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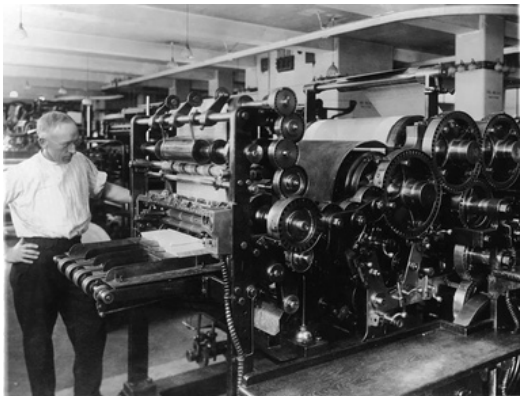
Napa Valley Family Releases Its First Wines Made From Top Cabernet Sauvignon Vineyards

By Cathrine Todd, Contributor.

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Annulus Cabernet Sauvignon wine lineup
Suzanne Becker Bronk



Old style printing press
Getty Images

Off a side road that seemingly didn't exist at first glance was a dusty, dilapidated building that was quite shocking to a woman who had dedicated a significant part of her life in partnership with her husband in high-tech labs as advanced life science researchers; when it came to achieving excellence in the world of science, a place such as this one did not typically give one confidence. But, in this case, this woman was thrilled to experience such a "cool place" that had grit to it that was ideal for creative endeavors. She was led by her artistically talented

ANNULUS

youngest daughter who had a fresh approach for their family wine labels that brought them to seek out an artisanal company run and operated by men who seemed to be working on 100-year-old printing presses. These machines appeared to no longer exist in the world, except within this dilapidated haven, and the knowledge to work them was almost extinct except for these men who expertly handled these ancient instruments. As they seamlessly moved with the complicated maneuvers of the machines, one could ascertain that these men were skilled artisans who had not only been doing this for decades but were probably passed down from master to apprentice.

The daughter, still at university at that time, decided on an unconventional color palette for the label of their family's first release of their Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon wines. It had an overall brown color that is reminiscent of that stunning shade of rich brown found in fine suede leather with a symbol of a metallic ring with an oak tree growing through the top. There are three different Cabernet Sauvignon bottlings, each with its own metallic color ranging from bronze, gold, and the color of bronze that had gone through the patina process; hence, there are hints of antique green. Yet describing the colors does not do them justice as they are multifaceted, with various tints and depths of shades that give the embossed symbol a sense of dimension and vitality.

For this family, their Napa Valley Annulus Cellars wines would reflect the heart of winemaking in their beloved valley, where families place every little bit of the fiber of their being into their wines—building a community of those who connected over their passion and love of such a divine drink that perfectly expressed their precious land. In this place, people came together to establish a multi-generational dream instead of like other places in the country, losing their kids and grandchildren due to a lack of real attachment to their homes.

Annulus Cellars



*Luke Evnin and Deann
Wright leaning on oak tree
(Olaf Beckmann)*

Wife and husband team Deann Wright and Luke Evnin are the founders of Annulus Cellars. Their daughters, Alexandra and Elena, are a part of this family dream. Alexandra has experience selling wines in NYC and is now working for other wineries to learn the winemaking end. Elena's artistic gifts have proven valuable for designing the ideal visual representation for their excellent Napa Cabs.

Deann and her husband bought a home in Napa almost 25 years ago, and their second daughter was born in that house. They had always been fans of the wines of Napa and the increase in sunshine compared to their previous home in San Francisco proved to be irresistible. Still, through time, they found themselves part of a diverse wine community, attending all the events, getting to know the wine producers and having their kids grow up with multi-generational grape growers and winemakers. They dreamt of creating their own multi-generational wine family with their vineyards, feeling a deep connection to the earth where their family would have deep roots filled with many memories.



*Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard
David Sawyer*

But that dream had to be placed on hold as Luke traveled for work and Deann raised two little girls. But their conversations after the kids were tucked into their beds, of having vines, a winery and being part of the great legacy of Napa wines that would continue for generations to come within their family, always continued until one day they decided to take that leap. For Deann and Luke, making anything other than a great wine wasn't an option so when they started looking into purchasing vineyards, anything that was in their price range wouldn't live up to their aspirations. But then they realized that many of the Napa wine producers they admired had either bought fruit from top vineyards and then eventually bought their own or kept buying grapes from growers they trusted.

They had gotten to know Daphne and Bart Araujo, the owners of the Napa Green Certified, historic Wheeler Farms Winery; their winemaker, Nigel Kinsman, a rising star in Napa, was interested in meeting with Deann and Luke about their Annulus wine project. Nigel has already received a 100-point score from Antonio Galloni of *Vinous* for his 2018 Accendo Cabernet Sauvignon that he makes for Daphne and Bart and a 99-point score from Wine

Advocate for his personal label. Hence, he has really impressed Napa Cab lovers with his skills. However, it is vital that owners and winemakers have great chemistry for the partnership to work, and Daphne and Bart felt that Nigel would work well with Deann and Luke, which has proven to be the case.

Luke has been impressed with how Nigel has been able to bring out a harmonious overall quality in the wines that highlight a balance between restrained fruit and savory notes that has an elegant power as opposed to the type of power that has little nuance; exactly the kind of wines that he and Deann had always gravitated towards.

Balancing Openness with Belonging



*Vine Hill Ranch Vineyard
Olaf Beckmann*

The metallic symbol on their Annulus wine labels is based on a sculpture their youngest daughter saw on the streets of Florence during a semester spent studying there. It is a big ring at the bottom with an olive tree growing out the top as a memorial to victims of a car bombing in the 1990s. Deann and Luke's daughter contacted the artist to get permission to use this symbol but modified it to use a Napa oak tree on their label. This symbol has come to represent their mission with their wines and ultimately inspired them for their name, Annulus, which means

“ring” in Latin. As it is a ring that represents peace, life and hope as it is the cycle of the grape's lifecycle in the vineyards, it is the circle of family, friends and community and the continuation of hope still growing during our darkest times.

As we continue living in a world that tears down barriers, allowing an open, free-flowing society to create prosperity for all, many are feeling lost and lonely in terms of belonging to something tangible that creates a feeling of community. How does one find belonging without giving up a world where they are constantly nourished by various people from different walks of life?

For Deann and Luke, seeing the transformation of Napa and losing some of that multi-generational family feeling by having big conglomerates buy up many of the properties throughout Napa Valley has been a sad transition to witness. And so, instead of mourning the fact that future generations will not get the opportunity to be part of a community that is a close-knit tapestry of varying backgrounds, they are investing in keeping that community alive. And even though they have spent the better part of their lives pushing forth innovation

and finding cures for supposedly incurable managed diseases, they also profoundly know how much the wellbeing of the mind goes hand in hand with the wellbeing of the body.

Whether it is supporting multi-generational growers, keeping an old art of printing alive or simply trying to keep the circle of a support network of neighbors that has been there for all the ups and downs of life sustained, one can either allow these precious ways of life that maintain the wellbeing of the heart and mind to disappear or like Deann, Luke and their daughters, decide to significantly invest in those facets in life that not only allow humans to survive physically but be inspired by life, every single day.



*Annulus Cabernet Sauvignon wine lineup
Suzanne Becker Bronk*

Annulus's inaugural wines will be released in September of this year.

2021 Annulus, Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California: 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot sourced from lots in Stags Leap District, old vine fruit from the 1520 vineyard on Diamond Mountain, and other heritage vineyards. Depth and richness on the nose with brooding fruit enhanced by gravel and torn rose petals, juicy red plum fruit and mulberry compote flavors on the palate, and ultra-fine tannins. Only 307 cases were produced.

2021 Annulus, Vine Hill Ranch Vineyard, Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley, California: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from the Vine Hill Ranch Vineyard, which was first planted in 1884 and farmed by the Phillips family since 1978. Exotically enticing aromas of jasmine blossom, sandalwood and star anise with generous fruit that is refined in its subtle intensity, such as blueberry cobbler flavors with hints of graphite and an ideal amount of weight on the palate, just enough lushness without losing its overall refined quality and the finish on this wine is like ribbons of silk slowly caressing every inch of the palate.

2021 Annulus, Beckstoffer La Piedras Vineyard, Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley, California: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from Beckstoffer Las Piedras vineyard located at the foot of Spring Mountain which was first planted in the 1840s. Smoldering nose that beckons the drinker with intriguing notes of espresso and cocoa dust with delicious flavors of blackberry coulis and skillfully sculpted tannins, creating a firm structure with an overall elegant quality like an exquisitely made corset crafted with the finest materials.