V.4

LOAM Baby

A Wine Culture Journal

SONOMA COAST ISSUE


HATERS

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Opening Letter

In my thirties, I worked at a highly esteemed winery in the Napa Valley. Those were heady times – fancy-pants dinners during which benchmark wines were often poured with abandon, extensive travel, tons of socializing. That all may sound glamorous, but, like everything else in life, it's only fun if it's offered up with some modicum of moderation. Otherwise, after a while there's a vapid sameness that settles into even the most hedonistic of pursuits, and that can leave one feeling alone and empty.

So on the weekends I'd jump in my Mustang, with Mary Gauthier playing on the stereo, and drive out to Occidental – a small, unassuming township that anchors the otherwise sprawling appellation of the Sonoma Coast.

There, amid the off-the-grid pot growers, the artists, the galleries, little restaurants and cafés, I'd let my hair down and start to feel like a regular person again.

Of course, as a total wine nerd, I also liked knowing that one of my favorite vineyards at the time for Pinot Noir – Summa – was located right outside Occidental, up on Taylor Lane, which I could reach by winding my car along shaded, mist-dampened roads lined with fragrant Redwoods and nearly-chartreuse beds of maidenhair ferns. I once took a bottle of 1995 Williams Selyem Pinot Noir up there with me, pulled my car over, and had an impromptu roadside picnic near that storied site.

Today, I still love exploring the Sonoma Coast, which unfolds over a staggering 750 square miles. Of the half a million acres of land in this appellation, less than 7,000 are planted to wine grapes. It's the ideal appellation for the adventurer; it's decentralized and untamed. Beginning above San Pablo Bay near Carneros and ending in Mendocino County, this appellation, perhaps more than any other in California, affords the traveler a diverse culture and landscape. Oyster farms to dairies to roadside antique stands to beaches – there really is a little something for every traveler passing through the Sonoma Coast.

This AVA could probably use a few sub-appellations to make it more understandable. The Fort Ross-Seaview appellation already exists, but strong arguments could be made for sub-appellations named Occidental Ridge, Annapolis, Freestone, Bohan-Dillon and others. However, I prefer to focus on estates and producers rather than the appellation as a whole.

The number of excellent, heart-stopping wines in this appellation is remarkable. If you love wines that are fresh and vibrant, possessing of bright acidity, length and great texture, try exploring the wines of the Sonoma Coast. The better wines are aesthetically some of the most compelling wines from the US I've ever had. The texture alone on the better wines from this area is something to behold if you're a texture freak like I am.

It's nearly impossible to generalize about the inhabitants of such a large, diverse area. I will say, though, that for such a sprawling environment, it's an oddly tight-knit wine community, which I found captivating and life-affirming. I met many independent, fierce, risk-taking boot-strappers while working on this issue. Many of them knew each other and helped one another, despite sometimes being hundreds of miles apart. It's a pretty special place, so...

Let's make this trip together-

P.H. Dudek

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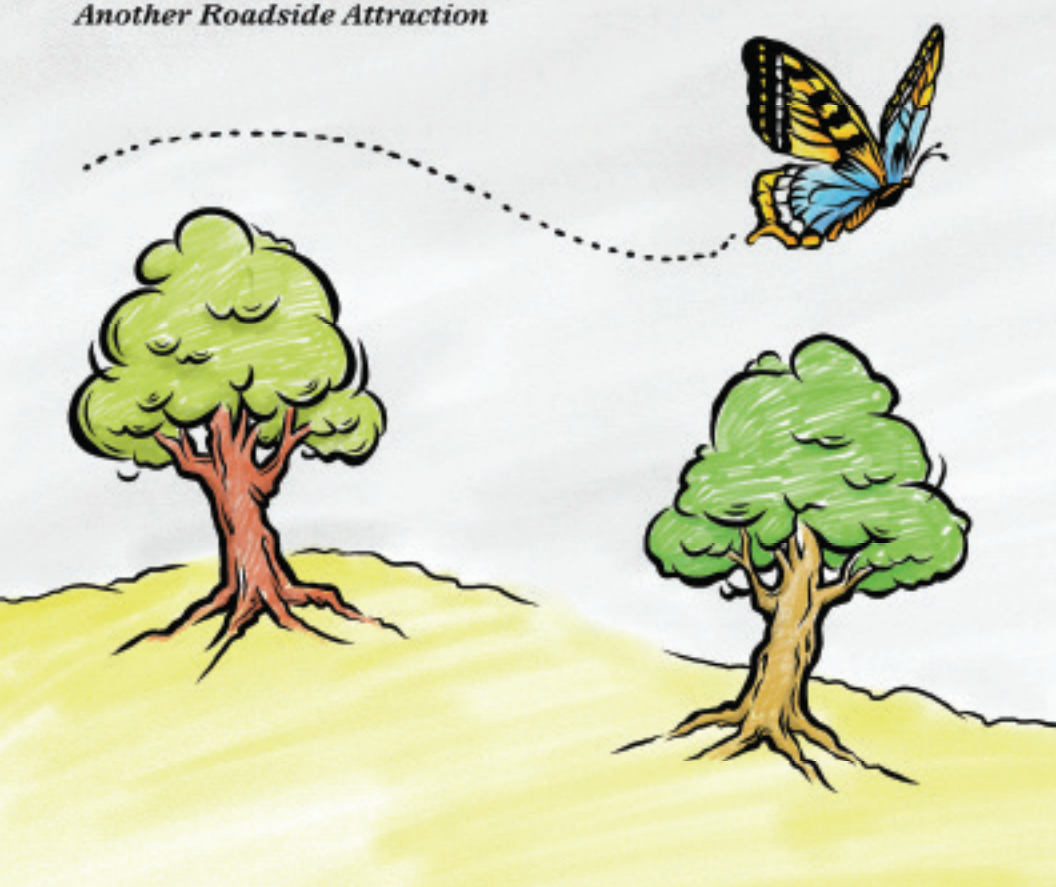
"It is a landscape in a minor key. A sketchy panorama where objects, both organic and inorganic, lack well-defined edges and tend to melt together in a silver-green blur. Great islands of craggy rock arch abruptly up out of the flats, and at sunrise and moonrise these outcroppings are frequently tangled in mist. Eagles nest on the island crowns and blue herons flap through the veils from slough to slough. It is a poetic setting, one which suggests inner meanings and invisible connections."

Tom Robbins
Another Roadside Attraction



8 Days A Week

A week in the life of two hard-working winery owners…who also happen to be raising small children.

Not long ago, I was sitting in a café observing a young family. The parents looked to be in their late 30s, perhaps early 40s. They had three young children.

That the mother was not part Australian Shepherd still astounds me to this day, for however else was she able to herd three little ones with such skill and unflagging focus? Dad was perhaps a bit more sober, trying desperately to complete what may have been an important work text, when two of their kids suddenly needed help opening up their little packets of jam. Otherwise, presumably, and based solely upon their behavior, the world was going to end, quickly, and perhaps very badly.

After an hour or so of constant struggle, these undaunted parental units, sweaty brows and all, left with their kids in tow. Off they went to visit a nearby attraction while I stayed behind, exhausted from having watched it all unfold.

Indeed, I often wonder how parents manage to carry forth with their own lives (including jobs, personal-growth goals, the cultivation of dreams, dentist and doctor's appointments, oil changes, etc.) and still raise children. Watching that young family got me to thinking about Sarah and Chris Pittenger, winery owners I met while researching the Sonoma Coast appellation.

Running a small business, as anyone who has ever done it knows, is an all-consuming enterprise. Even when business owners take a vacation or the occasional day off, they're still plagued with worry; will the bills get paid, are employees happy and performing, and most importantly, are the customers being taken care of well? Add to that the raising of children, and, well, life can become quite hectic and exhausting. There really ought to be some kind of award for folks who do that all particularly well.

If such an award existed, it might very well be bestowed upon Sarah and Chris Pittenger of Gros Ventre.

If you have all but given up on American pinot noir, well then, you haven't been looking hard enough. The pinots of Gros Ventre – particularly those from the Campbell Ranch vineyard designate, located in the inhospitably cool and windy Annapolis area of the Sonoma Coast appellation – are at once savory, fresh, racy, brooding and possessing of great, great length and texture. Chris and Sarah Pittenger, who make the wines and run the winery they own themselves, are grinders when it comes to fulfilling their on-going dream of producing delicious, memorable wines that are well-suited to aging.

In addition to balancing vineyard work, time in the cellar, compliance-related paperwork, etc., Chris and Sarah also juggle the raising of their two small children. While their Gros Ventre wines are Sonoma Coast or Sonoma County appellated, they live in Placerville, and so clock a tremendous number of miles on their respective vehicles, something that is true of many hands-on winemakers who source fruit from vineyards far from their own domiciles. If you're wondering how they pull it off…well, I asked the Pittenger's if they wouldn't mind keeping a diary (just adding to their workload!) of their activities for a week this past summer.

Friday May 29, 2015

Sarah Pittenger: (6:30 am) 5-year old John Henry gets up early, as usual. I put on the coffee and make his favorite – French toast. Chris and 3-year old Jane are up around 7:00 and by 8:30 Chris is out the door, taking the kids to summer camp on the way. I'm at my desk by 9:00 am. Besides what I do for Gros Ventre, my day job involves consulting for a couple different advertising agencies from my home office. Today will be a shorter day, as we're headed to Healdsburg in the afternoon.

SP: (3:00 pm) We do the mad rush to pick up the kids and get to Healdsburg, where we're staying with Web Marquez (co-owner/winemaker Anthill Farms) and his wife, Elizabeth. Their place is like a second home to us. In fact, we've rented their guest house for months at a time when we've needed an outpost in Sonoma County. True to form, when we arrive there's an incredible meal waiting for us. Grilled tri-tip, homemade tortillas, fresh greens, several home-pickled accoutrements… all this in spite of the fact that they have a new baby. It's great to see friend Tyson Freeman, too (winemaker for The Withers). Kids run in and out like crazy, wines are opened, and we all catch up.

Jane and Baby Thorn

Chris Pittenger: Seeing Web with his newborn sparks fond memories. It seems like yesterday that we lived together with Dave (also of Anthill) in a bachelor pad in Healdsburg. Life seemed a bit less chaotic back then…

SP: I throw caution to the wind and stay up way past my normal bedtime solving the world's problems with Elizabeth and finishing off the last bottle of wine. I finally hit the sack (which I'm sharing with Jane tonight) at 1:15 am.

Saturday, May 30, 2015

SP: (5:45 am) After a rough night of sleeping horizontally and lots of kicking, Jane wakes up and is ready for the day. I will now start my penance for drinking wine until 1:15 am. Web and Elizabeth already have coffee made and are ready to head out the door with baby Thorn for a quick trip to LA. They make it look so easy.

CP: (8 am) Out the door to make the 4-hour loop to Fort-Ross Seaview and Annapolis to check vineyards on the West Sonoma Coast. Campbell Ranch vineyard fruit is amazing, but the winding roads make it a tough drive. This place is wooded, foggy, and windy and smells of conifers and sea salt. It's an ideal setting for Pinot, or maybe filming Game of Thrones Season 6.

SP: (12:00 pm) The kids and I head out to meet Chris in Healdsburg for lunch. We get to the town square where I settle in on a bench in front of the fountain and scrounge pennies in the bottom of my purse for the kids to throw in the "wishing well." The leaves flutter, a cool breeze is blowing, my headache is gone. Happy.

Road to Campbell Ranch

Soon, Chris walks up dirty and tired from the vineyard trip, and the kids run for yelling into his arms.

Sunday, May 31, 2015

SP: Early to bed Saturday means we're early to rise on Sunday. We have a lot to do, including the 3-hour drive back to Placerville.

CP: (9:00 am) The whole family heads to Baranoff Vineyard, overlooking Laguna de Santa Rosa in the Russian River Valley. The kids love running through this tightly-spaced vineyard. Jane's only 3, but her little arms can span the width of the 3-foot rows no problem. I am stunned by how early everything is again this year. Last year we had our earliest harvest, picking everything over Labor Day Weekend. We will beat that date this year for sure. Can you say climate change? Nahh!

SP: (12:00 pm) After visiting Baranoff, we hit The Barlow in Sebastopol. Since we're real country mice now, even Sebastopol feels pretty cosmopolitan. Eat a delicious lunch at Vignette.

(3:00 pm) We arrive at Chris' wine locker in Santa Rosa, which Chris has had since his days at Williams-Selyem. I got it in my head that we should lose the locker and store it all at our house, so Chris built a wine storage room in our garage. This was our first trip to load up the van with as much wine as we could and cart it back to Placerville.

CP: One of the nice things about having your wines locked up in storage 3 hours away is that you are less likely on a Tuesday night to pull out that bottle of Marcassin you helped make in 2007. Most of these wines are the perk of digging out tanks and cleaning drains for several years during my apprenticeship days. I do suspect that our new proximate cellar location will result in some fun Tuesday nights going forward.

SP: The kids oblige us by falling asleep on the way home. And while we love visiting Sonoma County, it is nice to be home, sweet home.

Monday, June 1, 2015

Home

SP: Chris is off to work early. Bottling is happening Thursday, so he's busy getting ready. I take the kids to summer camp and then get to work. At 3:30 I go pick up the kids and take them to their first day of swimming – John Henry is on the Junior Dolphins swim team and Jane is starting lessons. Excitement is palpable.

CP: Bottling this week means racking wines from barrel to tank and putting the final blends together. Several weeks are spent doing blending trials to put the wines together on paper, but this is when it actually happens. You can never be certain that the blend you put together on paper will be the same in tank. Fingers crossed.

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

SP: Along with our usual activities, I'm hosting book club tonight. When we moved to Placerville, we didn't know a

Kids' first day of swimming

Bending Trials

soul. We had modest hopes of finding some like-minded spirits, but I was pretty nervous about the whole deal. Lucky for us, there are some amazing folks who make the foothills their home. The women in my book club, for example, are strong, smart, balanced, and also bad-ass river guides, kayakers, skiers, and mothers.

CP: Schedules for bottling dates are made a year in advance. This typically doesn't account for swim lessons, sick kids, or Sarah's increasingly busy consulting work. It's my turn to play Mr. Mom today. After taking the kids to camp, it's back to the winery to do more racking for bottling. Then back to town for swim and Dad Night with the kids while Sarah hosts book club. We hit up our favorite local restaurant and the candy store (Dad is a pushover) before grabbing some things from Home Depot to put the finishing touches on the garage wine room.

SP: We read *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki* by Haruki Murakami so I had decided some kind of Japanese cooking was in order. Our friends have a 5-acre farm near here and raised a pig for us, so our freezer is stocked with pork. I decide to try my hand with a slow-cooked Japanese ham (non-cured – no experience with this whatsoever). I admit the result was pretty salty, not great. I love these girls for eating it anyway. Last friend leaves at 12:30 am.

Book Club in the Drinkin' Shed

Sarah and Puppy

Wednesday, June 4

CP: Stressing. Ask any winemaker what they hate most about their job and you will likely get the same answer... BOTTLING! Last minute preparations for tomorrow. Lots of pieces to the puzzle and plenty of opportunities for something to go wrong after a year or two has passed since harvest. At least I didn't have to drive to Napa to check labels that got delayed by the printer at the eleventh hour...

SP: A friend stops by with his new puppy. Mmmm.

Thursday, June 5

CP: (5:00 am) Bottling day. It is here. I'm up early and out the door in a mad dash. Two of the bottlings (a Gros Ventre Pinot and a Skinner white) are for Melissa Perello's new restaurant, Octavia, in SF. We are stoked to work with her and Paul Einbund on these special bottlings for their wine program.

All in all, bottling went pretty smoothly, and the best part at the end of the day? It's over.

SP: I'm full-time mom and worker bee today. Non-stop.

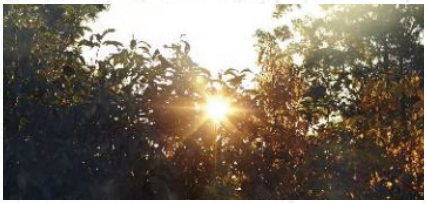
Friday, June 6

CP: With the bottling behind us, it's back to blending trials to prepare for the next round of bottling dates in August. There are long lead times with suppliers – corks, labels, glass, etc. Never a dull moment, and with harvest looking like it will overlap with bottling in August it makes for an active and interesting "off season."

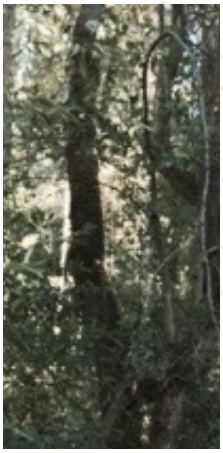
Gros Ventre Sonoma Coast and a special Pinot bottling for Octavia Restaurant

SP: The week is done. My favorite way to spend a night is at home with the family, cooking and eating. This is what we do most nights. Tonight I cook our regular meal (we cook this at least once a week) – bone-in chicken thighs or drumsticks, roasted red and sweet potatoes, butter leaf salad with a simple vinaigrette. Not much to do besides throw everything into a couple cast iron skillets and into the oven.

Chris gets home around 6 and we open a bottle of Pinot and tuck into some hot, crispy chicken. After getting the kids bathed and PJ'ed, we end up on our front porch with some magazines. While we live right "in town", it feels like we're in the middle of nature. We get all manner of creatures in our yard – deer, foxes, squirrels, even skunks once in a while. We watch our resident family of doves do their thing as dusk falls. This is the best time of day, and our happiest way to spend it.



Proust Questionnaire: Daniel J. Ricciato



Subject: Daniel J Ricciato
DOB: June 20, 1978

Daniel Ricciato works for Thomas Rivers Brown as a grower relations/vineyard Quality Control representative. He regularly walks vineyards from Wooden Valley to Northern Calistoga on the Napa Side, and Petaluma to Boonville on the Sonoma side. Chicken salad is his favorite sandwich. Cooking over an open flame while camping on the beach with friends is his idea of a really good time.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

The feeling of being completely consumed in any one moment, no matter what is happening. A feeling of total inclusion where there is no past, no present. Being immersed in naked singularity and being in one place and all places at once. Running, tasting a transporting wine, ski mountaineering, all these things have delivered for me in that way in the past.

What is your greatest fear?

Conscious disconnection. A psychotic break, Alzheimer's, losing the ability to rationally analyze and understand the world around me.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?

John Muir. He was a solitary man that was in awe of the bounty of nature and then gave all that majesty back to the world through his writing. He was an American explorer who embodied the principles of courage, toughness, sensitivity, romance and giving back.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Anyone that is truly money wealthy will tell you free time is the greatest extravagance, and I strive to have as much free time as I can. Freedom is extravagance and I love freedom. I should get a tattoo of a bald eagle flying through the sky, drinking a tallboy of Coors Light. That would be extravagant.

What is your favorite journey?

I love the first few hours of a long road trip. When you're looking out into this big open space and have nothing but music, open air and hopefully a hearty companion to talk with. I get a little pit in my stomach just thinking about it, I get so excited.

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

I'm prone towards hyperbole. When I am in the wake of any experience, I really relish in the good parts, so I tend to refer to many of my most recent experiences as "the best" or "the finest".

What is your greatest regret?

I had the opportunity to move to British Columbia after college and instead I moved to NYC. I have since been to BC multiple times and there is an energy there that I haven't really experienced anywhere else. I wish I had spent some quality time there to immerse myself in that environment.

What or who is the greatest love of your life?

Music, writing and the outdoors are things that I always look to for emotional support, meditation and inspiration. These components have incredible resonant qualities that show us how big the world is and that go beyond our small inner world of problems and tribulation.

When and where were you the happiest?

I lived in Malibu on the beach one summer. I was coming off my junior year at Boston College and I lived in a large house with six other friends. My one friend's parents were building another house and renting this one. The house they built was complete and they let us live in the beach house that summer once they moved out. I could write a book about that summer. We all just worked enough to get by but had this fantasy ranch on the ocean with pieces of art that were occasionally loaned to the Whitney, a hot tub, showers as big as bedrooms and a bunch of wild-ass 21-year-olds. It was one of those situations that definitely made me realize what you put out to the world comes back to you in spades. We were all in such a good place in life and the things that happened that summer were unbelievable. Every day a series of wonders.

Which is the talent you would most like to have?

I'd love to be a fine woodworker. My grandfather built furniture as a hobby, and he was meticulous. To have that sort of patience and attention to detail is a remarkable skill to me.

What is your current state of mind?

It's a little chaotic. I'm going through a big transition period right now in my life. When I feel most frazzled and displaced, though, I like to think about how some of my favorite music is the same way. In the midst of a big storm there is eye, and so I'm focusing on staying centered. What I love about chaotic music is that there is a quiet center and once you find that, you find harmony in the chaos.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd like to be more patient.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Remaining optimistic, and using that outlook as a means to inspire myself towards always improving my position in life.

If you could choose what to come back as what would it be?

Dolphins seem to have it pretty dialed. They play more than many other animals and that is a sign of intelligence.

What is your most treasured possession?

I have an able body and an able mind. That is such a gift, most people take it for granted. I have four parents that all work with mentally and physically challenged children and seeing what that is like from an early age definitely helped me appreciate what a gift a healthy mind and body are in this world.

Where would you like to live?

I've spent a bunch of time in Paris and would love to be back there for an extended period, maybe in retirement. I love it there, I feel love there. Everything in that city speaks to me, and makes me feel full of life.

What is your favorite occupation?

I can't imagine anything better than what I do. I tell people all the time, what I do for work, a lot of people do for their vacation. I travel around Northern California and walk some of the most beautiful, dramatic and historic vineyards out there. I drive through Napa Valley and the Sonoma Coast every day and talk with people about farming, their land, and the pursuit of refining their craft and making some of the best wines in the world.

Who are your favorite writers?

Graham Greene, Wallace Stegner, Michael Cunningham, Mark Strand, William Carlos Williams, Philip Larkin.

Who is your favorite hero of fiction?

I mostly like anti-heroes.

Who are your heroes in real life?

In 2013 I was in Champagne with my buddy Ketan Mody. We met with Anselme Selosse and Anselme does not speak a lot of English, but in our meeting with him, there was another couple from Italy that was also fluent in French and English (of course.) They translated everything, so Anselme spoke freely in French and the couple translated. Anselme has an artist's sensibility to his approach both in the vineyard and in the winery and at the same time a scientist's approach to the tiny amounts of nuance and decision-making that go into making incomparable wines. He is also humble, funny, warm, and just an overall good soul. A hero!

What is it that you most dislike?

Fake people.

How would you like to die?

With my mind intact so I can fully appreciate the magnitude of such a monumental transition.

What is your motto?

Love hard, and always.

The Tonifying Life: Stephen Singer and His Canvases

What stirs my soul the most is thinking about Art.

– Stephen Singer

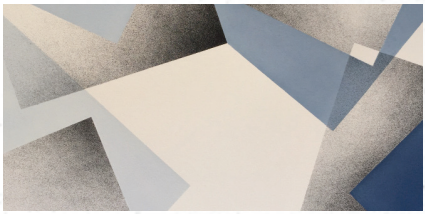
When I was in grade school, probably third or fourth grade, our class went on a field trip to a museum in San Francisco. I remember seeing abstract paintings and sculptures and wondering why anyone would waste their time making something like that. "There are more important things to do in this world," I remember thinking. At the time, I was living on a farm and raising a small herd of goats, and anything they did seemed immeasurably more significant than anything hanging in the museum that day.

Thankfully, years later, I realized that the very fact that I was, at such an early age, weighing the significance of something man-made against the backdrop of Mother Nature and the natural world was expressly a result of all the art I had been exposed to up until that time. That hierarchy I had imposed upon reality was born of aesthetic preferences I'd been leaning towards during those nascent years of my journey – books I thought were speaking just to me, movies that took me some place else entirely, music that made me feel less alone...

Having read *All Creatures Great and Small* in 4th grade greatly informed how I came to my herd of goats, for example, and to the world in general. Reading about Dr. James Herriot excited and agitated my mind, and filled it with wonder and thoughts that seemed to skirt the serious edges of mortality. That was the first book that introduced me to this notion of compassion.

Since that revelation, I've had the deepest regard for artists. And I'm not talking about people who announce they are artists at cocktail parties, presumably because they've invented some new way to preen before the mirror of celebrity. No, I'm talking about people who take great creative risks to express themselves in an effort to better understand what it means to be fully human.

Stephen Singer is that kind of an artist.



During the time that I spent shadowing him at his Baker Lane Vineyards property, and around the township of Sebastopol where he enjoys tooling around for groceries and other conveniences, he was a veritable whirling dervish of energy and creativity. Chats would be interrupted so that he might make us a super-green juice from greens we'd purchased earlier that day from a roadside farmer, or to take a drive out to his olive tree grove to check on the various species of olives he grows for olive oil, or to eat fresh plums off a tree not far from the estate's pond. We paused frequently to observe his four rescue dogs in their various states of play or rest. We listened to moody, atmospheric music while watching for raptors outside his kitchen window.
Life is full around this winemaker and painter.

RHD: *You live a full life here, Stephen. It's equal parts painting, wine, commerce – the commerce of wine and art – stewardship. Is it hard to live an integrated life?*

Stephen Singer: We battle the fracturing of our attention as a matter of course. There is so much nonsense being beamed at us all the time. And then there's our own frittering away of our own attention because of whatever may be happening in our own lives. It's also a matter of prioritization. Some people are better suited to being single-minded. Some don't really want to look at the connective tissue that's binding it all. They prefer to compartmentalize rigidly. They're more competent doing what matters to them most. I have always aspired to having diversity in what I can be conversant in and skillful at. I think it's presumptuous to call oneself a renaissance man, but I do admire people who can talk and traffic amongst a range of subjects. I just find those kinds of people better informed.

RHD: *When did you first become a painter?*

SS: I had an occasion in art class when I was eight or nine years old to do a drawing. Two things really made a big impact on me as a result of doing that one drawing. One was that I got some positive strokes for it. I was the youngest of five kids, and always struggling to have some traction in my family, trying to be noticed, for better or worse. Not a terribly worthwhile aspiration, but it was one I couldn't resist. So it was fun to get – as the littlest who was always sort of a punching bag – some good reviews. The other thing was that, again as the youngest in a rather strong and opinionated family, I was always being told what to do, where to go, what to eat…what I was drawn to in this idea of making "art" was that it felt like I was also making my own rules. There's something about Art: even when it's not terribly original, it can still be original enough to you that it feels like you're charting your own territory. At the very least,

you're certainly doing what interests you if you're true to yourself.
What I've always liked about making art doesn't have much to do with the process of refutation or discord; I don't like arguments that are based on polemic. I like positive statements to support a position because really what I'm most drawn to is finding common cause. Nevertheless I will admit that I also like how trying to explore a set of interests in myself got me to a place where I was operating under my own set of conceptual priorities. So that's always been something that has sustained my enthusiasm for the process (of making art), or as I like to call it, the conversation. It's a dialogue I can have with myself wherein I get to organize the subject matter.

RHD: *Is it important for you to succeed as a painter?*

SS: I have pretty much separated myself, for a really long time, from thinking about what my professional prospects are with art. I have had long periods of time during which I didn't paint at all. I have had big gaps in my life as an artist, because I've basically painted since I was eight, maybe nine years old, and other parts of my experience took precedence over my time in the studio.

What I have always really wanted, and have tried to fulfill for myself, is to lead an artful life. If I could put that into words, it's to use a lot of the criteria of observation and experience that inform my approach to my actual artwork, and otherwise bring those skills to bear on every other decision and choice I can make in life. So, when I wasn't actually making art, I still felt like I was engaged in an artistic experience, whether that's engaging in some of the businesses I've been in, or building my winery, or building my house. The artistic sensibilities that are most dear to me were never *not* part of the process.

For the last six years, I've had some good momentum. It's been pretty good recently, and that's felt fantastic. It's the first thing I think about in the morning when I get up and the last thing I think about when I go to bed. It's very energizing and it feels like a balm for this troubled world we live in.

RHD: *Your paintings are as much about negative space as they are about form and color. Can you talk to me a bit about negative space and why it's important to you?*

SS: I've always been attracted to the notion of negative space. It's been a very powerful source of stimulation and a strong conceptual and metaphorical notion. I wrote a thesis for my degree at U.C. Berkeley and it was very much about negative space. There is a wonderful film critic, Manny Farber, who I actually got to know during my life with Alice [*Stephen was with Alice Waters of Chez Panisse for 16 years; together they have a 32-year old daughter, Fanny.*] and I love the fact that he had this approach to film criticism which was very much rooted in this notion of negative space.

He was a very active and avid painter himself. He had dual passions of his own. His view of negative space, at least his metaphorical one, entailed writing about or looking for content or insight into the films he was writing about by not just focusing on all of the positive shapes (like the actors or foreground details), but also attending to the background details (*mise en scene*). He analyzed all of the layers of more subtle information that buttressed the narrative possibilities. The cigarette pack that's crumbled up on the table…the other *accoutrements* that the actors were surrounded by that helped propel the story. That construct greatly intrigued me such that the idea of negative space has enduringly remained a very powerful metaphorical concept while visually I find it very stimulating too.

RHD: *Is there negative space in wine?*

SS: Yes, in the array or filigree of details that add up to a significant component of the content of something you notice in a wine. When you think about winemaking the way I've come to think about it for the last 12 years that we've been making wine, you realize that the engine of considerations that really affect, however incrementally, the upside or the downside – there are many things that you can do to advance the qualitative prospects of the wine. I tend to speak in an analogous manner about various subjects, mostly with how I'm very prone to imagistic descriptions of things. Hence I talk a lot about wine having volume, space…about wines being three-dimensional. Either they wrap around your palate in a way that you can say is palpably of consequence or simply they summon an image in your mind that has real volume to it. There are also elements of the graphic lexicon that make sense to describe wine. One of the great things about wine is that it makes you think about other things. Drinking wine is a highly associative experience.

It's about the hierarchy of attention – the things that we pay attention to most naturally, or that somehow have greater prominence according to the conventional approaches to things…and then it helps to look for the other, background, stuff that's holding everything up.

RHD: *You spoke earlier about Formalism. In what way are you a Formalist?*

SS: What I mean by invoking that notion is that a lot of the work I'm involved with is very actively engaged with the Form. It's kind of a *double-entendre*; not just the forms within my paintings themselves, but the form of painting itself. I'm really actively intrigued by issues like, What is it that makes me want to put color on a page? What is the page itself? The page itself can easily be turned into a metaphor; it's a movie screen, it's a photograph, it's a rectangular use of space. It's a stage. Those have been significant subtexts in my thinking when I invoke the notion that I'm a formalist. In my paintings, I'm kind of building the form up…what I'm imagining is happening, or what I'm hoping is perceptible, is that there's this density and architectural

heft to my paintings that I have achieved. The page, though, is still the page; the illusion is just an illusion. Something that stimulates me a lot is working on paper…granted, very well-made paper, but the object-ness of it is relatively limited. That I can spend hours and hours working on something as relatively flimsy as paper somehow pleases me. In a sense, it's a form of meditation. So, to borrow from spiritual nomenclature, it's a practice.

I've been drawn to working with forms like this for nearly 40 years. Overlapping shapes of really simple rectangular forms still greatly interests me. That idea remains a very powerful one for me. This work, though, is also a significant departure for me, in that in the intervening time, what I've gathered from my own idiosyncratically developed techniques is that I've learned to add a lot of richness and heft to some of the same images that I may have done 40 years ago.

Something else I've noticed that is provocative and unanticipated is that after I finish some of these pieces, I've come to realize that the discourse of thinking that a given piece presents is sometimes very similar to some artists whom I've known I've liked. I didn't mean to channel these artists, but what I think is happening is that I'm learning something about what their aesthetic engagement is. For instance, an artist I like very much – Ellsworth Kelly. I was looking at this recent work of mine and I was thinking, my god, I'm kind of engaged with some of the same techniques. Whether it's self-aggrandizement or not, I feel like I'm in this dialogue with artists who have done great work and I'm getting to sort of "stir it up" with them.

RHD: *When you drink a benchmark wine, or see a painting by Van Gogh in a museum, do you ever think, "I want to create something like that? I want to create a benchmark."*

SS: Organizing information along aesthetic guidelines interests me more than anything else. I oftentimes have tallied in my mind a lot of great flavor sensations that I am indebted to – these very special wines. Because of the way I've organized my mind, I can remember them and retrieve those flavors and sensations. I have good retrieval there. That's very similar to how I think about art. I can revisit the sensation, retrieve the tension and flavors of various wines, and then allow them to inform me somehow anew.
I like these laudable examples of wines that other people have made. Not only are they pleasing to explore, but doing so also sustains the energy you need to make your own wine; the efforts others put towards a wine serve as inspiration. We keep our vines in hydrological tension. The fingerprint, or terroir of our site, is this cool-climate kind of spiciness and white pepper. That said, I don't want that character to dominate our wines. If a wine is made of fruit, it should taste like fruit. There is a direct correlation between how skillfully we water and what flavors emerge from the vineyard in our finished wines. We try and stay in a constant state of discovery here and are always open to understanding new sources of cause and effect.

I have wrestled, frankly, with this notion of whether or not the world really needs more paintings. There are a lot of objects already in this world. Much of it feels like the detritus of a failed civilization. The ethos that has influenced me wanting to make objects at all is this idea of site-specific work. With this kind of effort it's much less about the artist, really, and more about the site. So, I'm not so focused on how commercial my art is, or becomes, or having a gallery show. I just enjoy doing it. On the other hand, I guess I believe in the rigorousness and seriousness of what I do. I do believe in the value of it, in that I guess I would like to have a gallery show some day. Mostly, I just want it to be economically sustainable. Just like starting this winery; we started this winery to sustain our franchise on this piece of land – in a sense, to make this land pay for itself. We wanted to validate the financial commitment we made to this land, not just the emotional commitment.

RHD: *Is it ever an effort for you to remain engaged in wine with everything else you have going on? Namely, your artwork?*

SS: Sometimes it's an effort to sustain the energy it takes to be involved in the commercial side of things. Selling wine, for example. And the administrative side of the wine business, and even the administrative side of winemaking, is not something I enjoy doing. There is a certain amount of compartmentalization that is just a part of reality, but I try not to think very often about "this is what I do over here", and then "this is what I do over here". There's a natural sequence to my day; as long as it's interesting, it really doesn't feel like work. I have aspired to have what I do be what I want to do. It's not always the case. Sometimes you have to do things you don't like or have a natural affinity for, but even the challenge of having to learn something new becomes redemptive. It's nice to learn a new skill.

RHD: *Let's talk a bit about the wine business. What do you think of the current state of the business?*

SS: So much of it these days seems to be simply about people wanting to see their name and voice in print and trying to be controversial. I mean, *I don't care about wine that much!* I care about the outcome – where it fits into a more enlightened approach to life. To the extent that it makes the table a more congenial and enlivened place…well, that's the greatest outcome I could hope for a bottle of wine. I can talk about wine *ad nauseum* if it feels appropriate, but most of the time, it doesn't feel that interesting to me. I do know a lot about the various histories of places and types of winemaking and the personalities involved, but it's only interesting if somehow the wine itself stimulates that discussion.

But, one of my biggest complaints about winemaking in America, and in California in particular, is that so many people involved in winemaking really don't know that much about wine. They don't really care that much about the culture of wine, or care to understand where their efforts are as part of a really broad continuum of winemaking and culture. They don't do much to try to figure out how to be as well-informed by that continuum as they could be. I believe that the best way to understand what you're doing is to also understand what other people are doing and have done historically.

RHD: *Do you struggle with how to price your wines?*

SS: Because I've been a wine collector for many decades, and have made a lot of money over the years selling wines, I know what things cost. Now that I'm a winemaker, I know exactly what things cost to produce. I've always wanted to present my wines as better than what we're charging for them. As a buyer…a job I did for decades (at Chez Panisse and many other restaurants), I was always keenly aware of trying to buy on behalf of the clients I was serving; my job was to buy skillfully. At some point, I'd like to get paid money for our wines in a way that says, "We think what you're doing is really great and we want to acknowledge that." But, for now, we know that there's an ocean of wine out there so we try to price our wines where it won't kill anyone's pocket book.

RHD: *What do you think of these more experimental wine lists that are emerging these days?*

SS: I just don't want to go to some of restaurants whose wine lists are Olympic efforts at marginalia and obscurity and esoterica. Who wants to drink esoterica? A lot of those wines simply aren't generous enough. They're more about some kind of conceptual model of edginess. I want to drink something that tastes good. I feel like there's almost this contempt for deliciousness. A lot of these obscure wines from Croatia or Sicily…they're expensive and they taste like virtually nothing.

RHD: *What does it feel like when your wines get critiqued unfavorably by a critic?*

SS: I think it's important to just put oneself out there to engage with the world. And that's really all it is. Once you start making objects, they have a physical reality that extends beyond your personal realm. They become public. By being a winemaker, and by putting something in a bottle, for other people to enjoy, well…that's a public act. The act of making art may be private, but once you put it out into the world...well, it becomes a public act as well. It can be community-building. It can also be culture-sustaining. But whatever it is, if you're asking money for something that you've made as a way to express yourself, then you just have to deal with the pitfalls of that public exposure. What I hope is that when I do put something out there, it's reasonably comprehensible to intelligent people who, more often than not, will like it. When they don't, then there's either head-scratching or soul-searching.

RHD: *How do you tame or control your ego?*

SS: By being married.

[*We both laugh heartily at this.*]

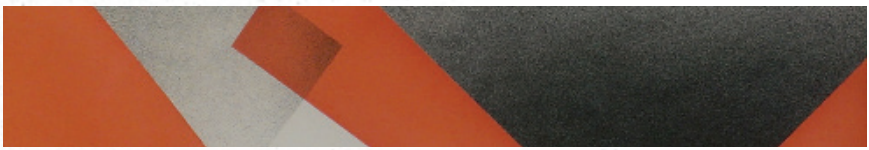
I have never had the kind of success that warrants putting a lot of effort into having a healthy but measured ego. I've had a great life, but nevertheless, the fact is that I've known quite a few really humbling experiences. Because of them, it feels impossible for me to set myself up as unimpeachably authoritative or infallible. And when you do that anyway, you're really setting yourself up for a fall that will be inevitable. I've never ignored the value of trying to know what the truth is like. A lot of what I've been able to do has been self-generated, a process that has enabled me to define various paths of my own. I have always felt that was reward enough.

I used to have this debate in my thinking. What would you rather have…a lot of money or a lot of power? Then I realized that actually the only reason a lot of people want money is that it gains them access. If you have power, you don't need to worry about the money. It's kind of fungible in a sense. Power is access and it gives you authority and opportunity and so forth. So, kind of corollary to that in my thinking is: You've had a lot of great experiences; that is a version of success as much as anything else.

RHD: *Is it important to you to be recognized, years from now, as having been a great winemaker or artist?*

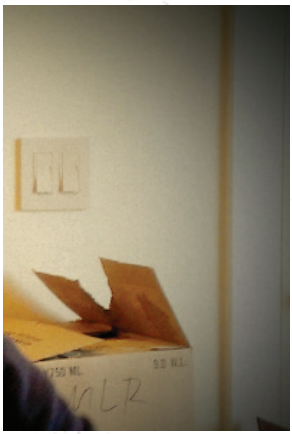
SS: I'm leery of legacy. To me, it seems too often that you can become a cult of your own making; the only member of that cult is yourself. I don't have a shortage of ego, but I also don't have an attraction to this idea that you have to be revered and fiercely regarded. None of that seems natural to me. What I would like is, in years to come, if someone does regard my work… that when they do observe it, it looks like the work of someone who was sincere, and hard-working, and had enough talent to justify the time and commitment they put into their work.

I don't even imagine myself being buried with a tombstone. If I did have a tombstone, one epitaph that makes sense to me is this: He made a good pasta.




MOTHER NATURE
FINDS HER BALANCE
SAN
RAVENEAU

Katy Wilson: "Harvest and Harvest"



In 2009, at 26 years old, Katy Wilson fearlessly launched her brand, LaRue Wines. In just six short years, Wilson's wines have gained a legitimate foothold among a growing number of America's sommeliers, wine critics and Pinot Noir enthusiasts. I checked in with Wilson, now 32, to see how life in the wine business is going for this talented millennial.

How do people react when you tell them you're a winemaker?

Well, sometimes, when I don't feel like talking, I don't tell people what I do because most people find it pretty interesting. They will really want to talk about it, find out more about it. But it's nice to have a job that people are excited about.

Is it important for you to be taken seriously?

Yes, I think it is. Sometimes people will come by the winery and ask for the winemaker, and I can tell they want to talk to a man. I can see them thinking, "Where is the winemaker?" It's important to me to have people respect my work. Hopefully after they've met me and tasted my wines, they will. But I feel like I have to really work hard to prove myself… because of my age and because I'm a girl.

I started driving quads when I was five years old. I started operating a tractor when I was ten years old. I learned how to weld at the age of ten. I drove forklifts and Bobcats. My dad was always teaching me that I could do everything. "It doesn't matter if you're a girl," he'd say.

On appearing on the dais for In Pursuit of Balance:

I definitely get nervous speaking in front of people. And also, I was one of the youngest people on the panel and the only girl who had been on an IPOB panel up to that point. It was a lot of pressure. It is kind of weird; I'm not used to people meeting me and saying they've heard of me or my wine. I'm just making this little bit of wine…but I guess it's cool. And having my dad attend these events with me is great.

I mean, when I started LaRue, I didn't think to myself, "I'm going to make a wine that Raj Parr likes." That was never even a remote thought. Nor was I interested in fitting in with a certain group of people. How I came to make the style of wine that I make was by learning from everyone I've ever worked for. I have adopted things I liked, left aside things I didn't agree with. Ross Cobb (winemaker, Hirsch Vineyards) has been a big inspiration for me. Our wines are very different, but I've learned so much from him. I feel like I want to learn from the best because I want to be one of the best.

On whether or not she likes being in the business of wine:

There is a lot of social craziness in the wine industry, and sometimes I get really exhausted by it. There are just so many things going on; you get invited to do so many things. Sometimes I want to go to all of these interesting events and tastings and dinner parties because they sound like so much fun, but then I have to remind myself that I have to get up really early the next morning to be in the vineyard.

On the name LaRue:

It's named after my great-grandmother. Her name was Veona Larue Newell. She lived to be 97 years old, so she knew I was naming my brand after her. She was always somebody who told me that I can do anything in life. She also told me never to let others tell me what to do. She didn't get married until 23 years old…back then that was really old to be getting married. And it wasn't for lack of suitors. She wanted to be a teacher and be on her own for a time before she married. She and my great-grandfather were married for 75 years. My great-grandfather outlived Veona by one year. He had, up until that point, spent his whole life in Ohio and Iowa, but for that last year of his life he moved to California and attended a lot of family events and my first wine release party. That was really meaningful and cool for me.

On breaking into the business:

I spent the summer of my freshman year working on a thousand-acre vineyard in the Central Valley, not too far from my parents' house. That was intense and crazy. I was working ten-hour days, six days a week, for minimum wage…no overtime. I was in charge of crews doing leaf-pulling, green-dropping – all that stuff. It was a really good learning experience. Part of my goal was to work in every part of the industry so that I would hopefully become well-rounded.

When I turned 21 years old, I went to work in the tasting room at Eberle Winery, and I worked there my last two years of college. It was important for me to work the hospitality end of things in the wine business as well.

After graduating, I wanted to travel and work harvests, so I started out my first harvest at Testarossa in Los Gatos, and then I went to Australia and worked at Torbrek. When I came back from Australia, I went work for Joseph Phelps Winery. Next I went to New Zealand and worked at Craggy Range. When I got back from New Zealand, a friend of mine told me that Ross Cobb was looking for a harvest enologist over at Flowers Vineyard & Winery. I interviewed with Ross and ended up getting hired. He's like my big brother now. I consider him my biggest mentor, especially when it comes to Pinot Noir. While I was there, I was promoted to Assistant Winemaker. When Ross left Flowers Vineyards & Winery, I left 6 months later.

At that time I was ready for a new chapter, and I knew that I wanted to continue to challenge myself, so I took a job at Kamen Estate Wines in 2009. I really respect Mark Herold's winemaking. I knew that we were very opposite in our winemaking styles, and I wanted to learn from him. A lot of people negatively judge what they consider to be the opposite of their own personal style, but I want to learn from people who have different styles from mine. I was at Kamen for five years.

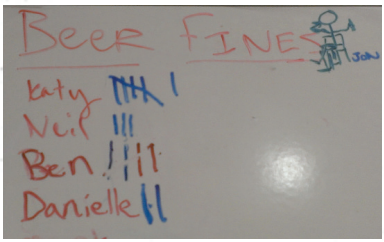
How did you know how to start a wine brand from scratch?

For my senior project at Cal Poly, I wrote a business plan about how to start a small wine label. In 2009, just as I was starting LaRue, I re-wrote my business plan; it wasn't that difficult to re-write. I restructured everything and showed it to some family friends…potential investors. Everybody wanted 50% of ownership. I wasn't really looking for investors that wanted to own half of my business. I thought everything was going to fall through.

And then a friend in the wine industry – a winemaker who had sold his brand for a lot of money – came to me and said, "I want to see you do this. You can pay me back as you are able, but I really want to see you do this, and I don't need any ownership." That was really important that he did that – and really crazy, too! He's an angel investor.

On growing up in California's Central Valley:

I grew up in Manteca, in the Central Valley of California. My parents have a walnut orchard there. We moved to that house when I was five years old. It's only 15 acres so we do most of the work ourselves. Growing up, my two sisters and I all worked, but I ended up continuing working in the orchard through high school. I just really enjoyed farming and things like driving a tractor. When I graduated from high school, I knew I



wanted to be in agriculture, so I attended Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. I started with Agricultural Business studies. During my first year there, I took Ag Business 101 and learned about wine grapes, and it just clicked for me. I pursued a double major – Agricultural Business, and Wine and Viticulture.I graduated in four years with two degrees.

With winegrowing, you're not just growing a commodity. With winemaking, you're creating something that is unique and special, but it still involves a lot of chemistry…a lot of farming. It's the best of both worlds.

On the possibility of failing:

I didn't think about the possibility of failure. That just didn't cross my mind.

In my first year, I made 300 cases. It didn't make sense to make less. A lot of the expenses are going to be the same, whether you're making 100 cases or 300 cases. I'm now up to about 400 to 500 cases. My plan is to stay right around 500 to 600 cases total – about 500 cases of Pinot and 100 cases of Chardonnay. I just don't want to grow bigger than that. With these amounts, I can continue to do all my own winemaking, marketing, bookkeeping, management of the wine club, topping and racking, grape hauling – all that stuff. If you grow too big you lose out on all of this stuff. This is a very personal undertaking for me, so I want to remain small enough so that I'm doing all the work myself. I mean, I use a shipment fulfillment house, but I manage all the shipments myself.

On whether or not scores matter:

It's really nice to get a great score, but it's not a break-or-make moment for me. It really only changes your sales if you get 98 to 100 points. Otherwise I don't think it really affects one's sales. Personally, it means more to me hearing that a sommelier has recommended my wine at dinner than receiving a big score. Somms taste great wines all the time, so when Yoon Ha, MW, for example, posted that the 2011 LaRue Pinots were some of his favorites, that was really, really nice.

On how she sells her wine:

I mostly sell through my wine club and mailing list. I also have a broker in California who has gotten my wines into some nice restaurants. I have about ten cases that I allocated to New York, and I sell a little in Washington, D.C. and Texas.

I do a release party every year. One year my dad and I built some cool lights out of barrel staves, and those kind of transformed the party space. We've held my release parties in vineyards and in restaurants. I enjoy changing it up every year.

I fulfill all the orders myself, so I know all of my customer names. I ran into a wine club member in New York at In Pursuit of Balance, and I recognized his name just as he was introducing himself.

About her parents helping out:

My mom and dad both still work full time, but they help me out during harvest and bottling. My dad attends a lot of my events. It's kind of like Bring Your Dad to Work Day. My mom is an accountant, so she really helps me during tax season!

Do you ever get intimidated by colleagues who have perhaps tasted more worldly wines than you?

I actually do! I taste a good amount of wine, but at the same time, it's really expensive to taste some great wines. I mean, sometimes I'll be at a party and there will be these amazing wines there, but then it's hard for me to concentrate on tasting them because there's so much else going on. I went to Burgundy for the first time a couple of years ago, so I'm not one of those winemakers who are always going over to Burgundy.

Can you describe what it was like to visit Burgundy for the first time?

You know, I didn't leave there thinking, "I'm going to do whole-cluster more because they do so much whole-cluster there." Or I didn't think, "I need to use the same cooper this or that person uses." Every vineyard in the world is different. Every vintage is different. Every cellar is different. So I'm not interested in someone else's formula. The key for me is to ask "why", not "what".

I really just wanted to listen to why they were making the decisions they were making. That's what winemaking is all about; it's about the thought process...one's intuition. I'm more interested in the thinking and philosophies of Burgundians than in what they actually do.

On evolving palates:

When I first started in the wine industry, my sister only drank Rombauer Chardonnay. That's ALL she would drink. She does all my taxes, so I would always send her wine on April 15th. Over the years, though, she started drinking my Pinot. I started to ship her LaRue. She and her husband came and did some tastings in Napa. Now my sister has graduated to Mark Herold Cabernet Sauvignons. Her palate has really evolved. She is a great example of why we shouldn't judge people who drink what we consider to be "entry level" wines. Wine lovers graduate to more beautiful wines, so I don't judge people who drink Charles Shaw, because they'll grow into liking nicer wines.

What's the best thing about being in the wine business?

Harvest and harvest.

What's the worst thing?

Email blasts. I hate doing email blasts. And Facebook and Twitter. That's all too much, though I see the value of participating.

What does a day off look like for you?

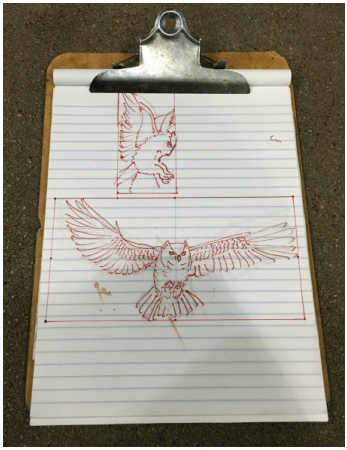
Especially now, with my business growing, there really isn't a day that goes by that I'm not working. And that's okay for now. It's not a long-term thing. I'm just building my business, so I pretty much work every day.

Ice, Ice, Baby: Chillin' with Tim Colla

I've enjoyed drinking wine for many years. It wasn't until I was in my mid-30s, though, that I began to consider the texture of wines. Since that time, I'm as drawn to the texture of certain wines as I am to their flavors and aromatics. I've also taken to thinking quite a bit about a wine's structure and its length. I guess as I get older, I've really come to think of wines sculpturally or architecturally. For me, the best wines have a significant presence about them, and that presence can inspire associative aesthetic musings; it can assume shapes, colors, and memories in the mind of the imbiber.

While I was working on this issue, I tasted a Saintsbury Pinot Noir from the Sonoma Coast's Sundawg Ridge Vineyard designate that was sculpturally compelling. Its great texture, structure, vitality and length left quite an impression on me. For days afterwards, I was haunted by its various dimensions. I wondered to myself, "What would this wine look like if it assumed a physical shape?"

Saintsbury winemaker Tim Colla was, in a former incarnation, an ice sculptor, so I asked Tim if he'd be interested in interpreting this very compelling wine through the medium of ice. Tim's a busy guy: when he's not making wine, he's spending time with his new bride, Rachel; walking vineyards with his dog, Poppy; practicing yoga; attempting to avoid the rocks and sharks of Bolinas; or slowly and surely working through Knausgaard's autobiography. Still…I had to ask:



RH Drexel: *Can you talk to me a little bit about why you chose an owl to represent the Saintsbury Pinot Noir from Sundawg Ridge?*

Tim Colla: The first morning I sampled Sundawg Ridge in 2013, I was crossing the threshold between the north and south facing blocks when I looked up to see a Great Horned Owl perched, wings spread, on a branch. I couldn't have been more than ten feet below the bird, and it was a magnificent display of weight, proportion, and vitality. The bird was simply stretching its wings, but it was hard not to be awestruck – a glimpse of its power and size, before weaving its wings back around itself.

The forest surrounding the vineyard is alive and vital, and the former riverbed offers a pathway for the surrounding wild inhabitants to travel through the heart of the place. It is a vineyard site very much intertwined with its surroundings, which makes it harder to read, farm and make resulting decisions, but without a doubt helps in creating aspecial wine.

RHD: *Let's talk about how you started sculpting in ice and about your mentor, Takeo Okamoto.*

TC: Between the summer of my junior and senior years of college (where I was studying chemistry and fine art) I found an "ice mover" position on *Craigslist*. The job listing basically required that I was comfortable traveling to Queens, and that I was comfortable working with 300-lb. blocks of melting water. They called me in for an interview, and I fell immediately in love with the owners of the ice sculpture studio, Takeo and Shintaro Okamoto.

It was a classic mentor position in which I did whatever was asked, and little by little, Takeo would teach me how to carve ice when the time allowed. By the end of the summer I was hired on as a sculptor, and spent the weekends of my senior year of college carving ice. When I graduated, I stepped into a full time sculpting position, and six months later was promoted to chief sculptor/studio manager. We employed six full time chainsaw-wielding carvers. Complete mayhem, but profoundly fun. I was surrounded by such talented and good people. It is obvious to say that, much like winemaking, it was process-oriented work and was remarkably satisfying.

"Ice contains no future, just the past, sealed away. As if they're alive, everything in the world is sealed up inside, clear and distinct. Ice can preserve all kinds of things that way – cleanly, clearly. That's the essence of ice, the role it plays."

- Haruki Murakami, Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman

RHD: *When you're making a wine, are you thinking about it sculpturally at all?*

TC: Great wines are, without a doubt, designed. As winemakers, we must make key decisions that clearly define and build the type of wine we want: how the grapes are farmed, when the grapes are picked, how the fruit is fermented, how it macerates, what the wine ages in, how long it ages, etc. All of these decisions are unavoidable, and each decision shapes and defines the final product.

We strive to make wines that are both generous and vibrant, structured and round. To do this, we need building blocks that combine to give these sensations. We cannot throw everything into a tank, treat it all the same, and expect the result to be our ideal expression of a site or place.

RHD: *The first time I tasted your Sundawg Ridge Pinot, I was really charmed by its length. When you're making a wine, are you consciously thinking about its length?*

TC: We often talk about the "energetic" nature of a wine, or how the wine performs and evolves when exposed to air and food – and good company. Length and energy go hand in hand. I think they are the result of picking grapes at their optimal ripeness, athoughtful and thorough extraction, and bottling the wines when they are still vibrant and fresh. Finding that "sweet spot" is of course subjective, and there are certainly many interpretations of that place. Capturing the vitality of the vintage and place is the goal.

The 2013 vintage was our first experience with Sundawg Ridge, and we would be lying to say we knew exactly what to do. The three clones planted expressed themselves very differently there, so it gave us a lot to work with when we were blending.

RHD: *The Sonoma Coast is quite sprawling, so much so that I've found it easier to write about designates, rather than to try to write about the entire AVA. What is particularly special about the Sundawg site?*

TC: Sundawg has a lot packed into a very small footprint. With less than seven acres of planted vines, the north- and south-facing aspects provide diverse topography and exposure. Even within the single blocks there are swales, shading, and changing soil types and depths that affect continuity in ripening the fruit. Because the hillside blocks are small, the variation within each block is minimized, but for the most part we embrace the wider spectrum of flavor and phenolic ripeness in this vineyard, and have come to appreciate it as a certain complexity to the site.

Sometimes vineyards just add up. When the synergy of the inherent qualities of a site combine with clonal diversity and good farming, the results are often compelling.

A couple of weeks after my interview with Tim, I opened a bottle of the 2013 Saintsbury Sundawg Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir and enjoyed a couple of glasses while looking at photos of Tim's sculpture. In a quite literal sense, I can identify aesthetic threads between the owl and this wine. The suggested movement of that generous wing span is mirrored by the energetic aromatic lift of this wine. It is fragrant just sitting in the glass on the table, without even being swirled in the glass. The cuts in ice that suggest plumage remind me of its light, feather-like texture. The obvious raptor strength of the owl is, for me, suggested by an almost unrelentingly long finish.

What I like most, though, is thinking about it less literally. At its very essence, this wine was rendered with a light human touch. The use of oak and extraction is modest and deliberate. Unquestionably, the Sundawg Ridge site announces itself in the glass, and that's what I find most inspiring of all. Tim didn't choose to sculpt some abstract form in the hope of illustrating his "approach" or "style" with regard to this Pinot Noir. Instead, he chose a memory imbued with and delivered by the natural world. I look at Tim's photo, I sip the Sundawg Ridge and, for an evening at least, the cares of the daily world melt away.

Photo Credit: Gary Van Ostrand

The Sonoma Coast Appellation:

A Vinyl/Digital Exploration of Songs and Wines

To Unfetter the Heart and Tame the Monkey-Mind

Central Reservation by Beth Orton

2012 Anthill Farms, Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

And I can still smell you on my fingers and taste you on my breath

From Eden by Hozier

2012 Radio-Coteau, Las Colinas, Sonoma Coast Syrah

Babe, there's something lonesome about you
Something so wholesome about you
Get closer to me

One On One by Hall and Oates

2012 Hirsch Vineyards, Bohan Dillion Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir

...I can feel the magic of your touch

Company of Friends by Danny Schmidt

2012 Littorial, B. A. Thieriot Vineyard Pinot Noir

I believe in ink on paper
I believe in lips on ears

Berkeley Girl by Harper Simon

2012 Gras Ventre, Campbell Ranch Pinot Noir

She is juniper and roses
She is amethyst and pearl

Brown Eyed Woman by the Grateful Dead

(5/8/77 Barton Hall version)

2011 Tin Barn, Sonoma Coast Syrah
Brown-eyed women and red grenadine...
The bottle was dusty but the liquor was clean.

Harpo's Blues by Phoebe Snow

2012 Wind Gap, Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

I wish I was willow
And I could sway to the music in the wind

You Must Build a Fire by Crooked Fingers

2012 Red Car, Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

So thank you love, you were so good to me
You put hope into my heart
Shined a light so I could see

A Little Bit of Everything by Dawes

2012 Peay Vineyards, Sonoma Coast Chardonnay, Estate

Oh, it's a little bit of everything
It's the mountains, it's the fog

Hear Me Out by Frou Frou

2012 Heintz Vineyards, Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

So listen up - this sun hasn't set
Just hear me out - I'm not over you yet

This Side of the Blue by Joanna Newsom

2012 Failla, Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

And I do not know my own way to the sea
but the saltiest sea knows its own way to me.

Storms Never Last by Waylon Jennings and Jessie Colter

2012 Chasseur, Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

And you make the sun want to shine

Joy by Phish

2012 Auteur Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast

That time is a river that flows through the woods
And it led us to places we both understood

California Stars by Billy Bragg and Wilco

2012 Saintsbury, Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

And warm the lovers' glass
They hang like grapes
On vines that shine
Like friendly wine

A while back, I showed a friend of mine some photos I'd taken of Carlo Mondavi of Raen during my time interviewing him. My friend looked at the photos and said, not kindly, "Great. Another hipster making wine."

The word "hipster" is used in a mostly derogatory fashion these days. Perhaps it always was; after all, in the 1940s, when the word came about, it was used by the establishment to describe jazz-loving troublemakers with loose sexual morals. [Author's Note: My preferred dinner party guests!].

As a culture, we seem to be using "hipster" in the same fashion as the descriptor "hippie" was used in the '60s and '70s. It was the establishment's way of shaming a subculture that at that time was espousing the ideals of peace, love, community, resourcefulness, personal freedom…of sexuality free of constricting labels, independent music (mostly in the singer-songwriter genre), less of an attachment to material things, a closer affinity with the natural world – in general, a life lived with a more immediate sense of joy and community at its center than one driven mostly by goals of material and financial wealth.

Sound familiar?

The subculture whom we might collectively term "hipsters" advocates for many of the same kinds of principles and a decidedly D.I.Y. resourcefulness that was very much au courant among the anti-establishment youth of the '60s and '70s.

Looking back, there is nothing wrong with that peace, love and equality that the hippies espoused. In many ways, we have regressed because they were into organic food, back to nature, make love not war, be good to all men, share and share alike - which is what many are talking about now.

- Imelda Staunton

Many of my closest friends would fall squarely into that "hipster" paradigm. I certainly didn't plan to surround myself with young hipsters at this point in my life. It just happened. I can only guess that it's because, as a person, I've always naturally gravitated towards people who are hopeful and, for the most part, positive thinkers. Hope is in abundance among the hipsters I know – so much so that I've taken to calling

them my "hope-sters." As a cultural movement, the hippies achieved few meaningful, permanent paradigm shifts within our contemporary civilization. Most of those hippies who attended Woodstock advocated for peace and who marched for civil rights allowed themselves to be absorbed by the mainstream as they matured. As they got older, selling out to The Man became less of a betrayal of their ideals.

Will the hipsters of today hold on to their ideals any longer than the hippies did? Will most of them, who are in their 20s and 30s now, grow into money-grubbing corporate raiders, as happened with so many flower children?

I guess that remains to be seen, but the chances of this subculture lasting beyond a mere fad or trend will have as much to do with how the establishment treats them as with their own commitment to a collective vision.

I have busted more hippies' noses than all the narcs in the free world.

-Ted Nugent

It didn't take me long to realize that Carlo Mondavi – who with his brother, Dante, owns and runs Raen, their small winery project on the Sonoma Coast – is a dyed-in-the-wool hope-ster. I discover this fairly early on in our time together, and it's because of the way he answered a rather rote question that I tend to throw towards all the winemakers with whom I chat: How do you feel about the future of the wine business? But before I can say "wine business", Carlo is already answering…he thinks I mean "the future of our planet," because that's what's on his mind.

"When I'm driving around out here," Carlo begins, "and I see these hillsides hugging the most beautiful coastline…with no homes on them, just wildlife…I think to myself, 'Why is the population of this earth growing so exponentially? How can we support that?' Thank God for visionaries like Elon Musk who are working on developing sunlight-powered batteries for cars, and others who are working to sustain our environment. It's terrifying to think about overpopulation and climate change, but I'm still hopeful that things will improve.

"For example, so many of us on this coast are trying to farm sustainably and responsibly. And I mean really trying to farm in a way that is as clean and responsible as possible. I have already seen improvements to this coast in my lifetime. I surf at a spot called Jenner. It's a sketchy spot in that there are a lot of sharks there. I've surfed it maybe only ten times because it can be dangerous. Every now and then, though, the sand spits-out perfectly, and the surf will be great.

"When I was younger, there were no seals around there. I think that's because the farming community here – and in most places – was at that time going through its 'chemical era'. I guess, in a way, as a farming community, we had to go through that to learn what NOT to do.

"I think everybody at that time was just spraying stuff Monsanto and Dow told them to spray. That resulted in agricultural runoff polluting our rivers, which killed off a number of rabbits who drank from the river and coyotes who ate the rabbits. Basically, those chemicals really threw things off for our eco-system around here and, I assume, in the places that used similar chemicals. Then natural farming really started to evolve. Our community became much more aware. Now when I go down to Jenner, to that same spot, I see tons of seals, and the wildlife has

returned to a lot of places around here. "If we can figure out a way to get along with Nature…all of us, not just the farmers…if we all make our footprint as small as possible, I really believe the environment can improve. I guess I refuse to buy into all of the negativity, that there's no way any of us can make a difference. I believe all of us can."

Photo Credit: Nate Christenson

I ask Carlo if it all ever becomes too overwhelming…the state our world is in today. "There is so much out there that is depressing. The gun violence issue, for example. I saw the Dalai Lama in New York, and he said that the world is better now than it's ever been. I hope there's truth to that. As invasive as technology is, I'm hoping that it also makes people more accountable. It appears to be doing that. If you're in a dark place, the world has probably never felt darker. But if you can get out and see nature…and see positive people…it becomes relative, and you can see hope in places."

I'm intrigued by how Carlo does and doesn't incorporate technology into our day together. He is as connected as many of us are to social media and to his various technological devices – his phone, his computer – but, there is no flashy technology in the Raen cellar. Everything in their cellar, which is housed inside a custom crush facility near the town of Sonoma, is paired down to the essentials. "Technology in the cellar can be a terroir eraser. I learned that from my time working at Domaine Dujac," Carlo says. (He worked at the storied property in his 20s.) "They do things very naturally there, and that's how we prefer to do things here at Raen. The name Raen is an acronym. It stands for Research in Agriculture and Enology, Naturally. If you let her, Mother Nature does it all. Then it's just our job not to blow it."

At Raen, only natural yeasts are used during fermentation. I ask Carlo and Dante to talk about why, and it turns out that this question leads them to the very crux of what their brand is all

about. Carlo explains, "Our dad [*Tim Mondavi of Continuum Estate in the Napa Valley*] would always tell us as kids that 'wine is basically rain'. It rains on the vines, the rainwater filters through the rocks, the vines drink the rain, the sun sweetens it through photo-synthesis and then in the air as the berries develop. There's the wax that the yeast cells stick to. There are over 50,000 individual yeast cell components on any given area, so if you do nothing at all – just try to bring the fruit in as best you can – you really can create one of the most natural beverages in the world, a beverage that tells you something about where it was grown.

"We want to make a wine that is totally from its environment, from its terroir," he continues. "Native yeast is such a big part of that – I mean, the funk and the beautiful elements that can come with natural yeast. It's really different every year. This year, for example, we had low ethanol-producing natural yeasts. We will work with that element to produce as site-driven a wine as we can – truly, site-driven. And it's important to me and Dante not to mask our wines with new oak. We have a couple of new oak barrels in the cellar, but for the most part we use neutral oak."

As I taste through the Raen wines with the brothers, I cannot help but admire the risk they have taken in making wines that are inherently built to age. Their undertaking is a serious and mature one, and I find it all rather riveting in that this isn't the first time I'm meeting Carlo and Dante.

When I was in my early 20s, I was a tour guide at the then new-ish Napa Valley Winery, Opus One. Opus One wines had already been made for years up to that point, but they were being made at Robert Mondavi Winery. This new facility was their new home, and I was one of Opus One's first tour guides. Their grandfather, Robert Mondavi, co-owned Opus One with the Baroness Philippine Rothschild. Carlo and Dante were just boys back then, and they used to come into my office and drive me nuts by goofing off and swiveling around on my office chair. I was self-absorbed and impatient and had no time for their antics. So to taste with them as men, and to consider their approach (which is a risky one – to make wines built to age for many years) is not only fascinating, but encouraging as well.

Wine pundits lament the fact that most consumers do not have the patience it takes to properly cellar and age a fine wine. The joke goes that most consumers age their wines on the car seat coming home from the liquor store. Perhaps this is the case, but I hope it isn't. The wines of Raen merit aging, or at least significant decanting. Those who give these wines the patience they deserve will be richly rewarded with sublime Pinot Noirs that are quite breathtaking in their dimension and scope.

I'm careful not to be hyperbolic about wines from projects that are still so young; Raen has only been around since 2013. After all, maybe they've just had a run of luck with a couple of solid vintages, but if what they've created in the bottle thus far is any indication, these wines are intended to leave their mark on America's enological history.

"I really believe that our wines can last up to 50 years…maybe more," Carlo says. "Maybe 100 years. At that point, a wine becomes a real piece of history. Ideally, our winery will last 200 years…at least. If you go to Burgundy, you see people get out of their cars just to take pictures of these hallowed sites like DRC and La Tache. I feel the vineyards we source from will someday be that special. It may take some time for these sites to earn the reputation that those benchmarks have, but I'm confident the Sonoma Coast will get there as a region. It may take us another 50 or 100 years, but it will happen. Wouldn't it be great to think that, someday, people will travel halfway across the globe just to visit vineyard sites on the Sonoma Coast? That's the dream.

"I love the idea of a family business that lasts a long time…and not those that only involve the immediate family. I like business models where extended families and even communities support a business. I saw that a lot in Burgundy and in Italy, and I love it when I see it here. There will be this big fabric of a community that will get behind a winery. It's a very anti-corporate, very anti-Build-it, Turn-it and Burn-it phenomenon. I can't stand that kind of corporate mentality. My brother and I will never sell Raen; at least I hope we never have to." Both brothers cite a number of winemakers and winegrowers on the Sonoma Coast as their inspirations. Ted Lemon of Littorai has been a tremendous source of inspiration for both brothers. "We love those wines!" And David Hirsch, the winegrower, has set a fine example, they tell me, by being a pioneering and gifted grower. Then there's Ross Cobb, the winemaker at Hirsch, who, Carlo enthuses, "makes some damn fine wines!" Asked how they hope their own wines strike others, Carlo answers, "I hope that when people taste our wines, they have that same sensation as when they take a bite of ridiculously delicious food – that it leaves them kind of at a loss for words. That they just kind of enjoy it and are happy."

NONNO's ADVICE

By Carlo and Dante Mondavi

We were lucky as brothers to spend so much time with our grandfather. He was our greatest teacher, mentor, friend and inspiration. We knew from a young age that we wanted to make wine, and really credit him for inspiring us. He gave advice all the time, but always had a set of points that he felt, if followed, would keep you on the right path.

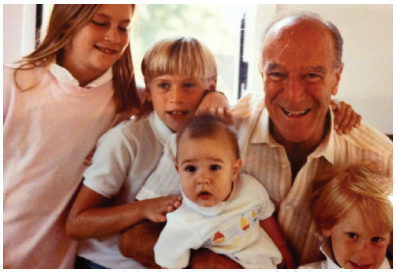
- *First and foremost, you must have faith in yourself.* He would tell us this at almost every family meal, then he would go off on a tangent about why you must have faith in yourself. Each day it was different, but he wanted people to believe in themselves.

- *Whatever you choose to do, make a commitment to excel, and then pour yourself into it with your heart and soul and complete dedication.* He would always say you have to put your heart and soul into whatever you do. He believed deeply that the great wines of the world come from great sites, but the best wines of the world are raised even higher by individuals who care so deeply about nature, the farm, the wine and beyond…

- He would always tell us that interest is not enough. *You must be passionate about what you do if you want to succeed and have a happy life.* "Find a job that you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life," he was fond of telling us. Our grandfather worked hard but he never considered it work; he loved what he did and wanted that for everyone.

- *Establish a goal just beyond what you think you can do. When you achieve that, establish another and another. That will teach you to embrace risk.* I remember the first time he asked me, "Do you know what the single biggest risk you can take in life is?" I was young at the time and had no idea. "Not taking a risk at all." Our grandfather embraced risk and took risks for all the right reasons.

- *Always stay positive. Use your common sense.* We were so fortunate to spend so many of our young adult years with our grandfather. He was always positive and always driven. I remember when we lost our old farm back in 2004. We were at his house having breakfast. It was a grey, somber day. Rather than dwelling on the loss as he could have, he turned to our father that morning and one of his first questions was, "Tim, what's the plan?" He remained positive and kept his eye on the future.



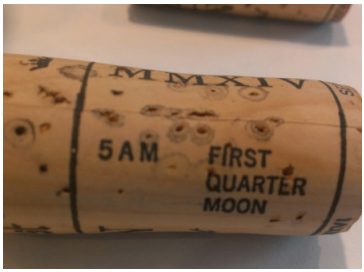


Photo Credit: Dorothy Mondavi

WINEMAKERS ARE JUST LIKE US!

They Grow Their Own Beards:

Ben Papapietro, Papapietro Perry Winery

They Park Their Own Cars

..And Perform Their Own Yoga Moves:

James MacPhail, MacPhail Family Wines

They Do Their Own Financial Planning:

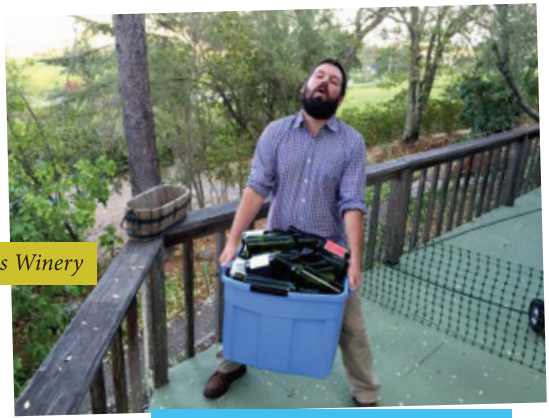
Ryan Zepaltas: Zepaltas Wines

They Enjoy Sunsets:

Vanessa Wong, Peay Vineyards

They Eat With Their Hands:

Webster Marquez, Anthill Farms Winery



They take out their own recycling!

John Lockwood, Enfield Wine Co.

Chamboulé: The Quiet Revolutionaries

There's this petulant side to me that's long wanted to dislike the natural wines category. Part of my disdain is somewhat logical; many of those wines are inconsistent and not all that pleasurable. But that's still not a good reason to dismiss a category out-of-hand, as I have had some very lovely natural wines, too. It probably doesn't help that this category's adherents often present natural wines as if they're the foundation of some kind of movement that I'd best be a part of. I've had winemakers, somms and a couple of wine writers insinuate that it takes an especially evolved or sophisticated palate to understand natural wines, and that these types of wines, in fact, represent the purest expression of the wine grape. I love cerebral wines that inspire thought and rumination, but I don't want to have to work to understand the majority of wines I drink. I mostly drink wine because it is such an ideal accompaniment to a meal, and I also enjoy drinking for pleasure.

I'm sure glad I didn't give up on natural wines, because had I, I may have never met Matt Taylor and tasted the wines of Chamboulé. Owned by François Morissette, of Canada's Pearl Morissette, Chamboulé is set to launch late this year.

I've long been intrigued by this notion of benchmarks. As far as I can tell, benchmarks have enduring strength, in part because they were anointed as great by others. To borrow a phrase…it takes a village to raise a benchmark.

In the current wine culture of rampant self-promotion and the manic pursuit of significance, it appears that everyone is trying to be the next benchmark winery. But only Time, the Audience and, ultimately, Mother Nature, can reveal a true benchmark.

I find myself wondering, when a benchmark arrives, did the people behind it consciously try to make that winery or vineyard into a benchmark? Did they know they

were on to something special? And, if so, how did they achieve their level of greatness without ever becoming over-exposed, facile, tired…in other words, a passing trend or a brand with an expiration date attached to its relevancy? Was humility a part of their pursuit – the humility it must take to navigate fickle vintages and problematic sites—and if so, how did they balance that humility with the uber-confidence necessary to stay the course towards greatness?

And what happens when wineries destined for greatness change ownership, vineyard practices or even sites, winemakers, etc. If I asked you, Dear Reader, right now, to name the last five winemakers in succession who worked at some of the world's greatest benchmarks, would you be able to? At Chateau d' Yquem, at Krug, at DRC, at Gaja, at Mouton Rothchild…I sure as heck can't name the last five winemakers at each of those estates, much less at Vega Sicilia or Penfolds.

I guess my point is that people come and go, but Mother Nature and great sites endure. So from one generation to the next…from one owner to the next…how do certain wineries become enduring cultural icons?

I've been in the wine business for over half my life (thus far), and it's very rare that I will taste a wine and think to myself, "This will be a global benchmark someday." In point of fact, in over 25 years, it only happened a handful of times. In those very rare instances, those brands had about them a very rich texture, a tremendous site or sites, a team capable of seeing the Big Picture, a story told honestly, a wonderful label – the many components it takes to create something truly singular. My sense is that Chamboulé may be a benchmark in the making – a very exciting prospect for anyone who loves and believes in American wines as much as I do. They certainly didn't suggest to me that it was their intention to become a benchmark, but there's something palpable and buzzing in the air around this brand and these breathtakingly pure and beautiful wines. And, by golly, they're natural. Go figure. Another teachable moment for this wine nerd.

RH Drexel: *Can we talk about natural winemaking? So many people seem to be confused about it...including me!*

Matt Taylor: In California, people seem to think it mostly means "organic." There's another perception that says that natural winemaking is, basically, doing nothing. Just allowing the wines to make themselves. If a wine is on a course, this particular understanding of natural winemaking would support just letting that wine stay the course. I guess I would call that *perception*, and people who adhere to it, *non-interventionist*.

But, in actuality, natural winemaking is the hardest and most tedious way to make wines, should you decide to pursue that path legitimately. You have to have a lot of experience and education in wine. You need to really understand every fork in the road, and you then need to make educated decisions at every single production stage. Wine constantly wants to become vinegar, to have one bacteria or another take it over. Natural winemaking starts in the vineyard because you have to have grapes that are in good enough shape to pursue that natural path in the cellar. Not having to add acid…not having to add other things…that's easier said than done. I've actually never worked as hard in my whole life as I do now.

It's about growing grapes so purely that when we get them into the cellar, nothing has to be added. The high quality of lees that we get, the skin maturity – all of that is a result of

decisions we made in the vineyard. It's really about growing grapes that can self-sustain, despite the susceptibility to things going awry.

RHD: *I've tasted a lot of natural wines that are just really, really funky. Yours are not at all that way. In fact, they are some of the most arresting and pure, lovely wines I've had from the United States. Can we talk about natural wines and inconsistency?*

MT: In the bottle, the Chamboulé wines go back and forth, through huge peaks and valleys. Consumers need to be told this about natural wines; there isn't that same unchanging course you get in a bottle of wine that has been heavily manipulated. I think consumers would find many natural wines beautiful if they understood that these wines are indeed alive, so they are constantly changing in the bottle. For me, natural wines really have a soul and a spirit. They touch you. Sometimes, though, they may be going through a valley in the bottle, so that may require some patience from the consumer…waiting a few hours until that wine opens up and comes around, or even until the next day.

Also, there are a lot of winemakers who possess great ideas about pushing the envelope in the cellar towards something very natural. Sadly, their vineyard sites or farming practices do not match what they want to create in the cellar. They may have luck here and there, but they're not able to consistently produce beautiful natural wines.

Take Nicolas Joly [*a well-known winemaker from the Loire region of France*]. When he makes a great wine, he really makes a great wine. I respect him a lot. His wines can be so pure and beautiful. His wines, though, can also be very oxidized. I believe there are ways to make wines oxidatively, without having them be oxidized. In our case, we are constantly making decisions about how much oxygen we can get onto a wine without its oxidizing. That comes back to this notion of living on this threshold in the cellar, but knowing exactly when to make very crucial decisions.

RHD: *When they are released to the public late this year, will you be presenting Chamboulé wines as natural wines?*

MT: Without a doubt they will be presented as natural wines, because they live in this "under 40 ppm" total sulphur world. There will be nothing added to these wines. I don't know that we'll be marketing them that way, necessarily, but we will be talking about how we make our wines oxidatively and classically. We use a lot of lees.

RHD: *You know, you hear about recording artists who sign up with a record label and things go well for a while, but then the record execs decide they don't cotton to that artist's sound; they want them to change directions and create a different vibe. You have a lot of emotion invested in this project. At any point did you worry Francois might switch gears, away from the prevailing natural wine philosophy, towards something else?*

MT: I've been burned a lot in my life, so I was quite cautious with this project. Who wants to be screwed over by another wealthy person? But, François is great; François had already been trying to make these kinds of wines in Canada with Pearl Morissette for years, so I knew there was a level of commitment there that would only deepen over time. He and I also love the same kinds of wines. Rayas. Vatan. Wines that take you to the edge. Wines that you remember. He is extremely dedicated to this kind of winemaking, which has given me so much confidence in this project.

RHD: *Tell me about the Chamboulé name.*

MT: We came across so many great names, but they were all trademarked. Then François came up with Chamboulé, which is kind of an old-fashioned French word. It's not used that much these days, but it means, "to turn upside down" or "to stir up." And that's exactly what this project is all about – to stir shit up and flip the switch. It's also a word that's beautiful to look at. I wouldn't go with a French word if this winery weren't owned by French Canadians. I feel that gives us a pass to use a French word.

RHD: *I often get super bummed that words like "authentic", "artisan", "handcrafted" don't really mean much anymore... at least not to me. They've been so over-used and co-opted by corporate ad men. I'm sure they'll come back around, but it will probably take a couple of decades. Do you worry that you won't find the right language to describe these wines?*

MT: If a wine is beautiful, multi-dimensional and consistent, it kind of just speaks for itself. I plan to talk about these tremendous sites we have on the Sonoma Coast…Coleman Valley Road, Taylor Lane…these locations that could be sub-appellations in and of themselves. That's what I'll be talking about.

RHD: *Do you have anxieties about Chamboulé entering the market?*

MT: I am a glass half full guy; I really believe in this project. I tend to be pretty positive about things. We are a small-production winery, so hopefully there will be enough people out there who enjoy and collect these wines. I think people will also like these wines because they are not about dogma or agendas. If you're picking for low alcohol, you're losing something in that wine. If you're picking for plushness, then you lose acid, structure. We're not in either camp. We basically just want to make pure, beautiful wines.

My goal is to really push the envelope on wines from the Sonoma Coast; we want to take our wines to places wines from here have never been. Having said that, in order for Chamboulé to

last, we also have to make wines that sell. We are taking great creative risks, but it's important that the wines are beautiful and that people enjoy them. It's not enough for us to create something really "out there" that's such a wild animal that nobody wants to drink it.

Our wines are about having reverence for the great wines of the world; Chamboulé is about wanting to somehow honor the great masters in wine that came before us. François and I have been lost in a reverie over a bottle of Rayas.

RHD: *You are a big proponent of biodynamic farming. Why is the practice of biodynamics so integral to your vision for Chamboulé?*

MT: There is a certain energy to fruit grown biodynamically. Unfortunately, not every biodynamic farmer is a true one, so that term can get degraded very quickly. I find these days that biodynamic practices are used for marketing purposes mostly. But, for me, it's like seeing through an additional lens. Once you begin to explore biodynamics, you begin to look at everything differently. I think you're less apt to want to control nature with a fist once you start exploring biodynamics.

The quality of the ethanol in biodynamic wines is different. That's why I feel different the morning after I've consumed them, versus something that's not biodynamically farmed. I think science will catch up with biodynamics. For me, it's a tool I use in the vineyard and cellar.

RHD: *How often are you in the vineyard?*

MT: Probably more so than a lot of winemakers. In fact, some people might fault me for not being inside the winery enough, but I'm there to guide fermentations. I do all the work in the cellar, but the way I make wines is really by making them in the vineyard.

This industry is an industry of clichés, bullshit and *poseurs*. It's also an industry of recipes. You go to certain parts of the Napa Valley, for example, there's a prevailing recipe for cover crops that exists there. There's a recipe for hedging and landscape viticulture. There are many prevailing recipes, but for me, I need to work from a very real and immediate place, so I'm not using recipes. I'm learning from the vineyards and I'm remembering what my mentors taught me. And they taught me it all starts in the vineyard, so that's where you'll usually find me.

RHD: *Do you pay equal attention to vintage and site?*

MT: I guess that comes back to the question you just asked me about being in the vineyard. It's very easy to fall back on a recipe and tell yourself, "Okay, I'm receiving my fruit. I have a style I want to communicate." But, if you're present in the vineyard all year 'round, you see fluctuations, variations in the fruit. If you live the vineyard life, you are constantly thinking throughout the season about how you will come to that fruit. At that point, site and vintage start to melt into each other. That's the benefit, really, of spending as much time in the vineyard as you can.

RHD: *You've traveled all over the world. You've lived in Spain and in Burgundy. You've spent a lot of time in Kenya. How have those travels shaped you as a winemaker?*

MT: I worked at Domaine Dujac in 2004. A lot of people will say, "Ugh…that was a lousy vintage!" And that's precisely why I liked working at Dujac that year. You learn the most during difficult vintages. Living in Jerez was also a great learning experience. I still enjoy drinking Fino; it is very civilized and it's such a lovely beverage. I have lived in Kenya numerous times…mostly over the summers…and I was always struck by how the friends and families I came to know there would always reference a memory by a year. They would say, for example, "Remember that time in 1991?"

My Kenyan friends grasped time differently than I did. It was a revelation for me spending time in Kenya. For us here in the US, time seems to unfold in a fairly narrow window…the next five years…the next ten years, but in Kenya, I learned that time is much more expansive and profound. Living in Kenya taught me a lot about continuity.

RHD: *You were born and raised in Sebastopol, where you live today. Did you learn about wine from your parents?*

MT: My family has a lot of history in these parts, but they don't actually consume much alcohol, so I learned about wine and vineyards from the friends I had as a kid. Some of their families were in the business, and I became very attracted to the lifestyle at a young age. I grew up around families like the Bilbro Family, who have Marietta Winery. They would take me foraging for mushrooms. They would go hunting and then make sausages from their bounty. They dove for abalone. At the end of the day, I would see this bounty on their table, and then they'd place a bottle of their wine alongside it. That leaves a strong impression on a twelve-year-old. I really wanted to be like Chris Bilbro, to be a part of something like that.

RHD: *I've been working on this piece for a while and every time I see you, you seem more inspired than the last time I saw you! Why are you so inspired these days?*

MT: My learning curve has been so exponential lately. I've never learned as much in my life as I have in this time frame. It's hard not to wake up excited when you're learning so many new things every day.

This issue is dedicated to David Hirsch, of the Sonoma Coast's Hirsch Vineyards. Amazingly, there was not one person with whom I met with on the coast who did not make mention of Mr. Hirsch as a pioneering winegrower, a considerate colleague and helpful neighbor.