



2019 NORTH OF THE GATE WINE COMPETITION JUDGES

DEBRA DEL FIORENTINO



International Wine Judge, Sommelier, Certified Wine Professional and Certified Specialist of Wine, Debra Del Fiorentino is a consummate wine professional who brings a dynamic energy and expertise to every endeavor she undertakes. Debra is a familiar face at numerous prestigious wine competitions.

She also is President and Owner of Wine Competitions Management & Productions and Libation Logistics.

She is one of the Founders of Spirited Magazine, as well as the Food and Beverage Director. Debra also serves as an independent wine educator and partner in Russian River Vineyards.

VON HURSON

With 24 years in the wine industry, Von's career has taken her from wine sales and wine educator, to working harvest and making wine. She is a published photojournalist, wine columnist, holds an Advanced WSET certificate and has hosted a web-radio wine show – interviewing well-known personalities in the wine industry. Now on to her greatest challenge: producing her own wines as co-founder and co-owner of Valiance Wines, with profits going to assist America's wounded Veterans and their families. Having been a competition wine judge for many years, she sees it as a way to reward the efforts of talented winemakers and introduce the consumer to some excellent wines.



BILL MCNABB



Wine journalist Bill McNabb has traveled and tasted in all the major wine growing regions of the world from Europe to Australia and New Zealand to South Africa. For the past fifteen years, he has served as the Wine Editor for the Piedmont Post newspaper. Bill has judged at the San Francisco International Wine Competition and at the Grand Harvest Awards.

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CAROL SHELTON

Carol Shelton has had an illustrious 38-year career in the wine industry. While getting her Enology degree from UC Davis, Carol worked with Dr. Ann Noble, of Wine Aroma Wheel fame. As one of the first dozen women to receive her BS in Enology in 1978, Carol worked for Robert Mondavi, Saltram's in Australia's Barossa Valley, and in 1980 at Buena Vista, where she was mentored by the great Andre Tchelistcheff. As winemaker for Windsor Vineyards from 1981 till 2000, her wines drew great acclaim and she earned the title of "Most Awarded Winemaker in America" as well as "Winemaker of the Year" three times. Carol left Windsor in early 2000 to form Carol Shelton Wines with her husband, Mitch Mackenzie. Their goal is to craft small lots from carefully selected vineyards, with Zinfandel as their focus and passion.



ANNA MARIE DOS REMEDIOS



Anna Marie dos Remedios began making wine as a hobby to relieve the stress of her day job as a newspaper journalist and business owner. She focused on making small lot, single-vineyard designated wines from some of California's best wine-growing regions. She learned traditional winemaking methods from mentor and renowned Pinot Noir producer Josh Jensen at Calera Wine Company. When she began Idle Hour Winery, she used traditional methods – native yeast fermentation, gravity-flow racking, and the use of neutral French Oak – all of which are very gentle in nature, and she applied them to all of the varieties she ferments. She furthered her education by enrolling as a student in the University of

California, Davis, winemaking certificate program to gain an understanding of the chemistry of wine and winemaking. Anna Marie and her partner, Deb Payne, decided to relocate the winery to Oakhurst, which made Idle Hour the first winery in that small town located just outside the south entrance to Yosemite National Park. Idle Hour is named after Anna Marie's paternal grandfather's (Augustinho dos Remedios's) Chinese junk, a sailing and fishing vessel that she enjoyed as a young child with her family in Hong Kong, where she was born. In addition to Pinot Noir, varietals produced by the winery include Petite Sirah, Cabernet Franc, and Tempranillo.

LARRY VAN AALST

Retired sommelier, Equus Restaurant and Host of The Sonoma Report, CRN Digital Talk Radio the Equus Restaurant wine list was judged "Best of Show" in the 1995 and 1998 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. The Gallery of Sonoma County wines, nearly 300 bottles hand-picked by their winemakers, sets the tone – wine country splendor in a classic setting. Larry Van Aalst, Equus Sommelier, has been selecting wines for Equus for over a decade. Larry has been judging at the Cloverdale Citrus Fair/San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition for over a decade.



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MIKE KUIMELIS JR.

Mike Kuimelis Jr. is the winemaker and founder of Mantra Wines and Mobius Wines. He knew from age 10 being a winemaker is what he wanted to do. He first made his own wine in his converted garage in 1995, with the first barrel of Cabernet Sauvignon. In 2000 his obsession for winemaking became a career and Mantra Wines was born with 200 cases of Cabernet Sauvignon from the Alexander Valley Estate vineyards. His wines are now distributed across the United States, Canada, and parts of Asia. Mike has made wine for 23 years, and still makes wine in Healdsburg close to the family vineyards. He and his wife opened a tasting room in Novato 2 years ago, which was awarded *Best Wine Tasting* in Marin County by the Marin IJ Readers Choice Awards and *Best Wine Tasting Room* by the Pacific Sun.



MIKE DUNNE

Retired food editor, restaurant critic and wine columnist of The Sacramento Bee, Mike continues to contribute a biweekly wine column to The Bee, as well as occasional other features. During his 30 years as a feature writer at The Bee he focused primarily on food, wine and restaurants, but also wrote travel features, ranging from Idaho to Morocco, Guadalajara to the Finger Lakes. In retirement, he has been judging up to 18 wine competitions a year, from small regional contests (Amador Calaveras, Lake counties) to larger international roundups (Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas). He and his wife Martha live in Sacramento most of each year, but we also spend three to six months annually at another home in San Jose del Cabo, Baja California Sur, Mexico.



BRIAN MILLER



Brian Miller, Certified Specialist of Wine, is a wine Retailer and Wine Event Coordinator. Brian is the owner of Amador 360, a specialty wine retail shop in Plymouth, California. He is the creator and organizer of The Barbera Festival, and a coordinator of many other wine events. He has judged at wine competitions for several years.

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KAREN BENNETT

Karen has worked in the wine industry for 29 years, opening one of the first California wine bars in 1991. In 2004 she became the manager and wine buyer for Bill Hoppe's renowned Hoppe's Garden Bistro on the Central Coast. In 2009 she spent 2 years in San Diego before returning to the Central Valley where for the past 7 years she has directed the wine list for Meir Brown's Cafe' Med Restaurant and Gourmet Shop in Bakersfield, California. Karen is certified WSET Level 2 and Court of Master Sommeliers.



RICH COOK



Rich Cook has been writing about wine since 2008 and is currently a lead reviewer at the internationally renowned e-publication winereviewonline.com. Rich is the Founding Director of the Toast of The Coast Wine Competition at the San Diego County Fair, and also serves as Director of Robert Whitley's Challenge Series, Monterey International, and the San Diego County Fair's Distilled Spirits and Homemade Wine competitions. Rich judges several major competitions, and is also a panelist with the California Grapevine. When he's not swirling and spitting, he can be found teaching music or leading worship.

TRACI DUTTON

Traci Dutton is a sommelier, a wine judge, and the manager of public wine and beverage studies at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena. She joined the CIA in 1998 as beverage manager and sommelier for the college's Wine Spectator Greystone Restaurant. Over the course of more than 30 years in the wine world, Ms. Dutton has worked in high-end establishments such as Montrachet, The Striped Bass, and 231 Ellsworth, and has served luminaries as varied as Oprah Winfrey, Kevin Bacon, and Chef Paul Bocuse. She has studied and tasted great wines at vineyards around the world, from Portugal and Austria to Argentina and the United States. Her writing on wines and beverages has appeared in *Kitchen & Cook*, the *St. Helena Star*, *iSanté.com*, and many other publications. In 2011, she was named one of the top wine country sommeliers by *Tasting Panel* magazine.

