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Lise Ciolino, Winemaker



My love for Syrah started long ago. As a young girl, my parents enjoyed wine with dinner every night, and offered their children small portions. I always preferred the white wine. I did not develop a taste for red wine until, at age sixteen, I traveled to the Rhône valley with my father, a wine enthusiast. We stopped at the house of Chapoutier to buy wine and, during a magnificent four-hour luncheon, I tasted my first Hermitage. From that day on, Syrah has held a special fascination for me.

As a college student, I studied mathematics and computer science at Brown University and later pursued a career in the software industry, moving to the San Francisco Bay Area. Here in northern California, the romance and my love of wine grew greater and greater—soon becoming an absorbing passion.

I started by helping friends in their vineyard. A weekend course in viticulture at UC Davis led to an enology course. This led to making a barrel of wine in a friend's garage in Palo Alto. Exploratory trips to various wine regions, more courses, more home winemaking, wine tastings, wine seminars—my thirst for wine knowledge was insatiable.

In 2001 my husband Vincent and I purchased 55 acres in Sonoma County's Dry Creek Valley, planted with 10 acres of mountainside vineyards. Here I approach winemaking with enthusiasm, spirit, and a drive to succeed. I consider myself self-taught, although I have completed many courses at UC Davis ranging from wine chemistry to pest management to wine marketing. Today I focus my energy and curiosity on making world-class Syrahs at Montemaggiore.

Born in Denmark to American parents, I have lived in France, Switzerland, Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island. My heart finally found home, however, when my husband Vincent and I settled in Sonoma County to start our small, family wine business.

A handwritten signature of the name 'Lise' in a black cursive script.

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