Forbes

A Look At Sonoma County's B. Wise Vineyards

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B. Wise Vineyards and its Moon Mountain Estate represent a sanctuary for wine connoisseurs and enthusiasts alike. B. Wise sits on top of a ridge that offers an unbelievable view of Sonoma Valley, making it a true gem in California's wine country. Surrounded by peach, citrus and persimmon trees, this stunning winemaking haven brings the best of what both Sonoma and Napa vineyards have to offer. Moreover, it boasts a rich history and a commitment to crafting exceptional, terroir-driven wines that capture the essence of the Moon Mountain District's unique microclimate.

"Our goal is to grow well-fruited, balanced wines that express the hillside *terroir* of the Moon Mountain District," explains B. Wise Properietor, Brion Wise. "Which to me is primarily the red soils, which give our wines their distinct minerality."

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To be more precise, B. Wise produces a wide selection of wines that range from Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to estate grown Cabernet, in addition to more obscure varieties like Petite Sirah and Tannat.

We chatted with B. Wise Vineyards', Brion Wise, on the vineyard's history, philanthropic endeavors, wine and food pairings and more. Here's what he had to say.



B. Wise Vineyards Estate B. WISE

You first started planting vines here in 2002 and built your home on the property as well. What attracted you to this particular site?

I was looking for a place that was a romantic place to live that was one mile to a coffee shop, especially as I grew up on a farm where it was twenty minutes to town. It needed to feel away from other homes with none in sight. It had to be able to grow great grapes which, being beside Monte Rosso made that possible. And last, when I drove up to it, it felt like a scene in the movie Walk in the Clouds which I loved and had watch many times.

You've spearheaded an incredibly unique annual spring break program for students studying hospitality at your alma mater, Washington State University. Please describe what you're doing.

Having been to many wine catered dinners, I wanted to do something different. My aim was to give back to students at my alma mater, WSU, but also do something unique for our wine club members other than just serving wine and food. These students are in the Hospitality Business Management Program at WSU, some with a bigger culinary focus.

They are under the leadership of a Master Chef who comes with them. In our program, I fly the students down to Sonoma for five days to cook and learn more about wine, all as they work to plan this grand dinner for our wine club members. During the days, I take them around to visit famous wineries and restaurants in the area so that they can learn about wine country hospitality from the very best.



B. Wise Vineyards Estate tasting room B. WISE

The students prepare a multi-course meal at the end of the program that's paired with your wines. What are some of the more creative pairings that they have conceived?

Throughout their trip, we work on the menu together, use as many local ingredients as we have here in the spring, and pair each course with our wines. Normally it is 7+ courses. Some of my favorite pairings they have come up with include our Pinot Noir with duck breast, black forbidden rice and a Cantonese style reduction.

It's wonderful for the guests (and for me!) to see their beaming faces smiling ear to ear when they present the courses they created. At the conclusion of the dinner, we introduce each of them and they talk about their backgrounds and their goals after finishing their program at WSU.

B. Wise makes such a unique variety of wines. Which are your favorite pairings for your more obscure wines? And your more traditional pairings with Pinot, Chardonnay, and Cabernet?

Pinot to me is a great lunch wine so generally I would pair it with a light salad, simple grilled fish, or a turkey sandwich. For dinner I like a big Cabernet, which I like with Salmon, a pasta Bolognese or red meat. With Tannat we like to do something like duck or cassoulet, something rich and wintery that Tannat pairs beautifully with.

Describe your estate olive oil and how you like to use it in a B. Wise cave meal.

I like our olive oil to be riper, which leans more towards those beautiful buttery notes. It pairs great with fish or bread.

Do you have a current favorite wine in your B. Wise portfolio?

The B. Wise Moon Mountain Estate Grown Cabernet is always one of my favorites. It is elegant enough to pair with lighter foods, but robust enough to stand up to chops and steaks.



Brion Wise JAK WONDERLY

I hear you also own a Napa Valley winery, BRION. Can you give a short description of that?

BRION is the Napa Valley winery I founded in 2002, focusing on single-vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from Yountville, Oakville, Pritchard Hill, Coombsville, and Moon Mountain. The wines showcase the talents of my three winemakers – Julien Fayard, Mark Herold and Massimo Monticelli – each focused on interpreting the vineyard sites that best suit their personalities and winemaking styles. I also employ America's first (and only) Master Cooper who makes French oak barrels specifically for my wines. In August 2023, I acquired a 128-acre estate on Pritchard Hill which will serve as the future home to BRION.