FARMING WITH ALL OUR HEART

by Jodie Morlet

Rocks, Paint & a Pony

efore Luc could walk, his mother Marie-Thérèse strapped him to her back as she tended to the vines. Within a few years, Luc was tasked with helping remove rocks from the family's vineyards. Luc was so proud of the pile of rocks that he had made, that he decided

to turn his chore into a game. He began throwing the rocks in order to have them land atop the pile. His excitement soon waned when his father Eric appeared. Luc could tell by his Papa's facial expression that something was wrong. One of those rocks had broken the windshield of his father's car! Needless to say, Luc was taken off rockclearing duty and never threw a rock in a vineyard again!

For his fifth birthday, Luc received a small wooden wheelbarrow. His parents told him that he could paint it any color that he wanted. Luc chose a bright white and worked for hours painting his masterpiece. Once the paint had dried, Luc was eager to learn what his new chore would be. Much to his dismay, Eric told him to spread manure throughout the vineyards! While this ensured that no more windshields would be damaged,

Luc's wheelbarrow soon turned a dingy brown, and ever since then, he has regretted selecting that white paint.

As a teenager, Luc assisted his father in plowing the vineyards. Eric guided Gilda, the family's pony, while Luc followed behind directing the plow. Luc often jokes that he was "cheap labor," yet it was these forma-

MORLET

Family Vineyards

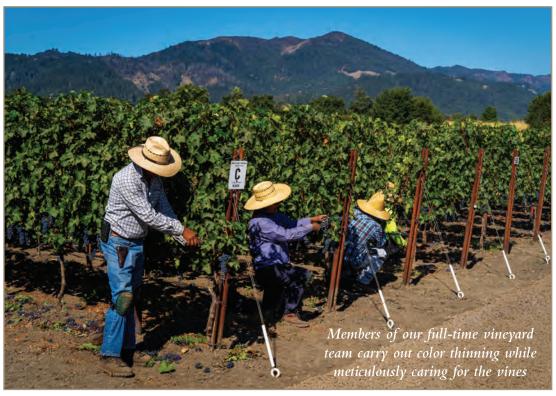
Fall Newsletter 2022

ISSUE XVII

driven past, one of our vineyards can see that Luc takes our farming practices to heart.

Un Vrai Vigneron

Prior to completing a bachelor's and a master's degree (DNO & DESS) in Œnology from the Université des Sci-



tive years growing up on his family's Champagne domaine that helped to shape his future approach to viticulture as well as his winemaking philosophy. Luc believes that great wine cannot be crafted without great fruit, and great fruit cannot be achieved without great vines. Over the years, I have heard many vintners make this claim, yet Luc truly lives by it. Anyone who has ever walked through, or even



Luc plows with his father, Aÿ-Champagne, 1983

ences de Reims, Luc earned a degree in viticulture. He enrolled at École Viticole de Champagne (referred to locally as La Viti d'Avize), because his grandfather Pierre and his father Eric had attended the school, and both gentlemen felt that Luc would benefit from the hands-on curriculum.

The school was founded in 1919 by Jules-Arthur Puisard and

his wife Louise-Eugénie. Having no children of their own, they donated their vineyards, cellars, caves, park and home. This left a lasting legacy, as winegrowers in the Champagne region have been trained there for multiple generations.

Although Luc's viticulture and winemaking degrees were obtained



'Mon Chevalier' Vineyard, Knights Valley

separately, he considers the two fields to be completely intertwined. He views himself not as a viticulturist and a winemaker, but rather as a *Vigneron* (winegrower).

THE MEANING BEHIND A MOTTO

Since founding Morlet Family Vineyards in 2006, our winery's motto has been "Manicured Vineyards, Classical Winemaking & Creative Artisanship." More than merely words on a page, it is Luc's authentic integration of viticulture and winemaking that result in the seamless and harmonious style across each of the wines in our portfolio.

To craft world-class wines, Luc must first select ideal sites. Luc makes our Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs, Syrah, White Bordeaux-style Blend and Late Harvest Sémillon through long-term, per-acre leases. Luc cherry-picked those vineyards which he believed would provide him with the best quality of fruit. Further, he is responsible for the farming decisions at each property. With a guaranteed price per acre and an understanding that Luc is making decisions in the best interest of quality, our growers do not over-irrigate to plump the berries, and they permit Luc to do as much thinning of the crop as he deems necessary each year. (Given that we have received 100 points on eight of these wines over the years, I think that it is safe to say that Luc knows how to pick a vineyard!)

It was always our vision to have our Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc wines be completely estategrown. Beginning with the 2018 vintage, this dream became a reality! The milestone was only possible thanks to Luc's ability to understand the potential of a property, along with his expertise in knowing how to properly



'Morlet Estate' Vineyard, St. Helena

develop each site. (We also had to convince our commercial lenders that he knew what he was doing, so we are very grateful that they trusted his judgment!)

We purchased our 12-acre Knights Valley property in 2005 by refinancing our home and subsequently taking out a home equity loan. In 2010, we bought our pre-Prohibition St. Helena winery, which was built in 1880. To minimize the bank's risk, we were asked to sell our home. After living on the floor of a one-room office for five months, while our two young children and puppy tried not to disturb our employees, we had finally renovated the farmhouse (built in 1853) and moved in next to the winery. Four years later, we relocated our family closer to town. Then, one day, as Luc was driving along Highway 29, he saw a "For Sale" sign on what was one of the last unplanted parcels in the renowned Oakville ap-



Luc monitors the phenological stage of one of our Chardonnay vineyards, Russian River Valley, summer 2008



'Cœur de Vallée' Vineyard, Oakville

pellation, just adjacent to the historic To Kalon vineyard, where we had been sourcing fruit since the first vintage of our Cabernet Sauvignons. In the spring of 2015, we acquired the 24-acre property, which had originally been developed in 1872 but left fallow since the 1970s. (Not wanting to have to sell another house, I asked our bankers if there was anything else that we could do. They made me sign over Luc's life insurance policy to them, but that's another story!)

For each of our estate vineyards, Luc's thorough preparation for planting consisted of the removal of any remaining tree roots and large rocks. The ground was ripped with a bulldozer in three different directions, and then the topsoil and upper subsoil were plowed four feet deep, using a French butterfly plow, to facilitate deeper root development. Out of an abundance of caution, French drains were installed every thirty feet. High density planting (2,200 vines per acre) results in competition among the vines, which in turn produces petite berries, tiny clusters, and an overall smaller crop. The 3 1/4 x 6 foot spacing facilitates proper airflow, thus naturally limiting pest and fungus development while providing evenly defused light for the fruit zone. Luc planted the low-vigor rootstocks Riparia Gloire de Montpellier and Riparia x Rupestris 101-14 and chose the field selections of the various varietals based upon the unique micro-terroir in each vineyard block.

Having our own estate vineyards allows Luc complete autonomy in making long-term decisions to grow the best quality of fruit. He is able to implement organic and sustainable (*pérennité*) farming methods with a strong sense of stewardship for the land.

TALKING TO EACH VINE

Luc personally selected and trained each member of our full-time vineyard staff. Under his daily supervision, our dedicated team diligently tends to our vines with amazing dexterity and care. These hardworking, skilled and detail-oriented gentlemen work throughout the year in whichever elements Mother Nature brings.

Even though we utilize mechanization when possible to alleviate the arduousness of some of the repetitive and laborious tasks (soil cultivation and hedging), we manually tend to the canopy and to the fruit zone to ensure the finest work possible. We estimate that each vine receives no less than fourteen different farming interventions every year! Throughout this cycle, Luc asks our viticulture team to "talk to each vine." Vines are not all created equal. In addition to influencing the upcoming crop, a farming gesture can affect the vine's production for years to come. Thus, every decision must take into consideration the unique needs of each vine.

1. Pruning Toward the end of the winter in late February or early March, while the vines are in dormancy, all unnecessary wood is removed by pruning each vine. This represents one of the most important tasks, as it will not only determine the shape of the vine and the crop level for the upcoming harvest, but also for future vintages. Each vine has its own DNA and sense of vigor, so we must adapt our general pruning style to the needs of an individual vine. Luc favors the Double Guyot pruning system. On either side of the trunk, we leave one



long cane of six buds coupled by one spur of two buds. Thus, each vine is left with two canes and two spurs. This system presents several advantages. It limits the future shoots from crossing each other, reduces exposure to fungus and potential diseases, and develops a more evenly distributed and symmetrical crop. Further, by renewing the wood each year, we diminish the number of wounds, thereby decreasing the chance that spores will land and contaminate the vine.

2. Tying Immediately following pruning, four ties per vine are made to fasten the canes to the wire and give an overall strength to the future canopy. Although this task is now semi-mechanized by using tying guns, it still requires the proper bending of each cane, without any breakage of the tissue and sap conduits.

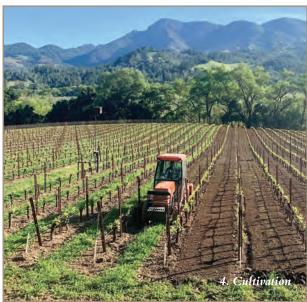


3. Mowing
As much as we love the winter rains, they also make the cover crop and weeds grow, especially as the photoperiod increases.



Mowing is essential to halt competition with the vines for water and nutrients. This intervention also limits the presence of moisture near young sprouts, protecting them from detrimental freezing temperatures.

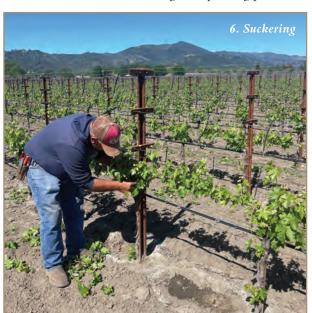
4. Cultivation In Luc's view, cultivation is paramount in order to decompact and aerate the soil, to preserve the overall biological health of the vineyard and to limit evaporation coming from the ground. The use of a spader (six mechanized shovels) cultivating deep into the ground, along with an under vine power harrow, provides the best outcome. This combination eliminates shallow roots. Deeper rooting ensures that the vines are not as dependent on weather conditions, as the roots are able to obtain moisture from the ground. This also leads to more depth in the expression of the fruit in the future wine.



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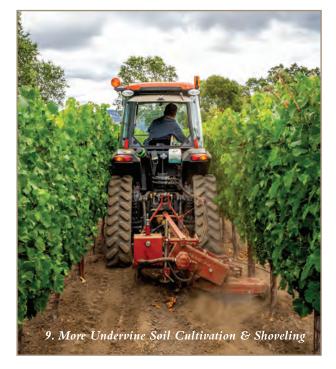
- **5. Shoveling** With a shovel or a hoe, we eliminate the few weeds that might remain around each vine trunk and stake.
- **6. Suckering** We manually remove the unnecessary growing sprouts, called "suckers." If left on the vine, they would take sap (and therefore, energy) away from the main shoots that were selected through the pruning process.





- 7. Shoot Positioning There are two objectives for this phase. First, to support the canopy so that the vines are protected against wind, and second, to begin to have an evenness of the canopy which in turn provides an evenness of the fruit zone. Luc utilizes stakes with crescents at the top to develop a wide canopy. Once fully formed, it acts as an umbrella to shade the fruit from excess sun. Three catching wires are in place. Each varied growing season determines how quickly these wires are needed. Some years, our team has barely finished the first pass in each vineyard, when the second catching wire is needed. These wires ensure that each shoot is straight and does not overlap with another. This prevents congestion of the leaves and of the future fruit zone.
- 8. Hedging Typically, the canopy is nearly fully developed sometime in May, when blooming occurs. In theory, if vine vigor were perfectly controlled, hedging would not be needed, because the tips of the shoots would never grow too high. In reality, to "erase" the differences from one vine to the next, we hedge the tops of the vines to generate a consistency of the canopy. While this ultimately provides the most even ripening of the fruit, it is what gives our manicured vineyards the appearance of a French garden.
- 9. More Undervine Soil Cultivation & Shoveling Throughout the summer, our tractorist makes multiple passes to remove weeds by cultivating under the vines with the power harrow as well as by in-row discing. A quick shoveling occurs again to remove the weeds around the vines and stakes.







10. Lateral Removal Removing the laterals by hand keeps the inside of the canopy open for proper air flow, thus naturally limiting the development of diseases such as powdery mildew, downy mildew and gray rot. This procedure also facilitates an even ripening of the grapes.

11. Thinning Thinning (dropping of clusters to the ground) is carried out in order to bring more light and air to the fruit zone. The objective of the first pass is to leave one cluster per shoot and to remove clusters in congested areas. The second pass removes the wings and shoulders of any clusters that cannot fit in one of our hands. Lastly, the third pass (color thinning) occurs after veraison has concluded. Any clusters that are green or are otherwise behind in the ripening timeline are dropped to make sure that all remaining fruit is in sync. By the time that you



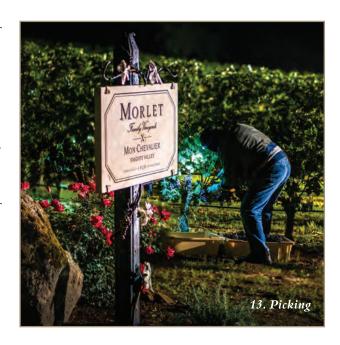
have finished reading this paragraph, you might wonder if we are left with any fruit at all! Rest assured, the fruit that remains develops into the highest quality of grapes possible, but this is easier said than done, as the art of expressing both *terroir* and vintage presents a delicate balancing act.

If not enough fruit stays, a vine will be overly stressed and its remaining grapes will be characterized by harsh tannins. On the contrary, if too much fruit is left on a vine, not enough stress will occur. This results in a dilution and lack of character of the fruit. When thinning, Luc and our team must strike the perfect balance to cause the vines to gently struggle so that we can get the very best out of them. The vines must be able to bring minerals deep from the ground for *terroir* expression. Luc doesn't seek concentration for the sake of concentration alone, but rather for highlighting the personality of each vintage.

12. Light Leafing The sooner that the fruit zone is dry each day, the better. This keeps the fruit healthy and free of pests. Luc therefore insists on a light leafing. The canopy is never drastically stripped which would cause an excess of sun to hurt the fruit. Rather, Luc prefers that we remove some leaves on the east facing side of the vine (with exposure to morning sun) in order to achieve defused light. This is extremely labor intensive, but is an essential component to our grape farming practices.

13. Picking One truly unique characteristic of Morlet Family Vineyards is that Luc manages both viticulture and winemaking seamlessly. His picking decisions are crucial, as each future wine will depend on whether the fruit was





picked at the proper physiological ripeness. As Luc is sampling, he carefully observes the status of the vines and their particular water needs. He takes 200 berries from each block to analyze the Brix (sugar content), acidity and pH levels. Not merely relying on numbers, he also tastes the fruit to evaluate the ripeness level.

Luc must monitor the weather forecast and bases his decisions on the quality of the ripeness of the fruit. The picking window varies from one varietal to another. From the time that Luc determines the grapes are ready, we only have 24 hours to pick the finicky Pinot Noir, while the more heat-resistant Cabernet Sauvignon provides a bit more flexibility.

We do not want the fruits of our labor (both literally and figuratively) to be spoiled at the last minute. The grapes are therefore picked by hand at night. The small 35-pound lugs are transported to the winery in one of our three refrigerated trucks, set at 50-55°F. These judicious efforts preserve freshness and aromatics.

14. Winterization After harvest, we spread organic compost and seeds for the cover crop. A plow with a disc then buries the seeds. This temporary cover crop, comprised of legumes, grabs its needed nitrogen from the air instead of the soil. In early spring, after the pruning and

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5



tying of the vines are completed, this "green manure" is moved down and buried with the spader, thus bringing beneficial nutrients and organic matter to the soil.

THE REST OF THE MOTTO

Luc has definitely graduated from his days using a little wooden wheelbarrow and plowing vineyards with his dad and his pony, yet a love for viticulture has always remained in his heart. Even with his deep and intuitive understanding of the vines, each growing season is different and brings its own set of challenges. Luc believes that he and our team must put all of their efforts into what they can control, and humbly accept what they cannot. To make the best decisions, they must learn by observing one vintage to the next and must utilize knowledge gained from the fields of biology (specifically histology – the study of tissues) and chemistry.

Luc is not the only one who knows how to make decisions for our vineyards. Ten years ago, I hosted Dr. David Tuggle and his wife Judy at the winery. During their visit, they asked if I would be interested in trading wine for their very slightly used tractor. They had the exact narrow Kubota that we needed! We worked out a deal, and they received a wine allocation for several years until the tractor was "paid" off. I take great pride in knowing that my tractor (which I affectionately refer to as the "Tuggle Tractor") contributes to our farming efforts, and even more importantly, I am so glad that Dave and Judy have become friends as a result of our trade so many years ago.

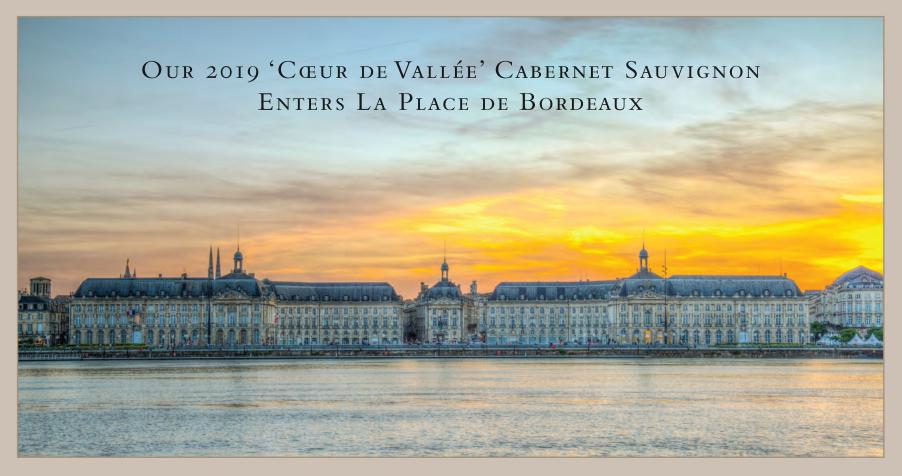
Each year, at the end of the six to eight weeks of harvest, we gather our entire staff at the picnic area nestled in the bird sanctuary at our 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard. As we enjoy the delicious lunch together, we thank the members of our vineyard team for their tremendous yearround work. As the wine flows, we engage in some friendly competition to guess the total number of estate tons picked that harvest, with the winner receiving a bottle of one of our wines. Over the years, the winners have always come from either our winemaking or vineyard teams. Luc is disqualified from participating, since he files our weigh tags, but I am holding out hope that one day, that bottle will be mine!

In December 2010, Robert M. Parker declared, "Mon

Chevalier may be the finest wine I have ever tasted from Knight's Valley. Brilliant winemaking and meticulous attention to detail in the vineyard have resulted in a prodigious effort." I wholeheartedly agree that it is the perfect blend of Luc's expertise in both viticulture and winemaking that have led to our wines receiving international acclaim. Luc continually strives for excellence and finds great joy in crafting wines that display the personality of each vintage. Our portfolio is a true reflection of his steadfast pursuit of the ultimate quality through the expression of *terroir* and the craft of *l'art d'assemblage*.

We invite you to experience Luc's passion for wine-growing by enjoying our wines with your family and friends. A Votre Santé!





Luc and I are thrilled to announce that beginning with the 2019 vintage, our 'Cœur de Vallée' will enter La Place de Bordeaux! Representing only the 5th leaf of our Oakville vineyard and the second vintage to be 100% estate grown, we are honored that this wine (94% Cabernet Sauvignon & 6% Cabernet Franc) will be distributed outside of the United States through this prestigious platform.

This spectacular wine has received 98 points from wine reviewers from different continents. Colin Hay of The Drinks Business in London proclaimed,

"Gloriously indulgent and screaming 'Napa', this is immediately open and expressive on the nose... But there's something French about this too, with plenty of the freshness and a cool, calm, measured concentration. Interestingly, there is almost a hint of Château Lascombes on the nose. Great density and very finegrained silky tannins give this a structured, architectural almost sculptural form. Spectacular, very elegant and refined." Closer to home, Jeb Dunnuck described this wine as a "full-bodied, concentrated, incredibly complex Oakville Cabernet with sweet tannins, a great

mid-palate and one heck of a finish." Lisa Perrotti-Brown concurred, "The full-bodied palate is taut, with a nice combination of bright crunchy black fruits and juicy blue fruits, supported by firm, grainy tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and mineral-laced."

We selected a dozen négociants who fully embrace Luc's winemaking philosophy and who appreciate the ultra-premium quality of the wine. Luc and I are immensely grateful to have the opportunity to share our story and passion with more wine connoisseurs around the world.

Fall 2022 Release



CABERNET FRANC

This wine captures the strong, rich and dense character of the Cabernet Franc grapes from our vineyard in the worldrenowned Oakville appellation. Bottled only during outstanding vintages, this massive wine pays homage to Luc's great-grandfather, Gaston Morlet, who OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY had a reputation for being a force of nature in his native Avenay-Val-d'Or. His

pioneering spirit remains one of the forces behind our family's passion for making the best wines possible. Crafted from 100% Cabernet Franc grapes, this wine truly is a 'Force of Nature' or 'Force de la Nature.'

Jeb Dunnuck 100 points: The 2019 'Force de la Nature' is pure perfection in this reviewer's opinion. Offering a Cheval Blanc-like nose of red and black currants, flowers, leather, sandalwood, and violets, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, flawless balance, silky tannins, and just a great finish. It's one of those wines where nothing is out of place, and it brings incredible intensity paired with a hard to describe level of finesse and elegance. Give bottles 3-4 years and enjoy over the following two decades or more. – JebDunnuck.com, March 2022



CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Our unique estate lies on the western foothills, just north of the town of St. Helena. Shallow loamy topsoil and rocky subsoil of the Hambright series, as well 'MORLET ESTATE' as full sun exposure, create superb conditions for our Cabernet Sauvignon vines. ST.HELENA, NAPA VALLEY Respecting its historic 1880 charm, we restored the pre-Prohibition stone win-

ery, which is illustrated on the label. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques and reminiscent of a true First Growth, this wine represents the precious memory of a very special place.

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW 100 points: The 2019 'Morlet Estate' is deep garnet-purple colored. The nose is quite subdued to begin, offering youthful notes of ripe, juicy blackcurrant, fresh blackberries, and boysenberries with touches of camphor, violets, chocolate box, and cedar. Full-bodied, rich, and seductive, it has firm, exquisitely ripe, finegrained tannins and seamless freshness, finishing epically long and with a myriad of perfumed layers. - The Wine Independent, August 2022

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'Mon Chevalier KNIGHTS VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Located on the foothills of Knights Valley, near Calistoga, our vineyard, comprised of rocky and loamy clay Red Hills soil, benefits from its proximity to Mount St. Helena, whose warm and windy climate is ideal for the long ripening of the red Bordeaux varietals: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec

and Petit Verdot. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques, this special wine is dedicated to our son, Paul Morlet. It is 'My Knight' or 'Mon Chevalier.'

Antonio Galloni 97 points: The 2019 'Mon Chevalier' offers up all the classic Knights Valley notes of shaved pencil, graphite, spice, cured meats, rose petal and licorice. A long, persistent finish rounds things out beautifully. This regal, sophisticated Cabernet is a total knock-out. -Vinous, January 2022



'Coup de Cœur' SONOMA COAST CHARDONNAY

Each vintage, the tasting of individual lots of Chardonnay reveals a strictly limited number of barrels with truly outstanding features. These selected barrels are then judiciously blended to compose this magnificent cuvée. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this wine represents our 'Heart's Astonishment' or 'Coup de Cœur.'

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW 98 points: The 2020 'Coup de Cœur' bursts from the glass with bold notions of ripe, juicy pears, honey-drizzled peaches, and pineapple upside-down cake, plus suggestions of crème brûlée and almond croissant. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is lively and intense, delivering tightly wound citrus and savory layers, leading to a long and chalky finish on this beautiful wine. - The Wine Independent, August 2022



This Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir is made from the very best section of the 'Côteaux Nobles' vineyard, located on the eastern slope of the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean. This great and beautiful (Joli) plot is at the very center of the ranch, its heart (Cœur). Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, we

named this age-worthy wine after the French expression which references the intriguing and attractive character of Pinot Noir. It is the 'Charming Character' or 'Joli Cœur.'

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW 96 points: The 2020 'Joli Cœur' is medium ruby-purple colored. It rolls out of the glass with up-front notes of kirsch, redcurrant jelly, and wild blueberries, plus hints of iron ore, tree bark, and wild fungi. The full-bodied palate has a rock-solid structure of grainy tannins and a lively backbone, with vivacious red berry and earthy layers, finishing long and ferrous. – The Wine Independent, August 2022



'Bouquet Garni

BENNETT VALLEY

This wine is made from an exceptional hillside vineyard located in Bennett Valley, where natural conditions are perfect for growing Syrah in the Goulding cobbly clay loam soil. As a result of the cofermentation of three field selections, this wine reveals a complex and spicy

bouquet. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques of Vallée du Rhône, this unique wine is named after the famous culinary bundle to honor our first relative who emigrated from France to the USA, Abel Pierre Aimé Coutanceau, who was a professional chef. It is the 'Garnished Bouquet' or 'Bouquet Garni.'

Jeb Dunnuck 97 points: The 2019 'Bouquet Garni' has straightup awesome notes of smoked black fruits, cured meats, chocolate, and violets, and it has an Hermitage-like feel in its tannins and structure. It's a gorgeous, layered, powerful Syrah to drink over the coming 15 years. - JebDunnuck.com, March 2022



NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON

From a judicious blend of different barrels, this special cuvée from Napa Valley embodies the youthful character and energy of the newly planted vines and is the offspring of our mature Cabernet Sauvignon bottlings. Named in honor of our children, Paul & Claire, 'Les Petits Morlet' represents their passion, talents, optimism and future.

Antonio Galloni 93 points: The 2018 'Les Petits Morlet' is a delightful wine. Soft, open-knit and so inviting, the 2018 is beautifully done. It captures all the house signatures, but in an accessible style, making it easy to drink and enjoy right now. Succulent dark cherry, raspberry, mocha, spice and licorice linger on the long, understated finish. This is an absolutely gorgeous second wine. - Vinous January 2021



SONOMA COUNTY SAUVIGNON BLANC From a judicious blend of different barrels, this special cuvée from Sonoma County embodies the lively, aromatic and classic character of the Sauvignon Blanc grapes and is the offspring of our internationally acclaimed 'La Proportion Dorée.' Named in honor of our children, Paul & Claire, 'Les Petits Morlet' Blanc represents their enthusiasm, skills and cheerfulness.

Jeb Dunnuck 92-94 points: The 2020 'Les Petits Morlet' is a terrific introduction to the estate's Sauvignon Blanc and has a pure, exotic white grapefruit and honeyed mint-like style as well as medium-bodied richness, bright acidity, and a great finish. It's clearly an outstanding effort. - JebDunnuck.com, March 2022

