



EXPERT INTERVIEW: STEPHANIE LAMONICA

Behind the Winemaker

When did you first become interested in wine?

While I do appreciate wine greatly, sometimes I wonder to what degree I AM interested in it; I like drinking it, I like pairing it with food, but wine is really Scott's schtick.

What brought you into the wine business?

Scott's dream was the culprit.

If you weren't in the wine business, what would you be?

I aspire to have my children's stories published, and one day, one day, even illustrate what I write. Or I'd be out hiking.

Do you have a favorite place for wine?

Anywhere outdoors with sweeping vistas, if possible.

If you don't order wine at a restaurant or bar, which beverage do you choose?

I am a big fan of the clear spirits, vodka and gin martinis. I take mine extra dry and with olives.

What's your best wine-drinking memory? What was the occasion?

My birthday, in Alsace, at a Michelin restaurant, when after returning from the restroom I found two men desperately waiting for me: Scott and the waiter. My French being much better than Scott's, I was thrust into the conversation Scott was trying to have about the vintage corkscrew he had just bought at a market. Judging from the waiter's "oh, la la," we got the corkscrew for a good price: 75 centimes.

What are your thoughts on recent trends within the industry?

Supposedly structured wines are beginning to creep out of the shadows, but I don't believe it, not with the cool response we've had about our very nicely structured wines. I also think the "wine rush", where everyone mines from the same vein of grapes from mega vineyards characteristic of the West are doing terrible things to add to the homogenizing of wine. And I think too many people have done a disservice to the industry by trying to cast a large net, meaning, trying to be everything to everyone, instead of focusing on and creating fewer distinct wines of meaning.

What is the first thing someone learning about wine should know?

Don't trust what you read on people's websites; everyone is trying to wow you. Read books from reputable authors.

What are some of the benefits of drinking wine?

It helps you speak foreign languages better, at the time. Unless you drink too much, that is.

What are your three best tips, tricks or techniques for wine lovers?

Seek the authentic; read The Accidental Connoisseur, by Lawrence Osborne; watch Mondovino.

EXPERT PROFILE



Stephanie LaMonica

From Oneonta, in upstate New York, Stephanie LaMonica is more of a martini/Manhattan kind of gal, and both wine and farming are fairly new to her.

Truth be told, she would've never gotten into the wine industry, but in 1991, after having discovered Ory-gon in a bookstore in Albany, New York, she went West, looking for big, open skies, mountains, rivers, forests, and occasionally Sasquatch, meeting [Scott Elder](#), her husband and partner in 2000.

A brand writer by trade, she is the brand and marketing voice behind [The Grande Dalles](#). Drawing from her 10+ years of writing for international giants like adidas and Nike, and more regional big names like Umpqua Bank and Provenance Hotel Group, she writes her blog, The Uncultivated Life, has written and helped design their website, and continues to learn about wine, and more about the wine industry, and to that she often feels like Margaret Mead, looking in on and trying to understand the behavior of some lost tribe. While at other times she feels like Lisa on Green Acres, minus the accent, and jewels, having been plucked reluctantly from a more comfortable life, to make a go of it in the wilds of the wine world.

If you ask her what she really loves about all this, she'll tell you the meadowlark's song out on their land, the big sky all around, the raw nature of their vineyard, and the vanishing link of land, people and wine that The Grande Dalles strives to renew. Don't ask her what she doesn't like.

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