



WEDNESDAYS WITH WINEMAKERS – CARY GOTT

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Cary Gott is a fourth generation California grape grower and highly renowned winemaker. For more than 40 years, Gott has mastered his winemaking skills, producing world class vintages for some of California's most acclaimed wineries. Gott owns and operates Vineyard & Winery Estates in Napa Valley, a company designed to help people begin and operate super-premium wineries and vineyards.

Gott is currently consulting for Davis Estates, Calla Lily Estate and Lawer Estates. He works closely with vineyard managers to monitor and select grapes and then directs the winemaking processes. His utmost dedication, commitment and respect for the land are expressed in his elegant wines, which demonstrate his attitude and passion for all things wine.

Prior to founding Vineyard & Winery Estates, Gott was in the senior management ranks at Seagram Classics Wine Company, overseeing wine production for Sterling Vineyards, Mumm Napa Valley and The Monterey Vineyard. Supervising more than two thousand acres of excellent vineyards in Napa Valley and Monterey County, Gott established a reputation for producing high quality wines.

Raised on a winery in Escalon, California, Gott became familiar with the intricacies of the wine business at an early age as he watched his father produce wines from many wineries up and down the wine roads of California. Gott started his career in 1970 when he joined Sterling Vineyards in Napa Valley where he began as a cellarman.

Gott holds the distinction of establishing Amador County's first new winery in the early 1970s—Monteviña Wines. It was at this winery that Gott employed innovative farming techniques and a unique winemaking style, thus crafting a new age of Amador County Zinfandel. In the 1980s, Gott sold Monteviña Wines and took on the role of president of Edna Valley's Corbett Canyon Vineyards in San Luis Obispo County.

Gott currently resides in St. Helena with his wife. In addition to Round Pond Estate, Gott's roster of distinguished wine clients include Round Pond Estate, Ram's Gate, Pillar Rock, D. R. Stephens, Match Vineyards, Leiff Vineyards, Piña Cellars, Fantesca Estate and more.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A WINEMAKER?

My father James Gott was a winemaker and I originally said I was not going to do what he did because he was always on the road driving between many wineries in the Central Valley and North Coast. I went to USC to study architecture but changed schools and went to UC Davis, but not to study winemaking. I took a course from Maynard Amerine called Introduction to Wine for Americans. Right then and there I fell in love with the whole world of wine, winemaking and viticulture. The die was cast.

IF YOU WEREN'T A WINEMAKER WHAT WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

An architect, for sure. I have loved working with many architects over the years designing simple to elaborate wineries and also homes for my family.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH AS A WINEMAKER?

Years and years of winemaking experience that gives me the ability to sense where an individual wine is going and how to help it along to the bottle. And on top of that I have grown grapes for decades and have a great sense for vines, vine health and having happy and knowledgeable workers in the vineyards.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST WEAKNESS AS A WINEMAKER?

Not spending enough time in other great winemaking regions of the world, as you always learn something valuable when in a new wine region.

WHAT'S THE ONE MISTAKE YOU MADE IN THE CELLAR YOU WOULD NEVER REPEAT?

My first hydrostatic forklift at Monteviña was a Towmotor with a single pedal to go forward and backward. So when it arrived I jumped on and did a bit of 'learning' how to drive it with a single pedal. Seemed easy! So the next step was to practice getting close to a tank with the forks up in the air. Should be easy, right? I put the forks up, got close to the top of the tank and panicked. I stomped on the brake—which was also the 'go' pedal—and hit the tank, put a hole in it and almost knocked it over.

WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT?

All of the happy and smiling clients I have had over the years, people I have helped start their wine brand, vineyard or build a winery. Good friends all.

WHAT WAS YOUR SCARIEST VINTAGE TO DATE?

That would be the two vintages of '76 and '77 in Amador County. Those were two back to back severe drought years. Most of our vineyards were head pruned and dry farmed. Our production fell by 40% in '76 and another 25% in '77. Great wines were made, just not many barrels produced.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE WORD OR SAYING?

Elegant.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSION?

My family.

WHAT'S THE ODDEST THING ABOUT YOU?

I spent years as a kid listening to recording of Sandy Nelson, a great drummer. But I could not play the drums for the life of me.

WHAT SONG BEST SUMS YOU UP?

Frank Sinatra singing "All The Way".

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY?

My years in Amador County in Shenandoah Valley starting Montevina with planting vineyards, learning how to farm from a great old-fashioned farmer, Davis P. Massoni, designing and building my first winery and the local housewives who were the major part of my crew on the bottling line and in the vineyard.

WHICH OF THE FIVE SENSES IS YOUR STRONGEST?

Smell, then taste.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST MOTIVATION?

Getting the people I work with to do great work and helping them to learn more about the interesting world of vineyards and winemaking.

WHICH BOTTLE OF WINE WOULD CHOOSE TO BE STRANDED WITH ON A DESERTED ISLAND?

Davis Estates Sauvignon Blanc.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GOOD AND GREAT WINE?

Good wine can be enjoyed at home alone...great wine is enjoyed with friends.

NAME THREE INDIVIDUALS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE DINNER WITH.

Albert Einstein, Andre Tchelistcheff, and Richard Rhodes (the writer).

WHO IS YOUR WINEMAKING HERO?

Dom Perignon.

WHAT DOES THE CONCEPT OF "BALANCE" MEAN TO YOU?

The wine tastes seamless on the palate and exotic in the nose.

WHAT IS THE ONE THING YOU WANT PEOPLE TO REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR WINE?

That they are true to style, balanced, and they taste and smell great!

BEST COMMENT MADE ABOUT YOUR WINE? WAS IT BY A CONSUMER, TRADE OR PRESS?

What my wife Vickie says every year when she tastes a new vintage of Sauvignon Blanc I have made: "You make great Sauvignon Blanc."