



Diamond Wine Club

MODUS OPERANDI

Napa Valley

If you are ever looking for a prime example of a self-made (wine) man, you need look no further than Jason Moore.

Moore, 41, is a Dallas native who is self-taught in just about everything, including winemaking and the wine business. As a youthful waiter in several of Dallas' top restaurants (Steel Restaurant for one), Moore acquired a taste for wine and kept the idea of entry into the wine industry in the back of his mind.

Shortly after the turn of the century, he decided to do something about it. He talked his bride-to-be into selling everything the couple had and moving to California to follow his dream. Moore ended up in Davis, California, home of the prestigious University of California Davis, ancestral home of many of California's greatest winemakers.

Moore soon discovered UC Davis wasn't right for him. "I guess I thought the UC Davis program was too theory-based," Moore admitted during a recent interview. "I have always been a self-taught, self-study type of person and that's exactly the path I decided to follow." Moore then spent several years devouring every book on wine and winemaking he could find and started making wine in a friend's garage. "I had a number of mentors from the wine business - growers, owners, winemakers and the like. Whenever a problem arose, I called and asked for help. Many of the answers I got were conflicted, so I followed whomever I thought was right."

In 2004, he talked two friends into advancing some 'disposable income' into a new winery project and Modus Operandi Cellars became a reality. His first production was a mere 200 cases, but Modus Operandi Cellars has grown substantially to its present level of around 2,000 annual cases.

Jason Moore realized from the beginning that securing good grapes would be a problem

and went straight to the source, sort of.

"I was still waiting tables at the Michelin-starred La Toque Restaurant in Napa and one night I had a table with several wine luminaries. I had waited on Mary Rocca (Rocca Family Vineyards) on prior occasions and when the opportunity came, I quietly asked her if she knew where I could buy some wines. She offered to sell me some bottles, but I clarified what I wanted; some small tonnage of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from which I could make wine for my newly formed winery label. She was very gracious and helped me with my first grapes. I still buy Cabernet Sauvignon from her marvelous Rocca-Colinetta Vineyard in the Coombsville AVA and we have become great friends."

From its humble beginnings, Modus Operandi Cellars has become a darling of the boutique-loving wine aficionados of Napa Valley and beyond. The company's rise to fame was gained mostly on Moore's hard work and dedication, and not on any high ratings or scores his wines might have received.

"I've always stayed away from scores or ratings," he informed. "I always preferred to build my business on true relationships with people. That makes for a solid footing and in the case of Modus Operandi Cellars, it certainly seems to have worked."

The name 'Modus Operandi' is borrowed from the Latin and refers to Moore's unique method of using information he received from his many friends and mentors and then doing his own thing - his own modus operandi. He takes credit for the design of his striking label for Modus Operandi as one might expect.

Jason Moore's plans for Modus Operandi Cellars is to grow the brand to around 5,000 cases within the next five-year

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JASON MOORE,
OWNER & WINEMAKER

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period. He currently operates everything out at Basswood and boasts that the shared facility has two private tasting rooms that are state-of-the-art and something special.

Does he have his own wine style? “I would say my wines are just like me - big and bold. They are very extracted with loads of fruit, exactly what you would expect from a 260-pound Texan,” he added.

Modus Operandi Sauvignon Blanc 2008 was served at a White House State dinner last year, a great accomplishment for the tiny winery.

The future is extremely bright for the boutique winery. A Pinot Noir will be added next year, and Moore has received commitments from several growers and is adding new vineyards to his growers list.

You will hear many more great things about Modus Operandi Cellars in the future. Please remember it was a *Diamond Wine Club* selection at Gold Medal Wine Club where you first enjoyed this great wine. Cheers!

Modus Operandi 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

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— *Tastings.com (Beverage Testing Institute)*

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This month's Diamond *Plus!* Featured Wine:

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95 Points - *Antonio Galloni's Vinous*

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