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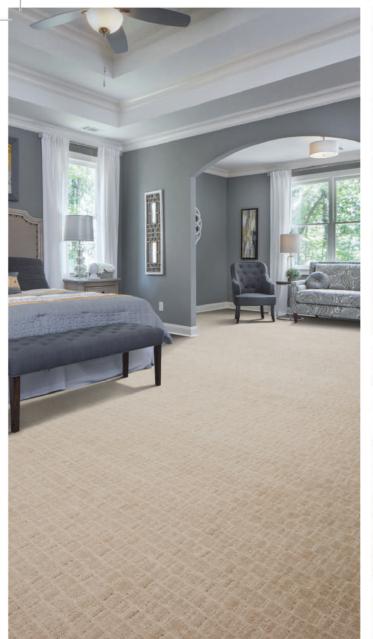
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napa valley

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The history in the vines

SARAH DOWLING Special Projects Editor

must admit, when we settled on the theme for this issue of Inside Napa Valley — History to Harvest — I was unsure of my connection to the subject at hand. I, like most peo-

SARAH DOWLING

ple, have an appreciation for history and the lessons we can learn from our past. However, I have yet to really set foot in a Napa Valley winery, let alone ones with decades of history behind them.

My personal history of agricultural reporting comes from working in

Yolo County, where processing tomatoes

yes, this is a specific type of tomato
and almonds are top crops year after
year. The wine industry is a whole new
ballgame. And I have a lot to learn.

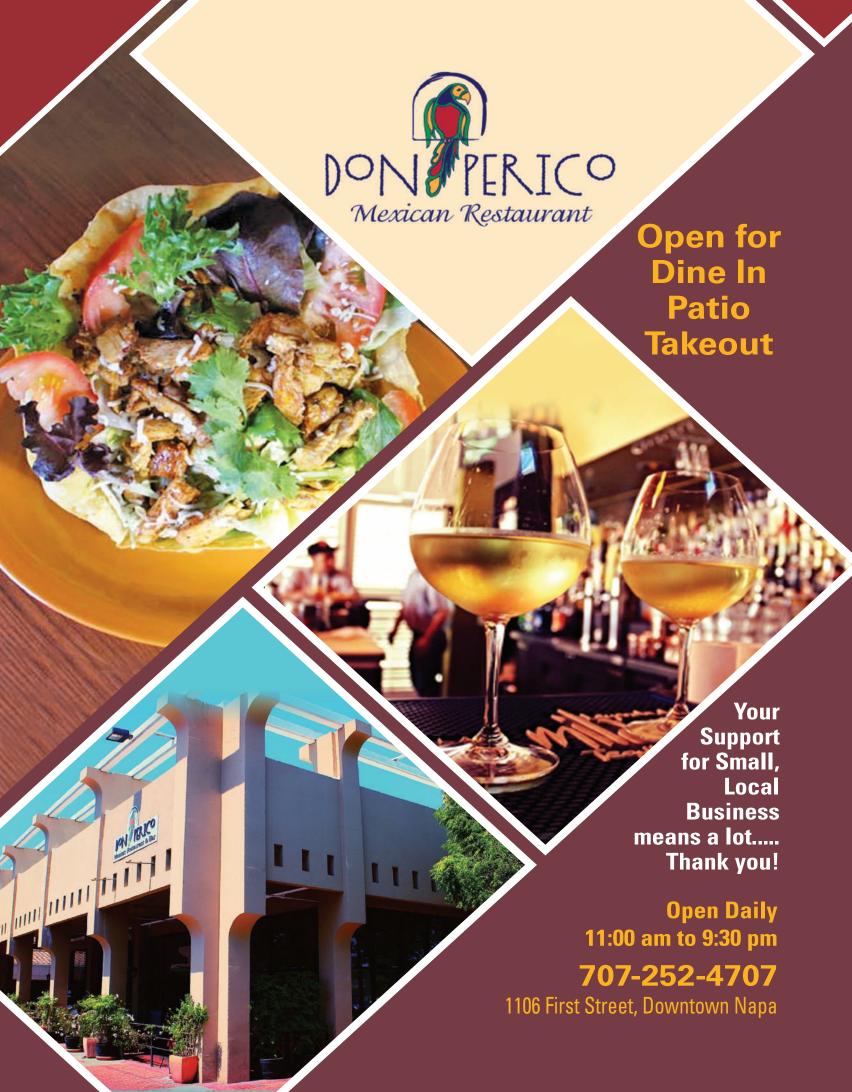
There is plenty of time to remedy this, of course, and as a newer Napa resident, I am in the perfect position to do so.

This lack of first-hand experience led me to lean on staff photographer Nick Otto and St. Helena Star editor Jesse Duarte to figure out which wineries to feature. Nick has visited numerous vineyards, during harvest and otherwise, and Jesse has been around for years, watching the Upvalley wine scene evolve. With their advice, and the

help of freelance writer Jessica Zimmer, this issue delves into the history of Schramsberg Vineyards, Trefethen Family Vineyards and Lang & Reed. This trio merely scratches the surface of the Napa Valley's wine history, but it is my hope that the next time readers drive past a vineyard or see these wine labels on a grocery store shelf, that they will have a deeper appreciation for the craft of winemaking.

Please enjoy our Fall/Winter 2024

On the Cover: Bottles of sparkling wine are seen in a windowsill at Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga. Photo by Nick Otto.





Submitted photos

Reed and Megan Skupny share a bottle of Rosé.

For Skupnys, winemaking is ALABOR OF LOVE'

Second generation of Skupnys guide lead Lang & Reed

JESSE DUARTE

hen it comes to winemaking, Reed and Megan Skupny have it all: their own label, one of the most respected last names in the St. Helena wine industry, and a firm commitment to family ownership in an age of conglomerates.

Well, they almost have it all. It's what they don't have that truly sets them apart: No Cabernet Sauvignon.

The commitment to Bourdeaux varietals other than Cabernet Sauvignon goes back to the founding of Lang & Reed in

1993 by Reed's parents, Tracey and John. They were most intrigued by Cabernet Franc, which they saw as more than just a blending component.

Reed praised "its nuance, its power, its femininity and its grace of presence."

"It's a gorgeous wine that stands up for itself," he said. "It's truly a food-friendly wine, you can take it seriously on a weeknight with a light, casual meal, and it can also be a date-night wine on the weekend."

Reed said that while other winemakers use Cabernet Franc in their red blends "to make Cabernet Sauvignon taste more Cabernet Sauvignon-y," the Skupnys see it as "a gorgeous wine that stands up for itself."

"Somebody told us that our wines don't taste like Cab Franc, they taste like Lang & Reed," Reed said. "That's because we have a house style and a house flavor."

Reed credits his dad, John, for establishing that house flavor, which Reed describes as "textbook Cab Franc," redolent of brambles and violets.

The Skupnys have also branched out into Chenin Blanc, which Megan and Reed fell in love with while living in France's Loire Valley. While some people tend to dismiss it as a "flat sugar bomb," Megan sees in it the same tantalizing possibilities John and Tracey discovered in Cabernet Franc.

"I'd had no idea that Chenin Blanc could be so nuanced and beautiful," Megan said. "It took a long time for us to reacquaint people with it, but now we can't keep it in stock."

Last year Reed and Megan launched their own label, Rockhouse Wine, offering Pinot Noir and Rosé of Pinot Noir sourced from the Santa Rita Hills.

When you visit the 19th-century Spring House at the corner of Spring Street and Oak Avenue for a tasting of Lang & Reed or Rockhound, "it's either myself, Reed, John or Tracey," Megan said. "John and Reed do all the winemaking and Tracy and I do everything else from logistics to sales to janitorial."

Tracey and John named Lang & Reed after Reed and his brother, and having his own name on a wine label since childhood gave Reed a deep appreciation of winemaking as a family tradition, not just an investment to be cashed in on.

"That instilled in us the idea that we'd never lose control (of the company)," he said. "While making oodles of money in the wine industry would be nice, that's



Reed and Megan Skupny represent the second-generation of family-owned Lang & Reed.



John Skupny founded Lang & Reed with his wife, Tracey. They named it after Reed, pictured here, and their other son, Jerzy Lang.

not what my parents set out to do. If they'd wanted to be fabulously successful, they wouldn't have done Cabernet Franc and Chenin Blanc."

said. "While making oodles of money in the wine industry would be nice, that's not just a case of passion over good sense.

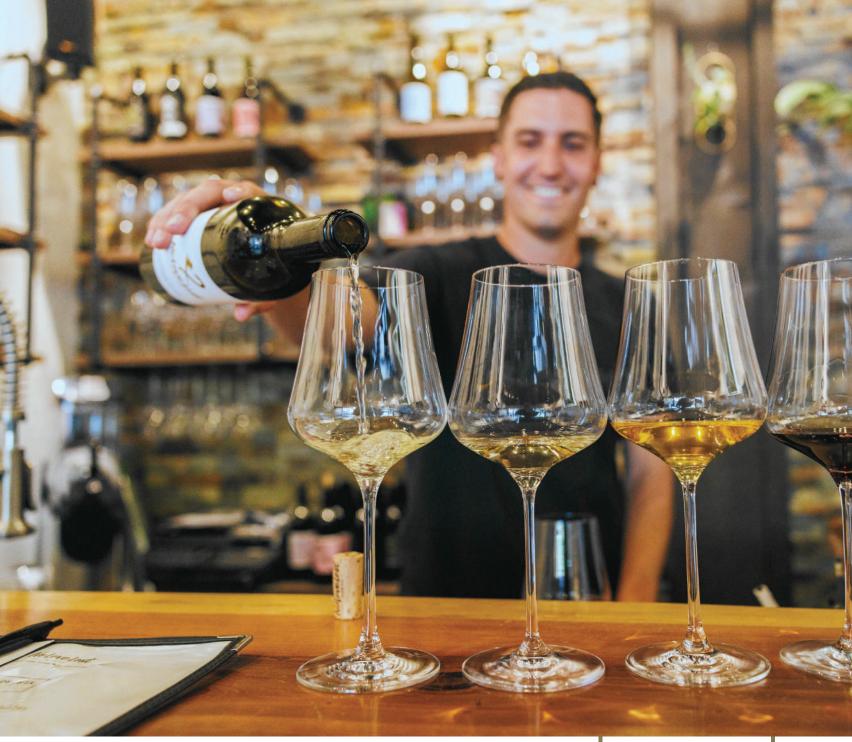
Last year Megan earned an Executive MBA through Sonoma State University's Wine Business program to help her achieve her full potential as Lang & Reed's sales and marketing director.

She put her degree to work by honing Lang & Reed's business plan to acknowledge post-pandemic sales trends, basing production on sales needs, and launching Rockhound and its sub-brand, Hawkbox.

Younger wine drinkers prize authenticity, so they appreciate family-owned and -operated companies like Lang & Reed.

"The origin of what they're consuming is really important to them, whether it's wine, food or clothing," Megan said. "You walk into our tasting room and see pictures of our kids stomping grapes. We do what we love to do, and that passion is contagious."

"There's a constant conversation in our family about how Lang & Reed can stay relevant," she added. "It's just the four of us, so when we hit the ground running it's with everything we have, with our whole heart. If you become complacent, then you're gone. So we have to maintain our passion."



From CPADE STARS TO S

Blaze Williams pours wine at No Love Lost in downtown Napa on Friday, Aug. 16.

Nick Otto photos, Register

Napa's No Love Lost Wine Co. offers a natural alternative

FALL/WINTER 2024





Jay Nunez, founder and winemaker of No Love Lost in downtown Napa, describes wine to customers on Friday, Aug. 16.



A bottle of wine is seen at No Love Lost in downtown Napa on Friday, Aug. 16.

HILARY WENDEL

owntown Napa has undergone an undeniable transformation in recent years.

One driver of this change has been a steady proliferation of tasting rooms and small urban wineries. No Love Lost Wine Co. is one of those new arrivals. The brand has grown a loyal following since opening its tasting room a year ago this September, but its first vintage was back in 2019. The small tasting room and well-appointed parklet are on Clinton Street — a newly bustling part of town referred to as the NOFI district, as in north of First Street.

No Love Lost attracts crowds and a younger demographic by offering a broad range of "accessible and esoteric natural" wines.

The founder of No Love Lost, Jay Nunez, is the ultimate multitasker and scrappy entrepreneur; he is the brand's creator, winemaker, tasting room manager and self-proclaimed "wine nerd." (For fun, he and his girlfriend, a wine educator, do blind tastings.)

He takes a Steve Jobs approach to his wardrobe. "I always wear a black V-neck T-shirt and black jeans and Adidas cross trainers — that way, I do not have to think about it, and I can focus on the business," he said. Nunez sports a bushy black beard, which could be a fashion choice to fit in

with young hipsters, but it is more likely another time-saving device. Despite "never sleeping," he is jovial and always on stage for visitors in the tasting room.

Nunez, 36, is a relative newcomer to Napa. He does not come from a long line of winemakers or farmers. His parents are Cuban ("by way of Spain," he is quick to point out). Childhood was in Orlando, Florida, with occasional visits to Spain to see family. Nunez said, "The place I grew up was devoid of good food or drink options." He credited nearby Walt Disney World for exposing him to many foreign visitors. As a child, Nunez had always loved playing music and creating, so he pursued a degree in music. He recalled that he was



working in music production by his early 20s, "but as I became an adult, that world got old."

His epiphany came on a transatlantic flight to visit a cousin in Barcelona.

"I watched 'Bottle Shock' for the first time on the plane – and I became obsessed with learning about wine," he recalled. A 2008 film based on the 1976 "Judgment of Paris" wine tasting, "Bottle Shock" showcases the Napa Valley through a comedic lens with actors Alan Rickman, Bill Pullman and Chris Pine at the forefront.

Nunez recounted a story of his cousin didn't understand why Nunez only wanted to spend his time learning about Spanish wine in village taverns.

"That's for old people," his cousin told him. Nunez had caught the wine bug. Within a few years of that life-changing trip, he made the pilgrimage to Napa, couch-surfing for a few weeks until he secured various jobs, bartending and working in restaurants and wineries to support his wine education. Winemaker Richard Graeser became a friend and influential mentor. After a meeting with Napa Valley College instructor Paul Gospodarczyk, he enrolled in the school's Winery Technology

"Changing careers is difficult, but Paul left an impression on me; he empowered me to believe in myself," said Nunez. Here, he struck up a friendship with Blaze Williams, the teaching assistant at the time for the program's five-acre vineyard. Last September, Williams joined Nunez at No Love Lost as director of content and vineyards. The two-person team produces 3,000 cases a year.

Nunez explained that No Love Lost is part of a wave of new downtown wineries, like Rebel, Benevolent Neglect, and

Customers chat at the No Love Lost tasting room in downtown Napa on Friday, Aug. 16.

Gamling & McDuck, creating "a counterculture under a sea of giants."

He said, "We are trying to buck a trend that we see as prevalent in the big wineries." He added, "We are all

fighting for change."

Nunez recalls his early days in Napa, feeling "uncultured, uneducated and ignorant," and sensed an undercurrent of condescension. "The elitist mentality is one of Napa's biggest flaws right now," he said. Nunez puts a high value on "fostering inclusivity."

According to the No Love Lost website, wanting to take him clubbing. The cousin its mission is "to produce ethically grown and packaged wines, all at a price point that is as approachable as our wines are." A tasting costs \$25, but locals know they can get a glass of wine off the secret menu for \$7, and the most expensive bottle is \$75 (\$60 with the locals' club discount). "That's what inspires me to go into places like the (Sacramento-San Joaquin) Delta and Lake County to bring things (fruit) in that we can price in that range," he explained.

Even the logo on the tasting room's awning and the wine label stands out as a differentiator — a line drawing of a serpent intertwined with a thunderbolt, creating the bold outline of a heart.

"I scribbled out the idea on one of my car trips from Lodi — Prince had a symbol, and I wanted a symbol for our movement," said Nunez. "The lightning bolt could represent the sky, with no ceilings or limitations besides the ones we place on ourselves. The serpent can be misrepresented and perceived as negative — similar to the grapes we use and the AVAs we focus on but it's an animal so grounded. It spends the entirety of its life connected to the earth."



wines from single vineyards and a single varietal. The most popular wines within the No Love Lost portfolio of 15 natural wines are an unfiltered Sauvignon Blanc and the Chillable Reds. The Chillable Reds have garnered a buzz and are drawing curious visitors who have heard about this unique wine through word of mouth or social media. Using carbonic maceration, "the grape is left whole to allow the transfer of sugar from the inside out," Nunez explained. "The Counoise is a perfect summer wine." He noted that Counoise is a grape rarely grown or found in Napa wines, yet it is one of only nine grape varietals allowed in the red blend of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. He theorized that the popularity of this chillable red is "a testament to a consumer looking for something between a rosé and a Caber-Nunez generally prefers to make his net Sauvignon." The website proclaims,



"Carbonic Counoise is our adult Kool-Aid good times sipper!" No Love Lost quickly sells out of all 275 cases.

In addition to these sold-out bottles, a chilled orange wine, in only its second vintage, is likewise popular and made with another atypical grape, Picpoul. The popularity took him by surprise. Nunez shared that he wasn't originally planning to make an orange wine; "it was trendy, and I don't want to follow trends," he said. However, the grapes fell into his lap in 2022.

In one of many side tangents during the interview (that sadly won't fit in this article), Nunez told the story of a grape grower he befriended in Lodi on his grape-sourcing trips. "I became friendly with an old farmer on the same road as some of our suppliers. Well, maybe he isn't old, but anyone over my parents' age is old to me," he joked. His farmer friend offered him some Picpoul,

which Jay used for a small production of orange wine. All 75 cases sold out quickly, and now in its second year, it is a part of the regular lineup.

Nunez understands that though he might be a fan of the esoteric, not everyone is, so he also makes Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

"People look at us as a modern producer, but we're just reverting to ancestral techniques, things that were done before the implementation of technology," said Nunez. He claimed that by returning to these methods, he goes against the current trends employed by some larger wineries, which use expensive technology and over-manipulate the wine. "We minimize inputs from grape to glass," he said.

Nunez's creative side is also present on the labels. Each varietal has a distinct label and a story behind it, often depicting a female heroine in the Japanese anime style. Nunez draws inspiration from literature or philosophy or his own creative writing. The drawing on the Counoise label features a woman looking through barbed wire at her chrysanthemum garden. It is a reference to "The Chrysanthemums," a short story by John Steinbeck. The story left an impression on him, and he draws a parallel between the grape, Counoise, and the heroine in the story as underdogs or "on the fringe."

One can infer that Nunez also identifies with the woman, an outsider looking in. However, one wonders what happens to this underdog's raison d'être when he starts to be recognized and lauded. Time will tell.

No Love Lost Wine Co. is located at 960 Clinton St. in downtown Napa. For more information, visit nolovelost.wine. ■

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10 QUESTIONS | MARY ANN TSAI, MOONE TSAI WINES

'A dream come true'

Napa winery owner builds business aligned with 'values, interests and lifestyle'

JENNIFER HUFFMAN

Mary Ann Tsai grew up in a close-knit, working-class Italian family in Massachusetts. So, it's not surprising that her first exposure to wine was through her grandfather — a home winemaker.

Later, while studying in France, "I discovered how wine and food enjoyment were an essential part of that enviable culture," Tsai recalled. "These early experiences helped spark my dream of one day living and working in the Napa Valley."

Following business school, Tsai worked for Beringer Wine Estates as brand vice president of marketing. After 12 years at Beringer, she was president at Luna Vineyards for another 12 years.

Eventually, with her husband, Larry, they launched Moone Tsai Wines, "and we've never looked back," she wrote.

"While at times challenging, we have been able to build a business perfectly aligned with our values, interests, and lifestyle. It really is a dream come true."

1. What was your childhood ambition?

To become a translator at the United Nations. With that in mind, I pursued French through high school, and during college, I spent a year in the Loire Valley.

Note: My (well-meaning) parents' early ambition for me was that I become a hair-dresser!

2. What was your first job?

After college, I headed west for my first full-time job in marketing for the Carnation Co. in Los Angeles. I then moved to Boston to pursue an MBA at Harvard Business School. My dream was to work in the wine business in Napa Valley, so we moved back to California in 1989. My first job was at Beringer Vineyards in marketing.

3. What's the worst job you ever had?

When I was a teenager, I had a summer job working on an assembly line in a smoke-detector factory in Quincy, Massachusetts.

4. What do you love or like best about what you do?

We love living on Howell Mountain. It is a very beautiful and peaceful place.



Nick Otto, Register

Mary Ann Tsai, co-founder and proprietor of Moone Tsai Wines, poses for a photograph on July 18.

We also love sharing our wines and story with people who appreciate the wonderful (and sometimes unexpected) connections that can occur while enjoying well-made wines, delicious cuisine, and good conversation. We have made many lifelong friends through our wine connections.

5. What is the biggest challenge your industry has faced?

On top of the worldwide pandemic, the 2020 Napa wildfires that turned our valley upside down.

6. Who do you most admire in the business world?

Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia (and environmentalist, philanthropist and alpinist): His groundbreaking commitment to environmental activism is inspiring individuals and businesses the world over

7. What's one thing Napa could do to help local business?

Napa could do a better job of helping small businesses, including family-owned wineries which are so much a part of the fabric of our industry and our community. I think the extensive and costly permitting

process and tasting restrictions currently in place make it especially difficult for small wineries to grow and succeed.

8. If you could change one thing about the wine industry, what would it he?

A better job could be done to balance the interests of wineries of all sizes, including the small, privately owned, family businesses that not only are the backbone of our industry, but allow Napa Valley to stand apart from other key wine regions.

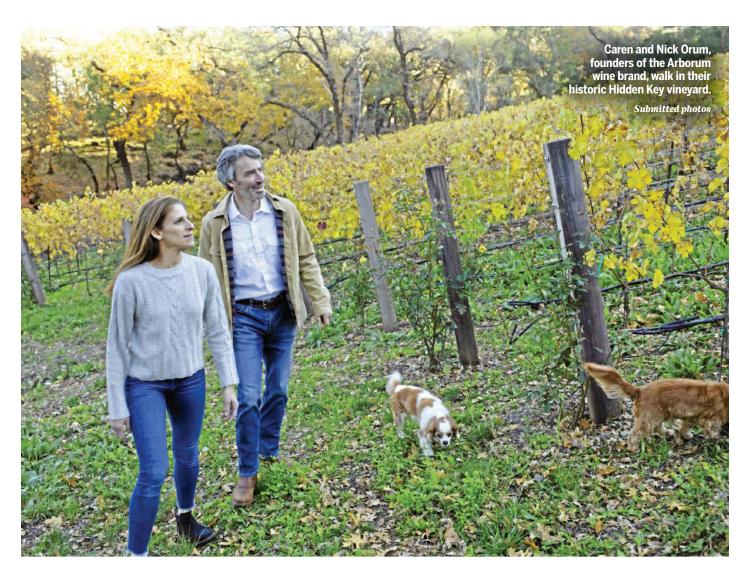
9. What's your favorite charity or nonprofit?

Among the nonprofits that continue to receive our support: our local fire department and efforts to protect Las Posadas State Forest.

10. What's something people might be surprised to know about you?

I intentionally jumped out of airplanes during my college years as a member of the skydiving club. I enjoyed nearly 100 freefalls!

Moone Tsai Wines is located at 3111 St. Helena Highway North, St. Helena; 707-913-7913; moonetsai.com. ■



CHAPIRA CHAPIRA

Owners of historic vineyard pledge to support charity

JESSE DUARTE

he story of the Weinberger family is the stuff of a Hollywood movie: Wine, murder, and a resilient widow who became California's first female vintner. Now Caren and Nick Orum are writ-

Now Caren and Nick Orum are writing a new chapter in that saga, replanting part of the Weinberger vineyards that had long lain fallow, restoring an olive tree orchard, and making a major charitable pledge.

The Orums, who have a background in investment banking, pledged to donate \$1 million and all net earnings from their wine sales to charities that support local vineyard workers and the environment. They announced Tuesday that they've already met their \$1 million goal.

"We're growing here and we live here, so we want to give here and support the environment where we are," Caren Orum said.



Hannah Weinberger took over the family vineyards and winery after her husband, John, was murdered in 1882.

THE MIGHTY HANNAH WEINBERGER

The Orums were inspired by the unusual history of their property on the eastern slope of Spring Mountain.

John and Hannah Weinberger operated successful vineyards and a winery north of St. Helena. In 1882, John was shot and killed in a murder-suicide by a former employee who'd been making unwelcome advances toward the Weinbergers' daughter, Minnie.

Undaunted, the 42-year-old Hannah Weinberger took over the business and ran it for 38 years, multiplying production by a factor of five and producing a Cabernet Sauvignon that won a silver medal at the 1889 Paris Exposition. She also took over her husband's role as director of the Bank of St. Helena, another virtually unheard-of role for a woman of the time.

Weinberger's success ended only when Prohibition took effect in 1920. She died in 1931 at age 90, having never remarried.

RESTORING THE PROPERTY

The Weinberger properties have since been carved up among various owners, including William Cole Vineyards, which operates the Weinbergers' original stone winery. But a 20-acre property where the Weinbergers had planted grapes and olive trees in the 1870s had been neglected until the Orums bought it in 2013.

"We didn't know it had been vineyard before because it was so overgrown," Caren Orum said. "When we started clearing out the underbrush, we found the terracing and we realized the olive trees were all in a row."

They've cleared dense brush, revived the olive grove, planted three blocks of Cabernet Sauvignon, moved into a 1930sera hunting cabin on the property, and hired vineyard manager Oscar Renteria and





A map shows the Weinbergers' extensive vineyard holdings as of 1881, one year before John Weinberger was murdered and his wife Hannah took over the business.

winemaker Andy Erickson.

The average slope is 26%, so the vines are hand-farmed. The Orums named the 2.5-acre, organic-certified estate vineyard Hidden Key after one of their children found an old key in a large tree. One of the kids pulled out the key and, in an eerie coincidence, the tree split in half two days later.

On Aug. 20 they're introducing a 2021 Proprietary Red with Cabernet Sauvignon from Hidden Key and Cabernet Franc from Pritchard Hill, plus a 2022 Proprietary White with Sauvignon Musque, Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon from Coombsville. They eventually plan to produce an estate Cabernet Sauvignon.

PLEDGING TO GIVE

The Orums named their brand Arborum, which evokes their last name and their passion for nature. They've committed to

donate \$1 million to charities that support local vineyard workers and the environment. All net earnings from wine sales will go to charity.

They've donated to 10,000 Degrees (helping low-income students go to college), the Napa Valley Farmworkers Foundation, Puertas Abiertas, Collective Napa Valley's reforestation efforts, Shine Napa Valley (supporting youth mental health), Point Reyes National Seashore Association, Kiss the Ground (supporting regeneration and healthy soil) and Save the Redwoods League.

They also donate their time. Caren serves on several nonprofit boards and Nick spends every Thursday volunteering for a restorative justice program at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.

"It feels good to give," Caren Orum said.■

SCHRAMSBERG VINEYARDS continues to

Davies Vineyards shares reds that make a mark

JESSICA ZIMMER

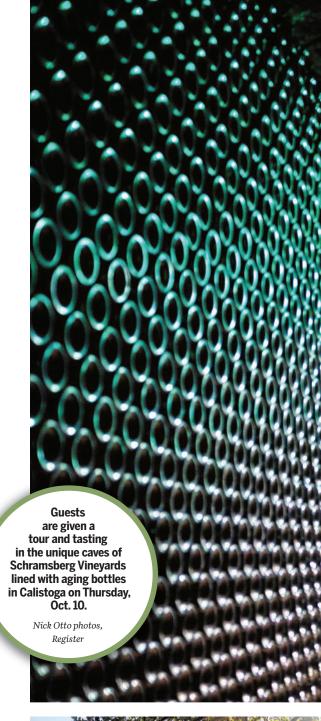
chramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga and Davies Vineyards in St. Helena, both owned by the Davies family, are constantly reinventing themselves and the over 40 wines that they create by looking west. Cool ocean breezes that blow over their coastal vineyards help maintain crispness, a key factor in Schramsberg's sparkling wines and Davies Pinot Noirs.

"Our secret is finding the coastal and bay-adjacent pockets in Marin, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma counties that preserve acidity. We allow ourselves to try a few new vineyard siteseach year," says Hugh Davies, president of Schramsberg Vineyards.

Davies says the wineries frequently try out different techniques, like "baseball cap" style canopy management to cover the grapes. This protects the fruit from sunburn. Schramsberg Vineyards also ferments select lots in contact with their skins to add depth and color for its sparkling rosé program.

Schramsberg and Davies wines are known to age extremely well.

"The reason you can serve a 2000 or a 2007 bottle of a Schram sparkling wine is because they preserve their youth. The tangy juiciness of our Chardonnay grapes and the flavorful depth of our Pinot Noir grapes retain that raciness," says Sean Thompson, vice president of winemaking for Schramsberg Vineyards.











Left: Guests visit the gift store at Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga on Thursday, Oct. 10.

Far left: A building that housed the Chinese workers employed by Jacob Schram at the turn of the 20th Century is still used today at Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga on Thursday, Oct. 10.







Above: A scene from Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga on Thursday, Oct. 10.

Top: Vineyard workers clean and sterilize large bins used to collect grapes as harvest wraps up for the year at Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga on Thursday, Oct. 10.

Nick Otto photos, Register

COUNTERING 2024'S WARMTH

In 2024, Schramsberg Vineyards finished its sparkling harvest at the tail end of September, a month earlier than last year.

"It was a blessing to get the grapes in before the variable weather of October. Normally the grapes from the Napa Carneros American Viticultural Area (AVA), the Anderson Valley AVA, the Sonoma Coast AVA and the Marin County AVA space themselves out. It was warmer, so everything came in together this year," says Jessica Koga, winemaker for Schramsberg Vineyards.

Schramsberg is now concentrating on revitalizing certain vineyards along the coast. This involves replanting the vines and adding new

infrastructure like trellis systems.

"For example, we rent the Juster Vineyards property in Anderson Valley in Mendocino County on a long-term lease. We're currently replanting the Pinot Noir vines. These have usually yielded a wine with aromas of pomegranate and plum," says Koga.

One of Koga's picks for a November 2024 release is the 2013 Blanc de Blancs Late Disgorged, a white sparkling wine made from Chardonnay grapes.

"This is the late disgorged option that's spent 10 years on the lees post-bottling. We have two vineyard designates coming out this year, including one from the Tognetti Vineyard in the Napa Carneros AVA. You learn patience from



working with sparkling wines. It takes forever to give it aged characteristics, like a crème brûlée or apple strudel quality," says Koga.

Thompson says the Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut, currently offered as a 2020 release, is one of his favorites.

"I like its super high acidity. This wine highlights the achievements of Marin and Sonoma county Pinot Noir growers in Nicasio, Occidental and Ft. Ross-Seaview," says Thompson.

Thompson says the Nicasio grapes in particular add mango characteristics.

"The Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut usually matures into a dense, fruit-driven wine with layers of citrus tart and vanilla," says Thompson.



The last of the Cabernet grapes to be harvested at Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga on Thursday, Oct. 10.

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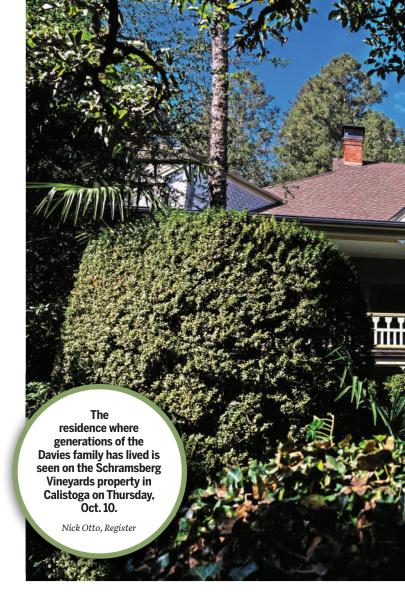




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A STORY THAT BEGAN ON DIAMOND MOUNTAIN

Schramsberg Vineyards was founded in 1862 by Jacob Schram, a German immigrant who built the winery and wine caves on Diamond Mountain. The winery operated for close to 50 years. The second generation of the Schram family shut it down during Prohibition.

The vineyards, caves and buildings remained closed until 1965. At that point, Jack and Jamie Davies, Hugh Davies' parents, purchased the estate.

The couple came to the Napa Valley from Los Angeles by way of San Francisco, with no experience in winemaking.

"My mother, then Jamie Peterman, graduated from UC Berkeley in the early 1950s. After graduation, she and her friend Wanda Hansen sold paintings by young California artists in The Hansen Peterman Gallery, a business they established near Union Square," says Davies.

At the time, Jack Davies worked as a marketing consultant for McKinsey & Co. The company is now an international business consulting firm.

"My father, a Stanford graduate, had clients that included Levi Strauss & Co. and Kaiser Steel. My parents met at a dinner party. They hit it off so well they married six months later," says Davies.

The couple relocated to Los Angeles, where they lived for five years.

"My father worked then as president of Ducommun,



Nick Otto, Register Schramsberg Vineyards has been recognized as a historical site both locally and nationally.



Courtesy of Schramsberg Vineyards

parents drank wine, Jack and Jamie were interested in tart, low-alcohol wines.

"They decided to make sparkling wine and grow the grapes in Napa Valley. No one else was doing that. They were excited by what their contemporaries like the Mondavis were doing. They wanted to create their niche," says Davies.

In 1965, Jack and Jamie bought the Schramsberg property for \$250,000. The Davies started their venture by taking short courses in winemaking and planting Chardonnay and Pinot Noir vines on Diamond Mountain.

Soon Jamie became a member of a group of individuals who perfected pairing Napa Valley's emerging wines with different cuisines.

"Many of these people were professional chefs. They bought Schramsberg and other local wineries' releases for their restaurants. This was an excellent way for winery owners to learn more about cooking and become part of Napa's emerging culinary scene," says Davies.

The Davies were also among the leading advocates for the Napa Valley Ag Preserve, which Napa County established in 1968. Today, the Ag Preserve protects approximately 7.3% of Napa County with restrictive agricultural zoning.



Courtesy of Schramsberg Vineyards

began having children, my two brothers. Davies. The whole time, they were hatching a

an aeronautics manufacturer. My mother plan to come to the Napa Valley," says

Although neither of the couple's



Courtesy of Schramsberg Vineyards



Courtesy of Schramsberg Vineyards

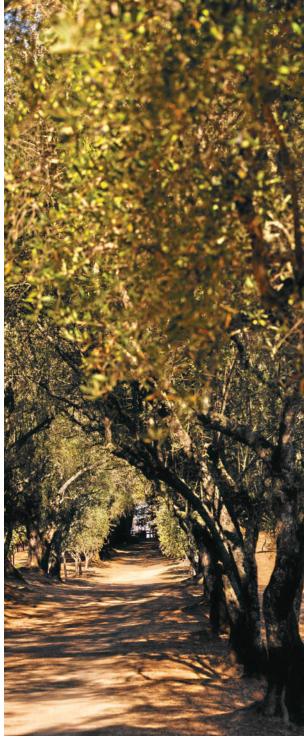
In 1998, after Jack Davies passed, the Davies family founded the Jack L. Davies Ag Preservation Fund (the JLD Ag Fund) to support agricultural conservation in Napa Valley. In 2003, the JLD Ag Fund merged with two similarly-minded nonprofits, the Napa Valley Foundation and the Napa Valley Agricultural Land Preservation Fund.

The JLD Ag Fund, which is guided by a volunteer board of directors, also commissions research on agricultural land preservation. It supports a wide range of

local people and projects, through paths like scholarships for local high school and college students to donations to the Million Trees Napa Initiative and multi-year pledges to the Napa Valley Vine Trail.

SHARING SCHRAMSBERG WINES WITH THE WORLD

Schramsberg's sparkling wines gained international recognition when the Blanc de Blancs, the first wine the Davies produced, was used for President Nixon's



1972 "Toast to Peace" with China's Premier Zhou Enlai. Every U.S. presidential administration since has served Schramsberg's sparkling wines at least three times.

In 2001, the Davies family began making still red wines, starting with Cabernet Sauvignon. Davies Vineyards now also makes Pinot Noir. The family opened the Davies Vineyards Winery in St. Helena in 2012.

It is a big job to educate international and domestic audiences about Schramsberg's and Davies' rotating cast of offerings.

"Fortunately, we have many repeat customers. Many have visited our wineries and are members of our 12,000-person wine club," says Laurent Sarazin,



vice president of sales and marketing for Schramsberg Vineyards.

Sarazin, who has worked for Schramsberg since 2001, shares its wines with distributors and chefs at high-end restaurants by taking six wines at a time to major cities across the country. He then works with restaurant teams to pair the wines with their top dishes.

"This is a tough environment because the market is saturated with wine. But we put a twist on the idea of sparkling wine and still red wine. We're American and we have a wide array of wines. Our wines are delicious and different. It doesn't hurt that we're competitive at our price point," says Sarazin.



Schramsberg Vineyards has been recognized as a historical site both locally and nationally.

Nick Otto, Register



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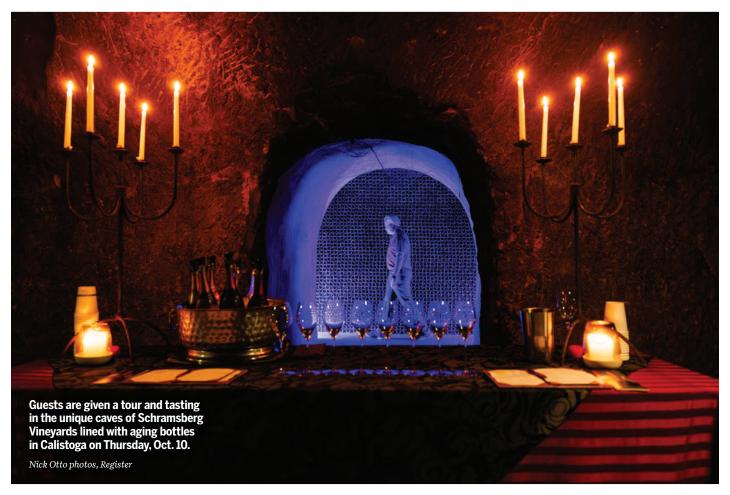
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IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE COME FROM THE PAST

Going forward, Davies hopes to teach his niece, Abbie Davies, his nephew, Jack Davies and his three sons, Emrys, Nelson and Hughie, more about the business.

"They've all worked at Schramsberg Vineyards in temporary roles. Currently Abbie is working at Domaine Serene in Dayton, Oregon to help make Pinot Noir. Jack is a sales representative for Republic National Distributing Company, a major wholesaler. We're excited to see them develop experience outside of the family business," says Davies.

Davies will also continue to draw on knowledge he acquired years ago from completing his master's thesis in oenology and viticulture at UC Davis. The project was a sensory analysis of 24 sparkling wines from the Anderson Valley, Carneros, Napa Valley and the Russian River Valley.

The "practical project" was a sparkling wine boot camp.

It gave Davies the knowledge base he needed to evaluate how techniques, growing conditions and environments impact the best grapes for sparkling wine from the North Coast.

"I still look back to those notes for then, we came to understand that we



Mathew Levy walks through stacked barrels in the caves of Schramsberg Vineyards in Calistoga on Thursday, Oct. 10.

inspiration on how to grow grapes for sparkling wine today. They are part of what helped us create Schramsberg sparkling wines like the 2014 J. Schram Noirs. That's taken nine years to mature. Back then, we came to understand that we

should blend Pinot Noirs and Chardonnay from Marin, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma counties. If you do it right, you'll make a wine like Schramsberg has created, a toasty, full-bodied, creamy sparkler," says Davies.



Nick Otto, Register

The River Club owners Alli van Zyl, Bertus van Zyl, Laura Gabriel and Kyle Gabriel pose for a photograph in front of their tasting room in Napa on Saturday, Oct. 19.

Welcome to The River Club

SAMIE HARTLEY

magine this idyllic scene: The Napa River gently rises with the tides as gulls call to each other overhead. Butterflies dance among the reeds as a gentle breeze induces a calm that even the soft hum of traffic traveling over the Imola Bridge cannot disrupt.

The only thing that would make this state of zen more divine would be a glass of wine to savor as autumn sun dips out of view creating a palette of creamy pastels across the sky. A rosé perhaps? Maybe a vibrant red? It doesn't matter what you're craving because this dreamy scenario can be yours at Napa's newest tasting room — The River Club.

Downtown Napa is peppered with tasting rooms, but if you are willing to be adventurous and go on a side quest, you will discover a truly unique experience. And it is entirely OK if you are reluctant to go down this road less traveled — the destination is worth it.





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Above: Alli van Zyl chats with Laura Gabriel while working at their new tasting room in Napa on Saturday, Oct. 19.

Right: Two guests sit outside of the River Club along the Napa River on Saturday, Oct. 19.

Nick Otto photos, Register

The River Club is quietly nestled along the Napa River in the industrial Tannery District on South Coombs Street. You've probably driven past it since its August opening and didn't realize it was there.

"When people drive up, they think where am I? What am I doing? But they see the river and then they say 'what a view!" says River Club proprietor Alli van Zvl.

Van Zyl's River Club partner Laura Gabriel agrees. "People don't quite know what to expect, but when they park and step out and see and hear the river, it puts them at ease. There's something about the energy of the water. It's a really special, unique place."

The River Club's location isn't the only thing that sets it apart from the typical Napa wine tasting experience. The wines themselves are unlike anything van Zyl's Belong Wine Co., which she



you'll find in Napa Valley simply for the runs with her husband Bertus, and Paper fact that none of the wines served at The River Club are made from Napa Valley grapes.

The River Club features wine from

Planes Wine Co., managed by Gabriel and her husband Kyle. Belong Wine Co. sources its grapes from El Dorado County while Paper Planes wines are made from grapes from the Russian River Valley.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

The van Zyls and Gabriels have been friends for years, but they took different paths to becoming winemakers. While the Gabriels launched a crowdfunding campaign to start Paper Planes Wine Co. and relied on direct business to business partnerships, the van Zyls harnessed the power of social media and boutique popups to share their Belong Wines. But after a few years of production, both couples wanted the same thing: a tasting room close to home where they could share their wines and host events.

The Gabriels found the spot along the Napa River, which is walking distance from their home in downtown Napa, and teamed with the van Zyls to share the burden of launching a tasting room in a hyper saturated market. Together, the couples, along with their young children, took on as many DIY projects as feasibly possible to help keep costs low. The River Club has been a labor of love - a true effort of blood, sweat, and tears - but the memories made this year in preparing for the opening have left a big impression on the couples and their young families.

"We looked downtown for a space, but there's this pressure to be open all the time if you're downtown," Alli said. "We wanted to have a space to accommodate work-life balance."

Unlike most tasting rooms you'll find in Napa, The River Club is not open daily. It's closed on Tuesday and Wednesdays, so the couples can have a chance to regroup, reset and get in some quality family time.

It's a necessity when The River Club is a side project for the couples in addition to their own full time jobs. It's a juggling act for sure, but the partnership works out so that a representative from each brand is always at The River Club to pour and discuss the wines.

"It's a small operation," said Laura. "When you visit, you are guaranteed to meet with one of the winemakers or owners of each brand. You don't always get that when you go tasting. But since it is just the four of us, we can sit down with guests and share our story. It's a more intimate experience."

"And no one knows our wines better than us," added Alli. "We literally have our hands and feet in these wines. We can tell you everything about the wines and really geek out, or we can keep it light and social."





An image of the simple décor at The River Club in Napa on Saturday, Oct. 19.

might make it challenging to find, but it caters to the wine lovers they're looking to host.

"Some of the best experiences happen Laura said The River Club location off the beaten path," she said. "We're just clientele."

close enough to downtown, so you can still eat and go shopping, but we like the idea that people would have to come find us. It draws a creative and adventurous





Above: The River Club opened in the old Tannery District along the Napa River.

Left: Bertus van Zyl pours wine for customers while working at the new tasting room he, his wife and two other friends opened in Napa on Saturday, Oct. 19.

Nick Otto photos, Register

FINDING THE RIVER CLUB

As the couples searched for a name for their joint venture, The River Club manifested from its proximity to the Napa Valley Yacht Club.

"We really wanted a name tied to the river," said Laura. "We looked up the river and looked at the yacht club, and thought, we're kind of our own club — let's be The River Club."

The name stuck and The River Club has been welcoming guests for two months.

Alli said The River Club has attracted a mix of tourists and locals in addition to their loyal fans who have already been singing the praises of Belong Wine Co. and Paper Planes Wine Co. and are thrilled to have a place to call their own.

The River Club is very much a second home for the couples, and they used the idea of home as inspiration for the tasting room layout.

"We wanted to create a welcoming space where people could feel at home," Alli said. "We have a living room area, a dining table. We have a kids corner, which is inspired by our kids. We have toys and books, or the kids can go run outside. We've had families come by bike. We're building community. We'd like this to be a home away from home — not just for us

We make wines that we like to drink, and the wines we have are resonating with guests. We're very excited about the future."

Alli van Zyl

but for our neighbors, too."

Building community is central to the vision of The River Club — so much so that The River Club's wine club is exclusive to locals. While Belong Wine Co. and Paper Planes Wine Co. have their own wine clubs that offer shipments across the country, The River Club wine club, The River Club — Club, is for pick-up only with the idea that only Napa locals and those within driving distance will be able to participate. The face-to-face connection helps foster the community the couples are trying to build at The River Club.

JOIN THE CLUB

Even though Belong and Paper Planes source grapes from different regions in California, Alli and Laura have been pleasantly surprised by how well the wines complement each other. Both describe their wines as fresh and vibrant that pair

well with food. The wines are great to enjoy immediately or after some aging. Both labels offer a rose, but that's the only wine they share in common.

Belong has its Sierra Soul Mourvedre and Krusinger Charbono, while Paper Planes has A Russian River Pinot Noir and a Suisun Valley Valdiguie.

Alli said some guests have been surprised that there are no Napa Valley wines at The River Club, but most people are excited to try something new.

Laura said despite having a Napa location, the couples are unlikely to make any Napa vintages in the near future.

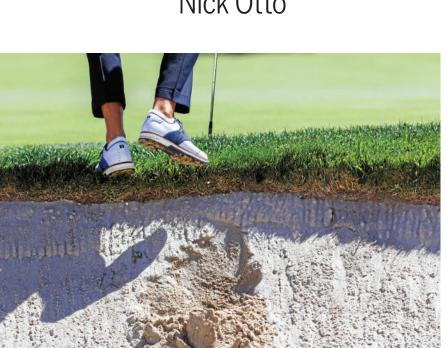
"There are so many Napa Valley producers making gorgeous wines," she said. "We didn't feel like we had anything to add to that, so we wanted to focus elsewhere. We make wines that we like to drink, and the wines we have are resonating with guests. We're very excited about the future."

The River Club is located at 101 S. Coombs St, Unit 8, in Napa. Tastings are available by appointment only Thursday through Monday. Hours are Saturday and Sunday from noon-5 p.m. and Thursday, Friday and Monday from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, visit theriverclubnapa.com. ■

Vintage's Sofie Richart tees off during a golf match against JustinSiena at Chardonnay Golf Club in Napa on Tuesday, Sept. 3.

Eye Napa Napa Valley

Moments captured by Register photographer Nick Otto

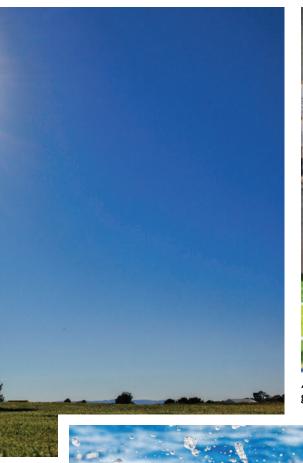


▲ A player exits a sand trap during the second round of the Procure Championship at Silverado Resort and Spa in Napa on Friday, Sept. 13.

Two members of the Vintage High School wait to perform before the start of ▶ the homecoming football game against visiting Wood on Friday, Sept. 13.









▲ Vintage quarterback Blake Porter (10) dives for a touchdown in the first quarter of a football game against crosstown rival Napa High at Memorial Stadium on Friday, Oct. 4.



■ Justin-Siena goalie Chase Padowan (1) chases down a ball during a during a water polo match against American Canvon on Tuesday, Oct. 1.

American Canyon ▶
goalie Kayden Shalhout
saves a shot during a water
polo match against JustinSiena in American Canyon
on Tuesday, Oct. 1.



Cabernet Sauvignon vines are seen at Trefethen Family Vineyards in Napa on Friday, Oct. 25.

Nick Otto photos, Register

Innovation AND AND CY

Trefethen Family Vineyards writes its story in the Oak Knoll District

JESSICA ZIMMER

refethen Family Vineyards is maintaining its storied legacy with a bevy of crisp, fruit-forward wines from the Oak Knoll District of the Napa Valley, including its signature Chardonnay. At the same time, it is exploring new directions like Dragon's Tooth, a blend of Malbec, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Trefethen's has freedom to create numerous refreshing wines because the estate sits at the southern end of Napa Valley, close to the San Francisco Bay. Every afternoon, cool winds blow across the vineyards and help the grapes maintain acidity.

"Another way we work with the environment is by building diversity into the vineyard. We grow 10 different varieties across our 400 acres of estate vineyards in the Oak Knoll District. We also have multiple clones of each variety. Our talented team farms everything in different ways as needed, for example by preserving brightness in our Chardonnay and building intensity in our Cabernet," says Hailey Trefethen. She is a third-generation vintner, a co-chair of the Trefethen Board and an executive vice president of the winery.



Hailey Trefethen poses for a photograph at Trefethen Winery in Napa on Thursday, Aug. 15.

Having these different varieties and clones means the grapes ripen at different times and have different qualities. Trefethen's winemakers have had decades to refine their knowledge as founders Eugene and Catherine "Katie" Trefethen established the vineyard in 1968. Their son, John and their daughter-in-law, Janet, started the winery in 1973.

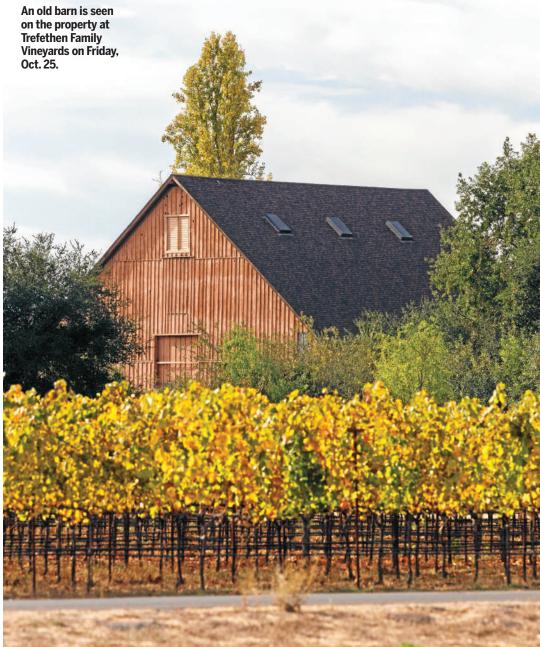
Trefethen Family Vineyards specializes in delicious, low-alcohol wines to be enjoyed with food.

"Our mother likes to say that our wines are not going to knock your socks off. They're going to slip them off. Because of their elegance and complexity, as well as the brightness in character which results from our cool climate, Trefethen wines also last for decades," says Lorenzo Trefethen, Hailey's brother. Lorenzo Trefethen is also a third-generation vintner, a co-chair of the Trefethen Board and an executive vice president of the winery.

TWO WINE CLUBS, BUT MANY CHOICES

Trefethen makes a wide variety of white wines and red wines, as well as a rosé called Summer In Napa. It also grows grapes for sparkling wines, which it sells to other wineries.

The winery has two membership options. Club Trefethen is highly customizable and functions on a subscription model. The HāLo Circle, geared toward collectors, is a more traditional wine club.





Guests can enjoy a wine tasting amongst the grapes that produced the wine at Trefethen Family Vineyards in Napa on Friday, Oct. 25.



Nick Otto photos, Register

Wine barrels are filled as harvest comes to an end at Trefethen Family Vineyards in Napa on Friday, Oct. 25.

It features special access to Trefethen's most coveted wines, including selections from the Library.

One standout is HāLo Cabernet Sauvignon, named for Hailey and Lorenzo. The grapes are grown in Hillspring Vineyard, which sits in the northwest corner of the Oak Knoll District in the foothills of the Mayacamas range. The 2019 release of HāLo Cabernet Sauvignon has flavors of plum and berry, layered with notes of molasses and tobacco.

There is also The Cowgirl and The Pilot, named for the love story between John and Janet Trefethen, Hailey and Lorenzo's parents. The 2021 vintage is made from Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec grapes grown on the estate vineyard. It has aromas of black cherry and dried fig and a palate of dark cocoa.

"Mom was a Salinas rodeo sweetheart growing up. She competes at a national level in cutting to this day," says Hailey Trefethen.

horse's ability to work cattle.

"Dad got his pilot's license at 16 and grew up hanging out at the airports,



A wine tank is emptied of grape skins as harvest comes to an end at Trefethen Family Vineyards in Napa on Friday, Oct. 25.

Cutting is a sport that showcases a washing planes in order to get flying time. We decided to pay tribute to them made mainly from grapes grown in the by blending two wines that balance one another," says Hailey Trefethen.

Another notable red is Dragon's Tooth, rockiest parts of the estate district vineyards. The label for this wine features the

Welsh Dragon, to honor the family's Welsh heritage. The 2021 vintage has aromas of blueberry and plum with notes of leather and molasses.

"When we were planting the Petit Verdot, we came across a scattering of obsidian shards, which, with a little imagination, looked like reptile teeth. That's how we came by the second part of the name," says Lorenzo Trefethen.

Bryan Kays, winemaker for Trefethen, says perfecting Dragon's Tooth requires measuring the "intense, juicy fruitiness" of Malbec against the "insular, dark, and brooding" backbone of Petit Verdot.

"The Cabernet Sauvignon is a minor player. It rounds out these very disparate concepts that come together well," says Kays.

THE CHARDONNAY NOTICED AROUND THE WORLD

Trefethen's Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignons are the most well-known of its wines. This is because the 1976 Chardonnay won the title "The Best Chardonnay in the World" award at the 1979 Gault & Millau Wine Olympics in Paris and again at the rematch in Burgundy in 1980.

"No one was more surprised by (the 1979) results than our parents! They didn't know that there was a tasting in France, much less that our Chardonnay had been entered in it. We certainly hadn't even started exporting our wines to France yet, though we had some in the U.K. After the results were announced. as you might imagine, there were some rather disgruntled producers in Burgundy, who demanded a rematch. The following year, at the Palace of the Dukes and Estates of Burgundy, the judges retasted all the top-finishing wines from the Wine Olympics, adding some Grand Crus to the lineup. Trefethen won again," says Lorenzo Trefethen.

More recently, at the 2020 and 2021 Decanter World Wine Awards (WWAs) in London, the 2017 and 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon both won "Best in Show." The WWAs is currently the largest wine competition in the world, at which tens of thousands of wines are tasted. "Best in Show" is awarded to the top 50 wines in the competition.

Trefethen's 2018 Chardonnay also won a Platinum award at the 2020 WWAs, a distinction given to only 178 wines. In addition, its 2021 Dragon's Tooth won Platinum at the 2024 WWAs. This distinction is given to only 117 wines.



Winery chef Chris Kennedy talks about how the food will pair with the wine to guests enjoying the Tasty Estate experience at Trefethen Family Vineyards in Napa on Friday, Oct. 25.



Guests are seen tasting wine in the main winery building at Trefethen Family Vineyards which was severely damages during the earthquake of 2014.

Trefethen leans into its history by continuing to produce its Chardonnay from grapes grown in the Oak Knoll District. The 2022 Chardonnay has aromas of green apple and stone fruit, with flavors of zesty citrus and notes of ginger.

Kays perfects this decades-long favorite by picking a bit earlier than the winery has in the past, as the seasons get warmer.

"It helps that we have our own farming crew. Members of it have been here for between 10 and 40 years. They can move into harvest mode quickly, capturing that focused acidity and those notes of tropical fruit," says Kays.

Dealing with more weather swings in recent vintages requires utilizing up-to-date information about soil types, farming techniques and knowledge of clones.

"It helps that we've been growing grapes in Oak Knoll District since 1968. Also that I started at Trefethen as an intern in 2006, when I was still earning my oenology and viticulture degree at UC Davis. Improving the wines under changing conditions is one way that we are traditional and modern at the same time," says Kays.

He adds the combination of approaches is necessary to get the best quality grapes and develop the wine's stimulating bite.



Photos courtesy of Trefethen Family Vineyards



The three-story wooden wine production building at Trefethen Family Vineyards was originally built in 1886 by Hamden McIntyre, a Scottish sea captain. McIntyre also built Inglenook, the primary building of Greystone, which is now a Culinary Institute of America campus, Far Niente and a number of other historic structures in the Napa Valley.

One of the hallmarks of his design is that the second floor of the Trefethen building is curved downward on each side, like a ship's deck.

"He built the ceilings 24 feet high, to make room for the carbon dioxide created from fermentation. You also see trenches on the second floor. These are for the juice to travel down," says Hailey Trefethen.

This building was one of the most technologically advanced at the time. It had a horse-drawn elevator and later, a conveyor belt that transported grapes up to the third floor. The grapes were crushed on the third floor, fermented on the second floor and aged on the first floor. The winery was originally called Eschol. The business was a venture of James and George Goodman, two New York brothers and businessmen who moved to the Napa Valley.

The 280-acre vineyard and winery building continued on through Prohibition by growing grapes to produce sacramental wine. All of the grounds had fallen into disuse by 1940. When Eugene and Catherine bought the property in 1968, they began to replant the vineyard. Janet and John Trefethen quickly took over, renovating the historic winery as they started to make wine from the vineyards. The family had to



restore the structure again in 2014 because of extensive damage from the South Napa earthquake.

THE STORY CONTINUES AT KATIE'S ACRE

As Trefethen moves into 2025, Kays and the family board want to keep experimenting with techniques and varieties.

"We have a library of all the vintages and often taste them to get perspective. The old wines taste wonderful after all those years. My goal is to have my takes on the Trefethen wines be as special in the decades to come," says Kays.

The winery is also planting new varietals, like Charbono (Bonarda), a red wine grape that tends toward blue and purple fruit, with a bit of spice. In addition, the winery is growing produce in "La Huerta,"



a garden patch on the estate that is just under an acre. La Huerta produces around 100 varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs a year.

"The garden's main purpose is to provide fresh produce for our team all year round. It's also the source of most of the vegetables and fruit in the dishes our chef creates. It was the inspiration for our annual salsa making competition where all the ingredients have to come from La Huerta. This year marked our ninth annual contest," says Hailey Trefethen.

One of the most-cherished spots on the estate is Katie's Acre, an acre of vineyard that is shaded in the middle by a champion walnut tree. A champion tree is one recognized as the largest living example of its species.

Long ago, Eugene Trefethen wanted to uproot the tree to plant more vines.

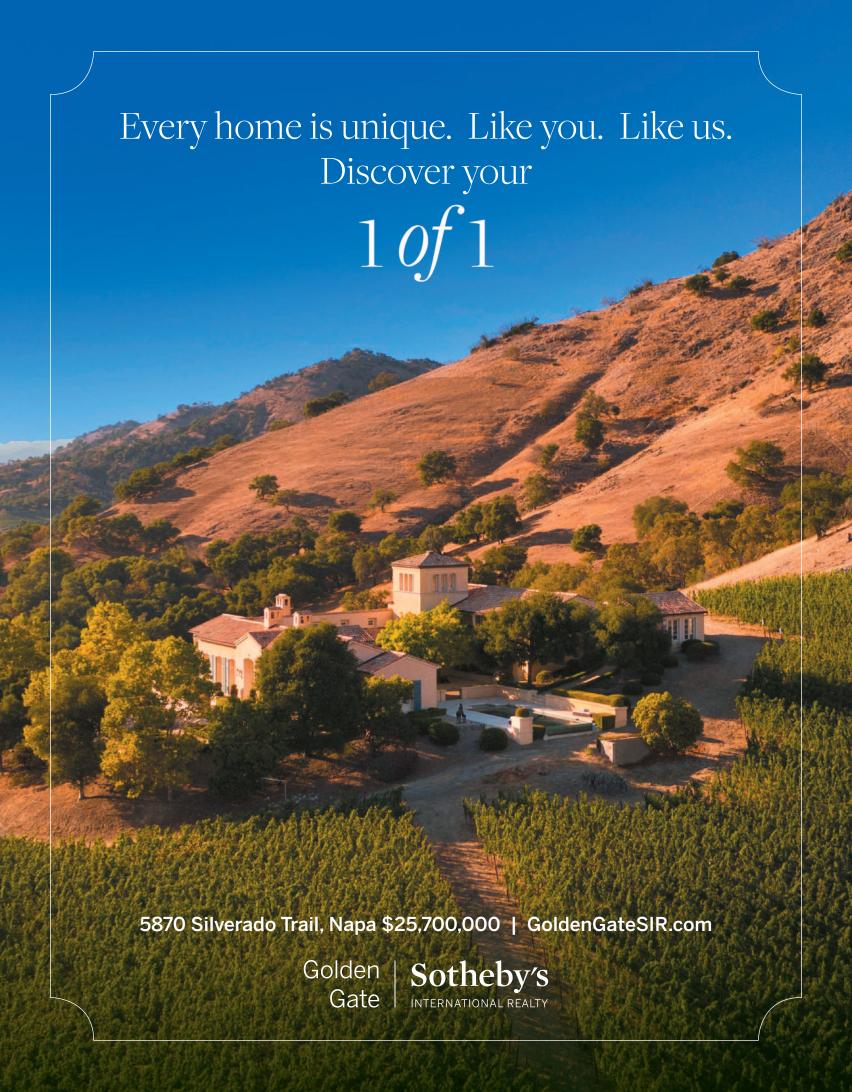
"Katie said, 'Don't you dare touch that tree!' The area around the tree is now a favorite spot for us to gather the company together. It's also where I was married," says Lorenzo Trefethen.

Trefethen makes Katie's Acre Chardonnay, its highest quality Chardonnay, from the grapes in the vineyard around the tree.

Guests at Trefethen Family Vineyards should request wines they have liked before, to get Trefethen's take on these varietals. They should also inquire about library wines, which Trefethen often opens and shares in their tasting room. That will give them a sense of what changes the vineyard team and winemakers have made over time.

"Lorenzo and I are always thinking 20 years ahead, in our vineyard practices and in what we will release. We're also taking our children into the vineyard for harvest. It's what our parents did, to include us. We can see they're already excited about being part of the process," says Hailey Trefethen.

To learn more about Trefethen Family Vineyards, visit trefethen.com. ■





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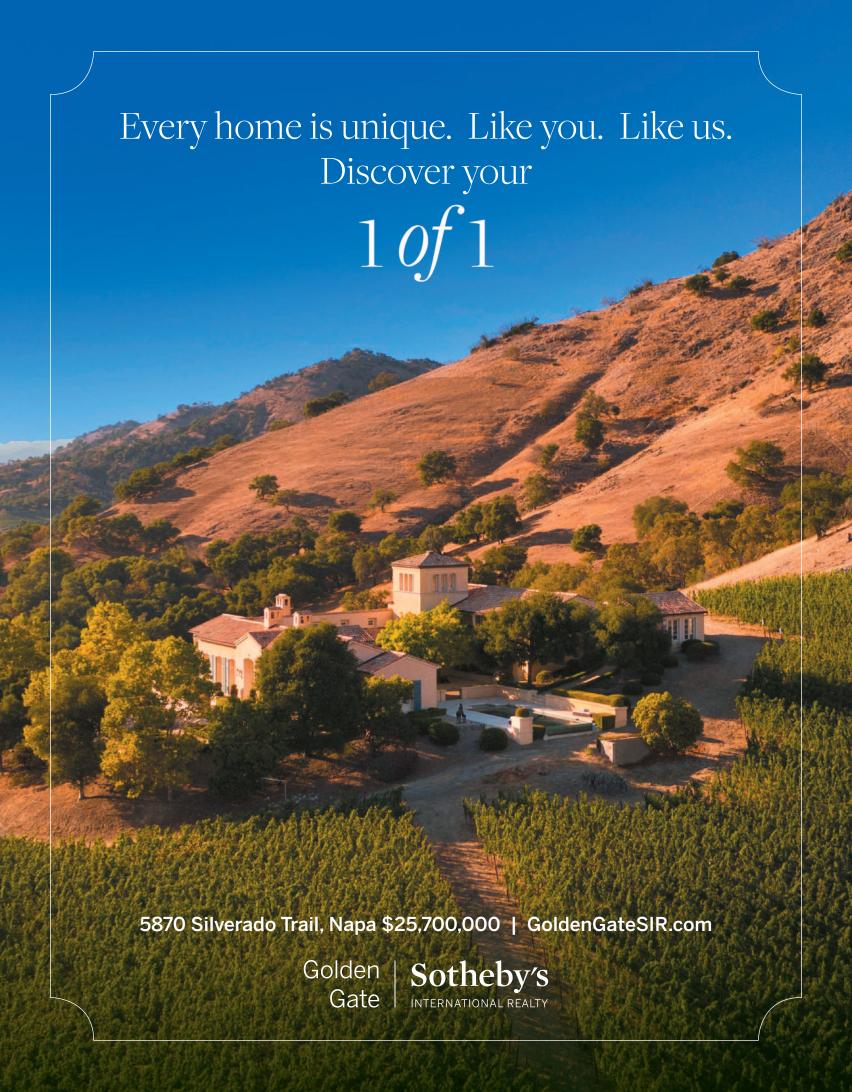
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