



PALMAZ
VINEYARDS
TRADITION, TERROIR
& TECHNOLOGY

FOR OUR PARENTS, AMALIA & JULIO

May their story inspire their grandchildren
and generations to follow to find love and
inspiration on this beautiful land.

—FLORENCIA PALMAZ
& CHRISTIAN GASTÓN PALMAZ



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II

A LETTER FROM NAPA

Christian Gastón Palmaz

People come to the Napa Valley for any number of reasons. Some are drawn to the mild weather. Others wish to indulge themselves. Quite a few are simply looking to escape. My parents had another reason entirely: to bring their family together. This pastoral dream entailed the two of them, their children and grandchildren (and pets!) working and playing as one. In 1997, they found the perfect setting: an abandoned winery and a neglected house, both in need of enough work to keep several generations occupied.

Over the next five years, we revived the vineyard and began digging the caves that would become our state-of-the-art subterranean winery. Once all that was complete, making the wine itself was even more satisfying — a challenge that has introduced us to an industry filled with extraordinary people and one that, indeed, brought our family together.

From day one, our guiding philosophy has been “love the land, know the grape and make a wine that honors both.” After nearly 20 years, though, I’ve come to understand that producing luxury wine involves more than just land and grapes — it’s also a matter of people.

Everyone in the family has brought an individual touch to Palmaz Vineyards; our passions and personalities seep into the soil and, accordingly, the wine. This book explores how that happens — the ways in which my family pursues both the art and the precision of winemaking.

That my father, Julio, has a medical background is readily apparent in the winery’s scientific components, yet other aspects of his personality exert a strong influence as well. Growing up, I observed closely as Dad scoured antique shops for fine vintage clocks. His fascination with precision mechanisms made our house chime raucously every hour. Likewise his restorations of classic Porsche prototype race cars, each one a milestone of technology and engineering. So too our winery, one of the largest and most innovative underground facilities on Earth.

The entrepreneurial spirit (and boundless charm) of my mother, Amalia, infuses the vineyard. “Be the Chanel of wine,” she has always instructed us, encouraging us to make impeccably crafted yet restrained wines. Her bonhomie is the foundation of all our personalized tours, too; we welcome every guest into the winery as my mother would a friend into our home.

My sister Florencia’s culinary background serves her well as she guides the wine in the context of the food we serve. More importantly, that combination brings our guests together. For Florencia, no joy is greater than to see friends and family gathered around a table, connecting with one another through food, wine and conversation.



THE
PALMAZ
FAMILY

from left:

Floencia & son Nicholas;
Amalia & Julio Palmaz;
Jessica, Christian &
son Gastón

not pictured are dogs:

Gina, Nelson, Minka &
Coco; *Siamese cat:* Max

The welcoming personality of my wife, Jessica, imbues the winery as well, her relaxed laughter and easy banter resonating around the grounds. She and her team of ambassadors greet first-time wine drinkers and seasoned collectors alike, explaining the intricacies of gravity-flow winemaking — and then sharing our precious vintages with them.

My own love for technology has spurred me to build tools designed to enhance the creativity of everyone at the vineyard. Whether they help with irrigation mapping or fermentation tracking via thermographics, these devices have one purpose above all: to help us master the art of winemaking. It pleases me no end to see Palmaz Vineyards' extraordinary creative talent liberated from the rote data crunching of yore. Yet all this proprietary technology only helps guide their actions — the human element is ultimately what makes a bottle of wine worthy of the Palmaz label.

In the end, perhaps my greatest pleasure comes from watching my son, Gastón, and nephew, Nicholas, grow up on the property. Seeing these kids sample their first grapes, scamper among the barrels and sell lemonade outside gives me a glimpse of the adventures to come as the third generation sinks its roots into this miraculous land. My parents' dream has become bucolic reality.

One sad — yet also life-affirming — note to mention as well: All of us at the vineyard were deeply saddened by the July 2015 passing of Hollywood legend Jerry Weintraub, a great friend of the Palmaz family who graciously wrote the foreword to this book. Jerry captured his own best essence some years ago when asked if he'd have done anything differently over the decades. "I have a hit book, a wonderful life, and I'm doing a million things in the theatrical business," he replied. "Why would I have any regrets? I can't have any regrets."

That was Jerry. As George Clooney put it shortly after his passing, "We'll laugh at his great stories and applaud his accomplishments, and in the years to come, the stories and accomplishments will get better with age, just as Jerry would have wanted." Indeed. And while all of us mourn Jerry, we're honored that his foreword and portrait for this book turned out to be one of his final projects. His memory will forever serve as a reminder that life is meant to be lived — to be shared and celebrated, just like a bottle of fine vintage wine.

That's especially true because ultimately, of course, the purpose of this book is to share with you our adventure. This first volume guides you through our vineyards, our winery and caves, and our home, showcasing the delicate minuet we dance with Mother Nature in order to produce each vintage. The second shares how we live and play through our tastings, lunches, festivities and other events. I hope you'll be inspired to uncork a bottle, pour a glass and experience for yourself the joy of bringing friends and family together around a table.

On behalf of our entire family, cheers!

Christian Gastón Palmaz
Napa, California
July 2015



IV

HISTORY

AFTER HENRY

After several decades of working the property, Hagen died in 1895, leaving behind 450 acres of “fine vineland,” as the *San Francisco Call* described it. “Some of the very best people of San Francisco have been patrons of this place for years,” the newspaper added. “There is a large house, with 10 sleeping rooms, together with a number of cottages that are rented to guests; large wine cellars; fermenting and storage cellar; distillery; gashouse; bowling-alley; milk house and many other outhouses; fine barn and stable for 20 horses.” Broken heart or no, Hagen did a lot of entertaining on the property, and there’s nobody more popular than a host with easy access to wine.

Hagen’s vineyards had survived the devastating phylloxera infestation of the 1890s, which wiped out many a winemaker in the valley. This yellowish aphid, *phylloxera vastatrix* (also known by another scientific name, *dactylasphaera vitifoliae*), carries bacteria that infects the roots and stems of grapevines, choking the latter to death; only after the industrious little buggers had devastated thousands of prime grape-growing acres in Europe and the United States did someone come up with a solution, namely grafting the phylloxera-resistant rootstocks of American grape varieties onto vulnerable European vines. Before phylloxera reached California, Hagen had 125 acres of vineyards; the aphids reduced that to roughly 60, although he managed to save the remaining vines by switching to the same resistant stocks as the rest of the wine-growing world.

In the years following Hagen’s death, the Cedar Knoll vineyards, along with the rest of Napa’s grape-growing community, would face an enemy much worse than sap-sucking insects: mindless lawmakers.

In January 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment ushered in Prohibition, forcing every winery either to shut down or, in a bid to stay solvent, produce a modicum of wine for sacramental or “medical” purposes. Grape quality in Napa collapsed. Enterprising souls turned many of the valley’s former winemaking properties into hives of black-market activities, including gambling and prostitution, and bootleggers cruised the nighttime roads. Hagen’s land fell into disuse, the carefully tended vineyards overtaken by weeds.

The property’s next owner had no interest in reviving the estate to its former glory. In 1934, months after Congress repealed the ban on alcohol, Norris King Davis purchased the house and grounds. Davis came from an illustrious political family. His grandfather, John Davis, had served in Congress and as governor of Massachusetts. His father, Horace Davis, was twice elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. His uncle, John Chandler Bancroft Davis, did a tour of duty as President Ulysses S. Grant’s Assistant Secretary of State.

Norris Davis never climbed to those political heights, choosing instead to work in San Francisco’s foundry industry. Given the rough-and-tumble nature of national politics, it’s maybe hard to blame him. But he respected his legacy by filling the house with significant

125 ACRES
ON WHICH
HAGEN GREW
GRAPES

64 ACRES
ON WHICH
THE PALMAZES
GROW GRAPES

100,000
GALLONS
OF WINE
PRODUCED
BY HAGEN

20,000
GALLONS
OF WINE
PRODUCED
BY PALMAZ

THE GRANT-DAVIS DESK

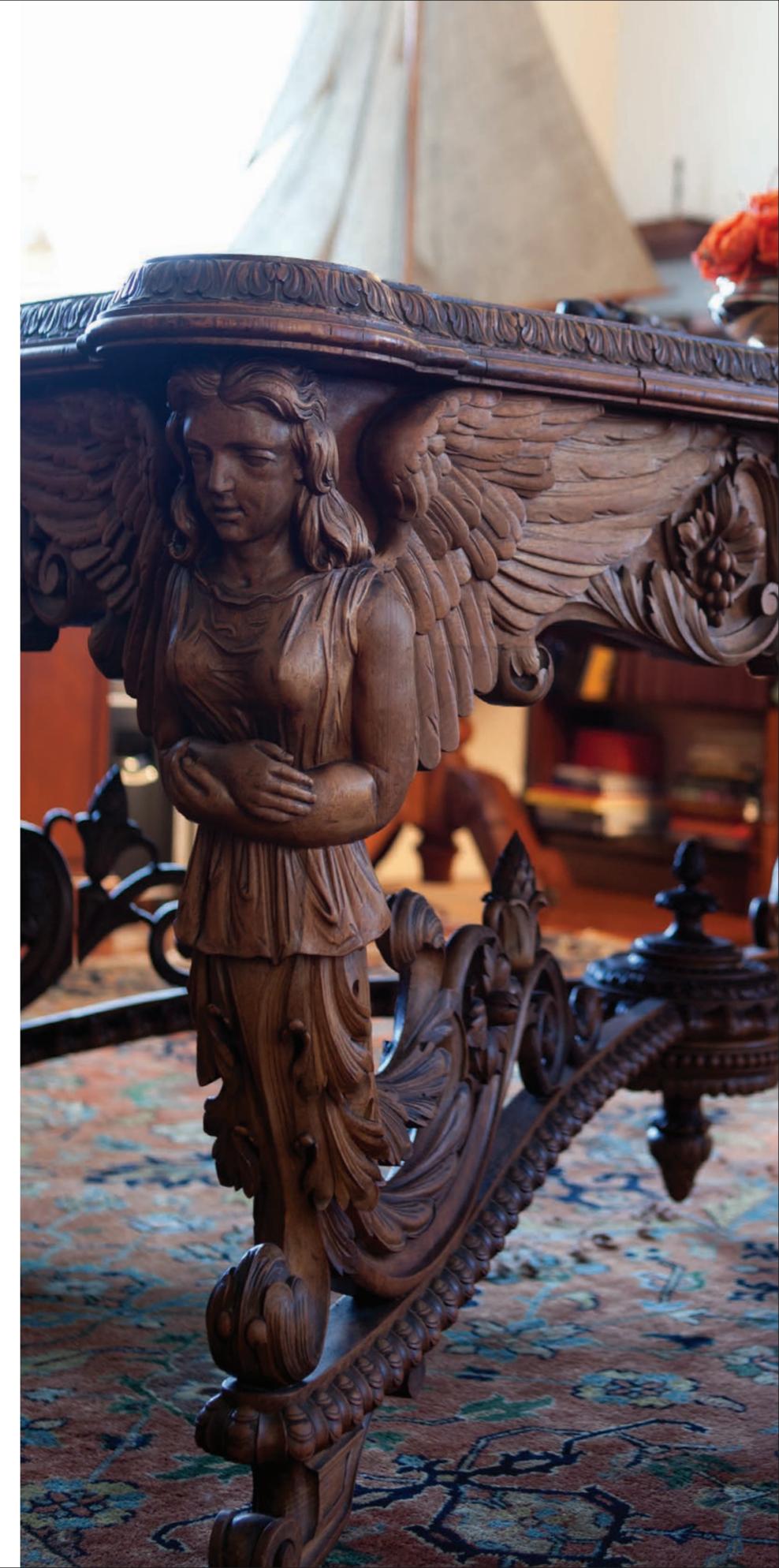
Legend has it that the Hagen House library desk was a gift from President Ulysses S. Grant to Cedar Knoll estate owner Norris King Davis’s uncle John Chandler Bancroft Davis, Assistant Secretary of State under Grant.

furniture, including a massive desk that might have belonged to Grant himself, which still resides in a third-floor room. (Considering its gargantuan size and thickness, probably capable of deflecting a cannonball, the desk would also prove hard to remove from that room.)

When Davis died in 1954, the Napa wine industry was undergoing a slow revival. Throughout the rest of the valley, what started as isolated vintners experimenting with the long-fallow land transformed over the course of several decades into a genuine commodity, with enormous vineyards and wineries squeezing out other types of local farming. Yet Hagen’s old property remained quiet during this period: Davis’s stepdaughter’s husband’s second wife owned the place, and lived in it as a conventional home.

And while Hagen’s legacy had faded into obscurity by the end of the twentieth century, his estate had a decade-long brush with Hollywood in the 1980s, when it played the role of “Tahoe House” in the CBS primetime soap opera *Falcon Crest*, starring Jane Wyman. Set in the fictional “Tuscany Valley,” the show’s principal photography took place at the Spring Mountain Vineyard, in St. Helena, and other locations throughout Napa, including the Palmaz Vineyards; interiors were shot in Southern California on a Culver City soundstage.

When the Palmaz family arrived in the late 1990s, the only signs of the once-formidable winemaking operation were the wild grapevines snarled in the oak trees and the rusting equipment scattered in the fields.





flows (i.e., the sediment carried by streams). Further millennia of geologic action carved out a depression wide and deep enough to become a hyper-local terroir.

On the far edge of the bench, a tall swinging gate opens onto a dirt-and-rock trail that seems to climb almost perpendicular to the valley floor. As Christian's passenger, you look out the window at the tires rumbling a few feet from the path's stony, crumbly edge. It's a long way down. But the sense of extreme danger is a bit illusory: Throughout the nineteenth century, thirsty residents navigated this same path with carts and horses in order to reach the hard-liquor still that some enterprising souls built in a clearing near the top. You figure that if drunken farmers could ride a skittish animal up and down these gradients without a problem, so can a four-wheel-drive vehicle built expressly for that purpose.

The path levels out at 1,200 feet and, after another switchback, angles down a shallow

ramp that leads onto the wide shelf of the middle vineyards, part of which sits in the looming shade of a forested ridge. Depending on the season, the sun might only peek above those far treetops by midmorning, exposing the vines to less sunlight than they would have received at the higher and lower elevations; that, combined with how the surrounding hills funnel the air coming down the mountain, means these vineyards are subject to the lowest temperatures on the property. Malbec and Merlot thrive here, thanks to their tendency to ripen early, as do white-wine grapes.

When the family first moved onto the property, they found a few surviving Zinfandel vines from Hagen's day on this level; now those blocks grow Riesling. Planting a narrow belt of 13 parcels along the side of a mountain was an engineering challenge, but Julio did it with the expectation that the combination of soil and weather would benefit the complexity of the resulting wine blends.

In the center of the 1,200-foot elevation vineyards sit the remains of a small stone building, reduced by decades of mountain weather to four rough walls open to the sky. This was Bill Woodward's Whiskey Ranch, a distillery founded in 1846. The ruins now store equipment and loose lumber; their tall weeds hide the occasional rattler. Julio wants to restart the distillery someday, and knowing the Palmaz family, any such effort will likely morph from a side project into an endeavor that would have left Hagen agog. But that's an initiative for some future time.

From the middle vineyards, the path zig-zags its way past a quarry and up another set of steep slopes to the top of Mount George. At these higher elevations, each switchback offers a sweeping view of not only southern Napa but also, if the day is clear, the dim shapes of San Francisco Bay and the skyscrapers just beyond. The highest set of Palmaz vineyard parcels sits 1,400 feet above sea level, with

seven Cabernet allotments that yield powerful tannins and dark-colored wines. These 12 acres form the core of the Palmaz Cabernet's structure and intensity, and one of the contributing factors is the soil: The loam, carefully mixed with cave tailings from the winery's excavation, controls the vines' vigor through consistent nutrients and hydrology.

The temperature at this altitude is around 11 degrees cooler than the valley floor, on average, and a bracing wind whistles its way through the rocks. The famous San Francisco fog that swamps the vineyards at the lower elevations rarely reaches these heights, resulting in more sunlight in the mornings — yet another characteristic of the terroir.

Between three distinct microclimates and more than 1,000 feet of elevation change, such extreme diversity can be daunting to manage. Christian's philosophy has always centered on farming the individual vine rather than the collective vineyard; this degree of attention allows every vine to thrive and yield grapes of balanced ripeness. Those who oversee the vineyards draw on a combination of tradition and new technology to optimize the ability of every vine to flourish in

its distinct environment, while exhibiting exceptional and unique attributes.

The uppermost vineyard, like the others, sits atop a bed of sand with perfect porosity, based on rocks excavated from the winery cave. To help with drainage, the upper vineyard is tilted 5 degrees.

On a blustery spring day, a raised section of vineyard is in mid-construction. A wall of large stones (again, sourced from the cave) marks its borders; standing on the edge, you can look down and see the substrate and soil layered like a cake, every layer engineered for maximum grape support. As little as possible is left to chance: If something isn't working, a shifting of elements can perhaps improve the crop the next time around.

Whether close to a river and thick with moist silt or clustered around mountain peaks as a combination of sand and volcanic ash, soil contains a complex mix of nutrients, such as magnesium, that can sustain hungry vines in their relentless fight for growth. Those who oversee the Palmaz vineyards draw on a combination of tradition and new technology to optimize the ability of every square inch of soil to sustain life, whether that means installing

tubing to feed an appropriate amount of water to every vine, planting cover crops between vine rows to provide more nitrogen to the soil or grading a field for optimum drainage.

With data on high- and low-vigor areas in hand, everyone working on the Palmaz vineyards can move to the next steps of tasting grapes, analyzing the soil, planting more cover crops or whatever else they need to do to improve the quality. In the past, it might have taken a vintner a decade or more to determine that a certain patch needed some incremental adjustment in order to produce good grapes; data can reduce that time to months or years, while providing an overarching perspective on vineyard trends. Long-term data from vintage blending, for example, guides winter projects such as trellis adjustments or drainage improvements.

The winery's lab also plays a vital role in ferreting out much of the data related to the grapes' composition. Yet technology (whether in the form of multispectral cameras, data analytics, chemistry tests or genetics) only does so much. If you want to grow wine-worthy grapes, you need the right terroir, guided by the right hands.





autumn

CYCLE OF WORK

Someone with little knowledge of the wine-making process might imagine harvest as a titanic struggle against the elements, bristling with complexity and danger. Nothing could be further from the truth. Harvest is the simplest time of year for the vineyard team: Vintner and vine have been dancing all season long, and the former usually has a good idea of the latter's moves.

That dance involves many laborious steps. As the vine grows, it must be trained, trimmed and cajoled into its eventual shape. With each pass through the vineyard, the winemaker attempts to exert a little more influence over the grapes' ripeness and flavor expression.

On the micro scale, the grapes must receive just the right amount of sunlight and airflow around the cluster, to encourage proper ripening. On the macro scale, the parcel must ripen so that all its clusters reflect the same flavor expression. On the Palmaz estate, the grapes from each parcel end up in a single fermentation tank, which becomes a single component of the final blend.

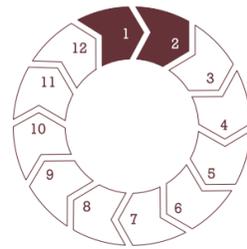
Years of planting have taught the Palmaz family the best ways to cultivate their patch of land. Much of the vineyard work is done by hand, with the average vine touched 34 times per year, a frequency and exactitude that recalls bonsai-tree trimming. Such techniques are gentle, and facilitate fine-grained attention to every part of the growing and harvesting process, resulting in a higher-quality crop. Because the Palmaz winery releases so few cases per year in comparison with the world's wine conglomerates (which are under pressure to produce as many

bottles as possible per season, in order to satisfy investors), it can afford to focus on producing only the best.

This high degree of attention minimizes any variation in quality from one vintage to another. Achieving it requires a full-time vineyard team to become intimately familiar with the vines' individual needs. (Year-round farming staff are an increasingly rare sight in the wine industry, due largely to pressures to minimize costs; many estates prefer to use outsourced labor that works in the vineyards only four or six times per year.)

Much of the vineyard work in a given year relates to canopy management, or balancing the airflow and sunlight on the grape clusters. As a growing vine climbs its trellis, the vineyard team will help it conform to a desired shape by adjusting the wires on the trellis cross-arms. With careful consideration, the canopies are adjusted for optimum sunlight penetration and fruit shading.

At Palmaz, growing grapes of exceptional quality is a yearlong affair involving dozens of rules and steps. The long road to harvest begins in winter, when the vines are pruned to prepare for the coming year's growth.



1. PRE-PRUNING AND PRUNING

Every new vintage begins with these early passes through the vineyard, which help set the stage for how the fruit will grow on the vine. In order to protect certain areas from frost threat and delayed bud break (i.e., when the new buds emerge from the vine), the vineyard team will pre-prune or cut only half of the previous year's growth. In pruning the vines, any cane from the previous vintage is cut away, any open wounds painted over and small buds selected for the coming growth.

2. TYING

A simple-but-essential task that helps establish the shape of the cordons, or the permanent trunk arms of the vine. In some areas, the cordon may be extended to reduce vigor, or cut back to focus the energy of a struggling vine.



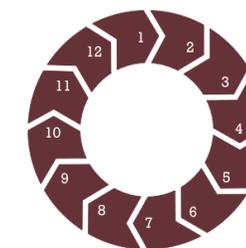


HARVEST

Determining when grapes are ripe for picking is an art, and winemakers can disagree on what constitutes “ready” versus “overripe” or “not ripe enough.” Or, as Christian will tell you: “The most defining moment of any wine is the moment the fruit is deemed ready to pick.”

At the ideal point, with the acids and sugars in proper balance, the grapes have become ripened and juicy, with no hint of vegetal character; if you bring your nose close, you can smell the fruit’s perfume. Although a plethora of technology aids decision making at Palmaz, taste and smell are among the most important tools a winemaker uses to determine whether the time has come to harvest. No two kinds of grape will necessarily mature at the same rate: a Cabernet Sauvignon, for example, may take longer. For all the acclaim that wineries and winemakers receive for their work, the art and uncertainty of when to pick grapes underlines just how much nature, the true star of the proceedings, remains in control. The winemaker’s ultimate task is to coax the best qualities from the fruit.

The day before a parcel is harvested, the vineyard teams pass through to set the stage. Leaves are removed up to the first trellis wire, making the cluster easier to reach when harvesting.



The pages of a standard Napa guidebook offer photo after photo of happy vineyard workers picking grapes beneath a picturesque sun. While that makes for pretty images, the Palmaz family and winemakers harvest their fields at night, assisted by powerful lights mounted on tractors and headlamps. Some of the reasons behind this shift are biochemical: Once the sun dips below the horizon, the grapes’ photosynthesis production gears down, fixing the sugar and acid levels in place, resulting in more consistent ripening across all the grapes picked that evening. The grapes arrive at the winery pre-chilled and firm, and can endure the de-stemming with less bruising.

As workers move through the vineyards snipping mature clusters free of the vines, their colleagues drive crates full of grapes through the massive double doors of the Palmaz winery’s top level. These crates find a temporary home in a windowless side tunnel that enjoys cool, steady temperatures. This is the moment when the fruit is passed off from the vineyard team to the cellar team, and a three-year process begins transforming the grapes into wine.



4C - CSPL1421D

Description: 300-Block D 1.1 Tons

Lot Status: Cold Stack

Duration: 15 days, 0 minutes

27.5° Brinex

Differential: 2°

LRSP: 157°F

URSP: 157°F

0.1°/Day

Brinex Rate

57.7

51.3

0.0 / Hour

ROC

09/18 10:00 am

09/19 12:00 am

09/20 12:00 am

09/21 12:00 am

09/22 12:00 am

09/23 12:00 am

09/24 12:00 am

09/25 12:00 am

09/26 12:00 am

09/27 12:00 am

09/28 12:00 am

09/29 12:00 am

09/30 12:00 am

10/01 12:00 am

10/02 12:00 am

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10/04 12:00 am

10/05 12:00 am

10/06 12:00 am

10/07 12:00 am

10/08 12:00 am

10/09 12:00 am

10/10 12:00 am

10/11 12:00 am

10/12 12:00 am

10/13 12:00 am

10/14 12:00 am

10/15 12:00 am

10/16 12:00 am

10/17 12:00 am

10/18 12:00 am

10/19 12:00 am

10/20 12:00 am

10/21 12:00 am

5C - CSPL1414P

Description: 300-Block P 2.7 Tons

Lot Status: Fermenting

Duration: 8 days, 0 minutes

11.8° Brinex

Differential: 2°

LRSP: 157°F

URSP: 157°F

0.1°/Day

Brinex Rate

81.3

80.1

2.2 / Hour

ROC

09/18 12:00 am

09/19 12:00 am

09/20 12:00 am

09/21 12:00 am

09/22 12:00 am

09/23 12:00 am

09/24 12:00 am

09/25 12:00 am

09/26 12:00 am

09/27 12:00 am

09/28 12:00 am

09/29 12:00 am

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10/15 12:00 am

10/16 12:00 am

10/17 12:00 am

10/18 12:00 am

10/19 12:00 am

10/20 12:00 am

10/21 12:00 am

2C - CSPL1413D

Description: 300-Block D 5.2 Tons

Lot Status: Fermenting

Gallons: 1041

Duration: 8 days, 0 hours, 15 minutes

81.0

85.5

0.1 / Hour

ROC

09/18 12:00 am

09/19 12:00 am

09/20 12:00 am

09/21 12:00 am

09/22 12:00 am

09/23 12:00 am

09/24 12:00 am

09/25 12:00 am

09/26 12:00 am

09/27 12:00 am

09/28 12:00 am

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10/15 12:00 am

10/16 12:00 am

10/17 12:00 am

10/18 12:00 am

10/19 12:00 am

10/20 12:00 am

10/21 12:00 am

2C - CSPL1425C

Description: 300-Block C 1.7 Tons

Lot Status: Cold Stack

Duration: 15 days, 0 minutes

16.8° Brinex

Differential: 2°

LRSP: 157°F

URSP: 157°F

-0.2°/Day

Brinex Rate

81.0

85.5

0.1 / Hour

ROC

09/18 12:00 am

09/19 12:00 am

09/20 12:00 am

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09/22 12:00 am

09/23 12:00 am

09/24 12:00 am

09/25 12:00 am

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THE RECIPE OF WINE

Winemaking begins with the vineyard team executing its cycle of work (see pages 82–93) under the guidance of Mother Nature and the winemaker. At harvest time, the grapes cross the threshold of the winery cave and make their way into the hands of the winemaking team, which begins the two-year process of immortalizing that year’s fruit into a memorable wine.

SELECTING, DE-STEMMING AND SORTING

Each cluster is gently cut away from the vine and placed in a bin under the cool cover of night. It is imperative that the grapes are transferred to the fermentation tank while still fresh and chilled, in order to retain the delicate berry aromas in the wine.

As soon as the grapes enter the winery, the winemaking team goes to work. Two team members stand at the grape-receiving table, visually inspecting each cluster. They discard any leaves or twigs, as well as any clusters that have green, under-ripe sides. Only the evenly ripe, clean clusters proceed to the de-stemmer.

De-stemming is a delicate task, performed with a very specialized piece of equipment that removes individual berries from their stems with gentle rubber fingers. The berries pass onto a sorting table that vibrates, thereby removing the stems.

Grape clusters are notoriously tight. When loosened from their stems, their centers reveal few small, immature green berries, which can pack an astringent punch if allowed to slip into a fermentation tank. For that reason alone, Christian designed a sorting table with a wire wedge that catches and discards those smaller berries. The winemaking team observes the remaining fruit as it travels down the conveyor, tossing away any last bits of stem or jacks (the latter are the little stems on the tip of a cluster that look exactly like childhood toy jacks).

Withered or damaged berries can’t roll properly down the conveyor belt, making them easy targets for disposal. Berries that survive to the end of the conveyor then proceed into the fermentation tank placed directly underneath.



THE VIRTUE OF SANITATION

Julio, always the doctor, is well versed in the importance of spotlessness. An operating room is made as germ-free as possible before the patient is wheeled in; physicians drape and scrub and mask themselves, knowing that the more sterile the environment, the fewer microscopic critters to wreak havoc. For a century and a half, medical professionals have recognized that cleanliness, if not next to Godliness, at least makes for healthier patients.

For thousands of years, wineries haven't placed sanitation at the top of their to-do lists. Whether encouraging workers to crush grapes with bare feet, or fermenting wine in chambers filled with fruit flies and drying grape skins, most winemaking emporiums assume that the relatively high alcohol and acid content will inhibit excessive bacterial growth in wine, and therefore do not make sanitation a priority. In the very olden days, such behavior was perhaps excusable, as nobody knew the real extent to which bacteria can grow and flourish if left unchecked; merely trying to explain the concept of a microorganism would have sparked derisive laughter from people who probably believed the earth was flat.

But just as the medical profession eventually smartened up to the dangers of things you can only see under a microscope (thanks in no small part to nineteenth century French scientist Louis Pasteur and his experiments with microorganisms and fermentation), so too the wine industry realized that a dirty winery can have a negative effect on the vintages rolling out the exit door. A grimy or moldy environment breeds bacteria, which can find their way into the wine, where the deviant little critters release histamines (the biological compounds that spark allergic reactions in humans, and may cause headaches) along with other organic compounds with ominous names such as *cadaverine*. Nobody wants those sorts of things in his or her body. Even low concentrations of bacterial growth can dampen the potential of the wine by muddying the aromas and interfering with the mouthfeel.

Within the Palmaz winery's dome, the stainless-steel vats undergo a regular, vigorous cleaning that eliminates leftover solids and traces of sugar-rich grape juice, all of which could contaminate the subsequent fermentation. The graded floor and omnipresent drains prevent standing water, while good ventilation inhibits mold growth. With its white walls and ample lighting (the better to see what needs to be cleaned), the space does feel a bit like an operating theater in which the "patients" are the loads of grapes that roll in from the vineyards.

These high standards set the winery's operations apart. Unlike food manufacturing companies (such as Amalia and Florencia's GoodHeart Brand Specialty Foods), for which outside inspectors examine every inch of the kitchen and preparation space, the wine industry as a whole has no defined standard of sanitation.





PALMAZ
VINEYARDS
CABERNET
SAUVIGNON

This is the estate's Cabernet Sauvignon, enjoyable in its youth but also capable of aging extremely well. Depending on the varietal blend, this wine features rich layers of dark fruit, spicy oak, chocolate and ripe berries, and rises to a full-bodied finish.



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