

Paul Colantuoni

WINEMAKER, ROCCA FAMILY VINEYARDS



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Winemaker Paul Colantuoni

Paul’s winemaking style is the perfect mix of old-world finesse and new-world exuberance. He believes that excellent wines start with excellent vineyards, and that gentle, minimal care is essential to transforming fantastic fruit into fantastic wines, and he shares our belief that 90% of great winemaking is done in the vineyard. He uses long, slow fermentations, frequent punchdowns, gentle pressing and extended barrel aging. Our wines are bottled without fining or filtration to express all the rich varietal character of the fruit.

Paul Colantuoni works closely with Mary Rocca to craft world-class wines with a non-interventionist approach. “My goal is to faithfully express the personality of Rocca’s vineyards,” he comments. “These sites have wonderful rocky soils with excellent drainage. Both vineyards have great climate conditions and sun exposure.

All of the pieces are already in place to make world-class wine, so my job is mainly to stand out of the fruit's way," he adds.

Paul has spent much of his life between the US and Europe, and his winemaking style is the perfect mix of old-world finesse and new-world exuberance. "My goal is to make charismatic wines with lots of flavor and aromatics, but without sacrificing elegance," he explains. "I try to soften the tannins and make wines that are very intense, but they must also be balanced and authentically convey the character of the vineyards."

Paul was born to Italian parents in New Jersey. At the age of 13, his family moved to Belgium where they were first exposed to the top wines of France and Italy. "Those wines were a revelation," he states. "Being introduced to such beautiful wines at a young age had a profound impact on me, and those wines continue to influence my winemaking style," he adds.

In 1990, Paul returned to the United States to study Chemical Engineering and Molecular Biology at Princeton University with the goal of becoming a doctor. At the beginning of his senior year he took a year off to travel and spend time with his family in Europe. While living in Italy, a roommate introduced Paul to some family friends associated with a local winery. Paul was instantly drawn to the intellectual challenges and the visceral pleasure of winemaking, and he quickly found himself spending most of his free time at the winery tasting and learning about wine. When he returned to Princeton in 1994, he was determined to pursue his new passions and to build a life as a winemaker.

"When I resumed my senior year, I changed my major to Romance Languages and started looking for a wine job in Napa," Paul explains. "I had never even been to California, but I knew that Napa was America's wine Mecca and that there was no better place in the world to start. I wrote a blind letter to Tim Mondavi and explained that I had no experience in wine but that I was motivated and would get

the job done. I guess it worked, because he ended up offering me three different positions,” he says.

After working as a Wine Educator and a Lab Technician at Robert Mondavi Winery for two years, Paul set his sights on securing a position that would offer him hands-on involvement in winemaking. He eventually crossed paths with a talented young winemaker named Ehren Jordan, who received his training in the town of Cornas in France under the renowned vintner Jean-Luc Colombo. In 1998, Ehren brought Paul on as Assistant Winemaker at Neyers Vineyards, a small winery located in the Pritchard Hill area of Napa Valley.

“Ehren had a big impact on me,” states Paul. “He’s an exceptional winemaker with a very traditional, vineyard-focused, hands-off approach. That continues to influence my style to this day. I believe that 90% of great winemaking is done in the vineyard. It is a fundamental principle. My job is simply to realize the full potential of Rocca’s amazing fruit,” he says.

Paul further refined his vineyard-focused approach by working in Europe for several years, beginning in 2002 at Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France, and in 2004 as the Cellar Director for Brancaia in Maremma on the Mediterranean coast of Tuscany. It was during these formative years in Europe that renowned winemakers Frédéric and Daniel Brunier and Carlo Ferrini helped Paul develop a talent for honing in on and faithfully expressing the signature qualities of great vineyards.

After returning to the United States in 2006, Paul started Colantuoni Consulting. In addition to Rocca Family Vineyards, he currently works with CONSTANT-Diamond Mountain Vineyard in Calistoga, and Alanté Vineyard in St. Helena.