

A COMMITMENT TO
QUALITY:
COMMEMORATING
OUR 20TH HARVEST

by Jodie Morlet



MORLET
Family Vineyards

Fall Newsletter 2025

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AU REVOIR VANCOUVER

Not wanting to live on separate continents any longer, Luc moved to California for me! He was hired to succeed John Kongsgaard as the winemaker for Newton Vineyard in the Napa Valley. Luc crafted the unfiltered Chardonnay as well as the vineyard designated Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot / Cabernet Franc wines.

I left my job teaching third grade in Granite Bay and was getting ready to teach first grade in St. Helena, while Luc looked forward to another harvest at Newton. Eager to start our new life together, we set off for our honeymoon on August 2, 1997. We were captivated by beautiful Victoria in British Columbia and loved seeing the stunning Butchart Gardens.

Shortly after we arrived in Vancouver for the second week of our romantic getaway, we received a phone call. Su Hua Newton was panicking, believing that the grapes were ready to be picked. Although Luc seriously doubted that the fruit had achieved physiological ripeness, we left Canada as requested. Just as Luc had thought, the fruit still needed a few more weeks on the vines. I learned two

important lessons that year: (1) Harvest in the Napa Valley is significantly longer than in Champagne, and (2) Grapes will always be the number one priority! (Luc and I recently celebrated our 28th wedding anniversary, and although we haven't made it back to Vancouver yet, we hope to one day.)

*L*UC A GRANDFATHER'S WISDOM
Luc and his two younger brothers grew up on their family's Champagne domaine, yet they often spent their summers at their grandparents' home in the Lot, located in France's Sud-Ouest, near Cahors. It was grand-père Pierre who first taught Luc to have an appreciation for agriculture. Luc assisted his grandfather in the garden and learned just when to pick the melons, peaches, and raspberries at the peak of ripeness. This passion carried over to viticulture, as Luc spent countless hours in the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir vineyards with his grandfather.

CRUSHING IN CHAMPAGNE

Although Luc had literally been raised among the vines, he felt it important to earn a viticulture degree at École Viticole de Champagne (La Viti d'Avize), just like his father and grandfather. During this time, Luc was a harvest intern at Chanson Père et Fils in Beaune. He later received a DNO (bachelor's degree) and DESS (master's degree) in Œnology from the Université des Sciences de Reims and was then hired as the winemaker for a Classified Margaux Growth.

In the summer of 1994, Luc and

I met in Paris through my stepmother. I had finished my Master of Education degree from UCLA, was teaching third grade, and was thrilled to finally be visiting France. Luc drove me to his family's home and winery in Avenay-Val-d'Or, where I toured their Champagne vineyards and caves and



*Harvest under the stars,
'Cœur de Vallée' estate vineyard, Oakville*

learned all about the *Méthode Champenoise* from Luc's father, Eric Morlet. Eric explained the importance of their various *Grand Cru* and *Premier Cru terroirs*, noting that harvest typically lasts for two and a half to three weeks each year. I had heard of the term "crush widow" but thought that anyone could handle a few weeks each year. Little did I know...



Left: Paul & Claire help Luc with harvest, St. Helena, 2004. Right: Claire holds a Pinot Noir cluster from Peter Michael's 'Moulin Rouge' block, 2005



The Morlet family celebrates their first harvest, 2006

HARVEST BABIES

As if cutting our honeymoon short wasn't enough, in October of 1998, I went into labor one month premature with our first child. We could actually see Peter and Su Hua Newton's Spring Mountain vineyards from my window in the maternity ward! Luc was still busy on his cell phone coordinating the next day's picks as I entered the fourteenth hour of labor, so I *very* strongly urged him to put away his phone and pay attention to me. Luc remained with me throughout the 33 hours of labor, and our son Paul entered the world on October 18th. My goal of not planning any important life events in the midst of harvest failed, because exactly two years later, our daughter Claire was born on October 15th!

Luc went on to become the winemaker for Peter Michael Winery from 2001 – 2005 (he has remained their consultant ever since), and as our children grew, they spent a great deal of time with Luc in the vineyards and helping with harvest. Claire first viewed Peter Michael's 'Moulin Rouge' block from atop her dad's shoulders, and at the age of five, Paul proclaimed that he saw a bear while he waited for his father to finish sampling Peter Michael Winery's 'Les Pavots' vineyard!

TWENTY TERRIFIC HARVESTS

It is hard to believe that 2025 marks our 20th harvest at Morlet Family Vineyards. Master of Wine Lisa Perrotti-Brown declared, "Few in Napa Valley are as driven, ambitious, and committed to winemaking as Luc Morlet." I couldn't agree more!

We began our label in 2006 with long-term leases on vineyards across our various varietals. Luc contracted per acre (not per ton) and was in charge of all farming decisions throughout the growing season. As time went on, we fulfilled our dream of being 100% estate grown for our Cabernet Sauvignons and Cabernet Francs, with our 'Morlet Estate' vineyard in St. Helena, our 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard in Oakville, and our 'Mon Chevalier' vineyard in Knights Valley. 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 regenerative farming methods with a strong sense of stewardship for the land, and we hope to have our own Chardonnay and Pinot Noir estate vineyards in the future.

Each vintage has brought a level of excitement along with its own set of challenges, and I am always amazed

by the tremendous dedication and hard work that Luc and our vineyard and production teams demonstrate each year. Given the number of varietals with which we work, our harvests can easily last for six weeks, not including our Late Harvest white wine. Luc personally selected and trained each member of our year-round vineyard and winemaking teams. During harvest, our full-time staff works nine to fourteen-hour days, six days per week, with a rotational schedule so that the seventh day is always covered. Luc works seven days per week throughout the season and manages both viticulture and winemaking seamlessly. He always instructs our harvest interns from France to pace themselves

and reserve their energy, explaining that "harvest is not a sprint; it's a marathon." And... what a marathon it is!

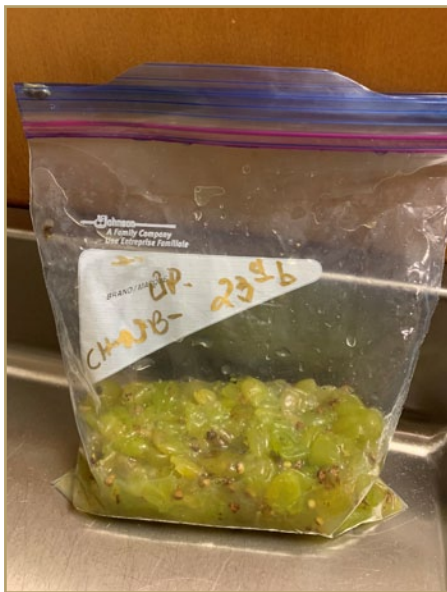
PRECISE PICKING DECISIONS

This year happens to be Luc's 38th professional harvest, but who's counting. Early on in his career, he had the privilege of working with many well-known wine consultants. As the winemaker for Château Dauzac, Luc was mentored by legendary consultant Jacques Boissenot, who helped him to perfect his skills making red Bordeaux wines. He was also influenced directly by Paul Pontallier, managing director of Château Margaux, and to some extent, by Michel Rolland, Bordeaux-based consulting oenologist.

Luc's picking decisions for each of our varietals is paramount as he aims to pick each vineyard block at the crescendo of ripeness. As Mr. Pontallier once reminded Luc, "Unlike other beverages, we have just one shot to get it right." Each future wine will depend on whether the fruit is picked at the proper physiological ripeness. Luc therefore spends an enormous amount of time monitoring and tasting the grapes for our entire portfolio to ensure that

we are harvesting at the most optimal times.

During the first harvest of Morlet Family Vineyards in 2006, I joined Luc as he sampled one of the vineyards. As he had a berry in his mouth, I asked him, “Are you tasting the juice, the skin, or the seeds?” He answered, “Yes!” This is because Luc takes a holistic approach to his picking decisions, balancing farming, science, and artistry. As he is sampling, he carefully observes the physiology of the vines and their particular water needs. He takes 200 grapes



Above: Evaluating Brix (sugar content) and quantity of ripe and underripe seeds

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 and then analyzes the number of underripe (green) seeds from his sample. Luc monitors the weather forecast and always bases his picking decisions on the types of *terroir*-driven wines he desires to craft. As the winemaker with the most 100-point wines across varietals, Luc obviously knows what he is doing!

CHARDONNAYS

We have long-term leases on two different Chardonnay vineyards. ‘Ma Douce’ comes from a mountain vineyard comprised of Goldridge soil in the Fort Ross-Seaview appellation. The vines benefit from both the cool maritime breeze (*douce brise*) and the mild and sunny mountain climate. ‘Ma Princesse’ hails from a vineyard in the Russian River Valley. The cuttings come from the Old Wente field selection, renowned for excellent quality and minerality. (‘Coup de Cœur’ represents Luc’s judicious blend of the best barrels coming from both sites.) If picked too early, this varietal can be overly simple, with no *terroir* expression or sense of place. If picked too late, the finished wine will be monolithic, lacking in both freshness and vibrancy.



Claire holds Old Wente clusters for the ‘Ma Princesse’ Chardonnay, 2007

Our 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2021 vintages of ‘Coup de Cœur’ have been awarded 100 points. Jeb Dunnuck exclaimed that this “blockbuster-styled” Chardonnay is “pure perfection in the glass that needs to be tasted to be believed,” and is a “magical Sonoma release that tops out my scale and does everything right.” He concluded, “Hats off to Morlet for an incredible Chardonnay.” Not to be outshone, the 2014 and 2018 ‘Ma Princesse,’ which we named in honor of our daughter Claire, also received the perfect score, with Mr. Dunnuck proclaiming that it has “beautiful balance, and a great, great, finish - a heavenly Chardonnay.” Jeb bestowed 99 points on our 2018 ‘Ma Douce’ explaining that “It’s another riveting Chardonnay from Morlet,” and for our 2016 vintage, he noted that it “is rich, full-bodied, perfectly balanced and a world-class Chardonnay.” Robert Parker said that our 2012 ‘Ma Douce’ reminds him “of a classic Bâtard-Montrachet produced by Michel Niellon in the mid-1980s.”

PINOT NOIRS

Robert Parker once asked Luc, “What is the hardest thing about being a winemaker?” Luc immediately replied, “The picking decisions for our Pinot Noirs!” Our three Pinot Noirs (‘Côteaux Nobles’ ‘En Famille’ & ‘Joli Cœur’) come from a leased vineyard that is located in the Fort Ross-Seaview appellation on the true Sonoma Coast. Situated on the eastern slope of the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean, this vineyard, which stretches from 1,300 to 1,600 feet in elevation, is above the fog layer. The vines are



Luc holds Pinot Noir clusters from the 'Joli Cœur' block

and focused, rich and persuasive flavors carried the dishes well.” He continued, “It is always a personal pleasure to serve Morlet Family wines in the Executive Residence.” Mr. Parker mentioned that our 2006 ‘Côteaux Nobles’ always reminds him “of a DRC Richebourg or Grands Echézeaux” and likened our 2007 to a Burgundy Musigny. He went on to describe our 2013 ‘En Famille’ as “a full-bodied beauty, showing wonderful ripeness and richness.” Jeb Dunnuck added that our “sensational 2019 brings lots of classic Morlet fruit – gorgeous on all accounts.”

SÉMILLON-SAUVIGNON BLANC

comprised of *selections massales*, (suitcase clones), which are considered to have some of the highest pedigrees in Burgundy. The Pinot Noir grape is often referred to in France as *l'enfant terrible* (the terrible child). Its thinner skin makes it extremely sensitive to any small variation in *terroir* and more finicky than our other varieties. While working with this varietal is very rewarding for Luc, his picking decision is crucial. When he determines that these grapes are physiologically ripe, we have only a short 24-hour window to harvest the berries. If picked too soon, the resulting wine can be too spicy, acidic, herbaceous, and simple. If picked too late, there will not be *terroir* expression in the wine. It can be too disjointed, have too many strawberry notes, and be very much like a baby Cabernet.

Audrey Frick granted our 2021 ‘Joli Cœur’ with 100 points, declaring that it is a “structured, noble, and highly compelling wine” possessing “incredible energy and an electric personality.” Robert Parker remarked that our 2012 ‘Joli Cœur’ “comes across as a *Grand Cru* from the Northern Côte de Nuits” while Stephen Tanzer stated that our 2010 “is a knockout Sonoma Coast Pinot.” Our 2006 vintage was served at The White House for a dinner in honor of Hu Jintao, President of the People’s Republic of China, and our 2010 vintage was featured during the State Dinner for Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan. Head Usher Daniel Shanks wrote, “The wine’s elegant power

Our ‘La Proportion Dorée’ (Golden Ratio) white Bordeaux-style blend is comprised of approximately three-fifths Sémillon, two-fifths Sauvignon Blanc, and a small amount of Muscadelle, all coming from Sonoma County. The dry-farmed Sémillon vineyard was established in 1953. These old vines are planted in loamy and gravelly soils. The Sauvignon Blanc vineyard is comprised of two blocks. The Musqué clone brings strong aromatics to the wine, while the Preston field selection expresses the mineral character of the *terroir* and provides the wine’s acidic structure. The dry-farmed 75-year-old Muscadelle vineyard has no training system. It is “head-pruned” meaning that the fruit grows only from the spurs and the vines naturally sprawl.

Sémillon is a very *terroir*-dependent varietal, so Luc must strike the perfect balance between harvesting both early and late. When picked early, the fruit can bring freshness and longevity to the future wine, and if picked on the later side, the fruit can provide more expression to this overall more subdued varietal. On the other hand, if Sauvignon Blanc is picked too early, it is too varietal driven, too spicy, and results in the typical *Pipi de chat* (boxwood) which, as expected, Luc does not favor. If picked too late, it begins to become similar to our late harvest wine.

Luc has received international acclaim on all of our wines, yet other than Château Haut-Brion, ‘La Propor-

tion Dorée’ is the only white Bordeaux-style blend to achieve 100 points! Robert Parker called our 2014 “a perfect wine and absolutely out of this world.” He continued, “It seems to come across like a Sonoma County version of a dry Haut-Brion blanc. This is a singular wine, profound, compelling, whatever!” Jeb Dunnuck granted a perfect stamp of approval on our 2018, saying that it “tastes like a top vintage of La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc on steroids.” He wrote, “Hats off to winemaker Luc Morlet for fashioning one of the greatest white Bordeaux blends in California!” Later, on social media he posted, “I’m not sure there’s anyone else in the world doing Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc better!” Further, this wine has been served at The White House a total of nine times, including for two French Presidents. The wine was showcased during the State Dinner for François Hollande, as well as at a luncheon and dinner for Nicolas Sarkozy. Daniel Shanks affirmed, “Such evenings show The White House at its best and are ideal for the timeless grace of Morlet Family Vineyards. We couldn’t have found a better match for the President’s guests, as the wine’s versatility and deep flavors captured the spirit of the day and provided the depth and structure needed for the menu and the conversation.”

CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Over the years, we have had the opportunity to develop three remarkable Cabernet vineyards. ‘Cœur de Vallée’ is located in the world-renowned Oakville appellation, in the “heart” of the Napa Valley. The To Kalon Creek meanders through our 24-acre property, and the vines benefit from a continuous 2% west to east slope as well as an abundance of well-draining 40 to 60% gravelly soils, derived from an alluvial fan. The majority of the property is comprised of the same Bale 103 & 104 soils as the adjacent To Kalon vineyard. This area receives morning fog from the San Pablo Bay and lingering sun in the afternoon. Just as the heat begins to peak, the cool bay breeze comes through. The resulting mild temperatures at night preserve the color and acidity of the grapes. In developing this superb estate, Luc designed six parcels to capture the six distinct micro-*terroirs*, four of which are planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and two of which are planted to Cabernet Franc.

Surrounding our historic 1880 winery in St. Helena, the ‘Morlet Estate’ vineyard is planted to 100% Cabernet

Sauvignon. The soils represent both volcanic and alluvial origins. The 17-acre property is mapped as Hambright-Rock Outcrops. These well-draining soils were derived from weathered volcanic tuffa/ash (Hambright) mixed with uplifted river sediment and metamorphized rock (Felta). Luc developed this vineyard in three main sections, each with increasing elevations that offer a variety of microclimates due to variations in degrees of slope and sun exposure.

Mount Saint Helena overlooks our 'Mon Chevalier' vineyard in Knights Valley, which is situated from 490 to 575 feet in elevation. The proximity to the mountain provides great air circulation from cool Pacific Ocean breezes through the Chalk Hill Gap as well as from the Napa Valley, along with warm and dry breezes coming from Lake County. Located between two competing fog systems of Napa and Russian River Valleys, this region is typically cooler and windier than our St. Helena and Oakville vineyards. The weather pattern produces a longer ripening season, which results in a more classic Bordeaux-like expression. Mapped as the Red Hills Clay Loam Series, the soil on our 12-acre property is an ideal combination of silt, sand, and clay. The surface horizon and upper subsoil have the texture of loam, while the lower subsoil contains substantially more clay.

If picked too soon, this varietal will result in an excess of herbaceousness and green pepper. The simple wine will lack layers and will not fully express its *terroir*. The picking decision cannot be too late or the fruit will be baked by the sun, resulting in a jammy character and loss of texture. It has taken Luc years of experience to master the picking decision for Cabernet Sauvignon. He patiently waits for the tannins to be beautiful, round, and soft while making sure that the fruit maintains its freshness and aromatic maturity, bringing energy to the future wine.

We released our 'Cœur de Vallée' through La Place de Bordeaux in 2022, and the wine has since received many accolades through this global platform. The 2021 vintage earned 100 points on two separate occasions. Jonathan Cristaldi of Decanter heralded it as "a masterful, elegant wine with deep concentration and staying power - just remarkable." Colin Hay of The Drinks Business asserted, "such an impressive wine - the pick of the US releases on La Place this year, and also perhaps the most Bordelais. There's staggering concentration and great density. The

quality of the pixilating tannins is remarkable. Exquisite already, but with the capacity to age glacially." Both our 2021 and 2022 vintages were awarded the Grand Master medal by The Drinks Business, distinguishing the 'Cœur de Vallée' as the best wine on La Place de Bordeaux for two years in a row!

Lisa Perrotti-Brown granted our 2019 'Morlet Estate' with 100 points, describing the wine as "full-bodied, rich, and seductive, with firm, exquisitely ripe, fine-grained tannins, and seamless freshness, finishing epically long and with a myriad of perfumed layers." Jeb Dunnuck praised our 2021 vintage, stating, "It is the finest expression of this site I've tasted, with an Haut-Brion-like gravelly earth character that flows to a full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, yet flawlessly balanced absolute blockbuster of a wine." Robert Parker believed that our 2013 "comes across like a First Growth Pauillac" while Jeb expressed that our 2015 has a "Château Latour-like character." Antonio Galloni added, "The 2015 'Morlet Estate' is an absolutely gorgeous wine that captures all the personality and pedigree of St. Helena's Northern Corridor and is one of the most distinctive Cabernets in Napa Valley!"

Luc and I were truly honored when our 2009 'Mon Chevalier' was featured on July 10, 2024 during The White House dinner commemorating the 75th anniversary of NATO. Thirty-two heads of state enjoyed this Cabernet Sauvignon, which we named in honor of our son Paul. Daniel Shanks reported, "The wine was magical and perfect, and seemed to speak of celebration." Robert Parker announced, "The 2008 'Mon Chevalier' may be the finest wine I have ever tasted from Knights Valley - brilliant winemaking and meticulous attention to detail in the vineyard and winery have resulted in a prodigious effort." Jeb Dunnuck awarded our 2018 vintage with 99 points, declaring it as a "pure, full-bodied, multi-dimensional Cabernet that's flawlessly balanced and is just another incredible wine from Luc Morlet." Jeb communicated that our 2014 vintage is "both powerful

and elegant, and impossible to resist" and that our 2019 vintage is "as pure and classy as they come; full-bodied and stunningly textured."

'Passionnément' represents Luc's selection of the best barrels from each of our estate vineyards and is named in honor of me! This wine has been granted the perfect score six times so far. Jeb Dunnuck proclaimed, "The 2016 'Passionnément' is pure perfection and incredible in every way; This is Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon at its finest." Lisa Perrotti-Brown concurred, "This is a staggeringly stunning and very singular Cabernet achievement by Luc Morlet, bravo!" Jeb expressed that the 2018 vintage is "pure magic in a glass and tops out on my scale, reminding me of some of the older Harlan Estate releases." More recently, Lisa deemed our 2021 vintage to be perfect, commenting that "the full-bodied palate has amazing tension and a jaw-dropping texture, finishing long and perfumed. Wow!"

CABERNET FRANCS

Both of our Cabernet Francs hail from our 'Cœur de Vallée' estate vineyard. 'Force de la Nature' is comprised of 100% Cabernet Franc and is sourced from the Bridge block (B) which borders the right bank of the To Kalon Creek. Shaded by trees in the late afternoon, these vines benefit from an astonishing 60% of gravel in loamy top-



*Physiologically ripe clusters from the 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard
(Left: Cabernet Sauvignon; Right: Cabernet Franc)*



Luc monitors the Cabernet Sauvignon grapes in the 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard

soil on clay-loamy subsoil (104 Bale Series). 'Force Tranquille' is composed of 85% Cabernet Franc coming from the Force block (F) and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon from the Eagle's Nest block (E). These vines are closest to the Napa River and are planted in loamy topsoil on silt-loamy subsoil (Cole Series) with 55% gravel.

Cabernet Franc tends to ripen one week to ten days before Cabernet Sauvignon, which makes it useful in cooler vintages, especially in Bordeaux, where Cabernet Sauvignon may not reach full ripeness. If the fruit is picked prior to physiological ripeness, the resulting wine can be spicy and herbaceous. Likewise, if picked overly ripe, the wine will be jammy and thin on the mid-palate. Luc views his picking decision as the most crucial aspect of obtaining the full expression of this varietal.

Only bottled from outstanding vintages, our 'Force de la Nature' (named in honor of Luc's great grandfather) has consistently received the highest praise, with the 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2023 vintages each receiving 100 points! Robert Parker exclaimed that this wine is "possibly the finest 100% Cabernet Franc ever made in California" and described it as "mindboggling" and "an ethereal wine that goes beyond just being majestic." He further affirmed that it is "a *tour de force* as

well as a *force de la nature* from the Oakville Corridor." Jeb Dunnuck agreed, declaring that our 'Force de la Nature' is "one of the finest expressions of Cabernet Franc out there, reminding me of a young 1998 Cheval Blanc." He continued, "The purity, balance, and just overall class here are off the charts, and it is an incredible wine from this great, great estate." "Hats off to winemaker Luc Morlet, who unquestionably has a magic touch with both Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc." Lisa Perrotti-Brown added, "Luc's spectacular 'Force de la Nature' continues to set the bar sky-high for Napa Valley Cabernet Franc."

The superb quality of the inaugural 2019 'Force Tranquille' (named in honor of Luc's mother) was immediately recognized. Lisa Perrotti-Brown awarded this vintage 99 points sharing, "It is a stunning, elegantly styled expression of Cabernet Franc." Jeb Dunnuck confirmed that this wine "is classic Oakville and a seamless Cabernet Franc that does everything right." The 2021 vintage also received 99 points! Jonathan Cristaldi noted, "This is superbly refined and elegant, an exceptionally pleasing and gorgeous wine built for long-term cellaring." Jeb noted that the wine is "absolutely brilliant, with perfect tannins and a seamlessness that's something to behold." He concluded, "It will probably merit a triple digit rating in 7 to 8 years."

SYRAH

Our 'Bouquet Garni' is made from an exceptional hillside vineyard located in Bennett Valley, where natural conditions are perfect for growing Syrah in the Gouling cobbly clay loam soil. Luc works with three different field selections, each of which ripens at different times. For this varietal, he believes that it is ideal to have a combination of underripe, perfectly ripe, and overripe fruit which he picks all at once and then co-ferments, leading to a complex and spicy bouquet.

During our first harvest, Luc was punching down the Syrah when the spicy aromas overtook him. He was transported back in time as he remembered helping his mother cook the family meals. When making a *boeuf Bourguignon*, *coq au vin*, *lapin chasseur* or other traditional French stew, Luc's mother prepared a *bouquet garni*. Luc assisted by tying the culinary bundle of parsley, thyme, rosemary and bay leaves together with a strip of leek. As the dish was simmering, Luc could smell the aromatic flavors being infused into his mother's creation and couldn't wait for dinner to be served. After that first day punching down our Syrah grapes, Luc rushed home to tell me that we would be calling our Syrah 'Bouquet Garni.' We named the wine in honor of Abel Pierre Aimé Coutanceau, Luc's first relative who emigrated from France to the USA, who was by profession, a chef!

Luc handcrafts this wine using classical winemaking techniques of Vallée du Rhône, so it is only fitting that his Syrah has been compared to the great wines of that region. Robert Parker said that our 2007 'Bouquet Garni' "is similar to a massive French Crozes-Hermitage from a super-rich vintage such as 2003." He deemed the 2011 as "remarkable" and "a dead ringer for a top-notch Côte-Rôtie." He also proclaimed, "Luc Morlet further demonstrates his genius with his 2012 'Bouquet Garni.' This French-tasting Syrah is the closest thing I have tasted to Guigal's famous Côte-Rôtie La Landonne. This is a sensational Syrah." He declared, "The 2013 'Bouquet Garni' really comes across like a Guigal single vineyard Côte-Rôtie such as La Landonne. It is a compelling, world-class, killer Syrah that is full-bodied. It is very French in style, but then again, the winemaker is French!" In the final review prior to his retirement, Bob wrote, "The 2014 'Bouquet Garni' is very Côte-Rôtie-like. This is just a beauty, sexy and lush." Jeb Dunnuck continued the comparison,

noting that Luc “makes a rockstar of a Syrah” and that the 2018 vintage reminds him “of top Hermitage from a ripe vintage” while the 2019 vintage “has an Hermitage-like feel in its tannins and structure – a gorgeous, layered, powerful Syrah.”

LATE HARVEST

Rounding out the portfolio and ending harvest each year is our Late Harvest white wine. Inspired by the best producers of Sauternes, ‘Billet Doux’ comes from a vineyard located in an ancient riverbed in Alexander Valley. Growing in the gravelly soil, the 25- to 60-year-old Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains vines benefit from cool, foggy mornings and hot afternoons. Muscat ripens earlier and is therefore picked before Botrytis occurs, while the Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc fruit is at the mercy of the weather (and sometimes, at the mercy of the birds!). The losses can vary greatly from one vintage to another, although a yield of one ton per acre is typical. The success of a vintage resides in both the optimal weather conditions and the picking decision. Luc must ensure that the maximum number of Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc berries are at the fullest stage in the process of Noble Rot. Two days after our team does a quick

pass to drop any undesired fruit, our Late Harvest grapes are picked all at once, which usually occurs in mid to late November.

Doug Wilder awarded our 2009 ‘Billet Doux’ with 100 points, exclaiming that “It is the emphatic thumbprint on Luc’s incredible body of work; I can’t think of any other domestic dessert wine in my memory that has displayed this level of intensity, purity, and extraction.” Antonio Galloni concurred, stating that it is “a gorgeous wine that is beautifully textured and loaded with class.” He described our 2011 vintage as “terrific, super-expressive, and superb,” while Lisa Perrotti-Brown noted that the 2012 is “full-bodied, full-on sweet, rich, concentrated and oh-so-unctuous, delivering powerful flavor layers and epic length.” Jeb Dunnuck announced, “Luc also makes an incredible, brilliant, smoking good dessert wine.” He confirmed that our 2013 “will stand beside any number of Sauternes and is another brilliant wine from this talented winemaker.” For our 2014 vintage, Jeb said, “It brings loads of richness and depth, yet always has a sense of purity and elegance, as well as lightness on the palate; It’s another gorgeous sweet wine from Morlet that will stand up to some of the great Sauternes out there.” He stated that our 2015 is a “full-

bodied, concentrated, powerful dessert wine that tastes like a great Sauternes on steroids – brilliant today but will probably be immortal!” Audrey Frick agreed, saying that our 2016 is “going to age at a glacial pace over the next twenty or more years.”

PERFECT PREPARATION

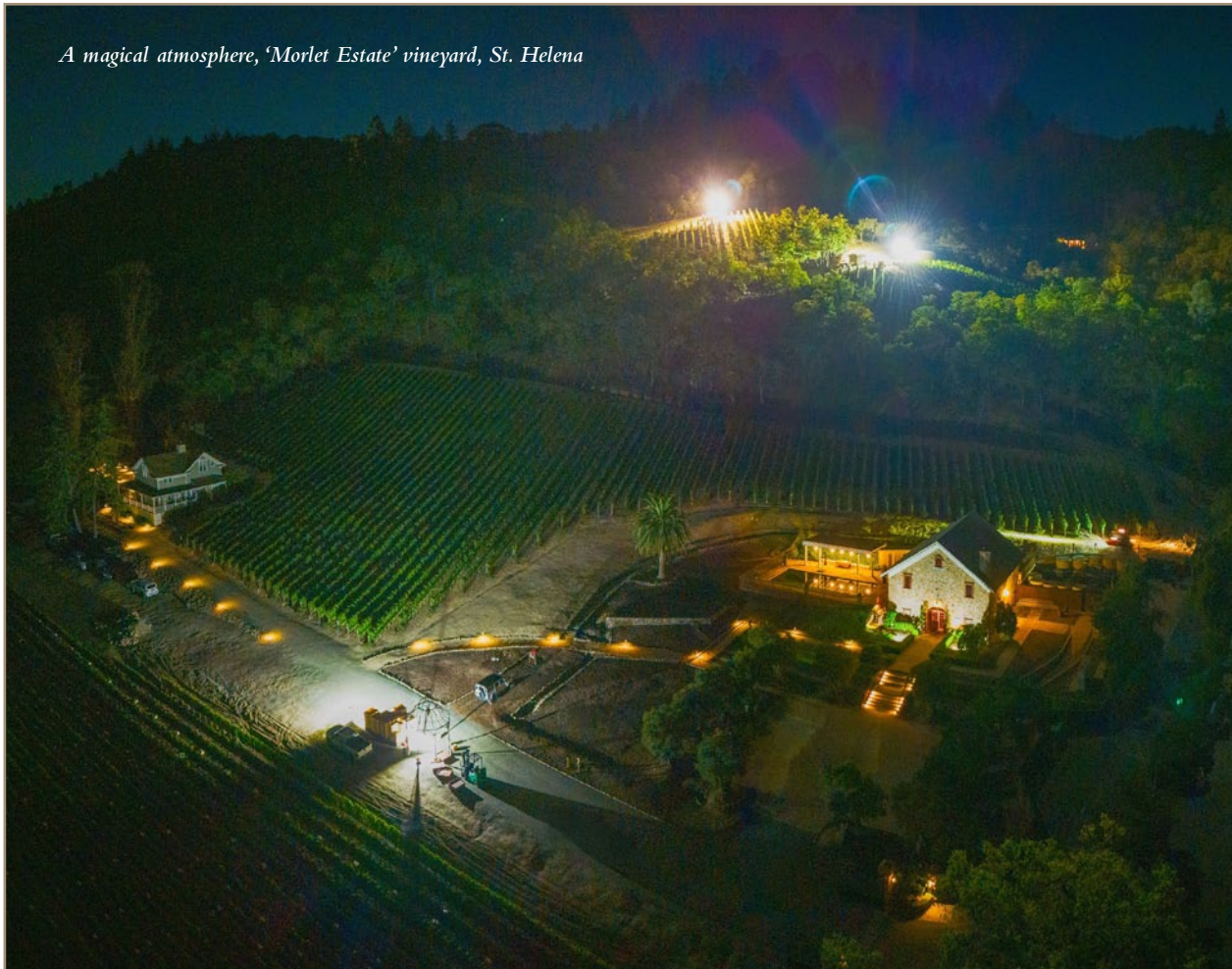
Even before Luc has made the first picking decision, preparation has already been underway. All of our harvest equipment is readied, including lugs, tractors, trailers, boom lights, sorting tables, stainless steel tanks, oak puncheons, oak barrels, etc. We have two complete sets of equipment to sort our red grapes, because we have had years when a large amount of our Cabernet fruit was ready all at once. We have even had a few harvests when our Cabernet and Pinot Noir varietals ripened at the same time!

Once Luc has made a decision for that night’s pick, the day begins for our vineyard crews. The first team arrives at 6:00am to conduct a quick pass through the selected rows. They remove any undesirable grapes that might show signs of mildew or grey rot. Next, they bring all of the necessary equipment onsite including boom lights, work lights, tractors, trailers, a forklift and pallets. Then, they spread our



Lugs are placed in one of the ‘Cœur de Vallée’ vineyard blocks in preparation for that night’s pick

A magical atmosphere, 'Morlet Estate' vineyard, St. Helena



35-pound lugs between the rows. Lastly, they tie colored tape to the ends of the rows to designate the vines that Luc has selected to be harvested. This team is then able to go home to rest.

NIGHTTIME PICKS

The second team typically arrives around 10:00pm to be ready for the pick. Each crew consists of eight pickers, two lug collectors and one tractor driver. Depending on the specific needs, we can have up to three crews (33 individuals) picking at once. Harvested by hand at night, the fruit is gently placed into the small lugs. These vessels only accommodate six clusters high so that the grapes are never bruised. Picking usually ends sometime between 4:00 and 6:00 in the morning.

There are several reasons why Luc insists that we pick at night. The main advantage is the coolness and freshness of the fruit. During the day, the berries are hotter and softer as they are exposed to the sun and high temperatures. The grapes are also full of sugar due to photosynthesis. Further, their acidity may be unbalanced and some of the aromatics may have deteriorated. On the contrary, at night, the vines only breathe without sugar metabolism. These cooler berries are packed with fresh aromas and stable acidity. In addition, they are sturdier and therefore less likely to be damaged while being transported to the winery's crush pad. These firmer berries will not begin to lose juice on their own. This avoids oxidation and permits us to postpone the start of fermentation, facilitating a proper racking of the fresh lees to naturally clarify the must of the white wines, and to ease the destemming of the red berries off of the stems.

A practical benefit is regarding logistics. We receive the

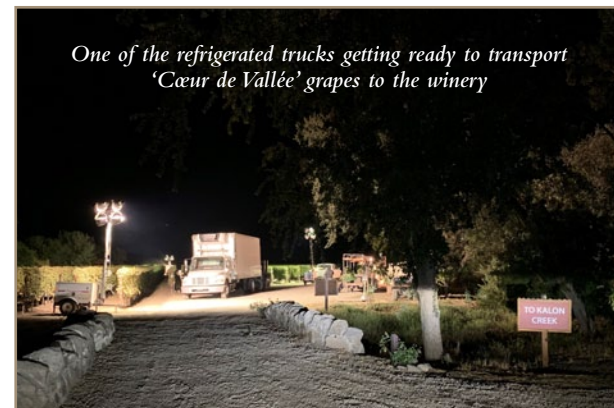


*Harvesting under the moonlight,
'Mon Chevalier' estate vineyard,
Knights Valley*



*Night pick near the To Kalon Creek,
'Cœur de Vallée' estate vineyard*

*One of the refrigerated trucks getting ready to transport
'Cœur de Vallée' grapes to the winery*





Chardonnay cluster-by-cluster sorting

fruit early in the morning, so our production team is able to begin the essential task of sorting. We can hand sort one ton of grapes per hour, so the earlier that the clusters arrive, the better.

Harvest is extremely labor intensive and requires high energy, dexterity, and resilience, so working during cooler temperatures is much more pleasant. Luc's grandfather Pierre once told him that to be a great farmer, you have to be a poet. Luc has always felt that picking at night under the stars creates a magical atmosphere. The silence is not only beautifully interrupted by nocturnal animals and the gentle breeze through the trees, but also by the noise of the picking shears, the tractor, and the joyful camaraderie of the crew. When the pick is over at first light, a sense of new birth of the *terroir* emerges, encouraging Luc to keep

going, despite his fatigue, and continue to the next phase at the crush pad, followed by more picking decisions which will start the process all over again.

PRESERVING THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR

We do not want the fruits of our labor (both literally and figuratively) to be spoiled at the last minute. The grapes are therefore transported to the winery in one of our three refrigerated trucks (set at 50-55°F) driven by one of the members of our full-time vineyard team. The trip from Fort Ross-Seaview to the winery can take up to three hours, while the berries from our estate vineyards have a shorter distance to travel. We are one of the few wineries that has invested in refrigerated vehicles, and our efforts preserve the freshness and aromatics of each of our varietals.

VINEYARD MAPPING

Luc's unparalleled commitment to excellence is further demonstrated through vineyard mapping. Eight members of the harvesting team hand pick four rows at a time. As soon as a pallet of lugs is formed, it is designated to go into one puncheon, which in turn yields exactly one barrel. Thus, Luc is able to "map" our estate vineyards, as each barrel represents a specific four-row section. He can therefore evaluate the quality of fruit coming from each of our micro-*terroirs*.

A GENTLE HAND

From the time the fruit is growing on the vines, to harvesting the grapes, to sorting the berries, we always use a gentle hand. Although we contract with a farming company for picking and hand sorting, our own year-round, full-time vineyard team is involved throughout the entire process.

As soon as the white varietals arrive at the winery, they are hand sorted cluster-per-cluster by members of our team and are then swiftly placed in the pneumatic press. Gently extracted over four hours, the juice is racked into French oak barrels.

Natural fermentation is achieved solely by the use of



*Left: Luc conducts bâtonnage in a Chardonnay barrel
Right: Monitoring the sedimentation process*



*Luc manages initial berry-per-berry sorting using Le Trieur™ native yeast and takes place at ambient cellar temperature. The Burgundian techniques of *élevage sur lies* (aging on the lees) and *bâtonnage* (stirring) develop the mid-palate and complexity in the aromatics, flavor profile and the overall texture of the future wines. The white wines are carefully racked prior to bottling. These traditional methods contribute to the creation of true *vins de garde* with graceful aging capability.*



Left: A berry-per-berry sorting team of 10 individuals results in the highest quality of fruit possible
 Right: Botrytized fruit for the Late Harvest white wine is placed directly into the basket press

All of our red grapes are triple-sorted. After the cluster-by-cluster sorting has been completed, the fruit is destemmed. The grapes are then sorted berry-per-berry.

In his ongoing pursuit of quality, Luc developed the concept for Le Trieur™ in 2001, while he was the winemaker at Peter Michael Winery. This device is similar to a sluice box on four springs and operated by an off-centered cam. Luc used statistics that he gathered in several diverse vineyards to design the wedge wire screen to have an optimal gap between the rods. Removing nearly 100% of the shot berries and approximately 80% of the raisins, both extremes of the ripeness spectrum, Le Trieur™ proved to be an effective solution to berry sorting. This sorting machine was immediately in demand, and within a few years, over 250 were sold to high-end wineries in the Napa Valley and Sonoma County. Luc used his portion of the royalties to purchase much of our equipment when we began our own label in 2006.

The berries rejected by Le Trieur™ will eventually

be composted. The red Burgundy, Rhône and Bordeaux varietals that make it through are hand sorted berry-per-berry by a conscientious ten-member team. This process attains the highest quality of fruit possible.

The Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc berries for our Late Harvest ‘Billet Doux’ white wine are not sorted, because their skins are worn down due to Botrytis. It is imperative to place the fruit into our basket press and extract the juice right away. This is when the final sugar content is determined (typically between 34° and 38° Brix) as well as when the aromatic profile is revealed. After an overnight settling and a careful racking to eliminate any residual Botrytis, the juice is barreled down into French

oak barrels. The sweet wine is placed in the cool cellar for eighteen months for the exhaustion of the yeast and the remainder of *élevage* until bottling.

Two-thirds of our red wines naturally ferment (using only the indigenous yeast on the skins) and macerate in small open top stainless-steel tanks. As soon as the grapes are put into the top of the tanks by gravity, one pump-over is done to activate the natural yeast. From that point on, the French technique of *pigeage* (punchdowns) is used. This process preserves freshness and results in a more fruit-driven wine.

The other third of the red grapes naturally ferment in open top Darnajou puncheons. These large barrels (159 gallons) are referred to as *demi-muids* when they are closed and used for aging, and *gueule-bée* when they are open top and used for fermentation. Twice each day, punchdowns are performed by our full-time cellar team in order to procure a gentle, yet efficient extraction of the polyphenols (pigments & tannins), resulting in more aromatic

complexity and leading to rounder and softer tannins.

After a long *cuvaison*, the wines are drained from the tanks and puncheons into 60-gallon French oak barrels to begin a 16-month *élevage*.

It is Luc’s ability to combine proven traditional French winemaking techniques with his ongoing zest for innovation that has been behind the success of Morlet Family Vineyards. Luc invented the multi-functional Gyrobox™. At the end of the natural fermentation and maceration period, this device, operated with a forklift, drains the puncheons. Instead of pumping out the wine over the course of an hour, Luc’s innovative design uses only gravity. This gentler method preserves the wine’s aromatics and also reduces the time spent to only twenty minutes. (When tilted the opposite direction, this device also serves to remove pomace.)



Luc performs punchdowns on our Cabernet Sauvignons



Luc designed the Gyrobox™ to drain puncheons by gravity



THE ART OF BLENDING

Our portfolio demonstrates Luc's expertise in the expression of *terroir* as well as his artistry in blending. Our many single vineyard wines allow him to showcase each unique *terroir*, while our 'Coup de Cœur' Chardonnay and 'Passionnément' Cabernet Sauvignon highlight his talent for *l'art d'assemblage*. Luc is committed to achieving the utmost quality for our single vineyard wines, therefore only a small number of barrels are designated for our two judicious blends. Additionally, as one of the rare winemakers who takes the time to taste and evaluate each barrel multiple times, he purposely maintains a small enough production to make this possible.

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

We are thrilled that our daughter Claire joined our team in June 2024 as the Member Relations & E-Commerce Manager. Although she oversees hospitality and directly supports me in marketing and sales, she has spent a great deal of time in the vineyards and cellars learning from Luc. She now knows how to prune, remove laterals, thin clusters, harvest and sort! We are clearly eager to see all that Claire will accomplish in the years to come.

THE HIGHEST QUALITY

For the second year in a row, The Drinks Business has named Luc as one of the top 100 winemakers in the world. Luc has accomplished the unparalleled feat of earning 100 points on our Cabernet Francs (11 times), Cabernet Sauvignons (9 times), Chardonnays (8 times), Sémillon-Sauvignon Blanc (2 times), Pinot Noirs (1 time), and Late Harvest white wine (1 time). That is 32 perfect scores and counting. While Luc and I are truly honored by the numerous international accolades which our wines receive, what is most important to us is that the wines he crafts are enjoyed by members of our Mailing List and by fine wine lovers around the globe. As we look with anticipation to future harvests (hopefully, without any major life events occurring at the same time), we invite you to enjoy the fruits of our labor and share our wines with your family and friends. *A votre santé!*

Above: Luc blind tastes each of our Cabernet Sauvignon barrels as he works on the blends

Top Right: Claire harvests at 'Cœur de Vallée'

Bottom Right: Claire hand sorts Cabernet Sauvignon berries



Fall 2025 Release



2022

'FORCE DE LA NATURE'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET FRANC

This wine captures the strong, rich and dense character of the Cabernet Franc grapes from our vineyard in the world-renowned Oakville appellation. Bottled only during outstanding vintages, this massive wine pays homage to Luc's great-grandfather, Gaston Morlet, who 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.'

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW 98 points: *The 2022 'Force de la Nature' bursts with a powerful perfume of black cherries, wild blueberries, and black raspberries, with suggestions of pencil lead, garrigue, and damp loam. The full-bodied palate delivers a firm frame of grainy tannins and wonderful freshness framing the generous red and black fruits, finishing long and spicy.* – *The Wine Palate, July 2025*



2022

'MORLET ESTATE'

ST. HELENA, NAPA VALLEY
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 as full sun exposure, create superb conditions for our Cabernet Sauvignon vines. Respecting its historic 1880 charm, we restored the pre-Prohibition stone winery, 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.

Jonathan Cristaldi 98 points: *The 2022 'Morlet Estate' is super-fragrant, offering blackberry fruit lifted by sweet tobacco, wet-stone minerality, loamy earth and a hint of violets. One of the few wines of the vintage displaying a distinctive blue-fruit character. Full-bodied, with ripe, stylish, crisp tannins that exhibit an aromatic quality reminiscent of walking through a wet redwood grove. Offers sustained length, energy and deep, penetrating richness, balanced by a lovely sweetness. Impressively structured and balanced.* – *Decanter, March 2025*

MORLET

Family Vineyards



MANICURED VINEYARDS,
CLASSICAL WINEMAKING
& CREATIVE ARTISANSHIP



2022

'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.'

Jeb Dunnuck 95 points: *Blackcurrants, scorched earth, graphite, leather, and savory herb notes all emerge from the 2022 'Mon Chevalier,' a complex wine that has a ripe, supple mouthfeel, beautiful balance, and a great finish. This is another classic, nicely balanced, structured, rock-solid 2022 from this winemaker.* – *JebDunnuck.com, Jan. 2025*

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW 95 points: *The 2022 'Mon Chevalier' skips out of the glass with cheery scents of red currant jelly, kirsch, and blackberry pie, giving way to hints of Chinese five spice, spearmint, and rose bud tea. The full-bodied palate is so plush and juicy with seamless freshness and a long spicy finish.* – *The Wine Palate, July 2025*



2023

'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 99 points: *The 2023 'Coup de Cœur' sails out with opulent notes of allspice, candied ginger, and honeysuckle, giving way to a core of pineapple upside-down cake, cedar, and apple butter. The full-bodied palate is built like a brick house with a solid backbone of acidity supporting the densely packed orchard and tropical fruit layers, finishing with epic length and incredible texture.* – *The Wine Palate, July 2025*



2023

'JOLI CŒUR'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW
PINOT NOIR

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.'

Audrey Frick 99 points: *The 2023 'Joli Cœur' is savory, complex, and deep with notes of wild herbs and juniper berries before more red-fruited cranberry highlights come to the fore, joined by notes of black raspberry eau de vie, wildflowers, and clove. It's elegant and has refreshing energy, a silky, stony texture, and saltiness and minerality throughout the finish.* – *JebDunnuck.com, July 2025*



2022

'BOUQUET GARNI'

BENNETT VALLEY
SYRAH

This wine is made from an exceptional hillside vineyard located in Bennett Valley, where natural conditions are perfect for growing Syrah in the Gouilding cobble clay loam soil. As a result of the co-fermentation 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.'

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW 96 points: *The 2022 'Bouquet Garni' strolls confidently out of the glass with classic Syrah notes of ripe plums, black cherries, and boysenberries, followed by hints of tar, peppered salami, and lavender with a hint of cedar. The full-bodied palate is wonderfully perfumed with a structure of grainy tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and fragrant.* – *The Wine Palate, July 2025*



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