



Diamond Wine Club

MOONE TSAI

Napa Valley

If ever a winery was destined for success since inception, chances are Napa Valley's Moone Tsai Vineyards would be found near the top of the list. Founded in 2003 by the team of iconic Mike Moone and Larry and Mary Ann Tsai (pronounced *Chai*, like the tea), the smallish winery has risen to the apex of Napa Valley wineries in just over a decade.

Moone's story is incredible - Beringer Vineyards, Luna Vineyards, Arnold Palmer Wines and others, plus a forty-year career of near perfection in the wine industry. Larry Tsai is a Long Islander turned Californian with a Princeton University degree and a masters from Stanford University. His wife MaryAnn holds a masters from Harvard's esteemed Business School.

When Mary Ann worked with Moone at Beringer Vineyards, the three became close friends.

"One evening," Larry Tsai related, "after late rib-eyes and too much Cabernet, it was suggested that we all get together and make a little Cab. I answered, 'we should make a big Cab' and our project was unofficially formed."

Moone Tsai Vineyards became a reality in 2003 with the release of a tiny 181 cases. The fact that it was incredibly well received came as little surprise to anyone in the know.

"To say that we were pleasantly excited and a bit surprised would be correct," Tsai added. "What has been even more astounding was the fact that some of our other wines, our Chardonnay and Bordeaux blends, for example, have also been warmly received."

Moone Tsai has reached an annual production of around 3,000 cases and Larry Tsai sees a possible elevation of that number to another 500 to 1,000 cases in the future. He is in no rush to increase production, but does not discount that fact someday.

Several years ago, the Tsais bought out their partner and now own Moone Tsai Vineyards. Larry Tsai is extremely grateful to Moone. "We both owe Mike our start in the business," he confessed. "His guidance has made us what we are today and he continues to be involved in various aspects of our winery. We will continue to pay him homage as long as we continue to operate."

The current winery operation is a true husband/wife undertaking. Larry has a host of duties - mostly on the selling side and the forecasting and implementation of the direction of the winery. MaryAnn deals with the financial aspects of the business, from bookkeeping to wholesale distribution to banking relations.

"Our jobs interact perfectly," Larry Tsai interjected. "It's almost a perfect fit. We each do a little bit of everything, and some of them happen to overlap. Take the growers and their contracts - she handles all that and oversees the winemaking operations. If she needs help, I step in and do whatever I can."

Speaking of winemaking operations, Moone Tsai Vineyards just happens to be in rarefied air with their winemaker, Philippe Melka. Melka is a 1989 graduate of the University of Bordeaux in Agronomy and Enology, he was a protégé of the eminent Professor Gerard Seguin, the acknowledged leader on soils and their effects in Bordeaux. While in southwestern France, he worked for Chateau Petrus, Chateau Haut Brion, and others. Melka also worked in Australia and Italy before coming to the United States. In California, he was associated with Dominus Estate, and served as consultant to the likes of Vineyard 29, Dana Estates, Lail Vineyards, Seavey Vineyard, Parallel, and Gemstone. He has been named as one of California's top consultants on numerous occasions and his wines have won frequent top awards.



continued on page 2



LARRY & MARYANN TSAI, OWNERS

continued from page 1

“Both MaryAnn and I consider Philippe our ultimate blessing. He involves us in many aspects of the winemaking and also the selection process for the final blendings. That aspect enables us to be involved in our winery in a way that founders seldom are. He is a true gift to us both.”

As to the future, the taciturn Tsai remarked thusly. “We both realize that Moone Tsai Vineyards is Act II for the both of us. We derive great joy at being able to focus on making beautiful wines that many people can really enjoy. This is a wonderful chapter in our lives. We can now do things together that we simply couldn’t do when we both had different careers.” The Tsais and their fine winery are wonderful ingredients of the Napa Valley wine community. We know you will enjoy!

Moone Tsai 2014 Charles Heintz Vineyard, Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

247 CASES PRODUCED

94 POINTS — *Antonio Galloni’s Vinous*

“... the 2014 Chardonnay Heintz Vineyard, is fabulous. Ripe apricot, peach, mint and wild flowers open up first, but it is the wine’s textural richness and oiliness - both signatures of Heintz - that stand out most.

The 2014 is unctuous, rich and buttery, but also wonderfully restrained.”

93 POINTS — *Robert Parker’s The Wine Advocate*

“Far more intriguing, sleek and concentrated, is the 2014 Charles Heintz Vineyard from the cool, windy Sonoma Coast. Also 100% barrel-fermented with indigenous yeast, it offers loads of unbuttered popcorn, white peach, pineapple, poached pear, lemon, caramelized citrus and a touch of marmalade in a medium to full-bodied, wonderfully vibrant, energized style with gorgeous fruit and length.”

Winemaker’s Notes - Philippe Melka

“The 2014 vintage of our prized Sonoma Coast Chardonnay invites inspection with a beguiling nose of white flowers, star jasmine, and exotic tropical fruit. On the palate, notes of lemon zest and pineapple coyly announce themselves, while the wine’s subtle oak framing, layering and pleasing acidity combine to present a picture that is at once refined and elegant, while also remarkably light on its feet.”



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

**DR Stephens 2014 Estate
Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley**

93 Points, “Best Buy of 2016” - *Wine Enthusiast*
92 Points - *Robert Parker’s The Wine Advocate*
92 Points - *Wine Spectator*

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