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Vincent Ciolino **Wine and Olive Grower**

I have strong family ties to California, Chicago, and Italy. Born in Chicago, I return several times a year to root for the Cubs and include my young California-born son, Paolo, in the lives of my large, spirited Italian-American family.

My forefathers were all farmers living off the land in Montemaggiore, Italy where my grandfather taught my father to raise food and hunt. My parents ran a café there; my mother was an excellent cook with a large repertoire of Italian and Sicilian dishes. Three of my siblings were born in Montemaggiore and one in Palermo (about 40 km away); my twin sister and I were born in Chicago following my family's immigration to the United States in 1957.

Settling in with Chicago's large Italian population, my family enjoyed cherished old world traditions: vegetable gardens, making Sangiovese at home, enjoying the big meal together on Sunday afternoons. My father had a reputation for growing the best tomatoes in all of Chicago, and his secret was a mulch of grass clippings and horse manure – very similar to the cover crops and organic compost I use today on our grapevines and olive trees in Dry Creek Valley. My first language was Italian, and I only learned English when I started Kindergarten.

I remained in Chicago during college at the University of Illinois, where my twin sister and I were the first in our family to receive college degrees. My major was biochemistry, and my minors of mathematics and computer science familiarized me with the computer software industry where I began a career in 1986.

My first trip to Italy was in 1996, the year I moved to Europe with a U.S. software company. Headquartered in London, I worked and traveled all over Europe, with many side trips to visit my relatives in Tuscany and Sicily. I acquired an affinity for wine, especially appreciating the French Syrahs and Cabernet blends. My cousins Mercurio and Michele, who make wine, olive oil, and prosciutto in Siena, introduced me to other favorites: the spicy olive oil and the Super Tuscan wines of the region.

Returning to the U.S. to marry Lise, I settled in California in 2000. We moved to Dry Creek Valley in 2001 and put down roots on 55 mountainside acres where we have developed vineyards, an olive grove, a family winery and olive press. I am the winegrower and master of all things olive. I supplement the green thumb I inherited from my father with classes at U.C. Davis. I enjoy experimenting with new ideas, particularly those associated with sustainable farming. I was very excited to have our vineyards and olive groves certified Biodynamic® in 2009.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Vincent'.

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