

Earl and Carrie Sullivan, Telaya Wine Co., Garden City, Idaho

NAMES Earl and Carrie Sullivan

WINERY NAME AND LOCATION: Telaya is a blend of the word Tetons (the mountain range in Wyoming), which is Carrie's favorite place, and La Playa (Spanish for beach), which is Earl's favorite place. We both left corporate careers (Earl, pharmaceutical executive; Carrie, veterinarian) to pursue wine and we wanted the name to represent our passions.

ANNUAL CASE PRODUCTION: About 5,000

PLANTED ACRES: None. We purchase from five vineyards in Idaho (Sawtooth, Skyline, Scoria, Williamson and Lanae Ridge) and three in Washington (Boushey, Quintessence, and Discovery).

CAREER BACKGROUND:

Carrie: After completing a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine at Ohio State University in 2000, I practiced small animal and exotic medicine in Columbus, Ohio and Boise, Idaho. I absolutely loved my career, but after my two sons arrived in 2004 and 2007, I struggled to find any work-life balance. Having come to the decision that my husband and I needed a life change, winemaking and owning a winery presented the opportunity to continue my pursuit of science but provide the flexibility to be present for my boys. I am challenged daily in our business but find great satisfaction in producing a quality, hand-crafted product (that I am immensely proud of) while creating an extended family made up of our winery team and supportive customers. While never easy, winemaking has culminated in that balance that I searched for—working with my husband, spending time with my sons and pursuing my passions.

Earl: I worked as an executive in the pharmaceutical industry, which had me traveling globally up to 290 days a year. I was missing things in my life, my wife's life and my kid's lives that I could never get back. Carrie and I sat on a beach in Mexico one year and decided to make a change. We wanted something intellectually stimulating (wine has never disappointed), something that would teach the work ethic I learned growing up working on our family farm in Kentucky and something we could do together. I had been exposed to fine wines throughout my career. When I was presented with the opportunity to work with a winemaker for a season, I fell in love with the process and art of winemaking. As a biochemist by education and a former COO, the science and business of wine come together for me in a way that keeps me challenged and engaged daily. Plus, I get to see my kids grow up in an industry that is full of great people, both on the production and customer side of the business.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE?

Getting banks in our region to both understand the wine industry and to believe in our business model as much as our family, customers and team do.

VARIETALS THAT YOUR WINERY IS KNOWN FOR: Turas, a Syrah-based blend, is our flagship wine. Telaya is also known for Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon



“Wine Business Monthly has been a great resource for us as we have grown our business. It has data we can show our banks about the industry and benchmark our progress against, it has equipment issues that allow us to explore the various options and what people like and don't, there are technical articles that help us continue to grow and evolve our winery experiments. The most recent influential article was one on the oxygen uptake of white wines and some types of presses that can help prevent that. But probably one of the most consistent, beneficial components we find in WBM is the Varietal Focus. Seeing how other winemakers treat and handle various varieties and then going out and tasting them to try to discern what the specific yeast, cold soak, etc. has done is very valuable to us as growing winemakers.”