



# PETER MICHAEL

WINERY



FALL  
LETTER,  
2013  
I S S U E  
X L I I

## ENTOURAGE – A MEETING OF PROFESSIONALS

We have written before about the Michael family's "100 x 100" vision. This is Sir Peter's shorthand for their long-term commitment to the winery, "100% ownership by the family for 100 years." The Michaels have owned the Knights Valley property since 1982: over thirty years, and the winery has released 25 vintages. Along the way, we acquired and developed our Seaview property on the Sonoma Coast, dedicated to Pinot Noir, and our Oakville property, dedicated to producing a Cabernet Sauvignon (to be released in 2014). With such a multifaceted project, there is the obvious question of how to keep building on our success. Six years ago, the Family, in conjunction with the winery's management team, developed a simple plan, assemble a team of experts. But, who? And how?

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*"As a family, we often gather with Nick and the team to taste wine. However, its around the tasting table with the Entourage where we really open ourselves to a group of independent wine experts, to taste, share, discuss and listen. The Entourage is both our most important group of independent ambassadors and critical advisory panel."*

— Paul Michael



## ENTOURAGE — A MEETING OF PROFESSIONALS

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*Entourage, Spring 2013:*

*Left to Right, Top:*  
Paul Michael,  
Jesse Rodriguez,  
Jamie Ritchie,  
Steven Spurrier and  
René Roger.

*Bottom: Tom Eakin,  
Peter Kay, Nick Morlet,  
Danielle Price and  
Michael Nelson.*

*On cover:*

*Right to left, Paul Michael,  
Steven Spurrier and Tom  
Eakin focus on a Les Pavots  
“comp set.”*

*Far right:*

*Winery Chef Janelle Weaver  
puts the finishing touches on  
one of her creations for an  
Entourage dinner.*



Enter the winery’s “Entourage.” This is a diverse group of highly experienced professionals from a broad cross-section of the wine industry. They serve as an advisory board on issues ranging from the quality and style of both our wines and our competitors’ wines, to new trends in the industry, to developing markets, and a host of other topics. In addition, the members function as informal ambassadors for the winery and the winemaker.

We view Entourage as a process. Formal meetings are held at the winery twice a year. Bringing in the panel from across the globe is truly a commitment. Each two-day session consists of a series of tastings, meals, and dis-

cussion sessions. We start in the morning and do not finish until late in the evening. The goal is to create a convivial but professional atmosphere, where ideas can be discussed freely and opinions shared frankly. What we want most from the members is their honest feedback.

So who attends Entourage? The panel is composed of nine regular members, four “in-house” and five “outside” members. The goal is to involve PMW’s management team so that every department gets the benefit of the Entourage’s perspective. The in-house members are: Paul Michael, as the representative of ownership, Tom Eakin, our General Manager, Nicolas Morlet, our Wine-

maker, and Peter Kay, our Director of Sales & Marketing. Javier Aviña, our Vineyard Manager, attends the evening sessions.

The outside members serve a term of several years, so the panel evolves slowly. The current group is quite diverse: René Roger is Professor of Enology and Beverage Management at the Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), Paul Michael’s alma mater, and one of the world’s most famous hotel schools. Michael Nelson is co-creator of TheWineArray.com, an online wine recommendation service. Previously, he spent a decade running the wine list at Manhattan’s iconic Gotham Bar and Grill. Dani-

elle Price is currently the owner of a business brokering rare wines to private clients around the world, and is also a partner in a wine project in Napa Valley. Before this, she spent seven years as Executive Director of Wine for Wynn Resorts overseeing their wine programs worldwide. Jamie Ritchie has spent over two decades with the auction house Sotheby's and currently heads their wine operations in the Americas and Asia. Jesse Rodriguez is a highly regarded sommelier, currently studying for the Master Sommelier exam. His resume includes managing the wine programs at The French Laundry in Yountville and Grand Del Mar Resort in San Diego.

At the most recent meeting, we introduced the concept of guest members. A guest would attend just one meeting. This is seen by the Michael Family as a way of getting a broader perspective without sacrificing the cohesiveness and familiarity gained with a group of regulars.

Our first guest was esteemed wine critic and *Decanter* magazine Consulting Editor, Steven Spurrier. Steven is also, very notably, the organizer of the famous 1976 "Judgment of Paris" blind tasting where a panel of expert French judges picked California wines over some of the top wines of Burgundy and Bordeaux. The furor stirred by this outcome was such a strong influence on Sir Peter's thinking that a mural depicting the unveiling, titled "After the Upset," is now prominently featured at The Vineyard, the family's wine-centered restaurant and hotel in the UK.

So what is tasted by the Entourage? The tastings fit into three categories, four if you count the meals. "Verticals" are tastings of multiple consecutive vintages of a single PMW bottling. The point of these is to examine how the wine is aging, and observe vintage to vintage variations. This helps us evaluate the consistency of the wines as well as how the gradual evolution of our winegrowing and making techniques is reflected in the finished wines. Horizontal tastings are, strictly speaking, multiple PMW bottlings, all from the same vintage. A variant of this would be a "portfolio tasting" where the Entourage

tastes the current vintage of all 14 of our bottlings. These are useful to evaluate the consistency of our wines and highlight the differences between the different bottlings. Competitive set or "comp set" tastings are blind tastings where we mix our wines in a flight of benchmark wines. The flight is scored to produce a group ranking of the wines. It is natural for winery staff to develop a "house palate"—a natural preference for one's own wines. It is, therefore, very interesting to see how the palates of the "outside" members may or may not contrast with the palates of the PMW team.

Food plays a large role in the Entourage process. As the meetings are long, it is natural that meals would be included. The meals also allow us the opportunity to have free-flowing conversations with our guests while evaluating the wines in a more natural way: paired with food. Some of the most impactful influences coming out of these meetings started as dinner conversations. Winery Chef Janelle Weaver regularly produces spectacular pairings that show off the wines and her food to best advantage. At times, competitive wines share the table with our own.

While an Entourage meeting is tremendous fun, everyone involved takes the event very seriously. At its

core, the process is dedicated to helping assure the long term success of the Michaels' vision for the winery. In between meetings, it is not unprecedented for winery management to consult one or more Entourage members when they encounter a new challenge. In the end, the Entourage members are part advisor, part friend, part eyes and ears in the market, and part ambassadors for the winemaker and the Michael Family's "100 x 100" vision. The process itself reflects the depth of commitment the Family has to the future of the winery. ■



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## 2013 FALL RELEASE

### 2011 MON PLAISIR

#### *Estate Vineyard Chardonnay*

The wine is intense and perfumed, exhibiting a bouquet of lemon cream, honey, and candied grapefruit, with subtle notes of spring flowers. The palate is rich, full-bodied and boasts a creamy mouthfeel with stunning hints of stone fruit, pear, dry apricot and brioche. A mineral character and suggestions of pain grillé and hazelnut complete each taste alongside its spectacular long finish; it is enjoyable now and will continue developing for seven-plus years.



### 2011 MA BELLE-FILLE

#### *Estate Vineyard Chardonnay*

This wine shows spectacular intensity: packed with aromas of peach, tangerine blossom, dried apricot, golden apple and nectarine, accented with wet stone-like minerality, brioche and peony flower notes. Rich and concentrated, the wine displays deep flavors of William pear, honey, almond, meringue, dry chamomile, orange rind and notes of baked Reinette apple. In the mouth, the wine is tactile and extremely pure. Layered and seductive, the finish is very long. The 2011 Ma Belle-Fille is enjoyable now and will continue to develop for seven-plus years.



### 2011 POINT ROUGE

#### *Estate Vineyard Chardonnay*

Due to the small size of the Chardonnay harvest, no Point Rouge was produced in the 2011 vintage. Please look for this bottling to return with the release of the 2012 vintage next year.

### 2011 LE CAPRICE

#### *Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir*

Le Caprice is easily identifiable by its deep ruby color and bright crimson tinge. It shows aromas of raspberry, currant, red cherry, strawberry, fresh leather and graphite. On the palate, the 2011 Le Caprice expresses a wonderful concentration of red forest fruit, which has a subtle way of lingering into a long lasting finish.



### 2011 MA DANSEUSE

#### *Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir*

Ma Danseuse charms the eye with its red ruby color and bright maroon tinge. Its bouquet is vibrant and delicate with aromas of roses, raspberry, Griotte cherries, forest floor, red currant, and a subtle note of violet. 2011 Ma Danseuse is delicate, fragrant and refined and shows wonderful concentration on the palate. Spring blossoms and potpourri, with subtle notes of rare spices embrace a silky texture and lingering aromatic finish.



### 2011 CLOS DU CIEL

#### *Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir*

Clos du Ciel has a deep red ruby color and an intense nose of black cherry, cassis, strawberry liqueur and black raspberry, with truffle, graphite and leather notes. The wine has a sensual texture and impressive length, exhibiting heavy notes of fruits and spice along with a full-bodied mouthfeel. 2011 Clos du Ciel will benefit from a couple years of cellaring resulting in a developed bouquet. The wine will age gracefully for a decade or more.



### 2011 LE MOULIN ROUGE

#### *Pinot Noir*

On the nose, the 2011 Le Moulin Rouge is packed with intense aromas of raspberry and red cherry, backed by notes of Earl Grey tea. As the wine develops it unveils a concentrated bouquet of strawberries and Griotte cherries with hints of clove and cinnamon. A full, rich mouthfeel exhibits a wine with breadth, depth and elegance, with a layered finish. The 2011 Le Moulin Rouge will age gracefully for a decade.



### 2012 L'APRÈS-MIDI

#### *Estate Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc*

The 2012 L'Après-Midi is a superb expression of our estate terroir. Intense and multi-layered, the bouquet is dominated by mineral, white and yellow spring flowers, honeysuckle, hawthorn, white currant blossom, lily of the valley, lemon, lime, white peach, and gooseberry completed by touches of acacia honey and candied anise. Rich and zesty, the flavors are reminiscent of the aromas with fresh almond notes. The strong mineral background balances the overall richness, giving a superb refinement. The finish is layered very long and elegant. The wine will benefit from another year of cellaring and will age gracefully for a decade.



### 2010 L'ESPRIT DES PAVOTS

#### *Estate Vineyard Red Bordeaux Blend*

Spectacularly rich and intense, the 2010 L'Esprit des Pavots displays all of the usual features which characterize the Les Pavots terroir: blueberry, vanilla bean, licorice, chocolate, cedar and coffee. The fruit of the younger vines brings additional aromas of red cherry, plum and red pepper to the complex bouquet. The palate is full-bodied, rich and concentrated, exhibiting abundant youthful yet supple tannins and a lingering finish. Fruit forward and enjoyable at release, this wine should age well for a decade.



“Mountain vineyards, classical winemaking, limited production”



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