

THE PETER MICHAEL STORY

Although the wines of Peter Michael are extremely successful, this story is not just about success. After all, many California wines are successful. No, this is a story about how a winery handcrafts wines that have been on allocation since the first release in 1987 and seem destined to remain so. It is a story about judgment and philosophy where a clear objective was established at the outset and maintained throughout.

In 1983 Sir Peter Michael built the Peter Michael Winery on a square mile of rocky volcanic ridges that form the western face of Mount St. Helena. In so doing he realized a dream conceived as a young man when his father, who lived in France, took him through some of the renowned chateaux of Europe.

From the beginning, the wine-growing philosophy was modeled on the French tradition that grape selection, barrels, methodology all were to come from France, but not in an effort to imitate the French. On the contrary, Peter says, "What I hoped to be able to do in the '80s was to show that the then general preference to choose French wines was misplaced. I am very pleased to find that in the '90s and into the next millennium, California is known as the place where great wines can be consistently produced, some of them from the Peter Michael Winery."

What he wanted was a range of wines that could hold their own alongside the wines of Burgundy and Bordeaux. First, under the stewardship of winemaker, Helen Turley, and now Nicolas Morlet, these ideas were distilled into practical principles that would be used to govern the operations:

- The vineyard terroir would be the single most important feature.
- The wines would prize balance and elegance above power.
- There would be a hundred-year commitment to the development of a great estate

Peter Michael Winery is equally committed to personally hand-sorting each cluster of grapes prior to pressing. This is a painstaking and laborious process, but it ensures that only the finest, fully matured grapes make it into the wine. The judicious use of oak is stressed because it produces an opulent wine with a seamless balance of expansive fruit, oak flavors and aromas. This is something every winemaker strives to achieve, but

few attain. In essence, it comes from a truism known in Europe for generations, namely that the best winemaking occurs in the vineyards and not by chemistry or recipe.

The Peter Michael Estate, with the only winery located in Knights Valley, scales the western side of Mount St. Helena. Its rugged slopes are home to numerous wildlife, including peregrine falcons. Redwood Creek meanders through the property and is one of the healthiest tributaries of the Russian River with annual runs of native Salmon and Steelhead. Fostered by their deep respect and stewardship for the land, the Michael's have re-forested this breathtaking mountain estate, having planted over 10,000 redwood and fir trees. In addition, they have designed each of their small vineyard sites to prevent erosion of the precious topsoil.

The wines of Peter Michael have earned numerous accolades from the critics including Robert Parker. He has been heard to say that if he were a French winemaker living in Bordeaux or Burgundy, he would be rather worried by the wines now coming from Peter Michael Winery and a handful of other wineries in California.

SIR PETER MICHAEL

Peter Michael, born in 1938, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1989 in recognition of the economic prosperity spawned by his work, both in industry and government. Alongside a successful and storied business career, he has cultivated interests in music and art, particularly sculpture, as well as wine.

Sir Peter created the first digital devices for drawing television graphics by computer. The Quantel Paintbox was just one of several commercial applications his company introduced in its 20 years of operation. In 1989, Sir Peter sold United Engineering Industries to another British company.

From 1989 to 1992, Sir Peter served as capital CEO of Cray UK. In this capacity, he led a classic and highly successful turnaround of this high technology company.

In 1992, Sir Peter founded Classic FM, the first national commercial radio station in the UK with a potential audience of 50 million listeners. With a lifetime love of classical music, he nurtured the idea of developing a popular format that used classical pieces as entertainment rather than worship. The intelligent but irreverent style rapidly took off and, with 8 million listeners, Classic FM has become the largest commercial FM station in the world. In March of 1995, with Sony as a partner, Classic FM US began broadcasting in several locations in the USA.

Sir Peter and his wife Lady Michael, or Pete and Maggie as they are generally known, founded Peter Michael Winery in the Knights Valley region of Calistoga in 1983. The winery, which produced its first vintage in 1987, reflects the Michael's farming heart. "If you have spent a lifetime in international business, you need to return to the soil, it's a pretty basic human feeling," says Peter. "Of the many businesses I have founded, this is the only one which carries my family name. I hope it will remain as a legacy for generations to come." Maggie echoes these sentiments, not just in the California winery scene but as the practical head of a 1000-acre family estate in Berkshire, England, where she successfully farms grain and raises cattle.

NICOLAS MORLET WINEMAKER

Peter Michael Winery is honored to have Nicolas (Nick) Morlet as Winemaker. Wine has always been a way of life for Nick who grew up working on his family's Domaine, Pierre Morlet & Fils, in Avenay-Val-d'Or, Champagne. Born in Epernay, France to a fifth generation wine-grower family, Nick, as a child, enjoyed learning about all of the practical and technical aspects of vineyard farming and winemaking.

Nick pursued education and work that immersed him in the classic winemaking techniques of Burgundy, Bordeaux and Champagne. Following his degree in Viticulture, Enology and Wine Business at Lycée Viti-Vinicole de Beaune, Burgundy, Nick worked at Maison Chanson Père & Fils in producing Premiers and Grands Crus of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Then, while working at Margaux's 2nd Grand Cru Classé "Chateau Lascombes," Nick researched the advantages of macerating Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot in small oak barrels. His thesis on "vinification intégrale" won him honors when he graduated in Enology from the prestigious "Institut Jules Guyot" University of Dijon in Burgundy.

Nick's love for California wines and wine country started back in 1994 while visiting his brother Luc Morlet in St Helena. After a stint at Joseph Phelps Vineyards for the Insignia and Backus labels, working with winemaker Craig Williams, Nick joined Peter Michael Winery in the winter of 2005. Nick's extensive experience with both Bordeaux and Burgundian styles of viticulture and winemaking lends itself well to the Peter Michael mission of handcrafting single-vineyard, limited production bottlings from small, mountain vineyards.

In addition to his passions for the expression of terroirs and for the ultimate wine quality, Nick is fully embracing the legacy started by Helen Turley and developed by Mark Aubert and his brother Luc Morlet, who graduated to consultant to Peter Michael Winery.

Nicolas Morlet joins the veteran production team of Javier Aviña, Vineyard Manager, and Tom Eakin, General Manager.

CLASSIC WINES

Fashions come and go but the choice of a great wine endures market whims and trends.

Great wine comes from the perfect match of grape to soil and site. It originates from a vision and an understanding that the winemaker has of the vineyard. Then comes the decision of which grapes and clones to choose to allow the vineyard its greatest expression. That is why Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon are grown at the Peter Michael Winery...not because they are particularly chic, but because they fit the terroir and because they are classics.

"After drinking many of the greatest wines in the world and after long consideration, it is quite clear that great wine is the result of choosing the correct grapes, planting them in the right spot and then preparing the wine carefully to preserve the tastes and aromas that the vineyard has provided."

Sir Peter Michael

"The best winemaking takes place in the vineyards and through these grapes, we can taste our terroir."

The Winemaker

The Peter Michael philosophy remains true to this commitment: classic grape varieties grown in small mountain vineyards made into great wines using classical winemaking techniques. Given this commitment to the product, only a limited quantity will ever be available.

THE VINEYARDS

The label on the back of each bottle of Peter Michael wine simply says "Mountain vineyards, classical wine making, limited production." Each of these three elements forms an essential component in the final product but it is the mountain vineyards that hold pride of place.

To drink a Peter Michael wine is to experience the flavor and aromas of a vineyard. The philosophy of the winery is irrevocably purist - whatever the vineyard gives becomes the wine. Winemaking serves exclusively to preserve the quintessential character, flavor and personality of each vineyard so as to convey a sense of place, or "terroir."

Notably, the grapes for all Peter Michael wines are grown on steep volcanic mountain slopes, some over 40 degrees. These slopes are oriented toward the morning sun, maximizing light and gentle warmth. The constant breezes from the Pacific coast to the west cool the vineyards, slowing the ripening of the fruit.

Due to this slow, gradual ripening, harvest at Peter Michael Winery typically starts three to four weeks later than in the valleys ensuring full physiological maturity of the fruit. The tannins have shed their harsh edge and the flavors are concentrated and complex.

The views are breathtaking from these mountainous vineyards perched 2,000 feet above sea level on the western face of Mount St. Helena. Only the hardy and sure-footed can navigate these slopes whose vine rows plunge straight down the mountainside without a terrace to block them. The vineyard's volcanic-origin rhyolitic soils are extremely rocky and well drained, which keeps yields low. The poor hillside soils contribute to the deep color and flavor of the grapes. Extremely rare in wine growing regions, rhyolitic soils are one of the most prized of all wine-growing soils. Their rare mineral composition gives grapes exceptionally distinctive flavors and aromas.

The estate Chardonnay vineyards are planted at the highest and coolest elevations on the property, nearly 2,000 feet above sea level. The Chardonnay clones vary in each of the three estate vineyards, but all are known for their low yields, which create intense flavors and aromas.

Peter Michael's Les Pavots vineyard is planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. Located just below the Chardonnay vineyards at around the 1,500 foot level, these Bordeaux varieties grow in extremely rocky volcanic soils. Cuttings for the Cabernet Sauvignon came from the famous Bella Oaks vineyard, the Merlot from the Three Palms, Winery Lake and Truchard vineyards, and the Cabernet Franc from the Madrona Ranch. All are classical, small- cluster clones valued for producing wines with the concentration and structure of a first growth.

In addition to the Knight's Valley Estate, the winery has acquired two additional estate vineyard sites with the purchase of its Fort Ross-Seaview Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast in 1997 and the 2009 purchase of its Au Paradis Vineyard, nestled in the heart of Napa Valley at Oakville.

The quest for estate Pinot Noir started with a search for the ideal vineyard site. Seeking only property with "great growth" potential, the family's attention centered on the rugged ridges of the Sonoma Coast.

In 1998, the winery purchased a truly exciting parcel, located on the first ridge inland from the coast above the South Fork of the Gualala River. The total acreage is about 400, but we developed just 30 as vineyards. The rest of the property was reserved as a wildlife corridor. After years of study and careful preparation, 25 acres were planted in 2006 with an additional 5 acres planted in 2007.

The vines are situated on a set of moderate to very steep slopes between 1,000 and 1,500 feet above sea level. The exposure is a mix of east and northeast facings and benefits from both the cooling influence of the Pacific Ocean just over the ridge to the west, and the mild, sunny mountain climate. The soils are a patchwork of rocky alluvial sediments, decomposing volcanic material, and clay. All blocks have been planted to carefully selected Burgundian field selections of Pinot Noir on a mix of rootstocks.

Subtle differences in exposure and marine influence between the three sections of the vineyard give us three different expressions of terroir and continue the winery's mission of crafting vineyard-specific wine.

Au Paradis is located on the east side of the Oakville appellation in the heart of the AVA's famed "red dirt" and comprises 26 acres of breathtaking views. Since the purchase we have been busy improving what was already a very highly regarded growing site. We removed eight acres of unsuitable vines in preparation for future replanting, completely replaced the trellis system on the remaining 18 acres,

reengineered the drainage and irrigation systems, drilled a new well and added adequate water storage capacity, built a new vineyard shop building, and resurfaced all of the vineyard roads. At the same time, the vines were lavished in the hands-on attention of Vineyard Manager Javier Aviña and his team as they brought the farming up to PMW's exacting standards

To ensure intensity of flavor, the winemaker is severe in keeping the densely planted vine canopies small and growth in check, what we at Peter Michael Winery call "bonsai-ing" the vines. Each vineyard site was chosen following extensive research of the soil, climate and grape variety. The cost of planting and farming the mountain vineyards here is at least twice that for valley-floor sites and, of course, hand picking has to be the rule. No mechanical harvesters can navigate these steep slopes.

Granted, the costs are enormous and the yields are low. But since it is here in the mountains where the finest wine grapes are grown, this is where Sir Peter has staked his commitment to quality.

WHAT THE NAME MEANS

L'Après-Midi (la-prey mi-dee), (Sauvignon Blanc):

French for "the afternoon". A wine delicious and easy enough to drink anytime - for example, in the afternoon. Sir Peter is fond of pointing out that it is always the afternoon somewhere in the world.

Coeur à Coeur (kooor-ah-kooor), (Sauvignon Blanc):

French for "heart to heart". It is the ultimate expression of the estate's passion for both Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon; the blend is equal parts of each grape.

La Carrière (la kah-ree-air), (Chardonnay):

French for "the quarry". The name refers to the rocky soil of this estate vineyard.

Belle Côte (bel kote), (Chardonnay):

French for "beautiful slope". Named by Sir Peter after the famous ski run in Courchevel, France.

Mon Plaisir (mohn pley-zeer), (Chardonnay):

French for "my pleasure", a reference to the utter pleasure evoked by this super creamy, earthy wine.

Ma Belle-Fille (ma bel fee), (Chardonnay):

French for "my daughter-in-law". Named in tribute to Emily Michael, daughter-in-law of Sir Peter and Lady Michael.

Cuvée Indigène (ku-vay in-de-zhen), (Chardonnay):

French for "indigenous blend". Named by a young cellar worker from Burgundy doing a stage at Peter Michael. The name refers to the fact that the wine is allowed to ferment naturally without the addition of commercial yeast.

Point Rouge (point roozj), (Chardonnay):

French for "red dot". In some vintages, 4 to 6 special barrels of Chardonnay are hand selected by the winemaker because of their truly exceptional wine quality. These are marked with a red dot and bottled separately, hence the name.

Le Moulin Rouge (le moo-lon roozj), (Pinot Noir):

French for “the red mill”. Named by Sir Peter for the pleasure seekers.

Ma Danseuse (ma dan-sooz), (Pinot Noir):

French for “My Dancer”, named by Sir Peter in honor of Lady Michael, hence the unique feminine bottling.

Le Caprice (le ka-preece), (Pinot Noir):

French for “the freak” as in “of nature” attributable to the rough vineyard terroir and the fickle nature of the Pinot Noir grape.

Clos du Ciel (kloh du see-el), (Pinot Noir):

French for “wall-enclosed vineyard of the sky”. Named based on the unique microclimate of this particular vineyard site, situated on the southernmost section with greatest sun exposure and receiving the least marine influence.

L’Esprit des Pavots (les-sprey dey pah-voh) (Bordeaux Blend):

French for “the spirit of the poppies”. While not quite Les Pavots, the name refers to the fact that the wine still shows the spirit or essence of Les Pavots, the estate vineyard.

Les Pavots (ley pah-voh), (Bordeaux Blend):

French for “the poppies”. Lady Michael named this vineyard after the wild California poppies that grow on the mountainside.

Au Paradis (oh-pair-ah-dee), (Cabernet Sauvignon):

French for “in heaven”. The name recalls a magical moment at a Michael Family campout on a hilltop in our vineyards. They awoke to discover a sea of fog below them and a bright new day above. Milo, the youngest grandson, then about six, asked, “Are we in heaven?”