



Diamond Wine Club

ROCCA FAMILY VINEYARDS

Napa Valley

Mary Rocca and Eric Grigsby had more in common than the fact they were both biology majors as undergraduates. When the two met in graduate school at Boston University, both were pursuing careers as doctors. Mary became a dentist and Eric an M.D., with a specialty in anesthesiology.

Eric was a native of Knoxville, Tennessee and Mary's family were residents of northern California, mostly around Santa Rosa. When the pair married in 1985 and decided to set up their respective practices, the choice of San Francisco as a venue wasn't all that difficult.

"We also realized that we both thoroughly enjoyed the wine country north of San Francisco," Mary Rocca explained. "The enjoyment of wine was a fairly major thing we both had in common. In fact, there were stories in my family that my grandfather had once made wine in his basement when I was a child."

The pair proceeded to establish their individual practices for the next fifteen years until the call of the grapes beckoned to the pair as the new millennium approached its launch. As was the case in a number of successful wineries, the owners of Rocca Family Vineyards weren't intent on first becoming a winery. "We were like a number of others who ventured into the wine business," Mary Rocca continued. "We were attracted to the idea of actually doing something with the land. Agriculture was big with both Eric and me, and with grape prices soaring, we intended to be growers and not vintners. It was only in the very back of our minds that we might someday become winemakers."

A wonderful piece of property (approximately 21 acres) came up for sale in 1999 that was located at the junction of the Yountville crossroad and Silverado Trail and we jumped at the chance. The plot was already planted in grapes and was under a long-term contract to Stags' Leap Winery.

"We were able to make a deal with Stags' Leap that allowed us to keep a small amount of the grapes for our own use. We named the vineyard 'Grigsby' after my husband's family name." The prospect of having the availability of top-flight grapes made the idea of a winery incredibly appealing to Eric and Mary. Since her surname was Italian and sounded more like a winery, Rocca Family Vineyards soon became a reality.

The grapes that Mary Rocca chose for her own use were the venerable Rhône varietal Syrah and the definitive Napa Valley varietal Cabernet Sauvignon. Rocca and her husband believed in the future of these grapes and began the process that would lead to the making of their own wines. They searched around for a talented up-and-coming winemaker to produce the label's first vintages and settled on Cecilia Welch Masyczek, a rising star in local winemaking circles. In 2008, Cecilia passed the winemaking baton to Paul Colantuoni, whose perfect mix of Old World Finesse and New World Exuberance has made him the perfect fit at Rocca Family Vineyards. Paul has worked and studied in Tuscany and Châteauneuf de Pape under some of the greats, and he continues to produce world-class wines under the Rocca label.

The company's first release of 700 cases in 2002 met with unexpected wild success and the ride was on. Rocca Family Vineyards quickly became one of the top Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon producers in Napa Valley. Rocca added another remarkable 12 acre vineyard on a knoll in the Coombsville growing area (just outside the Napa City limits) that affords a unique 360-degree sun advantage to its vines. The additional vineyard assures Rocca continued grape supply and future growth.

The production at Rocca has leveled out at around 2,500 cases each year. "We are of a mindset to run the winery and not let the

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MARY ROCCA & ERIC GRIGSBY
PROPRIETORS

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winery run us,” Mary Rocca added. “So far, we have been able to insure that our wines are only carried in the finest stores and restaurants.”

Mary Rocca is proudest of the fact that her wine has won three blind tasting competitions, two held in San Francisco and the other in Bordeaux. The wines involved were very expensive, much more so than the Rocca Family Vineyards’ entries. “To have reached that level this early is something special,” Rocca finalized. “It is a great tribute to our grapes and our hard working staff.”

Eric Grigsby still practices and teaches as a medical doctor in Napa Valley, but Mary Rocca credits him with much of the inspiration for the winery’s early success. He continues to serve as the president of a clinical research and education facility while Mary runs the winery and directs Rocca Family Vineyards’ sales and marketing.

Rocca 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Grigsby Vineyard, Yountville, Napa Valley

970 CASES PRODUCED

95 POINTS + PLATINUM MEDAL — *Sommelier International Wine Challenge*

95 POINTS — *Decanter Asian Wine Awards*

93 POINTS + EDITOR’S CHOICE — *Wine Enthusiast magazine*

“Brooding acidity complements the big, ripe fruit and sizable tannins, accented by hints of dried tobacco and cinnamon. This wine could stand a decant, vigorous swirl or cellaring, through 2028.”

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

“This wine is a softer, almost Margaux-style of wine compared to the Coombsville. The wine offers Asian plum sauce, a touch of ripe, black cherries and blackcurrants, background smoky oak and a nice fleshy full-bodied mouthfeel with velvety tannins and well-integrated acidity, wood and alcohol. This is a beauty that can be drunk now or cellared for another 15 years.”



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

Corley 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon
Yewell Vineyard, Napa Valley

93 Points - *Wine Spectator magazine*

134 CASES PRODUCED

