schedule, and whether they are ML-free.

### Vintners Advantage

**Lisa Levsen** is president of **Vintner's Advantage**, which has provided enterprise-wide winery software solutions since 1995. Levsen knows that "barrel management is the most time-consuming activity you have" in the winery and that "once you get past 500 barrels, it's painful." The barrel module of Vintner's Advantage requires a label printer, special label stock, and its Windows mobile reader, which is soon moving to an Android platform. The mobile reader can handle a 6-foot fall to a concrete floor and is guaranteed against damage. It can read from 30 to 45 feet away.

As with any comprehensive server-based cellar management system, there is a time investment to get started with Vintner's Advantage. Its systems are designed for the medium-to-large operation, with training adapted to the client's needs. For clients using its cloud-based model, training is free and done via webinar. Learning the barrel module takes less than one day.

**Robert Siegfried** is the barrel warehouse manager for **Michael David Winery**, which stores 28,000 barrels at three locations in Lodi, California. What he likes best about Vintner's Advantage is it "requires you to do best practices-type of work." Even with 28,000 barrels, Michael David's system gives each one its own identity, much like a tank. As a wine may go into as many as 30 different barrel types (year purchased, cooper, toast levels), the bar code allows for filling accuracy so that the work order matches the result.

With so many barrels, Siegfried makes good use of Vintner's Advantage's powerful barrel location system. Each barrel is tied to a location, defined as a block within the warehouse, with aisles within the block. He can even add the barrel stack location within the aisle.

When Siegfried started at Michael David 11 years ago, there were only 2,000 barrels and no bar codes. Mistakes were easy to make and hard to correct. Siegfried explained that "if staff is looking at barrel tags, they will make mistakes. A 6 can look like an 8." Now it's rare to make a mistake, and easy to quickly correct one. As work orders are assigned to staff, he has better accountability, which removes potential excuses. Siegfried recommends installing a system now if you plan to grow, instead of waiting until you have 4,000 barrels, like he did.

### Vintegrate

**Hub Lampert** is chief technology officer and principal at **KLH Consulting**, which provides the **Vintegrate** end-to-end winery software solution. While designed for wine businesses from 25,000 to 10 million annual case production, Lampert explains that most of his clients are between 100,000 and 1 million cases. Vintegrate is designed to scale with your business, making it an ideal choice for wineries on a rapid growth trajectory.

Lampert explained that at a certain size, a winery needs a single enterprise solution in which all data is stored, with barrel tracking important to both the winemakers and the financial managers. Lampert sees too many wineries "cobble together different applications," which are less than optimal. As with any end-to-end system, time committed to training will be a significant part of the investment.

While designed for larger operations, Vintegrate tracks barrels similarly to its competitors, with the use of bar codes and rugged scanners. Barrels can be grouped or considered individual vessels.

Lampert has over 35 years of experience in providing enterprise systems for many types of businesses, including wineries. He advises that a winery start with "something easy to use, that can help you get the exact cost per unit, and be able to accurately track barrel characteristics." **THIS IS NOT A** comprehensive list. Other suppliers include **The Wine-maker's Database**, **Wine Management Systems** (WMS) and **IVIS**, the Innovative Vinology Information System.

With these user-friendly systems, you can easily add to a barrel management system to meet your needs for more and better quality data while simultaneously freeing up time from grunt work and avoiding costly mistakes. Consider a barrel management system to replace your index cards, ballpoint pens, clipboards and spreadsheets. **WBM** 



## Technical Spotlight Rack & Riddle

Robotics ramp up sparkling wine production at Healdsburg custom crush

### Stacy Briscoe

**Stacy Briscoe** is the assistant editor of *Wine Business Monthly*. She has been writing about wine professionally since 2015, freelancing for multiple publications including The *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Edible Communities* and *Napa Sonoma Magazine*, among others. She also maintains her own website, *BriscoeBites.com*, dedicated to wine reviews and tasting notes. Outside of wine writing, she also contributes as a freelance editor for the independent publisher She Writes Press. Stacy has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English-language literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**SINCE OPENING ITS DOORS** in 2007, **Rack & Riddle**, founded by **Bruce Lundquist** and **Rebecca Faust**, has garnered a well-deserved reputation in premium custom crush services—in no small part due to its focus on producing and bottling custom sparkling wine in the traditional Champagne method.

Within the last 12 years, the business has gone through many transformations, and Rack & Riddle continues to evolve. Within the last year, the team has been able to incorporate some of the latest and greatest in artificial intelligence and robotics in their two newly acquired and custom-designed warehouse spaces in Healdsburg, California, just steps away from the town's main plaza.

Rack & Riddle still owns their 50,000-square-foot facility in Alexander Valley, purchased in January 2014. This is where the first stages of all winemaking operations take place; where grapes are hauled after harvest, crushed and barreled; and where red wines will stay to ferment and age. But all sparkling wine production—and all bottling—takes place in Healdsburg, where Rack & Riddle now owns two 6,700-square-foot warehouse facilities. The properties were previously owned by **Clos du Bois**, which sold off the spaces when they decided to "pare down their barrel program," according to Rack & Riddle general manager, **Mark Garaventa**.

Rack & Riddle bought the northern-most warehouse in 2014. Originally, everything from tirage to disgorging, final bottling and shipping all took place in the one building. "In terms of spacing, we just couldn't be under one roof anymore," Bruce Lundquist said. "The footprint for the automation is so huge, we wouldn't be able to operate."

So in 2018, when the southern-most building became available, "We jumped on it," Lundquist said. "Now, we have tirage bottling and transfer in the southern building, and riddling, disgorging and bottling in the northern building."



### **Key Points**

- Rack & Riddle expands to secondary warehouse in Healdsburg, Calif.
- Investment in robotic winemaking equipment increases winemaking efficiency and addresses labor issues
- Experimentation with faster riddling time may boost annual case production even further
- Cloud-based system allows winemakers to track their wines through the custom crush process

Garaventa described the two buildings as "just shells" when Rack & Riddle took over ownership, so they built the entire infrastructure from the inside out, including offices, the CO<sub>2</sub> exhaust system and the cellar. He estimates the cellar, located in a second wing of the northern-most building, holds about 85 tanks of various sizes, produced by both **Santa Rosa Stainless Steel** and **Quality Stainless**. That cellar space also includes an **Oenodia** cold stabilizer that works with electrodialysis. "We can do 800 gallons per hour of stability whereas if you cold-stabilized in tanks, it could take you a couple of weeks," Garaventa said.

Outside the cellar, Rack & Riddle installed what staff jokingly refer to as their "baby tanks"—12 25,000-gallon tanks and six 50,000-gallon tanks. (They had to lay down 24-inch thick concrete flooring to support the weight.) Garaventa said these tanks are generally filled with white wine for large sparkling wine programs but sometimes hold large batches of red wine blends.

"Outside the tanks we have jackets—they cost just as much as the tanks themselves," Garaventa said, pointing to the **PolarClad** tank insulation wrapped around the huge tanks and stressing the importance of temperature control on externally located tanks. "These chill the tanks down to 30° F. And once it turns off, they [the tanks] will stay between 30° F to 35° F."

But the bells and whistles really come with how Rack & Riddle handles secondary fermentation, tirage and dosage—all the processes that mean they are truly producing sparkling wine in the *methode traditionnelle*. Though the method may be traditional, the tools they use are 100 percent modern.

### **Technical Spotlight Rack & Riddle**



Stacking the riddling boxes had always been the hardest job to staff, and with the cost of labor constantly increasing, Rack & Riddle automated the process.

### **Installing Automation**

"We moved forward with automation because of labor and the challenges we're having teaching and keeping people on the line," said Garaventa, who noted that stacking the riddling boxes had always been the hardest job to staff. "And labor costs, not just hourly wages but benefits, are constantly increasing," he added.

Garaventa said it was during a trip to Europe that he saw just how far automation could go in a sparkling wine-focused facility and realized how much Rack & Riddle needed to implement this technology to continue to turn out the volume of high-quality wines they've built their reputation on.

### **Tirage Bottling and Bin-Aging**

Wine from the fermentation tanks in the northern-most building is pumped through a pipe bridge into tanks in the southern-most building to begin the tirage bottling process. The tirage line, which is comprised of a **Bertolaso** filler and **Arol** biduler/crowner, moves filled and capped bottles down a conveyor belt to be nestled into bins for aging. **MasPack** produced both the conveyor system and the robotics for bottle transfer.

Lundquist estimates that previous to installing the new robotic system, his team was able to bottle about 3,000 cases of sparkling wine a day; now they're able to get up to 6,000 cases.

The robotic system efficiently packs the filled bottles into the aging bins. According to Lundquist, Rack & Riddle uses three different-sized aging bins; the robots are pre-programmed to understand the size and shapes of each of those bins. "We punch in a different program every time we run a different bin size; then we run that size all day long. The robot knows what to do based on that program," he said. Rack & Riddle has two of these robots running at all times, increasing efficiency and decreasing manual labor significantly. But, Lundquist said, when it comes to the efficiency of the robots, "the integrity of the bin is everything. If the bin starts to bow a bit or becomes misshapen, the robot will lose its position in terms of where the bottle is nestled," he said. Though Lundquist estimates the wooden bins last anywhere between eight and 10 years, if a bin starts to show any kind of wear, it will be thrown out.

Once bottled and binned, wine is then stored inside the Rack & Riddle southern building (which is kept at a cool 50° F to 55° F) for as long as the client winery requires.

"We have some clients who will age wine as long as five years," said business development manager **Cynthia Faust**, adding that Rack & Riddle charges for storage space. "Some clients choose to age wines in their own winery and bring it back here for the final stages."

Once the wines have been aged per the client's specifications and are ready to

move on to riddling, another MasPack robot grabs the bottles out of the aging bins and passes them to a second robot via a conveyor belt. This second robot then grabs those bottles and lays them into the riddling cages, which are then transferred via forklift to the northern building.

This, too, all used to be completed by hand. Lundquist estimated one employee "on a really good day" can transfer about one bin per hour. "But you get tired," said Lundquist from experience. "This thing, because it keeps running, we can do double that number now. And honestly, we kind of have to because production has gotten to the point that doing it by hand is virtually impossible."

### **Ready to Riddle**

Once transferred to the northern building, riddling cages are then placed onto one of the riddling machines. Currently, the building is home to two different types of riddling machines: four that can riddle eight cages at a time and are appropriately named VMLs for "Very Large Machines." (The U.S.-based producer is no longer in business, according to Garaventa.) The rest are produced by **Oenoconcept**; these riddle four cages at a time. In total, with the current systems in place, Rack & Riddle can riddle 90 cages at a time, which is about 400,000 cases per year. The team plans to invest in another 36 Oenoconcept riddling machines, increasing production to 650,000 cases per year.

"With sparkling wine, what determines your capacity is riddling," Garaventa said, adding that the process can take anywhere between three-anda-half to seven days. "If it's a seven-day cycle, divide that by 365 and that's how many turns I can get out of one riddler. Multiply that by the number of riddlers and that's your capacity for the year," he said.

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### **Technical Spotlight Rack & Riddle**



Garaventa pointed out that riddlers can't "pull a double shift," as they run 24/7. "And you don't want a warehouse full of riddlers," he said. So to increase production, he and the Rack & Riddle team are looking into programs that reduce the riddling cycle to as short as three days.

"We ran our first trial with a Rosè, which typically takes at least a day and a half longer than other wine types...it came out awesome," Garaventa said. He said they'll run the trial again, and do so with several different varieties. "We're at an advantage in that we have a lot of products we can test," he said.

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Once the riddling process is complete, sparkling wine then moves on to the ice bath to freeze all the sediment settled into the neck of the bottle. Bottles are then placed on a conveyor belt and go down the line for disgorgement and dosage (machine by **Perrier**), corking (machine by Bertolaso), wiring (machine by **Robino & Galandrino**) and final mixing (no custom supplier).

Before foiling and labeling, the bottles continue along the conveyor belt through an **FTSystem** control and inspection unit that utilizes a light sensor to look for correct fill height, glass imperfections and proper cork and wire fit. If any imperfections are detected, the machine rejects the bottle, pushing it toward an exit conveyor. Those that make the cut go on through the foil applicator and crimper (machine by Robino & Galandrino) and labeling. "The foil pleat design is programmed to line up with the label," Lundquist said.

Currently, Rack & Riddle is able to bottle about 1,400 cases of sparkling wine in a day. However, in November, the facility will receive a new **Champagel** neck freezer that, according to Lundquist, will be able to grab bottles from the riddler one whole layer at a time (as opposed to the current **Sabat** machine that can only grab one row at a time). This, he said, will increase production by about 1,000 cases.

"With sparkling, freezing and chilling of that neck are the linchpins—everything else on the line depends on how fast you can do that because it is a really slow process," Garaventa explained, adding that the upgrade was a \$850,000 investment. Lundquist also noted that because the current neck freezer is so slow, all the other machines—the disgorger/doser, corker, wirer, shaker, even the inspector and labeler—aren't on "full blast." He added, "The guy running the neck freezer can't get the glass in there fast enough. The new robot will be much faster, so we can pump up the speed of the rest of the line." SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE PACKAGING

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### **Packaging Process**

Labeled bottles gather at the end of the conveyor belt where a MasPack automatic case packer packs two 12-pack cases of wine at a time. A separate extension of the machine actually prepares the packing, builds the boxes, inserts the dividers and pushes completed cases toward the end of the line.

The cases move toward the automatic palletizer, but before being stacked, the conveyor belt provides one more weight check to ensure each case is complete and rejects any underweight packages. Boxes are tagged with ID labels, then palletized based on a pre-programmed pallet configuration, stacked and wrapped, utilizing an automatic wrapping machine—which Garaventa estimated saves 75 percent more shrink wrap simply because of how tightly the machine can wrap the pallets.

### **Catering to Clientele**

It makes sense that the company would want to invest in a sparkling-specific location and boost the level of efficient technology. According to Faust, when the custom crush facility first opened, they catered to more still-wine clients than sparkling. Today, with an annual case production reaching 1,700,000, nearly 70 percent of Rack & Riddle's business is in sparkling wine, estimated Faust.

Though she can't pinpoint an exact number, Faust said the custom crush facility maintains a couple hundred regular clients. And the client base is an eclectic mix, with a few wineries hailing as far east as New York, and petite producers creating just 100 cases of wine annually. "We love that, though, because we know a lot of times they'll grow into a 'bigger fish," Faust said.

"And Rack & Riddle was really born from small producers."

In addition to assisting winemakers establish or maintain an existing sparkling wine program, Rack & Riddle provides what they call a "Private Label Program." "We lay down between 50,000 and 70,000 cases of sparkling wine made from vineyards we contract with, and clients can come in and personalize an already-made sparkling wine," Faust said, calling it an ideal solution for those interested in introducing bubbles into their winery's portfolio. The pre-made wines span the spectrum: bruts, blanc de blancs and Rosès, made with grapes from as broad a range as California designate to as specific as Napa or Sonoma County sub-AVAs.

"We'll do dose trials to come up with different levels of residual sugar to cater to customers' profiles. If they have a still wine they want to use for the dosage, our winemaking team can incorporate that, making the sparkling wine more personalized," Faust explained.

Rack & Riddle maintains an open door philosophy when it comes to winemaking involvement. Though there are those that take a hands-off approach, Faust said most are winemakers who want to be a part of, and learn about, the production process. For those who want to stay in the loop, Rack & Riddle utilizes **VinTrace**, a cloud-based system that allows clients to track their wines through the various stages of production. **WBM** 



### Rack & Riddle

Custom Crush Wine Services — R B Wine Associates

499 Moore Lane, Healdsburg, CA 95448 rackandriddle.com   707-433-8400				
Owners/Principals	Bruce Lundquist, managing member Rebecca Faust, managing member Mark Garaventa, general manager Penelope Gadd-Coster, executive director of winemaking			
Winemakers	Seven winemakers on staff			
Year bonded	2007			
Case production	1,700,000			
Custom crush facility	Occupy two leased buildings in Healdsburg, both approximately 67,000 square feet each			
EQUIPMENT				
Tanks	Santa Rosa Stainless Steel, www.srss.com Quality Stainless Tanks, www.qualitystainless.com			
Cold stabilizer	Oenodia North America, www.oenodia.us			
Glycol, tank heating/chilling	PolarClad Tank Insulation, www.polarcladinsulation.com			
Punch-down devices	Pneumatic			
Pump-over devices	Waukesha pumps and cap sprinkler			
Pumps	Waukesha centrifugal			
Presses	Diemme Enologia, www.diemme-enologia.com Bucher Vaslin North America, www.bvnorthamerica.com			
Barrels	Client determined			
	TIRAGE LINE			
Filler	Bertolaso, www.bertolaso.com			
Biduler/crowner	AROL North America, Inc., www.arol.com			
Conveyer belt	MasPack Packaging USA, www.maspackusa.com			
Robotic bottle transfer	MasPack Packaging USA, www.maspackusa.com			
Riddling machines	Oeno Concept, www.oenoconcept.com			
Neck freezer	Champagel—Duguit Technologies, www.duguit-technologies.fr			
Dosage	Perrier, www.perrier.fr			
Corker	Bertolaso, www.bertolaso.com			
Wirer	Robino & Galandrino, www.robinoegalandrino.it			
Foil applicator and crimper	Robino & Galandrino, www.robinoegalandrino.it			
Bottle inspection	FT System, www.ftsystem.com			
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## Winemaker Trials Chardonnay Three Ways: Measuring Effects of Concrete Tank, Puncheon Barrel and Stainless Steel Drum

Artesa's winemaker, Ana Diogo-Draper, wanted to compare Chardonnay fermentation results between the new 236-gallon square concrete tanks, a stainless steel drum and a once-used puncheon barrel. The goal: to find the unique characteristics each fermentation vessel imparts.

Stacy Briscoe

**Stacy Briscoe** is the assistant editor of *Wine Business Monthly*. She has been writing about wine professionally since 2015, freelancing for multiple publications including The *San Francisco Chronicle, Edible Communities* and *Napa Sonoma Magazine*, among others. She also maintains her own website, *BriscoeBites.com*, dedicated to wine reviews and tasting notes. Outside of wine writing, she also contributes as a freelance editor for the independent publisher She Writes Press. Stacy has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English-language literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

ARTESA'S WINEMAKING TEAM IS led by Ana Diogo-Draper, director of winemaking. Born and raised in Portugal, Diogo-Draper moved to California in 2005 to join the team at Rutherford Hill Winery. In the course of her eight-year tenure she was promoted from harvest intern to lab manager and, finally, assistant winemaker. She joined Artesa Vineyards & Winery in 2013 and was promoted to director of winemaking in 2015. Known for her collaborative approach, Diogo-Draper thrives in the fastpaced winery environment and excels at a wide diversity of roles, from laboratory analysis and quality control assurance to creative applications, such as sensory analysis and blending. Diogo-Draper credits her professional success to a passion for agriculture and winemaking, nurtured from a young age in Portugal when she first planted vines with family and neighbors immersed in the European tradition of wine appreciation. Diogo-Draper holds a B.A. in agriculture engineering from the University of Évora, situated in the middle of Portugal's historic cork industry. Fluent in English, Portuguese, Spanish and French, Diogo-Draper brings an international perspective to the Artesa winemaking team.

WINERY: Artesa Vineyards & Winery

**TRIAL OBJECTIVE:** Besides the objective monitoring and comparison of all three lots, from a winemaking point of view this trial aimed to highlight distinct components from this vineyard, which is bottled as a single-vineyard Chardonnay. **TRIAL DESCRIPTION:** Chardonnay grapes, Old Wente Clone (planted in 1979) on AXR rootstock from Hyde Vineyard, were harvested on the same day and whole-cluster-pressed. After cold settling for two days, the juice was racked into the three different vessels (each one corresponding to its own lot) and underwent native fermentation. Nutrients were added to each lot at the same Brix level (onset of fermentation and one-third sugar depletion). All three vessels were kept in a refrigerated trailer, set to 48° F and monitored daily throughout fermentation. The lots were individually analyzed post-fermentation, and SO<sub>2</sub> was added. None of the three wines underwent MLF.

Lot 1: New "NuBarrel" concrete tank (236-gallon square concrete tank) Lot 2: One-year old puncheon barrel (132 gallons) Lot 3: Stainless steel drum (85 gallons)

**TRIAL CONCLUSION:** Fermentation times for the puncheon and stainless steel drum were similar (around 28 days for the stainless steel drum and 32 days for the puncheon barrel), but the concrete tank took 67 days to become RS dry. This is due to the exceptional temperature retention of concrete, which was clearly displayed in this trial, since all vessels were present in the same space during the fermentation period.

The post-fermentation chemistry panels of the three lots were very similar, with the concrete tank presenting a slightly higher pH than the oak and stainless steel barrels. However, in our sensory assessment we found greater differences between the wines.

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### Winemaker Trials Chardonnay Three Ways

### Winemaker's Post-Mortem

Why was it important for you to study the differences in aging vessels for your Chardonnay program? Were there specific issues you were looking to address or goals you were hoping to achieve?

**Diogo-Draper**: We got three new concrete tanks right before the 2018 harvest season; therefore it was important for us to learn how concrete "shaped" Chardonnay grapes when compared to other vessels we already use, namely for this unique block of Old Wente Clone Chardonnay we get from Hyde Vineyards.

Our main goal with this trial was to see how Chardonnay performed when fermented in three distinct vessels under the same conditions. At the end of the day, we hoped for three very distinct wines, with the vision/hypothesis that the most complete, wholesome wine would be the blend of all three components.

### Were there any complications during the trial? If so, how did you address any problems that occurred?

**Diogo-Draper:** Not really—the trial went well. The biggest surprise was how much longer the concrete tank took to become RS dry when compared to the other two vessels (67 days versus 28 days in the stainless steel drum and 32 days in the puncheon barrel). We had read about the thermal ability of concrete tanks, but this trial clearly demonstrated that assumption.

### What was your team's opinion of this trial? Did they see the value of conducting this study?

**Diogo-Draper:** The whole team was on board with this trial. We set it up together as a team and discussed it throughout, as we were keen on seeing the results, particularly since it was our first time working with concrete tanks. The team had a very scientific approach to this trial, as we really wanted to assess how these three different vessels shaped each of the wines.

### Can you discuss the results of your trial? Were the outcomes as you hypothesized, or were there any unexpected developments? What winemaking lessons did you learn?

**Diogo-Draper:** On a sensory level, we found clear differences between the three lots, as we had hypothesized. The three people on our tasting panel were consistent with tasting notes, which was surprising, as we often tend to have different opinions when doing sensory assessments.

The post-fermentation chemistry panels of the three lots were similar except for the pH level. With the wine from the stainless steel drum and puncheon, the results were identical: 3.31 and 3.33 respectively. However, the wine from the concrete tank presented a pH of 3.66—considerably higher than its peers. We attribute this result to the alkalinity of the porous concrete surface and the ionic exchange between the fermenting juice and the vessel.

### Based on your results, will you adjust your Chardonnay program? Did you prefer the wines that had aged in one vessel over the other two?

**Diogo-Draper:** This trial showed us the incredible power of fermenting in different vessels, which is something we already do in our winemaking program, both for white and red wines. If anything, it reaffirmed our stylistic goal of having distinct blending components and our ambition to add more concrete tanks to the program.

## What were some of the comments from the team? Which wine did they prefer?

**Diogo-Draper:** Our choice varied between the concrete tank and the puncheon barrel when doing a blind tasting of the trial. In my opinion the concrete vessel offered the most intense aromatics on the table, but also a unique verve. But when we did the composite blend of all three wines, that was the wine we all favored the most.

### Do you plan to run this trial again and re-test your results?

**Diogo-Draper:** Yes, we will continue to test the use of all three vessels on Chardonnay; this vintage focused specifically on fruit from our estate vineyard. We conducted similar trials on Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon last vintage and will continue to do so in 2019, expanding to other reds such as Tempranillo.

The results of this trial surpassed my expectations. Moving forward we will be using all three vessels to ferment the Hyde Chardonnay grapes (which we bottle as a single vineyard wine). I truly believe the best wine on the table is the blend of the three components. **WBM** 



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## A Winemaker's Take on Distilling

Some pros and cons about DSPs for wineries

Curtis Phillips

IT IS USUALLY FORGOTTEN that up until Prohibition, most farms in the United States fermented a significant portion of their annual production. For most fruit and vegetables this makes sense since the post-harvest options for preservation were few before the widespread use of refrigeration. One could store them in a root cellar but, as the name implies, root cellars are better for things like root vegetables that have a lower moisture content than fruits, like peaches or plums. One could make preserves, jams and/or jellies, but this was limited by one's access to inexpensive sugar. One could picklegherkins, sauerkraut and umeboshi-provided one had ready access to salt. Of course, one could dry the fruit. But ever since the first humans let some berries sit around a bit too long, fermentation has been the preferred option to preserve the fruits of summer for winter consumption.

The formerly ubiquitous farmhouse distillery was simply another step in the process. Beer, cider, perry or wine are heavy, and the first three don't really travel well in pre-industrial conditions. For pre-industrial America, the production of brandy, applejack and whiskey was as much an exercise in decreasing the weight of transported goods as anything else.

Prohibition brought all this to a halt. Moonshiners were less hardened criminals or defiant revolutionaries than they were farmers-poor farmers, really poor farmers-who clung to an agrarian lifestyle that had been suddenly declared illegal. Prior to Prohibition, the very ubiquity of farm stills meant that there was little to no incentive to sell or buy their products. Farmers that were distilling for their own use also had no incentive to risk methanol poisoning.

With Prohibition also came the lure of profits. The potential for money meant that unregulated distilled spirits went from an innocuous and widespread farmhouse product to potentially deadly contraband. Although Prohibition lasted only 13 years before it was repealed, the regulatory landscape in which we reside is its lasting legacy.

### Wine and Brandy

Note that I am not a lawyer. I am not providing legal advice beyond, "If you want to start a distillery, you should go talk to a lawyer that specializes in Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) regulations." Everything I write should be considered just the most general of background information for that conversation with your lawyer.

and has been a winemaker

consultant since 1979.

From an operational perspective, it might seem natural that a winery should have a still. A still would allow the winery to produce brandy and, if it is a steam still, to recover the ethanol that remains in red pomace after fermentation and pressing. All the same, distillation isn't as forgiving as winemaking. Assuming that there has been no contamination, about the worst thing that can happen, during winemaking, is that the results won't taste very good. This is not the case with most other food products, and it is emphatically not the case with distilled spirits. Methanol is lighter and more volatile than ethanol. Because of this, methanol comes across the still first and needs to be separated (cut) from the body of the distillate.

The woody material present in a red wine fermentation, like seeds and stems, produces a small amount of methanol during alcoholic fermentation. Distillation concentrates the methanol in the first portion of the distillation. This methanol-enriched fraction has to be cut from the rest of the distillate. Regulatory requirements usually exist to make sure that the cuts to a distillation are done correctly. This is why winemakers in Italy are required to sell their pomace to professional grappa producers rather than distill their own-more generally, it is much the same for similar products in Europe. It is also why one can make wine or beer at home for personal consumption, but distilling ethanol anywhere except in a permitted distillery is a federal crime in the United States.



## Breweries, Wineries, Distilleries and Fuel

One of the less expected facets of alcohol production permits is that they can't really co-exist. What I mean is that one can't legally brew beer or distill brandy under a winery permit, and it's kind of tricky, verging on practically impossible, to get multiple permits for the same physical space. Actually, a single permitted facility *can't* legally operate as a brewery, winery and/or distillery at the same time. The best one can do is move all winery equipment and wine out of the area before moving the brewing or distilling equipment in. It has been many years, but I've known facilities that have done it.

When I interviewed **Art Resnick**, then the director for public affairs for the TTB back in 2005, he stated then that 27 CFR 24.248 is the correct regulation for any winery considering removing ethanol from wine. This comment was made in the context of reducing the ethanol in wine via reverse osmosis (RO) or spinning cone, but the point was that the TTB considers *any* removal of ethanol to be a distillation. Thus, "cold" distillation methods, like RO and spinning cone, are covered by the same set of regulations as conventional distilling. At the time, other TTB agents elaborated that, "Any removal of ethanol from wine in an open system has to be conducted in a distilled spirits premise (DSP), whether it's an alternating use with a bonded winery or a separate facility." This is greatly complicated by the fact that a distilled spirits premise would have to undergo a recertification with the TTB, if not with the appropriate state, county, and city agencies as well, before resuming operations in an alternating premise.

So as an alternating use, it should be possible to distill in the same premise that a winery otherwise occupies, but in reality, it is so much of a hassle that I would strongly recommend that a winery not consider that as a viable way to enter the distilled beverage business. My own opinion is that any winery that is looking to produce a brandy should start out by sending wine to an existing DSP for distillation to make sure that having its own DSP is worth it.

Again, readers should be aware that I am not a lawyer, nor am I providing legal advice. If one is seriously considering getting any sort of alcohol production permit, one should consult at least one lawyer who specializes in such matters before proceeding. **WBM** 

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## **New York Wines Sail to Europe**

Three Finger Lakes-based wineries establish an export link to 12 European countries

Ray Pompilio

**TODAY AMERICAN WINE CONSUMERS** enjoy having a choice of wines from California and all the major European countries, but now they are beginning to see a growing nationwide distribution of wines from lesser-known regions, including states such as New York and Virginia.

Gaining a national foothold for distribution by Eastern and Midwestern wineries has come slowly. However, in 2013 three Finger Lakes-based wineries began efforts even more daunting: to export their wines not to California, but in the opposite direction, to Europe. Fox Run Vineyards and Anthony Road Wine Co., both of Penn Yan, New York, joined with Villa Bellangelo, of Dundee, New York, to form New York Wines, SaRL. Their goal was to introduce Europe to wines from their base in the rapidly emerging Finger Lakes region.

The principals are **Scott Osborn**, co-owner of Fox Run, **John Martini**, owner of Anthony Road, and **Chris Missick**, owner and winemaker of Villa Bellangelo, joined by **Christian Claessens**, a Luxembourg businessman. The four met in 2012 at **MegaVino**, a large regional trade event held in Brussels. Their corporation is registered in Luxembourg and managed there by Claessens.

### The Concept

The business idea came from Osborn, who had attended a number of European trade shows with the support of the New York Wine & Grape Foundation. [Fox Run was purchased by Osborn and then-partner Andy Hale in 1994. Osborn and Hale remained partners until his Hale's passing. The winery eventually became a totally family-owned business in 2012, when Osborn's sister-in-law, Kathleen Zafonte, and her husband, Albert Zafonte, joined as co-owners.]

"Every year at these shows, distributors would come to me and ask, who is your distributor?" Osborn said. It wasn't until he met Claessens that the concept was developed. Claessens suggested that he partner with another two or three wineries in order to support the necessity of shipping wines via containers, which substantially reduces shipping costs.

"The size of the shipment has a significant impact of freight cost per case—the most effective way to move wine is by full 40-foot containers. Basically, the cost can vary from \$15 per case via LCL pallet to \$5 per case in a 40-foot container. Hence the advantage to work as a joint venture of wineries to optimize our supply chain costs," Claessens explained. Each 40-foot container holds 1,400 cases.

**Ray Pompilio** is a wine writer based in Ithaca, New York. An avid follower of the Finger Lakes wine scene and new grape varieties across the East and Midwest, Pompilio likes to find new and interesting methods of growing grapes and producing top quality wines in these regions. He also knows that finding ways to sell those wines is very important.



(LEFT ТО RIGHT) John Martini, Chris Missick, Scott Osborn and Christian Claessens started New York Wines, SaRL in 2013 to distribute their wines in Europe.

Excited by the concept, Osborn contacted two nearby winery owners: John Martini, who first planted vineyards in 1973 and opened his Anthony Road winery in 1989, and Chris Missick, an attorney who had travelled extensively in Europe and purchased Bellangelo in 2011. They both agreed, and the game was on.

"I think logistically, the core of what we needed to do was figure out what we thought the European market would want from us, and to make sure, from a legal perspective, that our labels conformed," Missick said. All the corporate paper work was handled by Claessens in Luxembourg. However, it takes a lot more than paperwork and enthusiasm to establish such a venture.

Claessens noted, "As newcomers to the international wine market, the cost of sales and working capital are fairly high. This required a continuous injection of cash in the business—in the first five years we are talking some \$150,000 plus the same in wine inventory." Osborn quipped, "We were poor in cash, but rich in wine." Thus, Claessens has contributed the cash inflow, while each winery has contributed about \$50,000 of wine (wholesale price) to fund the effort.



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### The Wines

What did they think would sell in Europe? As newcomers there, New York wines had the advantage of being different. For their first shipment, the three wineries started with a 20-foot container and 700 cases of wine. Of course, they wanted to present their *vinifera* wines, primarily Riesling, but they also included hybrids such as Seyval Blanc and Vignoles, which they described as "regional" wines. While hybrids are allowed to grow in Europe, they cannot be sold within the European Union. There is a bi-lateral agreement between the United States and the EU, however, that allows sales of U.S.-made hybrid wines in Europe.

Referring to the hybrids, Missick noted, "It was never the cornerstone of what we were going to focus on selling, but we thought using some of the local regional varietals of the Finger Lakes could be an interesting way to introduce Europe to the diversity of viticulture here." Bellangelo's Seyval Blanc has sold well there, based upon the general curiosity of the buyers, which also includes interest in Vignoles.

John Martini added that the curiosity also extended to where the grapes grew. He recalled being asked, "Wines from New York—

where do you grow the grapes, in Central Park?" "There was a combination of curiosity about the region, and on top of that, varietals that were not their fathers' varietals," he added. Hybrids not



(LEFT) The Bellangelo wines for export have the Statue of Liberty and "Finger Lakes, New York" on the front label so that Europeans will not think "Bellangelo" wines come from Italy. (RIGHT) The Bellangelo Riesling back label includes information in multiple languages.

withstanding, the primary focus of the company is to export and sell Finger Lakes *vinifera* wines to Europe. Osborn said, "As much as they were surprised as to where we came from, they were also surprised that the styles of wine we were making were so similar to what they have been drinking." Missick quickly added, "To them the wines are exotic, yet familiar."


## The Business Challenge

The concept of familiarity comes from some of the Finger Lakes' best *vinifera* wines, Riesling and Cabernet Franc. Europeans can quickly see the similarity of the Rieslings to those from Germany, and the Cabernet Franc to their counterparts in the Loire region of France. Those comparisons also contain a disadvantage. "Trying to compete with that varietal [Riesling] right next door to Germany isn't easy. The quality is there, but we weren't able to compete on the price level," said Missick. Part of this problem is associated with currency fluctuations. "When the Euro started getting weaker, we started to get expensive," he added. Martini concurred, noting, "We were on the shelf at the beginning with prices of about 12 to 18 Euros, while buyers were used to paying 6 to 8 Euros."

Missick added, "What we're trying to do, from a business perspective, is establish what correlations are causing periods of growth and retraction. They seem to correlate, one with the exchange rates, and two, political climate." Part of the political influence can be tariffs. Claessens addressed this, saying, "There is an agreement for wine trade between the United States and the **European Economic Community** (EEC), signed in 2007, and still in application as we speak. As a consequence, there are no additional tariffs on wine imports to the EU; actually, the duties on imported wine are quite low, a few cents a bottle."

The current political climate can be a totally different consideration. "The behavior of the current U.S. administration in terms of trade and tariffs with other goods does negatively impact the images of our products in the local market," Claessens said. "Many European consumers tend to boycott U.S. products, and we have seen a significant decline in our sales [down 20 percent] since the current U.S. administration has been elected." Outside of Europe, trade tariffs are also showing dramatic results, such as the cancellation of an order for 1,200 cases of Fox Run Chardonnay to China, a victim of the current U.S.-China trade war.

Not all their wines appear to have been affected, however. "From a Cabernet Franc standpoint, we were able to compete with the Loire. That was surprising to all of us," said Osborn. Pricing was more competitive, and the three wineries have seen their Cabernet Francs sell very well." Missick addressed Scott and added, "To further that point, Scott, both your Chardon-nays have done really well because they are benchmarked against Burgundy and offer a good price point."

Since quality is of prime importance when exporting to Europe, Osborn noted the possibility of an inherent risk. "A problem we see in our own industry is that a number of wineries might submit less than their stellar wines for export, and don't understand why buyers don't like them." The three agreed that the "big picture" was the most important part of the operation: establishing a foothold in Europe for the future benefit of the entire New York wine industry. Their company encourages other New York wineries to piggyback onto their shipments, with about 30 percent of the total that has shipped belonging to others, including Finger Lakes producers and a number of wines from the Hudson Valley and Long Island.

## How the SaRL Works

Their import company is responsible for delivery of portfolio wines to the direct sales countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands and France), as well as handling sales and excise taxes for those countries. When they sell through regional distributors, they handle order preparation, re-packing and direct transport to the countries of Denmark, Italy and Norway. A shipping contractor is utilized for Great Britain, Germany, Poland and Iceland, where sales by pallet and excise transactions are handled with EEC Customs.

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#### New York Wines Sail to Europe



Anthony Road translates some of the text on the back label to comply with European standards.

"In order to service our existing market, and keep developing it, we need about 1,000 cases of wine in permanent inventory," Claessens added. The wine is shipped to and stored in Brussels, which figures prominently as the capital of the EU. They all agreed that having the wines stored in and distributed from Brussels was very important, since Belgium does not have a very large wine industry to support, with the vast majority of wine there having always been imported.

What is the cost to store the wines in Brussels? "Cost of warehousing is calculated on per pallet base, average per month, at 10 Euros per pallet [\$11.50 USD]," Claessens said. This results in warehouse storage costs of \$400 to \$500 USD per month. He added, "The most important element here is that we use a bonded facility and are not required to pay the excises and VAT taxes upfront. This is particularly important as we sell in a dozen different countries with different tax rates. This requires a weekly reporting to customs regarding the movement of goods."

In the end, the work and cost to export and sell New York wines to Europe is considerable. The wineries sell their wines in the market at their current U.S. wholesale prices. Thus, successful sales don't translate into increased profits. "We sell in Europe at cost [wholesale] in order to keep the wines competitive. You need to consider that typically, the price of wine in Europe is 20 to 30 percent lower than in the U.S. In order to make an inroad in the mainstream market we need to keep the supply chain cost as low as possible and break even with our export business in Europe," Claessen explained.

## The Big Picture

John Martini added, "Are we making any money yet? No." With a chuckle, Osborn said, "At least we haven't lost money, either." This brings one back to the "big picture." Missick identified the most important element required to make these exports successful. "It shows how important the trade shows are, as a basis to get your wines tasted internationally," he said. Shows like **MegaVino** and much larger ones like **ProWein** in Düsseldorf, Germany are key. "You have people from all over the continent looking to buy wines there—it is a core lynchpin for us," Missick added.

Claessens agreed, noting that a significant cost of sales included the time and energy spent at such shows and the costs invested in promotion, as well as participating at consumer events with regional distributors and agents. "An important support has been received from the New York Wine & Grape Foundation, that allowed us to benefit from the promotion of New York wines in Europe, with their funding provided into the **Market Access Program** (MAP) of the **United States Department of Agriculture** (USDA). Clearly, without this support there is no way we could have broken through such a very competitive market," he said.

## Expanding the SaRL

To explain the structure of this exporter/importer business, Missick stated, "First and foremost, New York Wines, SaRL is an importer. We provide the logistics to get the wine into the theater of sales, and then we would work either with our own self-distribution model, or other partner distrib-

utors. It all depends on the country. Denmark, for example, is more complicated. It's like someone in the U.S. trying to sell in Pennsylvania (state-controlled buying), but in Belgium, we can do direct sales." Thus, the wineries that are included in the shipment are charged the basic case rate of about \$5 (in a 40-foot container) but are responsible for establishing their own distribution network in Europe.

Osborn further explained that if another New York producer can convince Claessens to distribute their wine, they will become part of the New York Wines, SaRL portfolio. One example is **Red Newt Cellars** in Hector, NY, a prominent and respected producer in the Finger Lakes that annually makes approximately 12,000 cases of Riesling. Claessen agreed to distribute their wine in Belgium and worked to arrange distribution for them in other countries.

## Conclusion

The principals in this five-year old enterprise knew it wouldn't be easy, and they have learned that their success will be measured over a much longer period of time. The current quality level of New York wines, particularly those from the Finger Lakes, has a relatively short history. Vinifera vines were first planted there some 60 years ago, and the recognition of their wines has greatly increased in the last 10 to 15 years. These are very small numbers in comparison to the many hundreds of years that their European competitors' wines have been produced and consumed.

The establishment of New York Wines, SaRL by three forward-thinking winery owners, in collaboration with a similarly forward-thinking European, has provided a template for efforts made by others in the future. So far, they have managed to sell their wines to 12 European countries. What follows remains to be seen, but these first small steps offer a promising look into the future for New York wines in Europe and elsewhere. **WBM** 

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## **Managing Vineyards** with Red Blotch Virus

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**RED BLOTCH VIRUS SEEMS** to be ubiquitous. Perhaps because I'm a consultant and I get called into solve problems, I seem to see more vineyards with Red Blotch-like symptoms than vineyards without. And though we've tested many vineyards and some test clean, so many tests confirm the presence of the virus that I feel we are drowning in the disease.

Unlike other virus diseases, this one is particularly problematic. Like leafroll disease, also caused by a virus, leaves turn red and lose their ability to

photosynthesize. Hence, sugar production is diminished as the canopy turns a bright shade of crimson, or similar hue. Also, like leafroll disease, phenolic maturity slows down, and color and mouthfeel components are difficult to attain. But Red Blotch is way worse than leafroll. We've lived with leafroll for a long time and, though it can be annoying and eventually economically damaging, it's nothing compared to Red Blotch. If leafroll is a hammer, Red Blotch is a wrecking ball.

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## **Managing Vineyards with Red Blotch Virus**

Besides the striking red leaf symptoms, the first thing growers and wineries usually discover about Red Blotch-affected vineyards is the failure to accumulate sugar past a given point. This varies, of course, but usually is found to be somewhere between 21° and 23° Brix. Because sugar accumulation ceases prematurely, for fruit to attain higher Brix, the fruit often dehydrates and begins to shrivel to concentrate the sugars. We all can agree that that's not really ripening.

What's worse, in many ways, is that Red Blotch virus interferes with the berry's secondary metabolism, responsible for flavor precursors, aroma precursors and perhaps, most important, phenolic production. Color, mouthfeel, structure, and overall flavor and aroma intensities can be dramatically impacted by Red Blotch. Those are things that can't be remedied in the winery. One simply cannot make great wine with grapes from Red Blotch-affected grapes. That is if the virus concentration (titer) in the vines is high enough to impact the fruit dramatically enough.

Initially, growers and wineries may simply let fruit hang longer, in hopes that fruit color, tannins, etc., will attain their desired profiles. Early on, when virus titer is low, hang time may indeed allow fruit to be harvested within the desired characteristics. But, eventually, the virus will win, and no amount of time on the vine will produce the desired fruit composition.

It's this window of time, before the virus impacts the vine so dramatically that it materially devalues the fruit, where the grower wants to milk as many years out of the vineyard as possible before tearing it out. Replanting is expensive and a financial burden. You already knew that. But what can we do to manage a vineyard to get those extra years of production?

## It's All About the Ripening

Red Blotch affects ripening in fundamental physiological ways as was recently discovered. One can imagine that the loss of chlorophyll pigment in the leaves would result in a loss of sugar production in those leaves. That is a factor, but it is by no means as simple as that. There are impacts on biological processes that go beyond simple loss of chlorophyll. Nevertheless, from a practical standpoint, we can assume that the timing, incidence and severity of leaf discoloration will correlate rather well with the inability of fruit to accumulate sugar.

The effects of secondary metabolism (which for practical purposes are those processes that produce the berry's flavor and aroma precursors and its phenolics) are perhaps even more profoundly impacted. Researchers found that transcription and post-transcription processes of ripening-related genes are suppressed in Red-Blotch-affected vines, and suppression of those genes causes, in part, the reduction of phenolic and other compounds. Red Blotch impacts hormonal metabolism, including abscisic acid (ABA) and hampers hormones' effects on berry metabolism. I mention ABA because it is one of the more important stress hormones (plant growth regulators) in the vine, and its impact on fruit ripening is profound. It is considered a major trigger for fruit ripening, and it also is associated with stimulating transcription of ripening genes to produce the infrastructure necessary for the berry's secondary metabolism.

So, how do we manage vineyards with Red Blotch? Well, we don't know for sure, but I am offering my opinion here, and it's something I have been doing with my own clients and will continue to determine if these things are having a measurable effect. Keep in mind that some of my suggestions here have been dismissed by researchers already but, in my opinion, perhaps dismissed too quickly. Since the effect of Red Blotch is both on sugar accumulation and secondary metabolism, I'll offer my opinions separately, though they both need to be considered.

## **Sugar Accumulation Ripening**

In dealing with sugar accumulation issues, my feeling is that we need to keep the leaves functional as long and as much as possible and control the balance between functional leaf area and crop load. While researchers claim that crop reduction in Red Blotch vineyards does not improve Brix increase, I have to imagine there is a relationship, though I imagine it is more of a threshold response than a linear, continuous response. In other words, over-cropping a vineyard will hamper its sugar accumulation in a healthy vineyard, but in a compromised Red Blotch vineyard, that threshold for sugar accumulation impairment must be lower. So, your crop level target almost certainly has to be set lower than for a healthy vineyard.

Keeping leaves functional longer is not necessarily straightforward. But we need to consider the factors that keep photosynthesis going as the leaves age. Water stress, at least excessive water stress, can cause stomata to close and possibly leaves to drop, so excessive water stress, during the ripening phase, can be counterproductive to fruit sugar accumulation. But I want to make it clear that I do believe that water stress can actually improve ripening in Red Blotch vineyards. More about that to come.

Nutritionally, we need to make sure leaves are at adequate levels of macronutrients, with special attention paid to both nitrogen and potassium, as those two nutrients tend to decline most often in leaf tissue from bloom to veraison and especially after veraison. Supplying a little extra nitrogen around the time of veraison may help leaves stay functional, at least marginally so they continue to photosynthesize as long and as much as possible. There is little negative consequence to the application of a modest amount of nitrogen around veraison. As long as the application does not stimulate new vegetative growth, nitrogen will not impact wine quality and, in fact, could boost the yeast-assimilable nitrogen content of the grape must. That said, nitrate itself does inhibit anthocyanin formation, so don't apply N at high rates and, if levels at veraison are sufficient, don't automatically apply nitrogen. Remember, we are fighting some difficult symptoms, and we have to make some compromises.

Potassium can be important also, as it is used to modulate stomatal opening and closing, as well as activate many enzymes in the plant. Boosting potassium late in the season is a double-edged sword. It may indeed maintain photosynthesis as leaves age and become more affected by virus, but potassium in the vascular system gets directed into the berry during ripening. Excessive juice potassium can cause problems in the winery with elevated wine pH, which is not always easily corrected by acidulation. But, on the other hand, if potassium is deficient and when combined with the effects of virus, extended hang time can also have the consequence of elevating juice pH and reducing juice acidity.

Best practices include testing tissue (I prefer petiole tissue, but blade tissue is also fine) not only at bloom but at veraison to get an assessment of vine nutritional status, and making corrections at that time to elevate those nutrients where they should be and, perhaps, just a little bit more than for normal vines.

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#### Managing Vineyards with Red Blotch Virus

## **Secondary Metabolism Ripening**

Since Red Blotch affects hormonal pathways and the expression of ripening enzymes, we want to do everything in our power to increase specific hormone levels and to stimulate the expression of ripening enzymes. At the risk of repeating myself from last month's column, allow me to do just that, albeit briefly.

Our friend ABA plays such a big role in the stimulation of ripening, it only makes sense that we want to help it along as much as possible to counteract the suppression of it by our enemy, Red Blotch. I mentioned above that excessive water stress can hamper photosynthesis and thereby retard sugar accumulation, which we want to avoid.

But carefully timed water stress will stimulate production of ABA and, thereby, stimulate the ripening enzymes we need for secondary berry metabolism. This is the practice that I use for all my vineyards, but here it is even more important. Water stress just prior to and during veraison will stimulate berry ripening through its stimulation of ABA production, so targeted water stress, during lag phase and through the completion of veraison, is the practice I prefer. I do this for healthy vineyards, so it makes sense to do it for Red Blotch vineyards. The difference, however, is that I want to relax the post-veraison water stress level to a greater degree for Red Blotch vineyards than for healthy ones.

In addition to prescribed water stress management (let's not call it deficit irrigation please), what else can we do to reduce the effects of Red Blotch? Good canopy management is crucial. Getting the fruit zone into shape on time is perhaps more important for these diseased vineyards than for healthy ones. Providing acceptable light into the fruit zone stimulates color and other phenolics in the skin and also reduces vegetative character in some varieties. So, leaf and lateral removal (in moderation), shoot-tucking and wire-lifting are important, and their timing is of greater importance for sick vines than for healthy ones. That means canopy management must be practiced intensively as soon as fruit sets on the vine. If you delay, you are just exacerbating the effects of Red Blotch.

I mentioned in last month's column some spray materials that may have a stimulating effect on ripening. Application of ABA itself at veraison may help, but my feeling is that it needs to be sprayed on foliage rather than fruit to get the desired effect. Just stay within the labeled rate to avoid negative consequences, such as leaf drop or reduction in photosynthesis.

Other materials may be used as a foliar application at veraison, such as the LalVigne<sup>®</sup> product I mentioned before, which is a deactivated yeast product that stimulates the vines' response to pathogen attackers (without actually being a pathogen). The biofungicide Regalia<sup>®</sup> is a plant extractive that also stimulates the plant's stress response, and it may have a similar effect. Another product called BluVite claims to promote fruit-ripening, but rather than a foliar spray, it's a material applied to the soil that stimulates native soil microbes and improves overall vine health. We don't know yet if these products will have the desired effect of counteracting Red Blotch's attacks on berry secondary metabolism. We are testing some this year, but it may take a while before we really know their efficacy.

We are fighting a losing war with these Red Blotched vineyards. That is for certain. But vineyards are expensive, so perhaps we can win a few battles before we face the inevitability of giving in to the virus. I'd like to think that is possible. WBM

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## Using Canopy and Shade Cloth to Reduce Sunburn

Grower trials in Paso Robles document lower cluster temperatures and lower grape loss.

Jim Gordon

TWO PASO ROBLES GRAPEGROWERS

concerned about the alarming effects of excess heat and sunshine on their crops dug deeply into the issue by conducting their own trials on shade cloth and other techniques to protect their vines. Both confirmed to their satisfaction that shade cloth can reduce grape cluster temperature by several degrees and help prevent sunburn. But they also made other—and possibly more important—findings that could be helpful to all growers whose grape crops face damage when temperatures reach the 100-degree and above range.

David Parrish, founder of Parrish Family Vineyard, and Daniel Daou, co-founder of Daou Vineyards & Winery, presented their trial results to Central Coast growers and winemakers on March 13 at WiVi Central Coast 2019, the annual conference and trade show produced by *Wine Business Monthly*.



Jim Gordon, editor at large for *Wine Business Monthly*, writes and edits articles on grape growing, winemaking and wine marketing. He has been covering wine and the wine business for more than 35 years, notably as the editor of *Wines & Vines* from 2006 through 2018. A role as contributing editor for *Wine Enthusiast* magazine began in 2014, in which he reviews California wines and reports on various California wine regions. He was executive director of the annual Symposium for Professional Wine Writers at Meadowood Napa Valley from 2008 to 2015. Dorling Kindersley (DK Books) of London published his first book as editor-in-chief, *Opus Vino*, in 2010, which was chosen as a finalist in the James Beard Awards. In 2002 he was co-creator and managing editor of the long-running Wine Country Living TV series for NBC station KNTV in San Jose/San Francisco.



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#### Using Canopy and Shade Cloth to Reduce Sunburn



## **Damaging Heat Spikes**

Paso Robles is a coastal region, but it gets enough warmth and sunshine to ripen Cabernet Sauvignon, a late-season variety, in September in some districts and does well with Rhone varieties and Zinfandel that thrive in heat. Too much heat, however, particularly when it comes in extended, multiple-day heat spikes, is an increasing issue that many growers associate with climate change.



The 2017 vintage also got Parrish's attention as he lost about 10 percent of his crop to sunburn alone, not counting the other effects of heat. He quoted from a study that 5 to 15 percent of Australian grapes are affected by sunburn due to high light, in combination with high ambient temperatures and ultraviolet radiation.

Post-doctoral researcher **Joanna Gambetta**, who headed the study, wrote, "The browning, cracking and berry shriveling mean that yields are reduced and the fruit can be downgraded, causing significant economic losses to growers and wineries."

The 2017 and 2018 growing seasons saw 15 and 12 days, respectively, that exceeded 100° F at Daou's property, both of which were higher counts than in 2013, which saw 16 days, according to Daou. His 120 acres of vines grow at 2,200 feet elevation in the Adelaida District of Paso Robles. The property is on steep slopes, with high-density plantings of mostly Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc.

In 2017 Daou's team could not react fast enough to a nine-day, statewide heat wave that brought temperatures to 106 degrees even in famously chilly San Francisco. Daou lost one-third of his crop, he said.



#### Difference Between Cluster Temperature & Exposed Fruit (Block 7, July 9, 2018 - September 13, 2018)

SOURCE: DAVID PARRISH

## Start with a Full Canopy

Parrish's 2017 fruit loss from sunburn spurred him to plan a trial for 2018 that tested the effectiveness of a leafy canopy and two colors of shade cloth in lowering cluster temperatures and increasing grape quality parameters, compared to control components. The 30-acre vineyard where Parrish did his trial sits in the Adelaida District on a sloping site that he rates as a Region IV on the Winkler Index.

In addition to owning three vineyards and producing 3,200 cases of Parrish Family wine, he is a canopy specialist for various fruit crops at his company, **A&P Ag Structures**. He sells shade cloth as part of that business and first used it 40 years ago in Riverside County on various crops before applying it to winegrapes about 10 years ago for winemaker **Paul Hobbs** in California's North Coast.

Parrish had observed not only that UV radiation and heat cause sunburn, but also the shorter and thinner the canopy is, the more radiation and heat hits the fruit, resulting in more sunburned fruit. Moreover, during heat spells the vines in thinner soils were suffering the most, he said.

"A full canopy is your first line of defense against sunburn," Parrish cautioned, and a healthy soil water level is necessary for a good, shady canopy. So before the 2018 growing season began, Parrish added extra drip lines to



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#### Cabernet Shade Cloth Trial

Date Harvested	Wine	рН	ТА	Brix	Lbs Harvested	Lbs. of sunburnt fruit removed at grading table	% loss due to sunburn	Additions at the Ferm. Bin	рН	ТА	ALC%	TANT H	FANT H	BANT H	PTAN	IRPs
9/22/2018	No Shade Cloth CAB	3.93	4.3	29	1100	103	0.095	H <sub>2</sub> 0 BACK 26BX T-ACID 1.3G/L	3.86	5.7	15.14	475	322	122	1137	2320
9/22/2018	White Shade CAB	3.88	4.2	29.1	1100	23	0.025	H₂0 BACK 26BX T-ACID 1.3G/L	3.82	5.8	15.1	466	307	129	1241	2440
9/22/2018	Black Shade CAB	3.85	4.7	28.6	1100	20	0.02	H₂0 BACK 26BX T-ACID 0.75G/L	3.85	5.6	15.04	513	360	129	1247	2468

SOURCE: DAVID PARRISH





ERIN KIRSCHENMANN

areas of his vineyard that had been too dry and added emitters to those lines in the weak spots. Aerial NDVI images of the vineyard in 2017 and 2018 showed a dramatic difference in vegetation.

He said the result at harvest time was much less sunburn and, "We used less water, in fact, because I was not watering the hot spots."



To add width to the vertical-shoot-positioned, double-cordon vines, his crew bolted on 7-inch and 17-inch crossarms above the cordon wires. This helped to cool the whole vineyard by shading more ground, in addition to partially shading the fruit clusters. They also pulled leaves to allow air circulation, but instead of exposing the fruit, they pulled more leaves on the inside of the canopy for a tunnel effect.

The irrigation and canopy changes alone wound up having a greater effect than shade cloth. In the trial, the clusters that had good leaf cover but no shade

cloth gained about two-thirds of the beneficial effects that those with leaf cover and double-sided shade cloth experienced.

## A Black and White Issue

Shade cloth does work, however, as Daou confirmed in his 2018 experiment. His crew applied black and white shade cloth to adjacent rows on the west side to protect against afternoon sunlight. Both cloths were manufactured to reduce light transmittance by 40 percent.

His instruments detected negligible differences in temperature for the two colors in early July, but during the week of August 28, following veraison, they showed a decrease from the ambient temperature by nearly 8 degrees with the black shade cloth, which was more than with the white cloth. Daou said he was so convinced by the trial that all his blocks with south or southwest exposure are now treated with shade cloth.

Parrish's trial reinforced the indication that black cloth is slightly more effective than white. He tested six variations in his Block 7 Cabernet Sauvignon vines that included exposed canopy, leaf-shaded canopy, single or double cloth and black or white cloth. The largest cluster temperature difference compared to the non-shaded, not-clothed exposed vines was in the leaf-shaded, double-black cloth: more than 9 degrees cooler. The white cloth under the same conditions made less than an 8-degree difference.

White cloth reduces UV rays but also reflects the light, so a diffuse energy still flows into the canopy, Parrish said. Black color absorbs basically all light that touches it. His opinion is that either black or white can be effective, but black shade cloth has an edge.

"Overall, shade cloth made a huge difference," he said. "We really got burnt up the year before. Anything in Paso Robles, any cluster that is out in the sunshine all day long, will not end up in the wine."

## **Cooler than Ambient**

One finding that surprised Parrish was that the clusters under leaf shade and double-black cloth were even cooler than the ambient air temperature in the heat of the afternoon. "I didn't think that could happen," Parrish said, guessing that the shade cloth helped the vines retain some of their overnight coolness. That section of vines measured 1.5 degrees lower in temperature than the 94.4-degree air, on average, over the test period that ran from July 9 to September 13, 2018. Clusters on the control vines averaged 102.3 degrees.

The experimenters used a hand-held sensor that measures the temperature of the fruit. They took readings between 2:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. to capture essentially the day's maximum temperatures.

Parrish also measured grape and wine chemistry during the trial and found that the shaded grapes had slightly lower pH and higher acidity than the exposed grapes picked the same day. The resulting wines showed similar results and higher anthocyanins in the shaded samples. WBM



#### **The Cost of Protection**

Many growers will be able to calculate the cost of fine-tuning their irrigation and expanding their canopies with cross-arms or other modifications. As for shade cloth, Parrish said he sells the material at about \$700 per acre to cover one side of the fruit zone in a vineyard with 8-foot row spacing. The labor goes quickly, he said, because the cloth can be cut with scissors, and it comes with lots of reinforced eyes built in for hooking it onto stakes.

His Cabernet Sauvignon sells for \$4,400 per ton; so if his yield is 4 tons and 10 percent is discarded for sunburn, that's a loss of \$1,760 per acre, or 2.5 times the one-time cost of buying shade cloth. In his trial, 1,100 pounds of Cabernet Sauvignon needed 103 pounds removed due to sunburn. The same 1,100 pounds harvested from vines with white shade cloth required removal of 23 pounds, and for the black shade cloth it was 20 pounds.

Asked if climate change is responsible for this extra cost, Parrish said, "I've always seen problems with sunburn. It may be getting worse, but any way we look at it we can't afford to lose 10 to 15 percent of our fruit. That's serious dough. For our operation that's a \$300,000 loss, and that could be our profit for the year."



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## Managing Mycorrhizal Fungi and Soil Health in Vineyards

Pre-plant and post-plant considerations

Paul Schreiner

**Paul Schreiner** is a research plant physiologist based at the USDA-ARS Horticultural Crops Research Laboratory in Corvallis, Ore.

**RENEWED INTEREST IN VINEYARD** soil health driven in part by advances in microbiome research provides a rationale for reviewing what we know about the foremost component of the root microbiome in grapevines, the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF). AMF are an ancient group of symbiotic fungi that have co-evolved with the roots of terrestrial plants over millions of years. They are believed to have been essential for the successful establishment of early plants on land.

Over eons of time, AMF have lost the ability to complete their lifecycle without forming a symbiotic relationship with a host plant. This aspect of AMF distinguishes them from other types of mycorrhizal fungi (such as ectomycorrhizal and ericoid types) that can be symbionts with plant roots but can also survive outside of the symbiosis. Plants provide reduced carbon in the form of sugars and fatty acids (food) to AMF in exchange for receiving mineral nutrients obtained from soil by the fungi. The AMF differ from the ectomycorrhizal fungi also because they colonize the interior of individual root cortical cells to form arbuscules (tiny tree-like structures that vastly increase contact between the plant and fungal partners). Arbuscules are the primary site of nutrient exchange between plants and AMF.

While other non-pathogenic soil bacteria and fungi play important roles in vineyard health and productivity, AMF are unique because of the broad range of benefits they confer. These benefits include improving nutrient uptake from soil (particularly for phosphorus [P] and other less mobile ions, like potassium, zinc and copper), increasing soil carbon storage and soil aggregate stability, thereby reducing the potential for erosion, and increasing plant tolerance to drought and pathogens.

The AMF are unique among the myriad of soil microbes because of their proven role to enable nutrient uptake and enhance vine growth. In the red hill soils of western Oregon where available soil phosphorus levels are quite low (Bray extractable P from 3 to 20 ppm), grapevines simply cannot grow beyond a few nodes if AMF are depleted from the soil. Grapevines may be considered a "super-host" for AMF because of the intense level of root colonization that is commonly observed. For example, many fine roots that my lab routinely examines from vineyards have arbuscules present in nearly

## **Key Points**

- Grapevines rely on arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) to obtain phosphorus and often other nutrients from soil when their availability is low.
- In most cases the resident AMF population in soil will likely be sufficient to colonize vine roots in new vineyard plantings.
- Boosting AMF populations in soil by inoculating vines or growing a host plant cover crop may be required if the site was fumigated or if AMF host plants were absent for an extended period.
- Judicious use of fertilizers, irrigation water, and tillage will limit potential harm to AMF after vineyards are established.

every root cortical cell (FIGURE 1). Such intense levels of arbuscule formation are unusual in other host plants and indicate that AMF capture much of the vine's fine root carbon that is potentially available to support other soil microbes.

AMF are an integral component of winegrape production wherever they have been studied. How we treat our soils and vines influences their abundance, diversity and the benefits they can provide. There are a few basic issues for viticulturists to consider in managing AMF to get the most from our below-ground fungal partners. These fall under pre-plant and post-plant considerations.



**FIGURE 1**. Intense arbuscular colonization of grapevine roots (*Vitis vinifera L.*) commonly observed in vineyards. Fine roots were cleared and stained with Trypan Blue and squashed between microscope slides to reveal arbuscules and hyphae in the root cortex.

## Pre-plant AMF Management

The key pre-plant issue is whether or not the population of AMF in the soil is ample enough to ensure that vine roots are quickly colonized. In most cases the answer to this question is yes. AMF are naturally present in almost all soils worldwide because more than 80 percent of all plant species form this type of mycorrhizal association. However, in modern farming systems certain practices can destroy or greatly reduce AMF. While their use is currently rare in viticulture, pre-plant soil fumigants (methyl bromide, metam sodium, dichloropropene/chloropicrin and dimethyl disulfide) typically used to control nematodes and soil-borne fungal diseases can wipe out AMF populations too.

AMF can be reduced if host plants are absent for an extended period prior to planting a new crop. This can result from long-term fallow periods or from the cultivation of non-host plants. Work in Australia to understand the phenomenon of "long fallow disorder" showed that a fallow period of one year or more reduced AMF propagules in soil, resulting in poor AMF colonization and phosphorus deficiency in subsequently planted crops. Soils from long fallow plots could be rescued by adding AMF back to the system with soil collected from recently cropped soils.

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#### Managing Mycorrhizal Fungi and Soil Health in Vineyards

Weeds can maintain AMF populations in soil and may be important in some cases. For example, my lab showed that soil solarization conducted in the summer reduced AMF populations the following spring in western Oregon because solarization suppressed weeds over the fall and winter that acted as a bridge to maintain AMF.

Growing cash crops or cover crops that are not hosts for AMF can reduce AMF propagules in soil. A number of plant species do not form mycorrhizal associations, or they form other types of mycorrhizas that will not maintain populations of AMF in soil. Common non-host plants used as cash crops or cover crops in agriculture are the mustards (*Brassicales*), including numerous vegetables, rapeseed, and meadowfoam, as well as spinach, buckwheat, amaranthus and lupine. A new vineyard planting that follows these crops may benefit from adding AMF at planting or boosting the native AMF population by growing a known host plant cover crop before planting.

Some good cover crop choices to boost AMF populations in soil are the N-fixing legumes (excluding lupines, as noted above) such as clovers, sub clovers, alfalfa and vetch, as these plants typically have a high phosphorus requirement and support high levels of AMF colonization. Other good hosts for AMF include sorghum and/or Sudan grasses, oats, barley, wheat and cereal rye, as well as other annual and perennial grasses. Even though colonization by AMF in most of the forage and turf grass roots is not particularly high, the high density of fibrous roots produced by these grasses results in a significant increase in AMF propagules in soil.

Exactly when the AMF population is too low for healthy vine establishment is not clear. My lab conducted numerous AMF inoculation trials when we first began working on grapevines more than 10 years ago. Results from those trials showed that inoculation with AMF (produced in my lab) enhanced root colonization and improved vine shoot growth in only one of five field experiments conducted in the Willamette Valley. In the second year, however, the non-inoculated control vines no longer differed from inoculated ones in the successful trial, and in no case was vine survival significantly altered by inoculating with AMF. Viable AMF were present at all the sites where we conducted inoculation trials so that the control vines became colonized by AMF to some extent. The vineyard where we observed a positive impact of inoculation on root colonization was characterized by having both the lowest level of AMF propagules in soil and the lowest level of extractable phosphorus in soil at the time of planting.

AMF propagule tests are time-consuming and costly, and for reasons beyond the scope of this text will likely remain a tool that only mycorrhizal scientists use. Another explanation for our inoculation results may be due to the fact that grapevines are very receptive hosts for AMF and require a lower abundance of propagules to obtain high levels of root colonization. We tested this by comparing how different doses of AMF inoculum influenced colonization of own-rooted Pinot Noir vines and that of the annual host plant, *Zinnia elegans*. Results showed that grapevines had five times more roots colonized than *Z. elegans* at the lowest dose of AMF tested, even though *Z. elegans* produced two times more roots in the soil profile, doubling the chance of making close contact with an AMF propagule.

## **Post-Plant AMF Management**

Even though grapevines rely heavily on AMF to obtain ample phosphorus and often other nutrients from soil, they can also reduce the extent of AMF colonization within their roots when nutrient status (particularly P) is high. The control of root colonization by the plant in response to nutrient status has led to the idea that the AMF symbiosis is self-regulating. Although, this begs the question as to how AMF may exert control over the plant. Nonetheless, avoiding fertilizer applications (particularly P) unless a nutrient is demonstrated to be low is a good practice to reduce negative impacts on AMF.

For example, the quantity of arbuscules in roots was found to be negatively correlated to leaf P and leaf nitrogen (N) concentrations across a survey of 31 vineyards in the Willamette Valley. Further work to clarify how vine leaf P status controls AMF conducted in the greenhouse showed that arbuscules are most strongly suppressed when high leaf P concentrations are combined with low levels of sunlight. Indeed, lower light alone was a more potent regulator of arbuscule maintenance than raising leaf P status to high levels. Therefore, if growers need to apply P fertilizer in response to low P test results they should avoid applications during prolonged periods of cloudy weather. The lower arbuscular colonization of roots in the above trial led to impaired uptake of copper.

A recent study in a Chardonnay vineyard has also shown that the use of N fertilizer reduced AMF in roots, which resulted in lower leaf P and must P levels. The suppression of AMF that result from the application of one nutrient can have unintended impacts on other nutrients. There is evidence from other farming systems that organic forms of nutrients are less harmful

to AMF than synthetic fertilizers, but even organic sources, including manure, can reduce AMF and diminish other benefits they provide when applied at high rates.

Soil-applied fungicides are well known to harm AMF but what about foliar fungicides? At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that the fungicides typically used in vineyard spray programs to control powdery mildew and grey mold have a negative impact on AMF. Intense levels of root colonization by AMF have been observed in my lab from vineyards that use both organic and more conventional spray programs. However, reducing tillage can benefit AMF because tillage breaks up hyphal networks in soil. The negative impact of tillage on AMF is well known in annual crops where it can reduce early season P uptake from soil. In vineyards, we found that in-row cultivation reduced AMF colonization of vine roots as compared to in-row herbicides (mainly glyphosate), both of which are used to control weeds.

In separate studies east and west of the Cascades, AMF colonization in grapevine roots was lower in vines at wetter sites (west) and in vines that received more irrigation water (east). Therefore, applying less water can also enhance AMF in vineyards. Since AMF provide other benefits beyond their key role in helping grapevines obtain phosphorus and other nutrients from soil, choosing management options that enhance their abundance and activity (or do the least harm) will have a positive effect on vine and soil health and a profound influence on the grape root microbiome.

Citations for the scientific studies that support the information presented here are available upon request from the author (*paul.schreiner@ars.usda.gov*).

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## **Sommeliers on Wine Packaging**

Sommeliers recommend wines—but have some issues with their packaging

Michael S. Lasky

**Michael S. Lasky** is the former editor of *AppellationAmerica.com* and is the author of hundreds of articles for national magazines and newspapers.

**WINE BUSINESS MONTHLY REACHED** out to sommeliers and wine educators across the U.S. to learn their perspectives and interactions with the various types of packages they must deal with and what reactions, if any, they perceive from the consumers they serve. Collectively, these highly trained wine professionals had mixed reactions to the various bottles, capsules, and other closures but perceive mostly nonchalance from their guests.

## The Essential Sommelier Corollary

Given: A sommelier, or wine steward, is a trained and knowledgeable wine professional, normally working in fine dining restaurants, who specializes in all aspects of wine service, as well as wine and food pairing.

Given: An essential part of the job is dealing with the selection, storage and servicing of bottles, corks, capsules and other packaging materials.

Takeaway: As wineries seek ways to entice larger consumer retail sales by differentiating their products with creative wine packaging, including custom glass molds and eye-catching capsules and labels, that same packaging can create storage, presentation and service issues for on-premise sommeliers.

Admittedly, the cleverly designed wine containers that work as intended, as sales boosters in retail settings, are not necessarily advantageous to the service demands in restaurants, bars and other on-premise establishments. An illustrative example derives surprisingly from the explosive rise in Rosé sales. While Rosé is made in all wine-producing regions, it's the diversely shaped bottles from Rosé's "ground zero," Provence, France, that seem to be the most problematic to on-premise beverage directors. Just ask **Theodore Ross**, operation manager of the national **Hill-stone Restaurant Group**. The San Francisco-based Ross said almost all non-stock bottles cause storage issues when their shape prevents them from fitting in the standard wine racks. "For example, the popular **Miraval** Rosé bottles are extra wide, and we have to store them in their shipping cartons kept in the walk-in wine cooler rather than displayed at the bar," Ross explained.

**Petra Polakovicova**, beverage director at San Francisco's **Epic Steakhouse**, added, "Every inch of space is precious in the compressed restaurant storage real estate, so having differently shaped bottles makes it a bit harder for us from the operation side. However, from the consumer viewpoint, when I present a differently shaped bottle, guests will invariably comment, 'Wow, look at that.' It definitely brings out the conversation."

> "Unfortunately for me," said **Chris Shackelford**, chef and sommelier at **Trelio Restaurant** in Clovis, California, "some of these awkward bottles don't work quite as well in bin racking, like the traditional Côtes bottles, which are rounded on the sides and don't stack well. I'm seeing some California wineries using those types of bottles. It makes it difficult to store. When I see a bottle that I can't use in my bin system, I have to say, 'Sorry, I can't bring it in.' So, basically, it's a storage issue. I'm not so much concerned about the aesthetics of the bottle in front of the customer, as it is storage for me."

"Our solution for non-stock bottles is simple. We just put the odd; y shaped bottles in our magnum rack," offered **Ed Peterman**, the wine director at Boston's **Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse**.

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#### Sommeliers Point Out the Palpable Increase in Bottles with Screw Caps

At **Maxwell Park** in Washington D.C., proprietor and sommelier **Brent Kroll**, said he has witnessed a wave of screw cap bottles coming into his restaurant. "It might not be a tidal wave," explained Kroll, "but even old guard wineries from Burgundy, for instance, are topping their bottles with screw caps. This is in addition to all the usual suspects, like wines from Australia and New Zealand and even from domestic producers."

"For me, personally, I know that even though guests want the expected presentation rigmarole with the cork pull and pop, qualitatively screw caps are more of a sure thing with no threat of a corked wine, and behind the bar for wines by the glass, screw caps are appreciably convenient," Kroll added.



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Kroll noted that he has never had a guest scoff at the presentation of an expensive wine with a screw cap. The assumption by consumers that screw cap bottles implies cheap or low quality is quickly being dismissed with more educated wine consumers. Sometimes Kroll, when necessary, offers perspective about how screw cap bottles better preserve what's in the bottle.

Amanda McCrossin, sommelier at the exclusive Press, a chophouse in Napa Valley, declared, "I like them. As far as a consumer goes, outside of the restaurant, I think screw tops definitely eliminate the possibility for having a corked wine, which I love. Any time you can eliminate that variable for a consumer, that's a good thing. As far as long-term aging potential, I think it's still too soon to tell, but I have been excited about all of the Australian wines that have been bottled under screw tops now for probably two to three

decades. So, I'm a fan."

McCrossin concedes that Napa Valley is a very traditional region and loves the classic cork, with a few wineries breaking through this tradition, but visitors expect a cork on their Cabernets. But, again, for wines by the glass, screw caps are particularly convenient for the wait staff and bartenders.

McCrossin continued, "Screw caps mean we have a little less work. I think it's unfortunate that people still associate screw top with being cheaper. So, I think there is always a bit of a pause that gets paid when they see the wine in screw top. I think there is a reassurance that has to come on my side, as a sommelier, when I present a guest a wine that's bottled under a screw top to just let them know that just because it's under a screw top doesn't mean it's a bad wine or a cheap wine. There are really great wines that are made all over the world, not just in Australia and in Europe and even in Napa, that are bottled under screw caps. So, there is an element of it's no big deal when I present a wine with a screw top at the restaurant."

Chris Shackelford summed up the screw cap attitudes of most sommeliers *WBM* spoke with by noting, "Over the last 20 years, I could see the guests' reaction to screw top wine has changed quite a bit to the point where I don't think people even blink an eye at them. The only difference they notice in wine service is the server doesn't have to pull out a corkscrew. Previously, maybe one or two labels served in a day had a screw cap. But now five to 10 percent have them on my list."

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"When guests want to enjoy different wines with each course, I will often suggest they choose half bottles. We sell a lot of them," said Napa's McCrossin. "It's a really great way for a guest to experience multiple different wines in one sitting. I think when I can find half bottles, I generally try to buy them for the restaurant because guests really seem to enjoy them," she explained.

Washington D.C.–based Brent Kroll said, "I think that half bottles serve a really good purpose, but Maxwell Park offers some 50 wines by the glass, and we also offer half bottle-sized carafes, so I think that basically is a worthy substitute for half bottles in our program."

Like other sommeliers *WBM* spoke with, particularly at high-end restaurants, Kroll resorts to the **Coravin** device, which preserves older and rare wines by extracting single pours without removing the cork. "I think in previous jobs I've used it more, but over time I have found, for example, by using the Coravin on old Burgundies that are already on the edge, you're still accelerating how the wine is aged; it's just way slower than if you actually pulled the cork and gassed it. I pretty much use an Argon-based preservation and dispensing system with temperature control from **Napa Technology**, but I'm also careful on which bottles I choose to use the Coravin, too."

A growing number of wine bars, saloons and restaurants are adding wines on tap, usually supplied by kegs from wineries. Sommeliers say they rarely recommend tap wines in fine dining locations where aged and premium bottles are better suited to the dining experience.

Jennifer Estevez, sommelier and owner/founder of OMvino, a wine consulting firm, comes right to the point about keg-supplied vino: "First of all, there aren't too many premium wines that are available in kegs. When they are available, it usually means that the restaurant has a special relationship with the winemaker or has a one-time special. For example, I used to work at **Press Club** [a wine bar in San Francisco] and would get really fun lots that were exclusive to us or just really strange, quirky things that were experiments from winemakers. Although you can definitely find cheap bulk wine in keg, you can also form partnerships with wineries and get some really special stuff."

Speaking from experience, Kroll explained why he thinks keg-delivered wine has a limited appeal to most on-premise establishments. "I have run a program before where we offered about 20 wines out of a keg, and I think the keg is cool but only when you are sourcing the wine locally," he said. "That's because you're going to keep refilling them, which works only if the winery is nearby—not across the country or out of the U.S. Also, there aren't enough wineries that offer kegs where you could do a whole program from them and have the same quality you'd have pouring 750s. But I think that if you're going to have a few wines, and they're around where you're located, I think it often can make more sense than 750s and keep the price down for customers."



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## Waxing Unpoetic: Sommeliers' **Biggest Wine Packaging Pet Peeve**

Other than the occasional ornately designed bottle with a hard-to-rack custom glass mold, the wine package element that bothers sommeliers most is wax.

"I love the evocative appeal of wax-enclosed bottles, but that love is lost when I have to open the bottle. The wax chips can make a mess on the table and floor. And fighting with the wax can be a turn-off to customers. Invariably I have to take it to the beverage station where I can struggle with the wax out of view and then return the bottle to the table to pull the cork," McCrossin said.

Ed Peterman at Del Frisco's also says he admires the elegant look of wax topped bottles and appreciates when a pull-tab makes it easy to get to the cork. Alas, he admits there are many other wax closures without a tab, making it a challenging ordeal to open the bottle.

So while wax removal battles are infrequent and annoying occurrences in sommelier's work routines, it's the increasing presence of ever-evolving wine bottle packaging that presents some challenges for these wine stewards. As wineries increasingly rely on eye-catching glass molds to attract retail sales, sommeliers accustomed to storing stock-shaped bottles report finding it difficult to rack these bottles on-premise, and often have to reject them despite favoring the wine in them.

Sommeliers say they appreciate the growing population of screw cap bottles, both for how well they treat the wine inside and the ease of opening the bottles. But presenting screw cap bottles at the dinner table, especially in higher-end restaurants, can interfere with their guests' expectations of the cork removal and ensuing pop experience. Although this has become less of an issue as consumers learn more about the value of screw caps, sommeliers note that it occasionally requires them to offer some previously unnecessary, tableside education.

This all harks back to what is and isn't the main task of a sommelier: Create the wine list, advise and educate the guest of the appropriate wine for their meal-not to deal with the potential hassles of opening progressively designed wine packages. WBM

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## Sixth Annual Wines & Vines Packaging Conference

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#### Stacy Briscoe

**Stacy Briscoe** is the assistant editor of *Wine Business Monthly*. She has been writing about wine professionally since 2015, freelancing for multiple publications including The *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Edible Communities* and *Napa Sonoma Magazine*, among others. She also maintains her own website, *BriscoeBites.com*, dedicated to wine reviews and tasting notes. Outside of wine writing, she also contributes as a freelance editor for the independent publisher She Writes Press. Stacy has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English-language literature from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**THE SIXTH ANNUAL Wines & Vines Packaging Conference** is taking place August 8 at the **Lincoln Theatre** in Yountville, Calif. All conference sessions, exhibits and amenities are designed to appeal to all sectors of the wine industry that are looking to learn about the latest innovations in package design, sales and marketing. Whether in winemaking, winery management, purchasing or hospitality, this is the place for all who want to improve their wine brand's look and performance.

This year features an exciting line-up of industry

professionals with insight into their areas of expertise

during the event's five sessions. The day will kick off with a keynote address from well-known and well-respected

Chuck House: co-founder of Icon Design Group and

an internationally acclaimed brand developer and label

designer. House works with wineries on five continents

and has designed iconic, memorable labels for established wineries, including Chateau Montelena, Frog's



Chuck House

Leap and Bonny Doon Vineyard.

Last year's keynote speaker, **Randall Grahm**, owner and winemaker of Bonny Doon Vineyard, spoke highly of House's inspiration and influence on his brand's success. "The one thing that Chuck taught me is that a wine label is your opportunity to tell your customer what they can likely expect from what's inside the bottle, set their expectations as far as style, quality and price," he said. "You don't want to create a situation of cognitive dissonance where the package promises something that the wine can't deliver."

Indeed, when one sees the quiet humor of "Le Cigare Volant," the swooping stretch of Frog's Leap, the soft-focused rolling vineyards of **Joseph Phelps** and even the deceptively simple stamp of **Alpha Omega**, one cannot help but find a calming comfort in these labels' familiarity. And that is what House aims to create: not just a label, but an icon that speaks of the wine, of the winemaker and to the wine consumer in what he calls an "open conversation."

"I am personally and professionally committed to the concept of 'sustainable enthusiasm," said House in an interview with *Wine Business Monthly.* "I find over and over that expressing the unique energy present in every project and every person is the key to building long-term solutions that can



sustain their own character despite the inevitable fluctuations of the weather and the market."

The rest of the day's conference follows this theme. Learn what kind of packaging is selling wine with insights from **Nielsen's** consumer data tracking, presented by **Kelly Cohn Nielsen**, Nielsen VP and innovations business partner, and **Peggy Gsell**, Nielsen client business partner. **Robert Williams**, Ph.D, professor at **Susquehanna University Sigmund Weis School of Business** will discuss the ongoing—and increasing—canned wine trend.

Andrew Adams, editor of the *Wine Analytics Report*, is leading a panel discussion about developing a successful private label brand from bulk wine. Marc Gallo, VP of marketing at Trinchero Family Estates will provide insight in how to successfully navigate and utilize the bulk grape market to build a successful business. Cynthia Sterling, creative director of Affinity Creative Group, will provide her expertise in how to create an innovative brand design and properly market these types of wines to the public.

Maggie Tillman, owner/sales, Alta Colina Wine; Janu Goelz, winemaker, Alara Cellars; Chip Forsythe, winemaker, Rebel Coast Winery; and Landon McPherson, founder, Harvest Card—all wine industry professionals within the Millennial cohort, will partake in a discussion about how their businesses remain receptive to the evolving wine market and the modern wine consumer. The discussion will be lead by Stacy Briscoe, assistant editor of *Wine Business Monthly*.

The event will conclude with the announcement of the 2019 Packaging Design Awards. Gold, silver and bronze medals will be awarded in categories for classic, alternative, luxury, redesign and series package design. Medalists will reveal how they created their package design and what goals in branding, marketing and sales they achieved with their new look. **WBM** 

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## Insight from the Wine Analytics Report Wine Sales Rise 1 percent as Rosé Continues Growth

## Sales Value Rises 1 Percent

The value of off-premise table wine sales rose nearly 1 percent versus a year ago to more than \$1 billion in the four weeks ended May 18, according to scan data tracked by **Nielsen**. Sales increased more than 1 percent in the 52 weeks ended May 18 compared to a year earlier, approaching \$14.4 billion.

## Sales Volume Falls 2 Percent

Off-premise volumes of table wines sold in the four weeks ended May 18 exceeded 11.7 million 9 L cases, down 2 percent from a year earlier. The latest 52 weeks saw volumes drop more than one percent from a year earlier to 161 million 9L cases.

## Cabernet Leads Value; Rosé Leads Growth

While consumers are shifting toward more expensive wines, traditional varietals are retaining their hold on the market. Cabernet Sauvignon saw \$2.7 billion worth of sales in the 52 weeks ended May 18, closely followed by Chardonnay at \$2.6 billion and Red Blends—often driven by Cabernet—at \$1.9 billion. Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir followed in fourth and fifth spots, with \$1.3 billion and \$1.1 billion in sales, respectively.

But growth among these top varietals was lackluster, with Cabernet Sauvignon leading the way at 3 percent and Chardonnay virtually flat. Other varietals slipped, bookended by Zinfandel (down 2 percent) and White Zinfandel (down 8 percent). The strongest growth was seen in Rosé, up 34 percent, and Sauvignon Blanc, up 7 percent. Both have been driven by imports; and though growth has moderated in recent months, they remain the fastest-growing varietals. However, average price per bottle has not been growing quite as quickly. In fact, the average price for a 750 ml bottle of Rosé fell 2 percent over the past year to \$9.63. Sauvignon Blanc increased 2 percent to \$9.48 a bottle.

Nielsen channels reported the strongest price growth for Zinfandel and Syrah, which both saw average price per bottle rise 4 percent over the past year to \$11.71 and \$7.29, respectively. The increase supported Zinfandel's position as the most expensive varietal, followed by Pinot Noir at \$10.73 a bottle. **WBM**  Produced by Wines Vines Analytics, the Wine Analytics Report is the wine industry's most accurate and objective source of market insights, analysis and data.





#### Methodology

Sourced from Nielsen, these figures represent off-premise retailer wine sales to the consumer aggregated across a variety of channels nationwide, including grocery, drug, mass merchandisers, convenience, dollar, military, as well as a selection of warehouse clubs, and liquor channel geographies and liquor channel retail chains. Nielsen figures are updated and released every four weeks.

#### Nielsen Table Wine Category Segments MARKET: Total US xAOC+Conv+Military+Liquor Plus PERIOD: Week Ending May 18, 2019

1	ieleen	Dollar Value		Dollar Value % Chg YA		9L Equivalent Volume		9L Equivalent Volume % Chg YA		Avg Equivalent Price Per 750ML	
	IICISCII	Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 4 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 4 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 4 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 4 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19	Latest Wks - W/ 05/18/1
	TOTAL TABLE WINE	14,364,031,173	1,043,834,158	1.3	0.9	161,143,191	11,710,042	-1.3	-1.9	7.43	7.4
CONTAINERS	BOX	1,388,495,636	106,206,232	4.9	5.4	33,878,177	2,547,325	2.3	1.7	3.42	3.4
	\$0-\$3.99	581,541,098	43,597,105	-1.6	-1.3	20,298,700	1,505,748	-2.1	-2.9	2.39	2.4
	\$4+	806,688,375	62,455,487	10.1	10.3	13,575,559	1,039,243	9.4	9.0	4.95	5.0
	Total Table Wine Glass	12,718,798,070	916,616,193	0.7	0.1	124,005,337	8,905,001	-2.5	-3.2	8.55	8.5
	Value Glass \$0-\$3.99	664,525,031	48,123,099	-5.3	-7.1	16,644,437	1,188,364	-7.0	-9.3	3.33	3.3
	Popular Glass \$4-\$7.99	3,200,166,261	230,406,336	-5.3	-5.7	48,684,009	3,470,607	-5.9	-6.9		5.
'IERS	Premium Glass \$8-\$10.99	3,358,051,460	240,670,553	-1.2	-1.5	29,678,698	2,120,968	-1.8	-1.6		9.4
SIZES VARIETALS TYPES DOMESTIC IMPORTED PRICE TIERS BY	Super Premium Glass \$11-\$14.99	2,785,410,675	205,649,284	7.2	6.2	18,432,653	1,357,574	6.6 6.2	6.0 E 9		12. 17.
PRI	Ultra Premium Glass \$15-\$19.99 Luxury Glass \$20-\$24.99	1,382,933,087 568,510,209	100,443,735 41,933,258	7.2 6.9	6.4 6.4	6,743,662 2,178,285	490,872 162,746	6.2 5.4	5.8 6.7		21.
	Super Luxury Glass \$25+	751,825,531	47,923,036	4.1	0.4	1,578,027	102,139	5.4 1.1	-0.8	Per 750 Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19 7.43 3.42 2.39 4.95 8.55	39.
		3,792,344,996	275,859,658	1.4	0.0	40,102,665	2,902,734	-0.8	-2.0		7.
	ITALY	1,194,215,271	85,678,635	1.4	2.0	10,490,063	749,431	-0.9	-0.9		9.
	AUSTRALIA	725,857,822	52,313,951	0.6	-2.1	11,945,443	864,427	-1.1	-2.6		5.
	FRANCE	461,949,150	34,366,384	7.8	-1.9	2,969,349	213,809	6.8	-6.9	12.96	13.
Ð	CHILE	254,965,098	19,034,703	-4.1	1.6	3,828,988	288,397	-2.9	3.1	Per 75       4     Latest 52 Wks - W/E 05/18/19       7     7.43       7     7.43       7     7.43       7     7.43       2     8.55       3     3.33       5     8.55       3     3.33       6     9.43       7     2.174       3     9.49       5     9.43       7     21.74       3     9.49       5     9.49       6     9.49       6     9.49       7     6.58       7     6.58       7     6.58       7     6.58       7     6.58       7     7.06       9.59     9.65       7     7.28       8     9.97       4     11.54       7     7.07       9     7.54       9.02     8.02       9     7.54       9.03     6.00<	5.
ORT	SPAIN	161,955,529	10,993,825	-3.8	-10.0	2,050,933	142,893	-2.9	-8.7	6.58	6.
IMP	GERMANY	82,381,844	5,679,502	-4.4	-4.8	817,718	56,841	-1.3	-3.7	8.39	8.
	NEW ZEALAND	481,867,707	38,174,841	9.2	8.8	3,477,868	276,195	9.0	9.4	11.54	11.
	ARGENTINA	337,002,861	23,294,272	-7.5	-6.3	3,690,039	256,020	-9.5	-8.3	7.61	7.
	SOUTH AFRICA	23,947,343	1,594,508	-8.0	-14.1	206,762	13,749	-8.9	-14.9	9.65	9.
	PORTUGAL	41,010,508	2,636,741	7.3	-13.4	443,372	27,405	1.6	-18.6		8.
	DOMESTIC	10,571,686,177	767,974,501	1.3	1.2	121,040,526	8,807,309	-1.4	-1.9		7.
	CALIFORNIA	9,521,291,487	691,903,478	1.2	1.1	112,343,324	8,179,220	-1.6	-2.1		7.
U	WASHINGTON	618,829,087	44,343,650	1.8	-0.9	5,172,215	369,829	1.1	-2.0		9.
ESTI	OREGON TEXAS	202,304,175 32,393,302	15,247,939 2,455,901	13.8 -0.4	14.8 3.3	1,032,677 394,146	79,565 29,322	12.9 -2.5	14.4 0.3		15. 6.
δ	NEW YORK	34,886,556	2,433,701	-0.4	-8.7	484,973	36,380	-2.5			6.
	NORTH CAROLINA	40,734,141	2,897,526	1.8	2.2	423,357	30,530	0.3			7.
	INDIANA	23,624,415	1,706,895	-0.5	-0.7	261,142	18,649	-1.2			7.
	MICHIGAN	22,072,730	1,425,834	-2.8	-6.6	240,766	15,099	-2.4	-7.6	2.0 8.02 -2.8 7.54	7.
	RED	7,408,337,298	515,966,847	0.6	0.6	74,098,640	5,203,697	-2.2	-2.4	8.33	8.
YPE	WHITE	5,857,139,210	440,403,561	0.7	0.8	70,623,121	5,262,149	-1.2	-1.5	6.91	6.
<u> </u>	PINK	1,097,248,195	87,443,087	10.4	2.5	16,407,973	1,244,008	2.6	-2.1	5.57	5.
	CHARDONNAY	2,548,516,229	191,530,751	0.1	-0.2	30,044,840	2,237,162	-1.9	-2.7	7.07	7.
	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	2,652,533,986	186,734,184	3.2	3.4	24,752,146	1,769,253	0.4	1.0	8.93	8.
	PINOT GRIGIO/PINOT GRIS	1,320,578,249	100,595,362	2.2	2.7	17,204,060	1,299,930	1.4	1.5		6.
		1,088,883,869	76,486,608	2.6	4.2	8,455,781	591,719	0.1	0.7		10.
		731,166,383	50,782,694	-6.3	-6.9 6 1	10,160,291	705,814	-7.8	-9.6 5.2		6. o
Ś	SAUV BLANC/FUME MUSCAT/MOSCATO	960,778,546	74,657,560 47,236,937	6.8 -2.2	6.1 -1.3	8,450,011 9,846,127	654,330 714.065	5.0 -3.7	5.2 -3.7		9. 5.
ETAL	WHITE ZINFANDEL	646,059,030 280,499,496	47,236,937 20,307,436	-2.2 -8.1	-1.3 -7.8	9,846,127 5,678,891	714,065 406,327	-3.7 -9.0	-3.7 -9.7		5. 4.
ARI	MALBEC	260,331,480	17,810,930	-0.1	-7.0	2,441,127	406,327	-9.0	-7.6		4. 8.
`	RIESLING	241,459,065	16,900,455	-5.9	-5.1	2,676,834	183,957	-6.4	-7.0	Per 75       Latest 52       Wiks - W/E       05/18/19       7.43       3.42       2.39       4.95       8.55       3.33       5.48       9.43       12.59       17.08       21.74       39.69       7.88       9.43       5.06       12.96       7.88       9.49       5.06       12.96       7.88       9.49       5.06       12.96       7.88       9.49       5.06       8.39       11.54       7.61       9.63       8.39       11.54       7.61       9.97       8.02       7.54       7.61       8.33       6.91       7.52       7.07       8.93       6.40 <th70< th=""></th70<>	7.
	ZINFANDEL	226,689,518	15,409,092	-2.0	-4.3	1,613,031	109,083	-5.4	-6.6		11
	SHIRAZ/SYRAH	149,534,622	10,053,004	-7.2	-8.2	1,709,590	114,291	-10.6	-11.6	7.29	7.
	WHITE BLENDS (ex. 4/5L)	224,029,783	16,161,900	-5.2	-6.5	2,731,530	199,460	-4.8	-6.3	6.83	6.
	RED BLENDS (ex. 4/5L + CHIANTI)	1,860,829,052	128,673,473	2.0	1.1	17,161,802	1,191,976	0.3	-0.7	9.03	8.
	ROSE BLEND	529,389,669	45,698,512	33.9	10.2	4,582,156	383,486	36.9	10.1	9.63	9.
	750ML	10,365,189,171	745,854,681	2.0	1.2	82,680,084	5,936,940	-0.4	-1.3	10.44	10.
ZES	1.5L	2,076,548,382	150,801,705	-4.7	-4.2	35,756,809	2,574,059	-5.7	-5.7	4.84	4.
S SI	3L	61,985,163	4,386,753	-8.6	-9.3	1,618,432	111,437	-10.5	-13.7		3.
GLASS	4L	78,710,568	5,669,243	-9.0	-9.0	2,506,055	178,556	-12.0	-11.9		2
ט	187ML	105,607,484	7,757,693	-2.6	-9.3	1,296,079	94,189	-4.3	-10.4	3.42     2.39     4.95     8.55     3.33     5.48     9.43     12.59     17.08     21.74     39.69     7.88     9.49     5.06     12.96     5.55     6.58     8.39     11.54     7.61     9.65     7.71     7.28     7.06     9.97     16.32     6.85     5.99     8.02     7.54     7.64     8.33     6.91     5.57     7.07     8.93     6.40     10.73     6.00     9.47     5.57     7.07     8.93     6.40     10.73     6.00     9.47     5.47     4.12     8.89     7.52     11.71 </td <td>6</td>	6
	375ML	18,054,414	1,307,984	8.1	-2.7	68,126	4,834	5.0	-19.9	2.39     4.95     8.55     3.33     5.48     9.43     12.59     17.08     21.74     39.69     7.88     9.49     5.06     12.96     5.55     6.58     8.39     11.54     7.61     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.65     7.71     9.63     6.85     5.99     8.02     7.54     7.64     9.752     10.73     6.00     9.47     5.47     4.12     8.89     7.52     11.71     7.29     6.83 <td>22</td>	22
	ex. 4/5L	900,708,338	69,609,637	8.8	9.4	16,126,740	1,232,180	7.8	7.9		4
SIZES	1L 1.51	30,293,414	2,398,006	12.4 5.8	11.2	456,927	35,903	9.7 7 2	8.8		5
X SI	1.5L 3L	26,899,934 648,482,430	2,042,828 49,407,129	5.8 7.8	4.1 8.9	533,452 12,527,164	40,730 949,770	7.2 7.2	5.6 8.0		4
BOX	SL	648,482,430 487,784,329	49,407,129 36,596,517	7.8 -1.6	-1.6	12,527,164	949,770 1,315,143	-2.3	8.0 -3.4		4
	~-		30,370,317	-1.0	-1.0	3,070,043	1,010,140	-2.5	-3.4	3.33     5.48     9.43     12.59     17.08     21.74     39.69     7.88     9.49     5.06     12.96     5.55     6.58     8.39     11.54     7.61     9.65     7.71     7.28     7.06     9.97     16.32     6.85     5.99     8.02     7.54     7.64     8.33     6.91     5.57     7.07     8.93     6.40     10.73     6.00     9.47     5.57     7.07     8.93     6.40     10.73     6.00     9.47     5.47     4.12     8.89     7.52     11.71     7.29     6.83     9.03     9.63 </td <td>2</td>	2

Source: Nielsen

## 2019 WBM Technology Survey Report Understanding the Technology Behind the Rising E-commerce Tide

Stories of concerted e-commerce efforts abound, but what policies and solutions are wineries putting in place?

#### Erin Kirschenmann



**Erin Kirschenmann** is managing editor for *Wine Business Monthly* and has been with the magazine since 2012. In addition to production responsibilities for the monthly trade magazine, she writes about wine industry trends, including business, technology and sales and marketing topics for *WBM* and *Winebusiness.com*. She graduated from Sonoma State University with a bachelor's degree in communications with a journalism emphasis. She can be reached at *erin@winebusiness.com*.

**A SERIES OF EVENTS** over the last year have made e-commerce, an old frontier for winery sales, feel new and fresh again, as wineries look to revitalize online sales: while tasting room visitation has increased in a number of emerging wine regions, more established regions have seen a decline; states across the country have opened up their borders to direct-to-consumer (DTC) shipping, to the point that a good majority of consumers are able to have wine sent to them; and the **Supreme Court** ruled in favor of retailers on the unconstitutionality of residency requirements, opening up questions about whether the decision allows for DTC wine shipments, creating new competition for wineries.

In the most recent *Wine Business Monthly* and Silicon Valley Bank Tasting Room Survey, we found that the move toward wine experiences over the last three years has had both positive and negative ramifications. The good: Guests are staying at a winery for a longer period of time, getting to know the brand, the people and the wine, often resulting in a larger purchase at the end of the visit or a higher club sign-up rate. The bad: The longer a person spends at one winery, the fewer wineries that person can visit in a day, giving rise to lower visitation numbers.

The wine club has long been considered the Holy Grail of winery DTC efforts and has been the focus of many DTC programs (for a complete timeline of DTC strategy benchmarking, revisit **Cyril Penn**'s article, "Tasting Room Survey Report-Visitor Counts Increase in Emerging Regions, Decline in Napa," in the July 2019 issue of *Wine Business Monthly*). While it is, and will remain, a staple of a healthy DTC sales program, there are a couple flaws. First, club sign-ups rely predominately on physical visits to the tasting room, where an employee can tout the benefits and make the pitch but, as

stated above, the number of visitors is flat or down in some areas. Second, the average lifespan of a club member is about 2 years, and that time frame hasn't increased much since we started tracking.

Now, managers are looking to e-commerce not only to bring in new customers from the comforts of their own home, or wherever in the world they may be, but also to retain old club members with less structured purchases.

This effort is doubly important now that the Supreme Court has ruled, essentially, for **Total Wine & More** in *Tennessee Wine and Spirits Retailers Assn. v. Thomas.* While the decision directly states that Tennessee's two-year residency requirement for retailers applying for a liquor license is discriminatory against non-residents and has no relationship to public health and safety—and is therefore unconstitutional—there have been some questions about whether it also applies to DTC shipping across state lines. With that looming threat, wineries are urged to take a look at business and DTC strategies.

In this survey, we asked winery representatives to talk about their e-commerce technology priorities, plans and pain points.

## **Top Priorities in Tech Space**

*Wine Business Monthly* asked respondents for the top three technology issues they were looking to solve in the next year, and e-commerce and other DTC solutions were highly rated by small, medium and large wineries alike. The answers available to those taking the survey included non-DTC tasks, including integration of company systems, security practices and infrastructure improvements but, even with all those other tasks, DTC came out on top, with providing better sales analytics, web analytics and customer

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- Scott Helwig, Winemaker

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analytics to the DTC team (47 percent), upgrading DTC (tasting room/wine club) capabilities (40 percent) and improving the mobile shopping experience (34 percent) as the top three choices.

Mid to large-sized wineries were, unsurprisingly, more likely to report an interest in better data but the gap between small wineries was much smaller than expected—56 percent to 44 percent, respectively. Much of this is likely due to the growing availability of data: in-house, from publications as well as from other agencies. It is becoming easier than ever to benchmark and set goals against your own numbers, your neighbors and other industries and locations than ever before. Additionally, there is an interest in doing so. All the data in the world wouldn't matter if no one took the time to analyze it. Dashboards and reports are built into a number of winery CRM, POS and other software solutions, putting the numbers front and center. For more information on this, see "From Cash Register to Competitive Advantage: The POS as MVP" on page 122.

Seventy-five percent of respondents said that there will be increased investment in e-commerce over the next two years at their respective companies, and, across the board, website redesign came out as one of the top endeavors. These renovations could be investments in new design and branding, optimization for responsive design, the inclusion of new shopping tools, widgets or more—but all efforts are likely designed for the chance to significantly grow e-sales. Currently, small wineries are reporting just 14 percent (on average) of their sales are done over their websites—mid-sized and large wineries said that online sales through their own website account for just 5 five percent of total sales.

Where the biggest difference in responses could be found was in how big of a push wineries are willing to make to their social media branding, marketing and other efforts. Whether social media delivers an actual ROI is still up for debate, but small wineries are taking the chance on a mostly free technology in their quest to reach new consumers and engage with existing followers.

#### Tracking Progress: Website Views, Devices and More

Following a marketing surge, it's nice to know whether the efforts have paid off. Did that ad result in more traffic to the website? How long did they stay on the site? Was there a purchase?

Tracking and benchmarking e-commerce are essential steps to manage sales. Why else would nearly half of the respondents choose providing better sales, web and customer analytics to their teams as some of their top priorities?

In positive news, just 23 percent of small winery respondents said they do not monitor their traffic. When it comes to the software that enables them to do that, the majority of wineries, large and small, use **Google Analytics** to keep tabs on what's happening.

Though they are watching traffic in general, a good third of respondents (29 percent) reported that they did not know how much of their traffic came from desktop, tablet or mobile devices. *Wine Business Monthly* separated the data out by job position though, and found that IT directors, by and large, had a better grip on how consumers are accessing websites. When sorting at the averages by job function, IT managers found that 64.8 percent of traffic came via desktop, 24.2 percent through phone and just 8.5 percent from tablet.

It's interesting to note that they number of views via smartphone is similar, but just shy of those reported across all consumer goods industries: **eMarketer** polls showed that m-commerce sales (those made via mobile phone) account for 34.5 percent of all e-commerce sales. Further, 76 percent of respondents to an **Outerbox** survey reported that they had made a purchase on their smartphones in the last six months.





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Mobile strategy is key to increasing sales online. For many in the wine industry, the biggest pain point is the shopping cart; it's not unusual to hear gripes about poor integration and functionality. And they're not wrong to complain-that same eMarketer survey found that 84 percent of shoppers have had difficult mobile shopping experiences and 40 percent have moved on to purchase from a competitor when that's happened.

The next frontier is using push notifications and geographical location to push special offers to nearby customers. Currently, 92 percent of respondents aren't utilizing this type of technology. Marketers say that SMS text messaging could be beneficial to club managers as a tool to let members know that an allocation is ready for purchase or an order is set for pick-up. Two of the large wineries that responded to the survey said they use geographical location for promotions, including discounts in the tasting room.

Benchmarking traffic and sales, though, is mostly done in-house, with some occasional help from the outside. Eighty-five percent of both small and large wineries measure sales to the prior year's numbers. Where results differ amongst the two groups is in how they compare figures. Smaller wineries are more likely to discuss outcomes with their neighbors (28 percent of small wineries versus 9 percent of large) whereas the majority of large wineries (32 percent) look to new programs like Community Benchmark (versus just 10 percent of small wineries). In some cases, the winery's POS software provides aggregated data to its users. Forty-three percent of all respondents use the annual Wine Business Monthly and Silicon Valley Bank Tasting Room Survey Results for a broader benchmarking set.

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SMALL							
	Once a Day (1)	Twice a Week (2)	Once a Week (3)	Once a Month (4)	Less than Monthly (5)	Response Count	Average
E-newsletter (email marketing)	0	4	20	37	26	87	3.98
Facebook	9	31	31	12	5	88	2.69
Twitter	4	11	15	11	9	50	3.20
Instagram	10	31	27	8	5	81	2.59
Digital advertising	0	1	2	15	16	34	4.35
Abandoned cart emails	5	1	4	0	10	20	3.45
Promotion through online retailers (wine.com, Wine Searcher, etc.)	0	1	1	5	6	13	4.23
Consumer review apps (Yelp, OpenTable, TripAdvisor, etc.)	3	5	12	13	15	48	3.67

#### MID to LARGE

	Once a Day (1)	Twice a Week (2)	Once a Week (3)	Once a Month (4)	Less than Monthly (5)	Response Count	Average
E-newsletter (email marketing)	0	1	5	9	4	19	3.84
Facebook	2	8	4	3	0	17	2.47
Twitter	0	8	2	2	2	14	2.86
Instagram	2	9	6	2	1	20	2.55
Digital advertising	1	0	4	1	5	11	3.82
Abandoned cart emails	1	1	1	2	3	8	3.63
Promotion through online retailers (wine.com, Wine Searcher, etc.)	0	0	1	4	4	9	4.33
Consumer review apps (Yelp, OpenTable, TripAdvisor, etc.)	0	3	4	2	4	13	3.54

2019 WBM TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

#### What the Data Proves

The results of the Wine Business Monthly Technology Survey are meant to serve as reference to overall trends in e-commerce world. It does show that all the rumblings and discussion of grander and more practical e-commerce plans are coming to fruition with more investment dollars. While it's not early days for online wine sales, brands and marketers are learning from campaigns that didn't succeed and those that did-and shaping best practices as a result. WBM


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Jim began his career in Ireland, where he rose through the ranks at Guinness, to ultimately become an executive member of the Board of Directors. In 1994, Grand Metropolitan recruited him to head its Irish wines and spirits division. Following his tenure at Grand Metropolitan, Diageo appointed him as EVP and President, assuming responsibility for Diageo's wine and spirits division in the Western region of the United States, and consecutively, he joined Allied Domecq in 2003, to lead their business in the Americas as President for North America and Canada, reporting to the Global CEO. Following the sale of Allied Domecq to a consortium led by Pernod Ricard, Jim was appointed CEO of The Jim Beam Company for USA, Canada and Mexico. In 2008, Jim joined Moët Hennessy, the wine and spirits division of LVMH, as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Moët Hennessy USA, where he was appointed to the position of CEO and President of Moët Hennessy USA in 2010. Currently Jim is the President and CEO of Moët Hennessy North America.

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#### This article has been updated to reflect the following:

- The correct web address for Microworks is *www.winesoftware.com*
- eCellar runs on all platforms, including windows and mac
- VinNow is used by nearly 500 wineries

# **Product Review: From Cash Register to Competitive Advantage: The POS as MVP**

Pam Strayer

**TODAY, POINT OF SALE** (POS) systems are hot shots compared to those of just a few years ago. Once relegated strictly to tasting rooms and back office functions to simply transact purchases, smart POS systems now have the power to maximize marketing potential. Oracle Systems' POS tagline sums it up: from "Point of Sale to Point of Service."

POS systems have become the onramp to a dazzling display of digital marketing opportunities by enabling tasting room staff to customize pitches, empowering marketers to kickstart automated follow-up email marketing, and revving up club managers who can turbocharge wine club conversions and increase average orders.

More advanced POS products have also enabled a new wave of integrated systems, creating dynamic, personalized websites that offer more customer-centric, **Amazon**-like e-commerce experiences—something wine marketers have wanted for decades.

More than 40 vendors in the winery POS space today serve an estimated 6,300 wineries producing more than 1,000 cases a year. Experts estimate wineries spend more than \$7.5 million per year on their POS systems, a figure based on multiplying the number of wineries by a minimum monthly payment of \$100 a month, for \$1,200 a year. (Keep in mind that larger wine companies with more brands, consumers and locations will likely pay much more.)

### What's Changed in POS Technology

Once solely a standalone solution, the POS systems now available on the market range from baseline, POS-only products, such as **Square** and **Quickbooks** POS, to fully integrated product families, such as the offerings from industry leaders, **WineDirect** (1,200 winery customers), **Orderport** (700 wineries) and **VinSuite** (500 wineries), among others. NewCo like **Bloom**, **truvi commerce** and **Commerce7** are pushing the envelope, bringing new capabilities to wineries across the spectrum.

While systems can be installed to run locally, most of today's popular programs are cloud-based (online). Mobile has almost become standard. Wherever they reside, POS systems can stream data to centralized repositories where everyone at the winery can access them.

Integrated Suite—POS included	
WineDirect	21%
VinSuite	12%
AMS Software	9%
VinNow	8%
Microworks	8%
OrderPort	7%
Orion Wine Software	4%
Standalone POS	
Quickbooks POS	13%
Microsoft RMS (discontinued now)	4%

**Top POS Systems** 

Source: Wine Business Monthly 2018 Technology Survey

#### **Number of Wineries Using the POS System**

Cloud-based Systems				
WineDirect	1,200			
OrderPort	700			
vinSUITE	500			
VineSpring	450			
Active Club Solutions	350			
Korona	250			
truvi commerce	120			
Commerce7	100			
Locally Installed Systems				
VinNow	460-500			
AMS Software *(for POS; there are more clients but they don't use the POS)	100-150*			

Source: As reported by vendors

POS systems now act like an amplified caller ID—they display tasting room employees an incredible amount of customer information, from purchasing histories and in-house customer notations. Mobile systems also free tasting room staff to conduct more tableside activities, increasing the amount of attention guests receive—with the goal of upping sales and wine club conversion rates.

Most importantly, the data that POS systems collect is no longer static. Today's POS data is dynamic. It moves—into reporting and analysis dashboards to provide near real-time feedback to everyone who needs to see the numbers—making it far more valuable and actionable. Data flows.

# Determining the Right Platform for Your Operation

To former Quickbooks executive **Ridgely Evers**, who owns and runs **DaVero Farms & Winery** in Sebastopol, as well as **Captina**, an integrated winery direct-to-consumer software solution, the key question for wineries is whether to look for a standalone POS solution or an integrated system.

"You have to start with the problem that the customer [the winery] is trying to solve," Evers said. "This goes back to a classic software question in the industry: do I want to find the best-of-breed solution in each category or go with an integrated product?"

Computer users may recall this as the difference between the Windows/ Microsoft world and the Apple/Macintosh world. The former was devoted to uncoupling software and hardware while the latter focused solely on marrying the hardware and software all into one system to promote easeof-use for customers. The split still persists today.

Evers said wineries, which are essentially small businesses, should go for the integrated solution: If wineries get the software decision right, the world of interconnected data that has long been a source of competitive advantage in the greater world of e-commerce can open the gates to growth.

Winery-specific software has traditionally lagged behind other industries in delivering both data and the seamless online and bricks and mortar experiences for two reasons. First, the market for this software is fairly niche in size (more than \$7.5 million with roughly 6,300 potential customers). Second, the wine industry niche has unique regulatory requirements to comply with.

And yet, one could say the period from 2018 to 2019 was a banner year in which the industry's software vendors matured and new, innovative players launched next-generation solutions and capabilities.

Need to be able to channel food sales separately in your POS? Check. Need to enable customers to tip sales staff with their tasting room wine purchase (and thereby increasing staff pay and retention)? Check. Need to parse different tax rates in a single transaction for wine consumed onsite versus wine shipped to the customer's home in another state? Check.

Despite the fact that the pool of potential buyers is small and the burden of regulation large, these and many other wish-list features have become a reality as a diverse spectrum of POS systems have proliferated and matured to meet wineries' growing needs.

In response to piecemeal systems, most winery software vendors today are migrating their product lines to a fully inclusive suite of solutions that help wineries capitalize on their data with the goal of integrating data into databases that can pro-actively help employees sell more efficiently. They also document activities and create reports that meet the needs of finance, operations and marketing departments.

To do this, the software must provide a suite that offers a minimum of three essential products: POS, wine club and e-commerce software.



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"Back in the day, winery software companies would specialize in one or two, but not all three types of software," said **Jeff Carroll**, product management director at **Avalara**, a leading provider of automated tax compliance software. "You would see companies like **AMS** and **VinNOW** and **Microworks** that would have a point-of-sale system plus wine club but not e-commerce. And then you would see other companies like **eWinery Solutions** (which is now **VinSUITE**) or **Vin65** (which is now WineDirect) that would have e-commerce and wine club, but not point-of-sale."

Evers sees the market moving toward integrated solutions as a plus for wineries. "The software decision is incredibly important because you are talking about the operating system for your business," said Evers, whose career in Silicon Valley at **Intuit** launched one of the world's most popular small business accounting packages.

"What it really comes down to is what are your competencies in your organization and where do you want to use your energy?" Evers said. "If you're going to do best of breed, then you're the one responsible for the integration and interoperability. The vast majority of solutions in the wine industry are for best of breed in a category: You've got a point-of-sale problem, you've got a club management problem, you've got a shipping problem, you've got a reservations problem."

But that leads to customer self-service, or picking and choosing individual platforms, a model he discourages wineries from pursuing. "The winery owner needs one vendor to be held accountable when data doesn't integrate or problems arise," he said.

E-commerce had not traditionally been on the radar for many wineries, but Carroll said that growth opportunities for wineries are shifting.

"In DTC, wineries have been able to get basically free growth over the last 14 years, maybe even 20 years, where new states keep getting added to the [DTC shipping] mix," Carroll said. "But now that is almost over. Wineries need to start getting better at the marketing piece of it and compete in order to sustain that growth and therefore be a little bit more sophisticated in terms of marketing. For POS, it's not just about checking out—it's also about capturing customers' contact information and marketing to them in the future."

"Generally, wineries are behind the curve but are catching up. Customer segmentation is going to become important. E-commerce will become more of a business driver," he added.

## **POS Pain Points and Opportunities**

In 2019, the winery POS category falls into three main market segments:

- 1. Wineries with a standalone POS
- 2. Wineries with an integrated suite
- 3. Early adopters looking for more powerful marketing innovations

The early adopters are making a bet on developing an e-commerce strategy as their emerging growth frontier and are looking for more powerful marketing innovations. They're willing to buy into platforms that provide personalized e-commerce.

However, wineries across the board struggle with ease-of-use for employees in most systems.



For some, when it comes to choosing systems, conflicts arise between departments, raising thorny issues about whose needs come first: finance (traditionally the heavyweight stakeholder in POS) or marketing (the department charged with club sales and e-commerce forays). New styles of coordination, collaboration and teamwork are sometimes needed, experts say.

Liz Mercer, Bluxome Street Winery general manager and WISE Academy instructor and content developer, has helped dozens of wineries make software buying decisions. In the span of her 18 years in direct-to-consumer wine marketing, she's used many of the leading POS systems—including Microworks, eCellar, Vin65, VinSUITE and OrderPort.

"There are two big frustrations today wineries face with POS systems: reporting and providing an integrated guest experience," she said. "The issue with reporting is getting enough complexity without massaging a lot of data. Secondly, wineries face challenges in providing an integrated experience for guests across the tasting room and purchasing."

Mercer said that another challenge is the limitations a vendor's software puts on the winery's web development team or agency. Web developers want to create media rich, online brand experiences with add-on reminders (about shipping price breaks, for instance) to spur customer e-commerce sales. Yet they find they are hemmed-in by technical details.

Wineries also complain about legacy architecture, lack of support and fragmented systems that don't integrate well, according to Mercer.

Those problems are severe enough that 85 percent to 90 percent of clients signing up with **KLH Consulting**, Orderport, Commerce7 and truvi commerce are "switchers"—wineries that already have a POS (either a standalone or integrated) but want more powerful tools.

While some wineries are content with the speed of innovation offered by the software they've bought into, others want to buy into a newer, more robust system.

## **Switching: Pros and Cons**

When wineries switch, Mercer said, the benefits can be substantial, but the stakes are high. With the breadth of programs, more than one department will be affected. The human dimension comes into play. There may also be process changes in the way work is carried out.

"Your workflows may change," Mercer said. "Just because that's the way you used to do it, it doesn't mean that you can't achieve the same results going forward, but your workflow may change."

Teams need to collectively define the requirements for a new system. Change management skills will be needed.

Evers says the silo-ing of departments is often where the problems of a lack of integration originate. "We see this in multiple places: the owner says to the tasting room manager, 'Go get a solution.' Then the owner says to the club manager, 'Go get a solution.' The manager has no concept that all these things should work together. The manager thinks they're trying to solve a particular pain point, one problem. Each manager has a silo that they're compensated for managing successfully and they're going to look for something that optimizes their silo. And they're going to want features that take you down a path. That path can be detrimental for everybody else but optimized for them."

After watching lots of different clients, Evers says, it's common to find, "one person will say I need a rope, and one person will say I need a hammer, but what they actually need is an elephant. They just don't realize it."

Mercer advises wineries to "think both upstream and downstream." "Make sure that you're engaging your business partners like finance and accounting



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as well as frontline tasting room staff, wine club representatives, and your e-comm person at the very beginning of the conversation," she said.

"The most important piece of advice I give wineries interested in switching is to get the stakeholders and the end users around the table early," Mercer added. "Decide what the key functionality must be in the requirements must be when putting together the request for proposal (RFP)."

Mercer cautioned against being swayed by cool new features at the expense of overall objectives: "We tend to see the new shiny thing without really ensuring that we're able to do our core functionality. Take the time to really think: Does this meet my needs? Is it solving a problem I don't necessarily have? Make sure that you solve your core functionality first and then see the shiny new things as bonuses on top."

One juncture that often leads to change is the launch or upgrade of a winery website. In that phase, winery website developers and agencies often assist client wineries in analyzing the pros and cons of different systems. James Marshall Berry of JMB Web Consulting in Sonoma said newer wineries launching their first websites are less tied to entrenched workflow habits and more likely to evaluate POS systems on their overall merits.

To him, data interoperability is the critical factor. He said too many wineries are married to static POS software that forces employees to download to Excel, upload, and spend time conforming various reports.

"The significant hurdles are—and you see it more in Napa and Sonoma that so many wineries have shirts that say, 'Well, this is the way we've always done it.' The problem is that the POS and the accounting departments work well together. But the accounting department often could not care less if the data touches anything or anyone else—wine club, anything at all," he said.

"Typically you might build a website that integrates everything, but the POS is still standalone because the finance department—the people who approve the money and write the checks—have decided they don't want to change and that's the way it's going to be," Berry added. "A lot of times the decision isn't made by the winery based on what's best for them. It's based on what they were used to doing and what they're used to needing in their reports."

Berry said wineries should stay focused on the overall goal of productivity and efficiency for all.

"The key for me is to recommend that all of your systems touch each other. If you have to say (more than once), 'We download this from Excel, make changes, and re-upload it to this other place,' then you're wasting your time and risking that inaccurate data is moved. You want your POS system to talk to your wine club and your e-commerce cart directly."

Ideally, Berry said, winery data should be dynamic, both for the sake of productivity as well as to enhance the customer experience.

"I should be able to sit in your parking lot and sign up for the wine club on my phone, walk into your tasting room, and say, 'I just joined the wine club and I want to buy this wine—will I get my discount?" he said. "When you pull up that customer name in the POS system, it should be registered as a wine club member and my discount should be there so I can buy wine with my club discount right away at the club I just joined."

"Then, internally in the winery's systems, those transactions and that data should make its way to accounting, inventory etc.—everything should talk to each other. That's the biggest thing," Berry said.

Berry said clients from growing regions like Oregon, Washington and Texas are quicker to opt for the new tools. "The newer wineries get it. The next generation realizes the value that technology brings to their business priorities."

So how and when do more established wineries change? After years of observation, Carroll said it's often a matter of employee turnover.

"From a personnel standpoint, I've noticed that when people turn over, people also tend to have systems that they prefer and that's where you might see easier change. In a more established company that keeps their employees for a long time, you don't see a lot of change from a system standpoint," he said.

"And the system has to work. It's a big change and requires a lot of change management," Carroll added.

How can wineries make sure they're making the right decision, if they decide to switch?

In conclusion, Carroll said, "Do your homework, get references and make sure you talk to somebody in a similar situation to you. You want to make sure you understand the problems that you're trying to solve and talk to somebody that's actually gone through the process of adopting the system you're researching. Everybody's going to do a good job selling their system, but you want to make sure that there are no surprises."

## Innovation from POS Providers: What They're Working on Now

**INNOVATION IN THE POS** and digital DTC marketing field is happening in many dimensions, both among established and new companies.

Vendors have focused on incremental improvements to core capabilities and on integrating popular third-party plugins that wineries often use in an effort to provide customization at an affordable price point.

In general, software leaders see the marketing challenges wineries now face in the light of fewer tasting room visits thanks to visitors that spend more time at a smaller number of wineries. Digital marketing can pick up the slack or broaden the playing field, and software vendors are lining up to meet wineries' needs as fast as their development teams can respond. They are innovating their feature sets to keep up with the changing pace of regulations, winery needs and integrations to third-party software.

## **The Major Vendors**

The top five leading vendors—WineDirect, OrderPort, vinSUITE, Vinespring and Active Club Solutions—serve a total of more than 3,150 wineries. That's 50 percent of the U.S.'s 6,300 wineries producing more than 1,000 cases. Here's an overview of what's new in their products.

## WineDirect

Last year, WineDirect funneled \$395 million in winery DTC sales via its POS, and fees from those transactions accounted for 32 percent of the company's revenue last year, a company spokesperson reported. More than 1,200 wineries use WineDirect's POS, according to the company.

**Devin Loftis**, vice president of product at WineDirect, sees the POS as the core of a winery's IT ecosystem. "Positioning the POS as the beginning of the funnel and seeing where that funnel leads your customers is key. How are wineries interpreting that or what actions are they taking based on the data?" he asked.

Though Loftis joined WineDirect from outside the wine tech world, he agrees with many inside the industry who see e-commerce as the most promising frontier for growth. "Online sales are about 10 percent of the DTC channel, and we see that as an incredible opportunity for growth with our customers," he said.

But it's that first transaction, usually in the tasting room, where the all-important, leverageable data starts—in the POS system. It's best if the data is captured digitally from the start, Loftis said.

"We encourage wineries not to use printers," Loftis said. "We encourage them to email the receipt out. That way you capture that email address."

Loftis recognizes that WineDirect's features and technology constantly need to improve. He said WineDirect is modernizing its programming language, moving from **Cold Fusion** to the nimbler **Ruby on Rails**. "We're also introducing—it's in beta right now—chip reader technology to handle the EMV chip on the credit card," he said. The software will also support paying by phone.

## **OrderPort**

"The tasting room is ground-zero for DTC sales and the POS is mission critical to delivering a great DTC custom experience," said **Rick Belisle**, managing partner at OrderPort. The company said it was the first to introduce mobile POS in 2012. Today, EMV is supported, and other new features include guest conversion tracking, shipping estimates and enhanced customer relationship management (CRM) software.

Belisle, like others, said the biggest influx of new clients are, "those who are using non-winery [POS] applications that don't do what they need or winery applications that have not kept pace with their needs." These clients, he said, tolerate gaps until growth promotes change.

"The POS should have a seamless connection to wine club and e-commerce," he said.

### vinSUITE

vinSUITE's roots date back to 2008, when it was called **Napa Valley POS**. Five years later, it merged with eWinery Solutions. A popular solution, it offers integrated POS, club and e-commerce software.

**Molly Spurgin**, marketing coordinator at vinSUITE, said newly added features include end-of-day reporting and event categories for quick transactions.

## VineSpring

**Chris Towt**, CEO of VineSpring, said 30 percent of his business is from new clients who struggle with general-use POS systems. They are often wineries who have been using "simple, easy-to-use POS systems, built by companies that are well funded and have specialized in building that POS for a much larger customer segment than just wineries," he said.

VineSpring is built on a hub and spoke model, integrating, like others, with commonly used POS, email and accounting programs including Square, **Mailchimp** and Quickbooks.

## **Active Club Solutions**

Founded in 2003, Active Club Solutions, based in Pleasanton, Calif., reported that 25 percent of its 350 winery customers are new business.

It has recently launched an employee time clock, a more streamlined checkout system and dashboard reports as new POS features. It is currently working on offering texting (SMS) capabilities for marketers.

# CANNED WINE?





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#### **NewCo Innovators**

New companies in the marketplace often offer a faster on-ramp to innovation. From 2017 to 2018, three new winery software companies launched: Bloom, truvi commerce and Commerce7. Each brings a different focus and approach.

Two pivot from existing technology—Bloom atop Shopify while truvi commerce builds on the wine industry software formerly known as **SimplyCMS**.

Commerce7, the subject of a lot of buzz, is the first winery software program to offer wineries dynamic personalization, which provides the ability to recognize a site visitor as a type (known or unknown) and then serve a customized view of the website.

Outside the world of wineries, Amazon and other websites using stateof-the-art technology have offered personalized commerce experiences for more than a decade so, to consumers, this is an expected feature of online sites, from newspapers to e-commerce.

## Bloom

**Patrick Stroud** founded Bloom in 2017 in Seattle, using **Shopify**'s robust e-commerce platform as its core. He began his career in e-commerce as one of the first 13 employees of Amazon, working directly with **Jeff Bezos**. In 2014, he started building websites on Shopify. Today, Bloom is the only Shopify expert specializing in wine. The Bloom agency has about 50 winery clients.

"Our current focus is start-up wineries and very small, high-end producers," Stroud said. "We get a lot of calls from people who are specifically looking for a solution utilizing Shopify."

Bloom's software integrates with many leading plugins, via Shopify, and uses **Google Analytics** and **Google Tag Manager** to track customer data. According to Stroud, Bloom's newest features include a QR code sign-up so new members can join using mobile devices without tying up the POS.

#### truvi commerce

Launched in 2018, truvi commerce was built on SimplyCMS. The company has grown from an 80-winery client base it inherited from SimplyCMS to 120 clients today—a 50 percent increase in 10 months.

Like Commerce7, truvi commerce was founded by wine software industry insiders, two of whom were veteran WineDirect employees. Its three managing partners are **Stephen Mutch** (who oversees product development), **Karin Ballestrazze** (who manages partner relations and customer success) and **Sheri Hebbeln** (who's in charge of finance and marketing). Mutch created SimplyCMS. Ballestrazze and Hebbeln each worked at WineDirect for more than 10 years. Hebbeln was also a co-founder of eWinery Solutions (now VinSUITE).

As a team who knows the industry well, the three have focused on providing a platform with modern tools, from POS through to shipping. truvi launched EMV in 2018 and hold-at-**FedEx** shipping in 2019.

"We saw a void in the marketplace," Hebbeln said. Now, truvi's client wineries can see wine club activity, e-commerce purchases and shipment activity directly, rather than trying to connect everything via API. "It can get clunky that way," she said. The software is also unique in offering line item order and tax management, Hebbeln added.

#### **Commerce7**

Commerce7 was founded by former WineDirect president (and Vin65 founder) **Andrew Kamphuis**, whose reputation in the industry precedes him. Commerce7 is providing marketing features once available only to the wineries with large budgets at prices that some small- and mid-sized wineries find affordable.

The company said it processed more than \$100 million in DTC sales for its first 100 winery clients within its first year.

Commerce7's competitive differentiation comes in its data collection, club software and e-commerce personalization features.

Using Google Tag Manager and custom code (written in Node.js, a JavaScript runtime built on Chrome's V8 JavaScript engine), Commerce7 sites can present different views of the home page, enabling wineries to tailor online messaging and experiences to segments, like first-time visitors, current or lapsed club members, or e-commerce buyers.

The breadth and depth of data collection is an emerging arena where platforms compete.

"Commerce 7 has more data about the customer that any platform out there. And we're able to use that data and serve it up to your front-line staff in your POS system," said Kamphuis. "We're recording every time a visitor comes to your website, every product they look at, every product they click on, every email they open, everything they buy."

He added, "If you look at most systems, they track everything the customer bought, but they're not looking deeper at who the customers are. So we're looking at: When was the last time the consumer visited you? When's the last time they've been to your website? What's the last email they've opened? Then we give that consumer an engagement score based on that."

Doubling down on the info about the customer inside the POS ultimately provides a better customer experience and for wineries to have better customer conversations, according to Kamphuis.

## Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Four Wineries and Their POS Solutions

**HOW ARE WINERIES USING** their POS solutions? Four wineries with varying production sizes, markets and regions tell their stories.

Two use mature platforms—AMS, founded in 1981, and WineDirect, based in part on Vin65, which was introduced in 2003.

Two others are early adopters of new, integrated POS solutions from truvi commerce and Commerce7.

## **Mature Platforms**

There's an old saying in the IT world that no one ever got fired for buying Microsoft (over other systems). Tried-and-true platforms have their pros and cons; Not having to learn a new way of doing things is one of them.

Both **Grgich Hills Estate** and **Brooks Winery** find value in the established platforms they adopted—AMS Software and WineDirect, respectively—nearly 15 years ago.

Winery	Size (Cases)	Region	% DTC	DTC Case Volume	Solution	Year Adopted
Mature Platforms						
Brooks	23,000	Willamette Valley, Oregon	65%	15,000	WineDirect, VinDashboard	2005
DIOOKS	• <b>Pros:</b> All-in-one data collection point; offers food ordering			• <b>Cons:</b> Reporting formats (but issue solved by using VinDashboard for easy-to-use reports)		
Craich Hills Estate	65,000	Napa Valley, California	20%	13,000	AMS	2004
Grgich Hills Estate	• <b>Pros:</b> In-depth customer history and accounting features			• <b>Cons:</b> Not as easy to learn (initially) as other systems		
Early Adopters						
	1,000	Sonoma County, California	95%	950	truvi commerce	2019
Fogline Vineyards	• <b>Pros:</b> Tip feature, mobile, compliant, affordable			• Cons: Data migration challenges (on winery side)		
Constellations Brands	40,000 (DTC only, 14 brands)	International	N/A	40,000	Microsoft AX, Commerce7	2018
(14 brands in DTC)	• <b>Pros:</b> Enables more powerful website experiences and marketing, ease-of-use for customer			• Cons: Data migration challenges (on winery side)		

## **AMS at Grgich Hills Estate**

Though AMS was introduced in 1981, it is widely used throughout the industry (9 percent of respondents in the *Wine Business Monthly* 2017 Technology Survey use the POS system)

Yannick Girardo is the director of DTC and marketing at Grgich Hills Estate in Napa Valley, where 20 percent of the winery's 65,000 cases are sold via the wine club. Girardo described AMS as "a little more complex to learn, but easier to integrate." What he likes is the depth of customer data he can view compared to other systems.

"When a customer is in the tasting room, you can easily see all the transaction history of that person and the staff can record whether or not the customer likes reds or whites and note other personal preferences," Girardo said. "You can record that in other software but it isn't as easy to access as it is in our system."

"AMS is the only software that is based on a full-fledged accounting system designed by and for accountants," said **Ernie Veniegas**, customer support specialist at AMS and the former Grgich Hills Estate DTC logistics and wine club manager.

He now supports AMS customers in the field to make sure they are getting the most out of the features built into AMS's six modules that cover the entire business process, from vineyard materials to blending, bulk wine inventories, warehousing, reservations, POS, club management, automated outbound emails and more.

"It's like a cafeteria—wineries can choose which modules to use that fit their needs and requirements, and we can configure that for them," he said.

Three years ago, the company introduced customizable wine clubs. "Our corporate gifting capabilities on the POS are very comprehensive," Veniegas noted.

The Windows-based program runs locally on a dedicated Windows server and also supports mobile use on tablets.

Most of its clients have been with AMS for 15 to 20 years, Veniegas said. "We don't rely on a lot of the new business. We focus on the customers that we have and making sure that our system does everything they need." Today, more conflicts arise between marketing and accounting departments over how much to spend on marketing features on the website. But Veniegas said it's the accounting departments that have a broader view of the business' overall priorities. "Our clients are very ROI-centric. How do new technological marketing changes contribute to the bottom line? New talent comes in and makes a lot of noise, but you have to distinguish between 'nice to haves' and the bottom line—And often DTC is just part of the bottom line," he said

As an example of a business-wide operational approach, Girardo said AMS supports internal communications easily. "We like the fact that you can add contacts which can then be sent to a specific person within the winery," he said. "For instance, if a wine club member visits over the weekend and asks to customize or change their upcoming shipment, you can create a contact in their profile and schedule a reminder email to be sent to the wine club manager for them to review and change as needed," Girardo said.

"The reservation system is probably the best feature that has been added in the last two years," he added. "It allows us to capture data from the get-go. And, of course, tasting room staff like the tip feature."

# WineDirect and VinDashboard at Brooks

Janie Brooks Heuck, managing director of Brooks Winery, a Willamette Valley Pinot Noir and Riesling producer, started out in the early days with Inertia Beverage Group, the predecessor of WineDirect, back in 2005 when Brooks' production was just 2,500 cases. Today, production is around 23,000 cases with 50 SKUs. About 65 percent of its sales are DTC.

Brooks Heuck said WineDirect is a good fit for her winery because it has some very specific capabilities she needs. The best feature? "Restaurant ordering," she said. "Since all our service at Brooks is tableside service, this is the one thing we absolutely need and could not find from other vendors."

She also likes the printing function that sends food orders right to the kitchen.

Brooks is jazzed about the new VinDashboard, which enables her to unlock the data potential of her WineDirect numbers. "It fills a gap in the WineDirect world by taking all my data, every single night, and uploading it," she said. "No more downloading into Excel and trying to fix the columns. VinDashboard has eight dashboards and 60 different reports so it makes my data really useful."

Her sights are now set on a new e-commerce solution. "We're looking at our e-commerce strategy with a company in New Zealand," she said. "How do I get my people to my website and how do I convert them into purchasers? If you don't have the right website, you put in a lot of barriers to that purchase piece."

## **Early Adopters**

These days, \$100 in monthly fees gives even small wineries a lot more bang for the buck than it used to with two new software vendors, truvi commerce and Commerce7, launched in 2018, offering POS systems along with a comprehensive suite of data collection and marketing tools.

**Fogline Vineyards**, which produces 1,000 cases annually, and **Constella-tion Brands**' 14 DTC brands, which boast 40,000 cases annually, both utilize these new software suites that provide them with features and functionality they didn't have before—features they both say benefit their bottom lines.

## truvi commerce at Fogline Vineyards

**Evan Pontoriero**, winemaker and founder of Fogline Vineyards in Sonoma County, winery said he switched to truvi commerce in 2019 after trying two other systems.

"We originally started on Square," he said, "but since almost all of our business is DTC, we needed something to manage our wine club because that was killing me."

He migrated to a solution that fixed the wine club problems, but then discovered its shortcomings over time: It often processed tasting room sales so slowly that customers would leave and the sale would be lost. Plus, it didn't meet compliance standards.

After extensively researching other products, he switched to truvi commerce which he says has the features he wants at a price he can afford.

"Changing software is an incredibly painful process," he said. "It's not only expensive, but there are issues with the data: Excel issues, like dropping leading zeros and things like that, credit cards that don't work, or zip codes that don't work all of a sudden. There's a lot of clean up when you change software and that's a huge problem, a huge nightmare, but we made it through it."

He values a multitude of features in truvi commerce. "It's a pretty robust piece of software and it's an all-in-one integrated solution that's affordable. We started out paying about \$2,000 in conversion fees, then it's \$99 a month. If you pay more, you get more features like the shipping manager."

He thinks the software will enable small wineries like him to better compete. "It's a hugely competitive market. There are 450 competitors in Sonoma County alone. You have to be lean and mean to make it work," Pontoriero said.

Pontoriero values the customizable club feature, and how it enables him to manage allocations. "It's the club revenue that makes the business work," he said. The winemaker looks to his club members to provide new opportunities for him to sell more wine—leveraging their enthusiasm into tasting events where he can utilize his new, easy-to-use mobile software to sign up more club members.

"I ask club members, 'Hey do you think we could do tasting at your house?' What I'm doing now is going to country clubs and doing events. Having the actual winemaker visit is novel for many of these venues, where sales reps—not winemakers—typically go," Pontoriero said. "I just did a tasting back in Pennsylvania at a club—the top club in the city—and they said that they'd never had a winemaker actually come to their club and do a tasting. I was the first one."

The software made it easier to sign people at the Pennsylvania event to sign up for the wine club on the spot.

Back at the winery, Pontoriero said his staff enjoy the new features and making more sales due to the new system.

"Rather than having to be stuck on the computer and the computer screen, it's great with mobile to be able to move around and go to different spots and talk to people who are maybe sitting at a table. You can interact much more easily and swing by to say 'Do you want need anything? I'm here' rather than them having to come up and cash out at the bar. Or you can sit with them there or even do a tasting on the patio outside."

Another big plus is the tip feature, which enables customers to tip tasting room staff.

"That's huge for us," said. Pontoriero. "It makes a huge difference on what they end up making. It's not insignificant if somebody is spending, say, \$250 on wine and then they hit that 10 percent tip. It's hard to find great tasting room employees and the tip feature helps us keep them longer."

## **Commerce7 at Constellation Brands**

When it comes to digital DTC marketing, **Miryam Chae**, director, DTC at **Constellation Brands**, is at the cutting edge, pushing the envelope to revolutionize systems that power the 14 online brands she oversees. She's migrating all of them to Commerce7.

"In talking with our IT team, we realized we wanted the flexibility to have a different content management system on the front end to manage sites and that with open API's, we could plug in all of our existing systems, be it our email platform, our email service provider or our data capture tool," Chae said.

When Microsoft retired its RMS POS software several years ago, Constellation migrated to Microsoft AX, its replacement. That was a year before signing up with Commerce7 to amp up Constellation's multi-brand digital DTC marketing (comprising 40,000 cases across 14 brands) for wine clubs and for e-commerce—arenas that, according to Chae, are fueling growth.

"Two things that really stood out for us immediately with Commerce7. One was the wine club management piece, which was shocking in the overall user functionality. The ease of use in allowing people to select the wine—that process became so much easier. The second thing was that the credit card processing became much faster. We saw how much more quickly you could order wine from your phone," she said.

Chae reported that friends and family used to message her frequently asking when the in-house friends and family store would be accessible via mobile. "With the new software, I actually got a text from a friend who said, 'I just ordered on my phone and it was so easy—I'm not sure I did it right," she said.

Opportunities for the front-end experience—the website—to implement creative, online branding also opened up upon switching to Commerce7. "With our previous system, we almost couldn't even use our agencies half the time because they would want to build things that we could not implement on that platform," Chae said. "As the agencies got smarter about the digital lane, they wanted a lot more flexibility in creating the front-end website design. They wanted to change the look and feel, change the process—for instance, show promotions first, and then show the billing, or add in pop ups," she said.

While she was confident the switch would be worth it, getting through the implementation phase to the new system was not easy.

"Everyone wants to be gung-ho and thinks that they can do migrations in two to three months," she says, "but that's not the reality. You want your marketing person to push the envelope with what we can do but you still need your technical translators to make sure that you're doing it the right way."

"Where everyone falls down is the database cleanup," she says, "but this is your opportunity to truly clean up your database. 'Garbage in, garbage out'—you always hear that, right? This is your chance to get rid of the garbage and bring over viable customer information that ultimately is going to help you grow your marketing effort—and then you're ready."

Has the migration paid off? For Chae, the answer is an unequivocal yes. "We are able to do things differently and we are able to work with our web

agencies. We have greater flexibility in doing more fun stuff that engages the customer," she said.

The Prisoner Wine Company was one of the first Constellation Brands sites to launch on Commerce7. In addition to the site, the brand is deploying its own branded reservation experience this summer.

But the biggest win across all 14 brands is the ease-of-use for the customer, Chae said.

"When customizable clubs came in two years ago, our average order values started to go up 15 percent," she said. But now, the wins are even bigger: "The new system is going to help us grow the wine club because now it's so much easier to tell people this is a user choice and for them to select the wines. For new customers who have only ever experienced a customizable wine club, we're seeing more than 70 percent of people taking advantage of that and increasing their order value. I've seen increases of \$50 to \$100 per shipment," Chae said.

Overall, Chae estimates that amounts to a 35 percent increase in DTC sales.

What advice does she give to others who are considering switching to a new platform?

"Do your research and know what you're capable of," she said. "People think we're big, but we manage 14 websites between me and our team of eight employees who work on DTC marketing and operations." Two of the employees are her developers in e-commerce, while the rest of the team consists of project managers and others who manage inventory, email marketing and the wine club. Chae said Commerce7's online tools make the team more efficient.

Chae says the initiative is cost effective. While Constellation does not disclose what it pays for Commerce7, Kamphuls said even its basic package (for wineries under \$450,000 in DTC sales) at \$100 a month (plus 1 percent of transactions) offers a full suite. "We believe in helping the smaller wineries and startups and don't want to limit their abilities," he said. WBM



	Company	Windows or Mac	Annual Licensing Fees	Installation or Startup Fees	POS System Cost	Service and Support	Training Costs	
	Active Club Solutions www.activeclubsolutions.com	Windows, Mac	None	\$1,499	Setup ranges from \$0 to \$1,499; Monthly fees from \$200 up.	Free; 2 hours per month	Free: 16 hours	
	AMS Advanced Management Systems www.amssoftware.com	Windows	Varies, depending on number of modules and number of user licenses; Billing is monthly	Varies; based on modules, deployment method and installation	Varies according to modules licensed, number of users and other factors	Software/hardware support and online tutorials/training free; Weekend support for service interruptions; Training at \$85 per hour; Custom software development or special data projects available at \$185 per hour.	Free: 8 to 16 hours; Additional hours: \$85 per hour	
	<b>Bloom</b> www.bloom.wine	Windows, Mac	Monthly prices available on website	\$1,500	\$99 to \$499 per month; Enterprise customers can be much more	Monthly subscription rate; Customizations cost \$150 per hour	Free	
	Captina LLC www.captina.net	Windows, Mac	\$5,940	\$0	\$495 per month, all inclusive	Included in annual contract	Included in annual contract	
	<b>Commerce7</b> www.commerce7.com	Windows, Mac	Tiers from \$75 per month	No startup fee	Starting from \$75 per month	Included in annual contract	Included in annual contract	
	CORESense www.coresense.com	Windows, Mac	Based on size of winery	Based on size of winery	Based on size of winery	Monthly subscription rate	Varies based on size of winery	
	<b>eCellar</b> www.ecellar1.com	Windows, Mac	Varies	Varies	Varies	Monthly subscription rate	Hourly rate	
ш	Figure www.commercebyfigure.com	Windows, Mac	Starting at \$200 per month	\$1,500 setup fee	Not reported by vendor	General service and support included in monthly fees; For specialized needs, \$100 to \$200 per hour	Initial training included with setup; Additional training \$100 per hour	
WAR	KORONA POS www.koronapos.com/ pos-system/winery-pos/	Windows	\$49 per month base price	\$0	\$49 per month	Included in annual contract	Included in annual contract	
OFT	Microworks Wine Software www.winesoftware.com	Windows	Starts at \$112 per month; increases based on modules, location and business model	\$400 to \$1,200, depending on the implementation	Starts at \$112 per month; Rates based on modules, location and business model.	Included in annual contract	Included in annual contract	
D	<b>OrderPort</b> www.orderport.net	Windows	None	Starts at \$1,000	Not reported by vendor	Monthly subscription rate; packages start at \$150	Included with support	
RATE	Orion Wine Software www.orionwinesoftware.com	Windows	No annual licenses; subscription based, cost varies based on winery size	Depends on size of winery and other solutions used	Depends on size of winery	Monthly subscription rate	Subscription rate	
<b>F G R</b>	<b>Revel Systems</b> www.revelsystems.com/ pos-systems/winery-pos/	Mac	N/A	N/A	N/A	Included in annual contract	Hourly rate	
L N I	TrueCommerce Nexternal www.trucommerce.com	Windows, Mac	None	\$2,000	Depends on selected features	General support is free; Dedicated support \$100 per month	Included in annual contract	
	<b>truvi</b> www.truvicommerce.com	Mac	Start at \$1,069 and increase to \$7,549 or more depending on package selected	Launch packages range from \$0 for a self-guided launch to \$6,000+ for a premium launch	Annual costs vary depending on the package (and features) selected; Pricing available on website	Basic support included; Premium support available for \$1,000+ per month	Training included at launch; Additional training at hourly rate	
	Vines OS www.vineos.com	Windows, Mac	\$3,588	\$1,000	Per terminal cost plus setup: \$119 for POS; Additional club, e-commerce set up starts at \$1,000	Two hours included monthly; \$125 hourly rates apply after	Included in annual contract	
	VineSpring www.vinespring.com	Windows, Mac	\$1,188 to \$4,788	\$0	Monthly fee	Included in annual contract	Included in annual contract	
	VinNOW www.vinnow.com	Windows	Starts at \$99 a month; based on the number of wine club members	Starts at \$0 for wineries with no data to convert	Starts at \$99 per month	Free; Service is available 7 days a week	Free	
	vinSUITE www.vinsuite.com	Mac	Depends on plan	Depends on plan	Depends on plan	Included in annual contract	Hourly rate	
	Vintegrate www.vintegrate.com	Windows	Starts at \$150 per month	Starts at \$1,500	Starts at \$150 per month	Hourly rate	Hourly rate	
	WineDirect www.winedirect.com	Mac	\$299 per month for annual sales up to \$25,000; \$549 per month for monthly sales up to \$250,000.	\$999 for support to configure and launch website, online store, wine club and POS	POS is included with comprehensive e-commerce packages	Included in annual contract; Free (phone and email assistance seven days/week, community forum) or premium support (priority ticketing, screenshare training and live chat) runs \$200 per month; Dedicated account manager with priority service at \$450 per month.	Pre-launch: Custom training sessions, 1:1 online meetings; Post-launch: Screenshare training (\$150 per hour) or onsite training at (\$200 per hour plus travel expenses)	
ΠY	ACHWorks www.achworks.com	Other	\$360	\$150	Not reported by vendor	Monthly subscription rate of \$0 to \$100 per hour, plus transaction fee	Included in annual contract	
<b>POS ONLY</b>	Harbortouch www.harbortouch.com	Windows, Other	\$49 per month	\$0	\$0 upfront, \$49 per month	Included in annual contract	Included in annual contract	
P	NCR www.ncr.com	Windows	Varies	Varies	???	Varies	Varies	

Premise-based or Cloud-based	Minimum System Requirements?	Offline Capabilities	Latest Features	System Integration
Cloud-based	High-speed internet connection	No	Time clock, streamlined checkout, dashboard reports	CellarPass, FedEx, GSO, NOAA, QuickBooks, ShipCompliant, UPS
Premise, dedicated cloud-based, shared cloud options available	PC or Macs to run the local software or access the cloud	Yes; All functions of all systems are capable of functioning offline	Payment card account updater, PS allocations, custom club, auto-email engine, improved order email and SMS, text content maintenance, event and reservation management, contact management, telesales workflow management system	Compli, Great Vines, Nexus Payments, ShipCompliant, VingDirect, WeighMaster scale software, Wine Compliance Pro.; SQL and API access layers to facilitate custom integrations to third parties
Cloud-based	Newer iOS or Android tablet for POS; Modern browser (Google Chrome best)	Yes; POS can look up customers, products and orders, and transact cash or non-card orders	Club member management and signup, QR code sign-up (so new members can join on their personal mobile devices without tying up the POS for sales)	CRM, MailChimp, ShipCompliant, social media channels, Zoho
Cloud-based	Broadband connection (including cellular service)	No	Integrated reservation and event-RSVP capabilities	QuickBooks Online
Cloud-based	No minimum requirements	Yes; All data is cached; View any previously viewed customers, products or transactions	Visitor count, custom attributes, etc.	Commerce7, FedEx, Navision, Quickbooks, ShipCompliant, Shippo, Zapier
POS is premise or cloud; backoffice is cloud	No minimum requirements	Yes; POS can work offline	REST API	All
Cloud-based	Systems that are not older than 5 years	No	Streamlined customer pickup feature, tip line, multi-tender	Any program that uses our API
Cloud-based	N/A	No	N/A	API based plug-ins; Custom integration needed
Cloud-based	No minimum requirements	Yes; Queued sales	In-depth product analysis and grading (ABC retail analysis)	bLoyal, Como, Quickbooks
Hybrid system	N/A	Yes; Mobile POS continues to operate when offline	Updated iPad and Android versions, kitchen printing, shortcut keys, alerts	Navision/Dynamics, QuickBooks, Sage, SAP
Cloud-based	Internet access	No	Guest conversion tracking, easy shipping estimates, enhanced CRM	Real integration with QuickBooks
Premise-based (local)	A standard PC	Yes; Sales, inventory, customer lookup, order processing	Gratuity	AccountingSeed, Dynamics, Nav, Quickbooks, Sage, Solomon
Cloud-based	N/A	Yes; If the network is down, the system can still process orders	N/A	Intuit, WineOS
Cloud-based	Internet connectivity	No	Digital signature and trustee feature enabling friends to pick up wine for customer	Avalara/Compli, Netsuite, Oracle, Revel POS, Quickbooks, Sage, SAP Business One, ShipCompliant
Cloud-based	Internet connectivity and web browser	Under consideration for future development	Hold at FedEx location, Pack'n Ship and VINGO integration, EMV, dual merchant accounts; truvi analytics (customizable reporting)	CardConnect (a First Data company), FedEx, Google Analytics, GSO, MailChimp, Pack'n Ship, ProNimbus, ShipCompliant, Stripe, UPS, VINGO, and Zapier, along with JSON REST API's
Cloud-based	No minimum requirements	Yes; Network option for always on mode	Real-time multiple location inventory, customer loyalty recognition	FedEx, GSO, UPS, Quickbooks, ShipCompliant, and multiple merchant processors/gateways
Cloud-based	No minimum requirements	Yes; Square POS can operate offline and resyncs when back online	N/A	Quickbooks
Premise-based (local)	Microsoft Windows	Yes; Everything	Destination-specific local district taxes, off-site card processing, bulk wine and custom crush tracking and billing	QuickBooks, VinoShipper
Cloud-based	iPad or browser with internet connection	Yes; Desktop POS works offline	End of day reporting and event categories for quick transactions	CellarPass, MailChimp, UPS, Stage14, ShipCompliant and more
Cloud-based	Internet connectivity	No	Integration with reservations, GSO integration	Vintegrate Enterprise Suite, QuickBooks
Cloud-based	Google Chrome	Not yet	Option to couple different promotions and create non-taxable contacts and orders in the POS; Automatically assign shipping status to refunded POS orders; Improved pickup order exchanges; Improvements to POS restaurant tickets and receipts	ShipCompliant, Tock, VinDashboard, WGits by WineGlass Marketing and more
Cloud-based	N/A	Yes; Reports	Tokenization, third-party verification	N/A
Hybrid-cloud	No minimum requirements	Yes; System is fully operable	Pay-at-the-table	Various third-party integrations in POS marketplace
Both: Next version is nearly all cloud-based (expected in 2020)	Windows 10 or higher	Yes	N/A	N/A

# How to Calculate ROI on Technology Investments

Peter Yeung

**WITH THE INCREASINGLY FAST** evolution of technology, it can be challenging to know when to make an investment in new technology solutions for wine businesses. These can be important decisions, representing an investment from tens of thousands to millions of dollars. A key analysis to guide those decisions is the return on investment (ROI) calculation, where a financial assessment of the value of the investment can be achieved. Technology investments in wine can take on a variety of forms, all of which will impact what is included in an ROI calculation. Solutions can include hardware, like optical sorters, automatic pump-over systems and iPads for hospitality; software, such as tank control systems, e-commerce systems and winery enterprise resource planning systems; and firmware, the software that controls hardware. Additional workflows and processes may also be required to utilize the new solution. The full scope of the solution should be taken into consideration when evaluating a new technology solution.

## The Four Stages of New Technology Evaluation

The ROI calculation plays an important part in the solution/initiative decision in the evaluation process. As seen in the figure below, there are four stages in evaluating a new technology investment:

- 1) **Ideation**—The decision to explore a new solution, with a high-level understanding of its potential benefits for the wine business
- 2) **Solution/Initiative Decision**—Where an ROI calculation and overall risk assessment of the solution are conducted to evaluate if this new solution is beneficial—this is the focus of this article
- 3) **Vendor Decision**—Once a decision has been made to move forward with the solution, evaluating multiple vendors and assessing them against each other happens at this stage
- 4) **Implementation**—After choosing a vendor, the process to implement the new solution begins

Though there will likely be some engagement with vendors during the Solution/Initiative Decision stage, to provide critical inputs into the ROI calculation, a decision must first be made as to determine if the solution makes sense overall.

Peter Yeung (pronounced "young") is a leading wine business consultant, developing strategic business plans and innovative marketing techniques for the wine industry. He was previously vice president of strategy and business development at Realm Cellars in Napa and Kosta Browne Winery in Sonoma, managing the allocation systems and business analytics functions. Yeung holds the WSET diploma and the CIA's Certified Wine Professional designations. Prior to wine, Yeung led strategic marketing, new market development and sales for a clean technology company and was a management consultant with McKinsey & Company. Yeung also holds an MSc at the London School fo Economics and a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in Economics.



## **ROI Overview and Types**

The ROI calculation should be all-inclusive, from both a cost and benefit perspective, including such elements as internal labor. More details about the elements of benefits and costs will follow below. The ROI should also be for the full lifecycle of the technology solution, not just the initial installation. Another important element of calculating ROI is the soundness of the input data. "Garbage in, garbage out" is a common phrase for any sort of financial modeling. If the inputs are way off, the outcome will not be representative and should not be used for the decision. Holistic ROIs are required to ensure the right information is available to make a decision.

Several different metrics can be used to calculate ROI. They include the following:

- 1) **Net Present Value** (NPV)—the discounted value of the cash outflows and inflows of the solution: the NPV is a single number in dollars positive numbers indicate the project pays off; negative means it does not
- 2) **Payback Period**—the number of years it would take for the solution to pay back its initial investment: the shorter the period, the higher the return and less risk of benefit capture
- 3) **Internal Rate of Return** (IRR)—estimates the profitability of the investment as a return in percentage terms; this would be compared against an expected minimum return for the company
- 4) **Benefit/Cost Ratio** (B/C Ratio)—the present value of the solution benefits divided by the present value of the costs; gives a ratio with no units, i.e., if >1, the project pays off; if <1 the project does not

Multiple metrics could be used to evaluate the project if desired. However, for wine technology investments, the B/C Ratio is the easiest to understand and the best framework to think through the major drivers of benefits and costs. If the ratio is greater than 1, the project is net beneficial; if less than 1, the project is net negative.

In order to include the time value of money, a business-specific discount rate should be used for the ROI calculation. This rate could be tied to the type of financing that would support the project. For example, if the project were to be paid via 100 percent debt at a 4 percent interest rate, a 4 percent discount rate could be used for the ROI calculation. However, for major business decisions, the weighted average cost of capital (WACC) would be the more appropriate choice, which includes both the cost of debt and the cost of equity.

Understanding and quantifying the benefits of a new technology investment can be challenging. If the key thesis of the investment is to improve wine quality, a more qualitative assessment may have to be made. With higher quality, the wines may become easier to sell and may command higher prices over time, which could theoretically be calculated and embedded in the ROI, but practically, this is difficult to predict. The key drivers of benefit for technology investments generally fall into the following categories:

- 1) **Improved Wine Quality**—May be difficult to quantify but important to assess as part of the decision
- 2) **Incremental Wine Sales**—Here it is important to take credit only for the incremental sales and only the gross margin contribution, not total revenue
- 3) Reduced Costs The solution may eliminate existing costs
- 4) **Reduced Labor**—The solution may make processes less laborintensive and therefore create cost savings; these should be the fully loaded cost of labor, including benefits and taxes

These benefits should be quantified, annualized and present-valued back to the current day.



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Robust Benchmarking Bilingual Communication While the cost side of the ROI calculation may appear more straightforward than the benefit side, it is important to include all costs, not just vendor-related costs. The major cost categories for wine technology investments are the following:

- 1) **Technology Costs**—The purchase cost of the equipment and/or software
- 2) **Systems Integration**—The cost of integrating various software systems together
- 3) Maintenance Costs—This could include extended warranty costs, but also software licensing fees, hardware parts and labor for maintenance
- 4) **Internal Labor and Overhead**—Full-loaded cost of labor to implement and operate the new technology, including management supervision if applicable
- 5) **Overhead Allocation for Space**—If there is hardware equipment that takes up space in the winery or other facilities, the overhead of that (rent or facility allocation, utilities, etc.) should be calculated
- 6) **Transition Costs/Testing**—Dual systems or processes may have to be run while the team is getting to know and understand the new technology; this could lead to a higher level of costs during the test phase, which should be included in the calculation

Quantifying these costs and present-valuing them back to today will allow for the B/C Ratio to be calculated. Just divide the present value of the benefits over the present value of the costs.

## **Assessing Risk**

Having calculated the B/C Ratio, it is also important to understand the risks underlying those calculations. If the estimates used could vary substantially, the B/C Ratio may need to be much higher than 1 to compensate for the large amount of risk. A few of the major risk categories to assess include the following:

- 1) What if the new technology does not work?
- 2) What are the risks to benefit delivery?
- 3) What are the risks of cost escalation?

Both identifying the risk categories, as well as assessing how big they are and how likely they may occur, are necessary to understand the solution. Small risks with a low likelihood of occurrence can be easily ignored, whereas large risks with a high probability would likely sink the project, unless the expected returns and B/C Ratio were enormous.

Risk mitigation plans can be scoped at this point to inform the "go/no go" decision. Product trials and tests can help mitigate some of those risks and make the team more familiar with the new technology solution. This will, however, increase the costs and delay the accumulation of benefits, which should be factored into the ROI calculation.

#### Example Technology Assessment – New Winery Bottling Line

One example of an ROI in action is a mid-sized Sonoma-based winery that was assessing the installation of a new bottling line. Previously, the winery had used a mobile bottling truck to bottle the wines. The primary driver (the "Ideation" stage) of considering this investment was a desire to improve quality by bottling each individual wine when it was closest to its peak. With the mobile line, the winery had to schedule six months in advance without certainty of how the wines would evolve over that time. The winery also projected volume growth, giving the winery more scale to amortize the bottling line over time.

To make the decision, the production team engaged with several bottling line manufacturers to get a better sense of the costs of the line, both up-front and in on-going maintenance. The business analytics team added to that the potential benefits—savings from renting the existing bottling line, labor savings from spreading out bottling and not needing as much temporary labor—as well as the additional non-vendor costs—rental cost of the footprint and additional labor expertise required on-staff to run, maintain and operate the line. These benefits and costs were calculated over the 20-year expected life of the equipment. Buying the bottling line itself was almost a million-dollar investment, but total costs over the 20-year period were close to twice that amount.

From a quantifiable ROI perspective, buying the new bottling line was a wash financially, with a B/C Ratio close to 1. There were moderate risks associated with developing the skills and expertise needed to operate and maintain the line. However, the potential for improved quality with little additional cost carried the day and the project was green-lighted for approval by the winery's board of directors.

#### Example Technology Assessment – New Customer Relationship Management System

Many wineries will simply rely on their e-commerce system to perform most of the functions of a customer relationship management (CRM) system if they do any tracking of customer interactions at all. Often, phone calls and emails are simply handled on the spot with no structured tracking for potential follow-up outside of email or Post-it notes. A CRM system, such as **Salesforce.com**, can help manage those relationships and provide more visibility and tracking for the winery sales and customer service teams.

To understand the benefits of implementing a CRM system, the team must first assess how it will be used. Two principal uses of CRM systems for wineries are as a case management system for customer service and as a sales targeting tool for sales campaigns. Sales reporting can also be created and automated. As a case management system, the principal benefits would include improved customer satisfaction and a reduction in time spent handling customer service issues. While improved customer satisfaction sounds like a qualitative benefit, it should result in higher overall customer retention, which can be estimated and quantified as a benefit driver of the ROI calculation.

Sales campaigns, for example, a sales calling campaign specifically targeted at certain segments of the customer base, can be crafted and honed over time to be their most effective. Incremental gross margin dollars, over what would have been done without the CRM, should be included in the ROI benefits. If the sales reporting is automated, that can decrease the amount of time it takes to create those reports, leading to a reduction in labor benefit. Thus, in this example, a CRM system would have the benefit drivers of increased customer retention, incremental gross margin from additional sales and reduction in labor of both customer service and reporting activities.

The cost side of the ROI equation requires equal consideration. There are both the start-up and implementation costs, as well as the on-going maintenance costs of operating the CRM system. Implementing the CRM system will require support from the software vendor, internal team support and potentially third-party consultants to help navigate some of the specific requirements of the implementation. The CRM system will likely need to be integrated into the e-commerce and accounting or Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems as well, which will require an estimate of the programming costs. If they are not, costs associated with additional manual processes during the operating period should be estimated. While the CRM software vendor's quote is a straightforward piece of the implementation costs, the internal team labor for implementing the software, training, set-up of processes and set-up of reports should all be included. During the operating phase, beyond the software licensing fees, additional labor associated with managing the vendor relationship, managing the CRM system and updating any system integrations when troubles arise, should all be accounted for. Thus, for a CRM system, most of the costs are focused on vendor costs, internal labor and external services.

As the customer base grows, a CRM system might pay for itself just on the labor savings and customer satisfaction increases from using it as a customer service case management tool. Using email or other more basic systems may be unwieldy at that point and take a lot of manual labor. However, leveraging the system to better target and up-sell wines can further bring the investment into the black and make the system a "must have" from a "nice to have." Conducting an ROI evaluation will bring clarity into where that point is for the CRM system and what the key drivers are of benefit for the business.

## **ROI** as a **Tool**

Though not the sole driver of decision-making for new wine technology investments, ROI plays a critical component in the decision-making for the Solution/Initiative Decision stage of decision making. Using the B/C Ratio framework provides a structure by which the entire project can be thought through and assessed over the lifecycle of the new technology. Making sure to include costs the business incurs outside of vendor costs is a critical element of the assessment. In addition, conducting a risk assessment helps to put the ROI calculation in context for decision-making.

The work put into developing the ROI calculation can also be used as a budgeting and negotiation tool. If a minimum return is required and can only be achieved if the product costs are below a certain level, that can be an area of discussion with the vendors during purchase negotiations. Management can also monitor the results of the project using the ROI calculations as a budgetary estimate for both the benefits and costs. Developing ROIs is a must for any major technology investment. **WBM** 

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# people

## Winemaking & Wineries

The Thornhill Companies welcomed Jerry Ferraro to the team as direct to consumer sales and marketing director. Ferraro, a certified specialist of wine, brings over 14 years of industry experience to his new role. In his new position, Ferraro will work with the Bien Nacido Estate and Miller Family Wine Company wines, developing and implementing strategic marketing plans to focus marketing efforts for maximum results, while approaching sales with a comprehensive, results-oriented mind frame to increase DTC sales.

The team at **Okanagan Crush Pad Winery** hired **Lesley Brown** as its new vice president of sales and marketing, to lead the company's Vancouver-based HQ Wine & Spirits division. Brown has become a key figure in the Canadian wine trade and over the past 18 years and has been behind the market launch of many successful wine brands from old world and emerging markets, including the Okanagan Valley.



Lesley Brown

**BRAND Napa Valley** announced the appointment of **Kristi Devine** as director of hospitality and sales. Devine comes to BRAND with hospitality and DTC sales management experience from notable companies including **Covert Estate** and **Fantesca**. With ten years of experience in the wine industry, her leadership roles include serving on the **Coombsville Vintners and Growers** board and work with the **Children of the Vineyard Scholarship Foundation** in Sonoma County.

**Peter Janiak**, previously executive chef at **Seghesio Family Vineyards**, will now oversee culinary programming for all the brands within the group in his role as **Crimson Wine Group** executive chef. In this position, Janiak will lead the culinary programming for all the Crimson brands, continuing his desire to work with benchmark wineries and elevate the wines with creative culinary programs.



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260 California Street, Suite 700 San Francisco CA 94111 Telephone 415.362.1215 Facsimile 415.362.1494 beveragelaw.com **Trefethen Family Vineyards** appointed **Nicole Rosenstiel** as director of marketing. In this newly created position, Rosenstiel will oversee all marketing strategy, branding, creative services, public relations, social media and digital marketing. Rosenstiel joins Trefethen from her most recent position as director of marketing at **Round Pond Estate**. Sheholds a bachelor's degree in business, management and marketing from the **School of Business and Economics** from **Sonoma State University**.

The **Chappellet** family named industry veteran **David Francke** as the new managing director of Chappellet. In this role, Francke will work alongside the Chappellet family to steward the future of their **Pritchard Hill** estate. Francke first joined the Chappellet team as a member of its board of directors in 2017. In his new role, Francke will oversee every facet of operations from sales and marketing to hospitality, DTC initiatives and strategic planning, while also working with the winery's vineyard and winemaking teams.

**Balletto Vineyards** promoted **Ian Bearup** to associate winemaker. As associate winemaker, Bearup will continue working closely with vice president and winemaker **Anthony Beckman** and play a key role in crafting Balletto Vineyards' Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. Bearup has worked at Balletto Vineyards for almost a decade, most recently as assistant winemaker.

**Cristom Vineyards** hired **Daniel Estrin** as vineyard manager and co-winemaker, effective July 15. Estrin comes to Cristom from **Littorai Wines** in Sonoma County where he served as associate winemaker for the last seven years. He joins a long-tenured Cristom winemaking team which includes winegrower-proprietor **Tom Gerrie**, and winemaker **Steve Doerner**.

**Ledson Winery** hired **Justin Kinkade** as its new associate winemaker. Kinkade graduated from **University of Colorado Boulder** in 2005. He began his career as a lab intern at **Matanzas Creek Winery** and most recently worked for four years as assistant winemaker for **Lewis Cellars** before joining Ledson.

**Peachy Canyon Winery** owners **Doug** and **Nancy Beckett** pass the torch to their sons, **Josh** and **Jake Beckett**. Following a successful 10-year hiatus running their business, **Chronic Cellars**, the brothers Beckett return to the family winery to manage the cellar, national sales and marketing, daily operations, as well as oversee the farming of the five westside estate vineyards in Paso Robles.

Winderlea Vineyard and Winery promoted KC Marold to national sales manager. Marold has spent the last four years leading Winderlea's direct to consumer sales and marketing programs. She is a graduate of Linfield College in McMinnville, Ore., with a degree in economics and studio arts.

**Mt. Boucherie Estate Winery** welcomed **Brett Thiessen** as its new manager of viticulture to oversee all of the winery's vineyards in the Okanagan and Similkameen. Thiessen brings a wealth of experience in organic and biodynamic viticulture and will be working with the teams at both Mt. Boucherie Estate Winery and sister-winery **Rust Wine Co**. to implement sustainable, organic growing practices.

, Artesa Vineyards & Winery, Ascentia Wine Estates, B Cellars, B R Bedell Cellars and Corey Creek Vineyards, Bell Wine Cellars, Ber Benziger Family Winery, Bergevin Lane Vineyards, Bergstrom W Winery and Tasting Room, Black Hills Estate Winery, Black Stallio Blackbird Vineyards, Bogle Vineyards, Bouchaine Vineyards, Bud The Wine Industry's Leading Online Job Site Cakebr Cameron Hughes Wine Co., Castello di Amorosa, Caymus Vineyards state Vineyards & Winery, Chance Creek Vineyards (Bock), Chappel Charles Krug Winey, Chateau Bianca, Mateau Dia , Chateau Mon Estate Wines, Darioush Winery, Dashe 🖯 vards, Del Dotto Vineyards, Delicato Vineyards ine Estates, Diageo Chateau & Estate Wines, Dierberg/Star aine Carneros, Ltd., Domaine Chandon, Domaine Serene Vinevards & Don <u>Seb</u>astiani & Sons, Dono Dal Cielo Vineyard, Dry Creek Vineyard More wineries use winejobs.com Fantesca Estate & Winery, Far Niente Winery, Ferrari Carano than any Fother online job sitery oppola Presents, Frank oma Caves, Fritz Winery, Frog's Leap Winery, Galante Family W Wine Cellars, Goosecross Cellars, Grgich Hills Estate, Groth Vine Gundlach Bundschu Winery, Hagafen Cellars, Hahn Family Wine Created & Managed by Iy Estate, Heitz Wine Cellars, Hess C <u>- Vinevards. J F J Bronco Winer</u> WINE BUSINESS MONTHLyck Neal & Son Vineyard Mg ordan Vineyard & Winery, Joseph Phelps Vineyards, Justin Vineyard Keller Estate, Kendall-Jackson, Kenneth Volk Vineyards, Kenzo Estate e Winery, Knights Bridge Winery, Korbel Champagne Cellars, Krupp es/Stagecoach Vineyards, Kunde Family Estate, La Crema, Laird Fan Lambert Bridge Winery, Lancaster Estate, LangeTwins Winery & & Vineyards, Lewis Created & managed by WINE BUSINESS MONTHLY on Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards, Lynmar Winery, Marimar Estat nerv. Martinelli Winerv. Medlock Ames. Mendocino Wine Co./Pardu

# people

Wines of Substance founder Charles Smith announces that Anna Mosier joins the company as its new president, leading the entire Wines of Substance portfolio of K Vintners, SIXTO, ViNO CasaSmith, Substance and B. Leighton. She comes to the company from E. & J. Gallo Winery in Modesto, Calif., where she was vice president of finance for the premium wine business.

Ackerman Family Vineyards has appointed Leo Tellez to the role of winemaker. His first Ackerman Family Vineyards wine, a 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, was released in June. Tellez is a Napa native who graduated from San Francisco State University with an international relations degree, and, following, pursued viticulture and enology classes at Napa Valley College. His first winemaking internship at Kapcsandy Family Vineyards in Napa Valley, and his most recent role was as Sodaro Estate's full-time winemaker, working with viticulture consultant Michael Wolf and the family to craft small-production Cabernets. He will continue to make the Sodaro Estate wines.

**Terlato Wines** announced the promotion of **Kaitlin Conner** to vice president, strategic accounts. Additionally, **Ashley Detty** was hired as strategic account manager for Southern California, Arizona and Nevada; and **Lindsey Laughrin** has joined the company as strategic account manager Northern California and Pacific Northwest.

**Splash Wines** appointed **Bruce Cunningham** as its president as of June. Cunningham, a native of Australia and a graduate of **The University of Adelaide**'s international wine marketing program, has 23 years of experience in the US wine industry, including founding **AWDirect**. He sold that company in 2018.

After 18 years, **Anne Moller-Racke** has decided to step away from the **Donum Estate**, as president and winegrower, to devote her full time and energy into building **Blue Farm Wines**. Started in 2001, with the planting of seven-acres of Pinot Noir behind her historic Victorian farmhouse in Sonoma, Blue Farm Wines itself was founded in 2013 with the addition of a like-minded partner and his 1861 Pinot Noir vineyard.

**Constellation Brands, Inc.** promoted **Matt Deegan** to senior vice president and chief sales officer of its wine and spirits business. Deegan will oversee the entire wine and spirits sales organization, inclusive of the U.S., the Americas, and commercial planning. He will also be part of Constellation's wine and spirits leadership team, reporting directly to Robert Hanson, executive vice president and president, wine and spirits.



Jelly Jar welcomed Noel Schaff to the role of winemaker. She has almost a decade of experience. After graduating with a degree in environmental geology science from Boston College in 2010, Schaff served as a harvest intern at Hahn Family Wines, progressing to assistant winemaker. In 2014, Schaff joined the Jamieson Ranch Vineyard winemaking team, where she further honed her winemaking credentials before joining Jelly Jar.

**Amapola Creek** hired **Kayla Berthoud** as its new assistant winemaker. She is a recent graduate of **UC Davis** with a degree in viniculture and enology. Additionally, new hire **Alyssa Smith**, DTC sales and marketing, has joined newly appointed general manager **David DuBois**, in the hospitality department.

**Quilceda Creek** announced **Nicole Trumble** as its new national sales manager, effective June 17, 2019. In this role, Trumble will bring her 15-plus years of wine industry experience to the Snohomish, Wash.-based winery to grow its network and promote its brand identity across the U.S. Prior to joining the team at Quilceda Creek, Trumble worked in the Napa Valley region as national sales director of a prominent Napa winery and in Dallas as regional sales director of **Pioneer Wine Co**., where for years she topped the list for sales in the state.

Matthew Ippolito, a 15-year employee and former VP of E. & J. Gallo Winery, announced today that he'll begin a new role as vice president of sales for cannabis/CBD company, Vertical Companies. Previously, Ippolito had invested in cannabis when California passed recreational legalization. In his previous position, Ippolito led Gallo Winery's 250-employee Northern California affiliated wholesaler, Gallo Sales Company, as vice president and general sales manager.

## **Distributors, Importers & Retailers**

Shaw Ross International Importers announced that Vinny Ferrone has been named senior vice-president eastern region, which encompasses Maine to Florida. Ferrone previously held the position of vice president, eastern region. Additionally, Tom O'Hara has been promoted to vice president northeast. O'Hara was previously general manager of New York. Ferrone has more than four decades of experience in the wine & spirits industry and has been with Shaw-Ross for the past 18 years. O'Hara 's career included management positions with E. & J. Gallo, The Charmer Sunbelt group and Banfi/Excelsior, before joining Shaw-Ross in 2017

LibDib, LLC hired Josh Zeller, a 20-year veteran of Republic National Distributing Company (RNDC), as its new chief operations officer. Zeller will be responsible for all aspects of distributor operations, including logistics, reseller experience and finance, and is the first executive hire since LibDib's launch in March 2017. Zeller has a BA and MBA, both from the University of Austin, Texas. He will remain based in San Antonio, Texas, and also will act as the interim office manager of LibDib South.



Josh Zeller

## **Industry Services & Suppliers**

City National Bank expanded its team of financial advisors to the food and wine industry, appointing Jennifer Pricco Braasch and Zachary Chubb as managing directors.

VineView hired Shaun Johansen as its new chief technology officer. Previously the co-founder and chief technology officer with Velo Industries (formerly Eyeball Inc.), Johansen graduated in programming from the Centre for Geographic Sciences in 1998. He has worked with a number of technology companies on multiple continents creating and optimizing software, from low-level computer graphics and server solutions to web architectures and operating systems.

designthis! hired David Stock as its new marketing director. Stock comes with 25 years of creative industry experience with companies such as Hasbro and Restoration Hardware. He has also developed branding and consumer packaging for Colgate-Palmolive, Brown Forman, and Warner Bros. His position at designthis! will focus on developing new business relationships, working with the principals on client brand strategy, directing the design team on print and digital projects and overall account management.

Hemsworth Communications hired veteran food, wine and travel journalist and destination marketing specialist **Charlene Peters** as managing partner. Based in Napa Valley, Peters will oversee the launch of Hemsworth's new Northern California office and will join forces with Charleston, South Carolina-based food and beverage PR director Lacey Outten to lead the agency's food, wine and spirits division, which was formalized in 2018 after years of servicing clients within those sectors.

Scott Williams has joined the Coastal Vineyard Care Associates team as director of winegrowing relations. Williams will be working closely with winemakers to better assist them in achieving their creative objectives. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in botany-biology at California State University, Fresno and later his master's degree in plant protection at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo.

TVB announced David Buonfiglio has been named vice president, digital, a new position at the company. Buonfiglio brings two decades of local digital sales and marketing leadership experience to his new role at TVB. In this position, Buonfiglio is responsible for working with members to create category-specific presentations further establishing local broadcast television's digital platforms as the leading digital medium for advertisers and agencies to allocate their marketing dollars. He will also work closely with station account executives to enhance their digital strategies and provide cross-platform sales training via webinars and in-person meetings.

Wonderful Nurseries hired Ken Noren as their Northern California, Oregon and Washington vine sales representative. Noren will handle grapevine sales for Northern California, including Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino counties, as well as for Oregon and Washington.

Ackley Beverage Group hired Thomas Bobson as its new marketing director. Before joining Ackley Beverage Group, Bobson was the marketing and communications director for Dexter Brewhouse, Mollusk Brewing, and Magnuson Cafe & Brewery. Bobson holds a bachelor's degree in business administration, business management from Seattle Pacific University.

## **Associations & Education**

Hank Wetzel, founder and family partner of Alexander Valley Vineyards in Healdsburg, has been elected Wine Institute board chairman for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The election was held at Wine Institute's 85th Annual Meeting of Members in Calistoga. Other board officers elected are John Sutton of The Wine Group in Livermore, first vice chairman; Suzanne Groth of Groth Vineyards & Winery in Oakville, second vice chairman; Rick Tigner of Jackson Family Wines in Santa Rosa, treasurer; and Randall Lange of LangeTwins Vineyards and Winery in Acampo, secretary. Bobby Koch is president and CEO of Wine Institute.

Wines of Chile appointed Aurelio Montes as its new president, effective as of June. Joining him as executive director USA for Wines of Chile is Julio Alonso. Alonso comes to the U.S. following a successful tenure in China as Wines of Chile's executive director Asia.

Walla Walla Vintners appointed Michael Burton as its new director of sales and marketing. In this key role, Burton brings more than 20 years of beverage-industry experience. Prior to joining Walla Walla Vintners, Burton held a senior role at Wilson Daniels Itd. as divisional vice president and most recently served as general manager of Rose & Arrow Estate in Dundee, Ore. WBM

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## winemaker of the month

Josh Beckett, winemaker, Chronic Cellars, Paso Robles, CA

Being a winery owner, winemaker and grapegrower, Wine Business *Monthly* has something for me from front to back in every issue. I am constantly scrutinizing the best ways to improve our business, researching what new products are available or what new techniques/ tools are accessible to help in our vineyards. I cannot possibly make time to attend all of the seminars and trade shows our industry provides all over the country, but Wine Business Monthly brings it to my doorstep. Specifically, in the April 2019 issue, I learned some valuable information from the article titled "Replanting Vineyards: Watch out for Nematodes." I am getting ready to remove some old vineyard acreage, and I hadn't given much thought to the possibility of nematode pressure.

NAME AND TITLE: Josh Beckett, winemaker

**WINERY NAME AND LOCATION:** Chronic Cellars located in Paso Robles, CA.

**ANNUAL CASE PRODUCTION:** Chronic Cellars is currently producing 60,000 cases annually.

**PLANTED ACRES:** We farm and own 20 acres of vineyards, 10 of which we just planted this year on a new property in the Willow Creek AVA. Additionally, my family owns another 80 acres of planted vineyards where we are able to source some of the grapes that go into our Chronic Cellars wines.

**CAREER BACKGROUND:** I grew up in the vineyards of Paso Robles, so wine was a part of my life from the very start. As a child, when I made a mistake, my parents turned the consequence into free vineyard labor. If I broke curfew, I'd find myself hoeing weeds. If I talked back, I was sent to head prune vines for hours in the blazing sun. Needless to say, I got all too familiar with the hard work that goes into caring for a vineyard over the years.

Once I graduated from college, I was determined to pursue something other than a career in wine, so I told myself I would work just one harvest before I went on to try something new. That one harvest turned into two, which turned into 10, and now I'm at 21 harvests and counting. I was fortunate enough to work a vintage at Cape Mentelle in Margaret River, Australia. After that, I returned to the States where I worked various winery jobs under the guidance of stellar winemakers. In 2002, I became the head winemaker at Peachy Canyon Winery, where I remained until 2013.

Somewhere along the way, my brother and I created the idea for a unique and edgy wine brand. It was with this rebellious spirit, and after many long days and weekends with very little sleep, we founded Chronic Cellars in 2004. We gave Chronic everything we had and built the brand to where we could both quit our day jobs. Now, more than 10 years later, I am happy to still be the champion of our unique Paso Robles wines as Chronic Cellars' head winemaker.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE? Creating a brand over 10 years ago that had such distinct individuality in an industry that hadn't seen anything like Chronic Cellars before, it was a challenge for our wines to be taken seriously with such wild labels and an unconventional attitude. Our focus was to make wine that was approachable to everyone and to earn the attention and loyalty of consumers who may not typically drink wine. We want to be that jumping off point for new wine drinkers because creating more people who love wine will only help our industry thrive.

VARIETALS THAT YOUR WINERY IS KNOWN FOR: Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Grenache, Mourvédre, Tempranillo, Tannat, Alicante Bouschet, Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Picpoul Blanc, Lagrein

# **Summer Solstice**

**JAKE LORENZO LOVES A** good summer solstice. Ancient Celtic tradition dictated that the day honored the Goddess Etain. The focus was to banish evil spirits, which in today's world translate as restaurant owners marking up their wine prices four and five times, or rich people buying their way into the wine business and making it impossible for those of us who have been working at it for years to survive.

According to Celtic tradition, the best way to banish evil spirits was with an evening of feasting and dancing or erecting massive stone structures, like Stonehenge, to track the sun. I don't know about you, but years of working in the wine business have left me with a fragile back, so there will be no heavy lifting of boulders for this detective. Villagers would also build a gigantic bonfire to scare away evil spirits, but given the tinder box that we live in these days, Jake Lorenzo will eschew any large conflagrations in the heat of summer.

That said, feasting and dancing are right up this detective's alley, so the summer solstice is the perfect occasion to dust off the Cajun Microwave, roll it into the back yard, and cook a feast for dozens of hungry friends who will show up to help with the celebration. A Cajun Microwave is a prehistoric technological marvel. The first one I ever saw was at Mr. Jerry's house in New Orleans, and we used it to roast a whole pig.

The pig was spread out, seasoned and placed on an old mattress spring that folded over to make it easier to flip the pig as it cooked. We placed the pig and mattress spring into this wooden box that was lined with sheet metal. Then we covered the box with a piece of heavy metal. We built a fire on top of that metal, and the radiant heat drifting down into the box slowly roasted that pig into a succulent feast that fed more than 40 people. Of course, it took almost 12 hours to cook, required several cases of beer, dozens of bottles of wine, a bottle of gin, another of bourbon, one tequila and a bottle of scotch.

Jake Lorenzo will never forget that delicious pig, neither will Chuy or Iggy Calamari or Jakelyn's mom, all of whom were in New Orleans with me. As soon as we returned home, we set about building a Cajun Microwave for Wine Country's favorite detective. I'm not sure that involving a chef and a scientist in a design project is a good idea, but Jake Lorenzo ended up with a very efficient cooking device. Chuy wasn't a fan of old mattress springs, so we built aluminum racks into my Cajun Microwave. Iggy feared the sheet metal would give off poisonous gasses when it heated up, so we lined the Cajun Microwave with stainless steel. I had just built my house, and was a fan of insulation, so I insulated between the stainless-steel interior and the wood exterior. We used a ½-inch cast iron for the fitted top. It was heavy but fit perfectly and radiated the heat evenly inside the box.

While this detective has cooked a few whole suckling pigs in my Cajun Microwave over the years, I usually prefer to cook a variety of meats because I think it makes for a more interesting meal, and it allows us to serve a wider variety of wines. For the Solstice Celebration I started with three racks of pork ribs liberally covered with my house spice rub. I had a whole pork butt seasoned with Tony Chachere's Original Creole Seasoning. Chuy brought a leg of goat that he had marinated overnight, then seasoned and wrapped in roasted agave. He bundled the whole thing in banana leaves to roast. The two



and finally we set up a couple of chickens with a Yucatan-style pibil rub. We had everything prepped and ready to go by 10 a.m.

of us worked together to prepare an entire beef brisket,

By then, Jakelyn's mother was finishing her second cup of coffee and seriously thinking about getting out of bed, and a dozen friends had already arrived. We placed everything on the racks in the Cajun Microwave placed the metal lid on top and set some used oak barrel staves on fire

wave, placed the metal lid on top and set some used oak barrel staves on fire, amid toasts of ice-cold Victoria beer. Music drifted from the outside speakers, chilled beer was available in the ice chest and Jakelyn's mom surprised us with enchiladas for lunch.

Since there was food and the crowd had swelled to two dozen, I brought out some chilled 2017 Domaine du Tremblay Sauvignon Blanc, a wildly perfumed example of Loire wine from Quincy. I also opened bottles of the uniquely great Seven Hills Dry Rosé of Cabernet Franc from Columbia Valley, Washington. We sat around tending the fire to keep the internal temperature around 250° F. Around 2 p.m., I brought out some fish spread made from halibut I had smoked on my Weber grill. I served it with a selection of German and French Rieslings. People raved about the pairing.

For Jake Lorenzo, the first day of summer may bring some hangover, but there is no way any evil spirits will be hanging around. I'm certain we chased them away in good style.

More people drifted in, increasing the crowd close to 40. Chuy and Iggy lifted off the metal lid, and I carefully lifted out the racks of ribs. We replaced the metal top, stoked the fire and ate ribs while we sampled six different Zinfandels brought by my guests. When the ribs were finished, we pulled out the chickens; they were wonderfully juicy and redolent of achiote and spices. We served a selection of single-vineyard Chardonnays from Sonoma and Napa, along with the first of the Pinot Noirs.

We dipped back into the Cajun Microwave for the pork butt, which was fall-apart tender and moist with intense pork flavor. People gathered around to make sandwiches on simple rolls, after adding some of Chuy's spicy coleslaw for crunch. More Pinot Noir and several Côtes du Rhône were admirable foils.

Finally, I sliced the tender, luscious brisket, and Chuy pulled the goat meat off the bone and put it in a bowl with some tongs. He had a pile of hot corn tortillas next to it and three different salsas for tacos. We opened every single bottle of wine my guests had brought, cranked up the music and danced till the cops came to shut us down. We moved the party inside, brought out some Fuenteseca tequila and brought the evening to a relaxed finish.

For Jake Lorenzo, the first day of summer may bring some hangovers, but there is no way any evil spirits will be hanging around. I'm certain we chased them away in good style. **WBM** 

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