

Winemaker Perspectives on Petaluma Gap's Iconic Vineyards

Great wines are made from great grapes, and just like winemakers and brands that earn renown with wine drinkers for the quality of their wines, winegrowers and vineyards can earn a reputation for producing consistently high-quality grapes. As a result, they are sought out by top winemakers; the most sought after becoming iconic vineyards, whose names you see on wine labels as vineyard-designated wines.

Two of the most renowned vineyards in the Petaluma Gap AVA are Gap's Crown and Sangiacomo's Roberts Road Vineyard as illustrated by the dozens of brands that are making vineyard-designated Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from these two sites. That includes lauded brands like Kosta Browne, Bruliam, Garry Farrell, Patz & Hall, Sojourn, Three Sticks, Trombetta, Lombardi Wines, MacRostie, Montagne Russe and many more. The two vineyards are within a mile of each other in the northeast corner of the AVA.



This year's annual Petaluma Gap Wind to Wine Festival on August 10, offers Pinot Noir lovers an opportunity to taste wines from these two iconic vineyards and hear the winemakers' thoughts on the unique wines made from these vineyards.

"The Petaluma Gap Wind to Wine Festival is a very special tasting event. We're a band of small family wine businesses eager to connect with people, sharing our stories and wines," said Tony Lombardi of Lombardi Wines, who will be pouring his 2021 Gap's Crown Pinot Noir at the tasting seminar.

"I've known Bill Price, the owner of Gap's Crown Vineyard, since 2009, when I was managing the Kosta Browne brand," says Lombardi. "Bill has been a mentor and a friend throughout the years. I started working with the vineyard in 2008 and since 2019, I've been making wine from a select block and clone."

Tony grew up in Sonoma County, the Lombardi family has called Petaluma home since 1947, and for the last three decades, he has been immersing himself in the wine industry.

"The fog and wind from the Pacific Ocean play a crucial role in shaping the wines made from grapes grown in the Petaluma Gap, giving them a distinctive blend of generous acidity and rich textures that linger on the palate," says Lombardi. "Crafting a Petaluma Pinot Noir is my tribute to honoring my family's long-standing history in this region."

In relation to the winegrowing history of California and Sonoma County, Gap's Crown Vineyard is young; it was planted between 2002 and 2005, but its unique qualities were quickly recognized, and those who discover it keep coming back to it.

Sojourn Cellars has made a vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Gap's Crown Vineyard since 2007, longer than any other winery still doing it.

"We look forward to making this wine each year due to the considerable depth and intensity of these Pinot Noir wines. They stand out in contrast to the nine other vineyard designate Pinot Noirs we make each year," says Randy Bennett, General Manager & Winemaker, Sojourn Cellars.

Bennett will be pouring Sojourn's 2021 Gap's Crown Pinot Noir at the Wind to Wine Festival iconic vineyards seminar, offering guests a chance to compare the same vintage and vineyard made by different winemakers.

"The unique combination of rocky, volcanic soils, cool windy Petaluma Gap climate, and meticulous farming by the Price Family Vineyards team consistently results in grapes with complex flavors, balanced acidity, and thicker skins from the windy conditions. The resulting wines are extraordinary, and you can see that across producers."

Seminar attendees will also taste a third 2021 Pinot Noir from Gap's Crown by MacRostie Winery. Heidi Bridenhagen, Director of Winemaking, MacRostie Winery expressed what makes Gap's Crown unique.

"Gap's Crown is an iconic vineyard that has helped put Petaluma Gap on the map. The undulating and at times rugged terrain produces wines with complexity and intrigue. Never the first to be harvested and rarely the last, this vineyard showcases the climate of bountiful sun and exposure on cool mornings and being windswept and cool during potentially hot afternoons."

Illustrating how impressed she and MacRostie are with the quality of the grapes, they are not content with just buying the grapes but try to replicate the feat of making a great vineyard. "Gap's Crown along with Roberts Road are what inspired me to develop our own vineyard in the area, Nightwing Vineyard," says Bridenhagen.

There seems to be a consensus that place and people are the key factors for iconic vineyards, and Roberts Road Vineyards is just west of Gap's Crown at the base of Sonoma Mountain. It was first planted by the Sangiacomo family in 1999, but they have a long history of farming in Sonoma County, transitioning from pears to grapes starting in 1969.

Kevin Bersofsky, winemaker at Montagne Russe will be pouring his 2021 Roberts Road Pinot Noir at the Wind to Wine iconic vineyards seminar and explains what makes these grapes special.

"First off, great grapes are grown by great people and the Sangiacomo's are amongst the best: meticulous farming with year over year consistency. Given its lower lying position, rich soils, and even growing conditions, their fruit makes opulent yet complex wine. It's a consistent fan favorite."

Over twenty different wineries source grapes from Roberts Road Vineyard with over a dozen vineyard-designated wines, and even though they've been growing grapes for decades, it wasn't until 2016 that they started making their own wines.

At the Wind to Wine seminar, Steve Sangiacomo will be pouring their Sangiacomo Wines 2022 Roberts Road Pinot Noir, giving attendees a chance to hear directly from the grower of one of Sonoma County's iconic vineyards.

The third annual Petaluma Gap Wind to Wine Festival will be held at the Gambonini Family Ranch on August 10. [Tickets to the event and iconic vineyards tasting seminar can be purchased through Eventbrite.](#)