

Ep 86: Napa Valley fires, Comparing Bordeaux varieties in Napa to Bordeaux and Soil mapping with Quintessa winemaker Rebekah Wineburg



Janina Doyle 00:00:07 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just can not get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Welcome back wine lovers of the world, for today is part two with Rebekah Wineburg, winemaker at Quintessa. You're gonna hear direct from source what it's like to live and work through a fantastic harvest and equally how it feels being a winemaker in a challenging one. I've always been in awe of winemakers. When you think a chef has every night of their working life to try and create a better dish or experiment with new flavors, a winemaker gets one shot every year and that's it. And when that sinks in, you just realize the magnitude of your, your liquid creations. I think for that reason, as much as I'd love to make my own wine, I'm not sure I could handle it. Now, to add, to that, I'm sure all of you are aware of the fires that Napa valley have experienced throughout the years. Well, Rebekah tells us what it was like to deal with the last one. And how as a winery they are preparing for the future. Now, there is nothing better than a bit of storytelling to understand a wine better. So you're going to learn about Quintessa's Harvest Opening Ceremony. Perhaps not as extravagant as that of the Olympics, but I think that you'll agree really special, personal and unique. This is a winemaker's episode. So of course we'll be looking at how different vintages change the flavors in the grapes. Oh, and of course, soils. In fact, you'll learn all about Pedro Parra, Dr Terroir. You know, there's loads in this episode, so you know what, let's go to the chat now.

Janina Doyle 00:02:13 Now I want to take us to the life of a winemaker. Can you, um, bring us to your emotions and tell us what is it like to have the high of a fabulous, great vintage, and then maybe equally the challenges of a difficult vintage.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:02:29 You know, I think it's like, so you get that, you know, you, you've worked all year, so hard and then you, you feel like, you know, you feel like you've done everything right. And you can trick yourself into feeling like you're in control and then mother nature can, has the last laugh. Right? She gets to finish it. Yeah. Um, so you could have a year like, um, I think you have the 2017 Quintessa.

Janina Doyle 00:02:55 Yeah and 18, and 18.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:02:57 And 18. So those are two, so one of those years was more challenging. The other year was a cake walk. Um, so 2017 was what I would consider a challenging year. You work so hard. Um, I think our timing of our operations, um, we had a good rainfall in the, um, winter, and then it turned quite warm, quite hot. And we had a 10 day heat wave at the beginning of September of temperatures, uh, over a hundred degrees and like 0% humidity. So over 40.

Janina Doyle 00:03:31 I was just gonna say, everyone knows over a hundred is bad. But yeah, it's super hot.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:03:37 And that's challenging to the vines. Um, they are in the final stage of ripening and that's when they are at their most, um, vulnerable to heat. Right. They can't, they can't control their really, if we're not them, it's not heat, it's water. They can't control as well, their water. And so, you know, we do everything we can, but it's, it can be very stressful. So how do we react to that? Um, the, you know, so you have that, those feelings during harvest, like, oh gosh, you know, like I'm having this heat wave, should I pick, should I not pick, um, are the vines gonna be okay? And as things come through, um, and so you can have kind of all these emotions and stress and, and trying to kind of figure out, uh, what the vines or what the, the wine wants to be. I mean, that's one of the things I think about every year, what does this, I'm trying to listen to the vineyard, what does this wine wanna be and how should I treat it? And so for instance, 2017, because of that heat, the Quintessa is more, the, the grapes turn more or a darker fruit than a red fruit. So more black fruit than red fruit. It's incredibly aromatic. I have that in my glass. It was like, when I poured it this morning and it's morning here, it just like exploded out of the glass. It's so beautiful. Um, but I tell you, it was a very difficult vintage for me. And then of course at the end of 2017, um, we had a very destructive fire in Napa valley and Sonoma valley. That was probably one of the scariest fires. Fire is a natural part of our ecosystem here. Um, they, they do happen, um, periodically that that's, it's supposed to happen here. Um, but this one was, I mean, it threatened the city in Napa, you know. People lost, a lot of people lost their houses. We didn't have cell phones. I mean, it was just incredibly stressful. And in retrospect, that heat wave that I talked about was a blessing because our vintage was almost finished by the time that fire came in.

Janina Doyle 00:05:35 It sped things up just that little bit cause of the excess heat. Yeah. Okay. And did you say there was no cell phones?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:05:42 I know that was the weirdest thing. That was kind of the stressful oh yeah. The cell phone towers, um, burned down in 2017. Yeah, we were, we were not quite, we were not prepared for a fire like that. We are much better prepared now.

Janina Doyle 00:05:55 For sure. But I suppose anyway, just the way we live our lives right now, everything is left to the last moment. Cause you're like, I'll just send you a text. I'll, let's meet here, you know, how do you, how do you even cope? And also like...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:06:09 You're in a natural disaster. Like you, you leave your home. Cause I, I live in the town, the city of Napa, which is in the Southern part, which still had power. And so since I had power, I had wifi. But you leave your home and you can't contact home anymore and you're driving into a fire zone, and you know, how do you get the news of what's happening? So this, it, 2017 was a real wake up call for us on how to, for the, you know, the, the wine industry on how to be prepared for fire for these kind of natural, like more destructive, natural disasters than we've experienced in the past.

Janina Doyle 00:06:46 In a vineyard though, how can you be more prepared?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:06:52 Well, you can have a generator, so you have your own power. Um, you can a plan for how to contact everyone.

Janina Doyle 00:07:00 Um, okay.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:07:01 You have N95 masks. So we had a, you know, before covid we had a, we already had a great stock of N95 masks.

Janina Doyle 00:07:10 But not, not for what, what people normally think. Okay. Yes.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:07:15 Other people are scrambling to get them. We're like, oh yeah, no, we we've got hundreds already.

Janina Doyle 00:07:19 Ah, you could have been, you could have made a good business out of that, doubled in price, you know?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:07:23 Um, but you know, just how, how to make those kind of decisions under greater emotional stress. Um, and, and I think that we've, we've had earthquakes here too. Um, times like this, it, it really reminds you what's important. And, and the here at Quintessa, we are it's, it's not just the estate because of the vineyard. It's an estate because we are a team, a family. We are farming the estate ourselves with our full-time team. We are working in the winery with our full time team and we, um, yeah, I'm just so I'm so close to this team. Um, I said our, our vineyard team is 16 guys that have been, the average tenure is 15 years, um, Martin Galvan, our vineyard manager's been here. He lives on the property for 20 years.

Janina Doyle 00:08:15 Oh. Now lucky him. It's not a bad place to live.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:08:18 I know. I know. My cellar team, um, are, I think average tenure is 12 years. Like I'm the newest person at seven years.

Janina Doyle 00:08:27 Oh how funny. You're the baby.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:08:29 And I'm the baby. And so it's just a great, um, when you have those kind of ex, harvest is always stressful, right. You're doing 60% of your work in three months for the year. Like it is, the vines don't sleep, the fermentations don't sleep. It's seven days a week. Um, you start work at 4:00 AM. I mean it just, right? So you're, you're a close team and you're under, you're used to working under stressful situations together. And so when you have that kind of extra situation of a heat wave, or, I mean, we could have rain like a 2011. That was an unusual situation where we had rain during the harvest. Um, again, those wines are absolutely beautiful. So it's kind of like you, these challenging years sometimes I would argue, actually create the most interesting wines. Maybe like people.

Janina Doyle 00:09:24 Well it's a story as well, isn't it? Absolutely. Our scar, our war wounds, they all mean something and they build us up as, you know, whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger, like we need that.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:09:36 Of course the, the easy, the easy years also make great wine too. You know, they're just telling a different story,

Janina Doyle 00:09:41 Which is 2018, right?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:09:44 In 2018. Yeah. So we had, um, we didn't have any water stress. We didn't, it was kind of the, in a way, the opposite of 2017, where we had 2017, you had these heat events, which are actually more typical, uh, for Napa valley to have that kind of heat, um, wave that's one of our more, um, that's one of our big risks in the here. We have very low mildew pressure, but very high risk of having heat waves. And in 2018 it was mild. Like it was, it was just right in the zone. So, um, the entire season. And so it was, there was beautiful energy in the canopies, great canopies, um, great plump clusters, like, so they were sized bigger than 2017, but not so big that you had to worry about dilution. And the harvest was long, which was great, cause it was also a larger crop because these vines were so, um, the canopies were so vigorous in a good way. So they had great vigor and energy, um, and so usually had a beautiful long even season and a beautiful long even harvest and this wine. Um, I think this wine is, is for me the, um, to date, I think the most true representation of the feeling I have, what I think is the soul of Quintessa, that feeling I have when I'm walking around this property and I'm walking through those different hillside and the different soil types and you know, I, I, I walk through, then you feel them how each different section tastes. That to me, I can see that so clearly in the 2018.

Janina Doyle 00:11:23 Okay. I'm, I'm excited now to taste that, but before I get on, cause I'm gonna compare the 17 with the 18, cause I have both. You said about how you feel as part of a family. Now I read in Forbes, there was an article where it's says you have this really beautiful ceremony when harvest begins. Can you just tell everyone about this because it's just stunning.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:11:45 Yes. So we call it our harvest opening ceremony. It's traditional, um, for people to do a, you know, a lot of people do a harvest blessing. Um, this comes from, uh, France and Italy. They do, you know, like a, a priest will come in and bless the harvest. And some, yeah, some people at the opening day and some people do that here. Um, we felt that, that wasn't quite authentic to us, um, to bring in some outside person and, you know, do a blessing more, you know, not the entire team is of that religion or, or follows that. And instead we do something that we call the opening ceremony. So it's a, almost a pantomime of the, the, the journey of Quintessa. It starts in the vineyard and so we start with the vineyard team with, I pick out like a beautiful cluster. This is the first day of harvest, a beautiful cluster. We all gather on the crush pad, take a cluster on a tray. And they say, you know, a couple of words about how they have cared for these vines for the last eight months and that they have the, had the responsibility of the, um, spirit of Quintessa, the soul of Quintessa for this time. And now at harvest it's that moment for them to pass on that responsibility to the winery team. So they pass this grape cluster onto the winery team and we thank them for their hard work. And we say how we are going to now transform this grape, the product of their work into, through fermentation, through this magical process, into the wine Quintessa that can be shared with the world, and that we take this responsibility very seriously. And then we pass that on to our hospitality team. So our director of hospitality, Morgan Bailey represents the customer, the sales, um, the wine itself. And so we pass that on to her and she thanks us for it. And at that point, actually we, we bring a bottle out

Janina Doyle 00:13:42 Why would you not?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:13:43 Right? And because that is the cycle, you know, it's not just the vineyard, it's not just the winery. It's also bringing it out to the customer. That is the full circle. We're talking about the biodynamic farming, being a closed circle. That's the circle. That's the, the life of Quintessa. And we are capturing that. So we're interpreting it, we are, uh, capturing the character of the estate and the character of the year in a bottle of wine, which is then able to go out into the world and

share that. And every time you open a bottle of Quintessa, you taste it. You're gonna feel a little bit of the spirit of Quintessa.

Janina Doyle 00:14:23 Okay. Okay, fine. I'm going. I'm going to try. So, um, did you say that you have some with you?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:14:32 I do.

Janina Doyle 00:14:32 Do you, which vintage have you got?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:14:34 I have 2017 in my glass and I had 2018 yesterday. So I can speak about this.

Janina Doyle 00:14:39 Yes. We were already saying this before we recorded, the joys. You have to drink it every day don't you. Tough, tough life. So this is, is bold. Isn't it? Which we would expect from a much warmer vintage.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:14:53 Oh, you have the 17 or the 18?

Janina Doyle 00:14:54 I, 17 in my hand and, well actually I, okay, I can be, I can be creative. Um, although I'm not as good at spinning around, uh, the wine with the left hand. Right hand, I'm so professional. Left it's like, oh, hang on, it's all a bit...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:15:08 I'm not... me too.

Janina Doyle 00:15:10 Okay. I'm like a really weird DJ right now. I'm like, anyway. Ah, do you know what okay, me just smelling the two. First of all, I just want everyone to know the intensity on both is really high. There's so much fruit. Um, but you get a lot more kind of, I don't know, chocolate covered blueberries in the 2018, I guess, cause it's a fresher year maybe. And then you get this kind of nice kind of chunky black cherries, black currents, even a bit of a forest fruits edge, but it's just nose wise, but both of them beautiful lick of kind of um, leather and little licorice spice. Um, I get a lot more kind of almost milk chocolate. It's like dark chocolate in the 2017 and then like a milk chocolate...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:15:58 It's a warmer year. That's exactly right. A warmer year expresses a darker version of Quintessa. So you get more of the, the black fruit and the dark chocolate. And then 18, you get, there's a lot of minerality, the vintages are different. They're showing those, the different character, the different growing seasons, but the character of Quintessa remains consistent and that has its, that is because we have what I'd call a true terroir, very strong terroir. Um, about, uh, three quarters of the property are volcanic soils. So the Eastern hill, the white soils that have, um, very low clay content. So these are very low fertility soils. The vines have to struggle very hard here and they create this beautiful expression that is more floral, um, redder fruit, and very, very long. Volcanic soils allow electricity into the wine. I think there's like this verve and grittiness. There, have a fine chalky texture in the finish. So that's the finish of Quintessa. I think of it that way. The central, there's two hills on the central, they are mixed volcanic, um, and alluvial, an older alluvial. And so here, one of them has a red soil, higher iron content. That's really, that's like classic minerality, earthy flavors, minerality, the other hills, a, um, a nut brown soil. This has kind of, it's like the Goldilocks. It is not too much clay, not too little clay. Like this is the persistent core of Quintessa and that's the supple fruit, that supple tannin. So these are, these are bigger wines. They're dense, but they are not aggressive.

Janina Doyle 00:17:44 Not at all.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:17:45 Yeah. That, it's like tricky tannin cause it's, I mean, 18 is just a new release. That's a baby wine. Um, but it's drinkable. And the reason it's drinkable is that other quarter of the Quintessa property, which is along the Napa river, which is our Western border. And there we have a true alluvial terroir. So this is a deep clay loam and clay gives you density and power, but it also gives you fleshiness. So that part of the property doesn't have the length or the structure, um, the seriousness, but it is like the flesh on the skeleton that that's the plushness. Um, I think that that's why Quintessa is so beautiful to drink young, but is quite ageable.

Janina Doyle 00:18:28 And I think what's really nice about them. They're beautifully full bodied. And as you said, really concentrated and, and they're, they're deep in color. So everyone be, be prepared. You will get the little marks on your lips like you are smiling, but there is, as you said, a real freshness that kind of goes through them. Um, and electricity, did you say that? Was that just come outta my head?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:18:51 No, I said electricity.

Janina Doyle 00:18:52 Oh no.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:18:53 But it is right?

Janina Doyle 00:18:53 No, but that means that I didn't come up with it.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:18:56 But it does right? It has this like, it's like it's, it's not that it's acidic, it's that, it's like dances, as a vitality.

Janina Doyle 00:19:06 A lightness, even with all the intensity of fruit. But interesting, I get, and I guess this is because the 2018 is fresher. I get a little bit more, almost a slight herbal note as well. Like even like a, a hint of dill or something like that, going on with this kind of...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:19:22 I get that as, we have, that's the, to me, that's like the, uh, I'm talking about like the native Oak Woodlands, that's the smell like that Quintessa should smell like it smells when I'm walking through those Oak Woodlands. And we have wild Sage and California Bay Laurel. So it's this, reads more of a bay, like it's not a menthol, but it's in this very aromatic family. Um, and those are the trees that are around us here.

Janina Doyle 00:19:51 Yeah. And I also get like a slight incense stick. So at the end of the day, it is that kind of dried wood, the perfume, those aromatics. It's it's, it's very beautiful. Yeah.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:20:00 Or a, I think of it as fresh tobacco leaf, if you've ever been like in a tobacco bar.

Janina Doyle 00:20:05 Yes. In Cuba. Mm-hmm, it's all these kind of that, it's leafy and earthy without being woody. It's the aromatic side of it and herbaceous side, isn't it?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:20:16 And that is the character of our terroir. And it's also the, the varieties that we are growing here, and the varieties in the blend are like the, they're the vehicle for the terroir. So it's majority Cabernet Sauvignon. Um, and then there's, uh, Cabernet Franc. So you get a little bit of that herbal character, a little bit more structure. Um, there's, uh, Merlot, a little bit of plushness. Petit

Verdot for that incense, that Potpourri. Um, and then there's Carménère. The family is originally from Chile. And so we have some blocks of Carménère here and it grows really well. This is my, um, only experience making Carménère, growing Carménère. And I'm planting, we're planting a few more blocks.

Janina Doyle 00:21:03 It love to hear that.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:21:04 I think it works really well here. Yeah. And so that's that incense, you know, it's got this, like it's plush, but it's herbal, but it's green, but not green.

Janina Doyle 00:21:14 It's quite hard to define, what I'm gonna tell everybody is that I feel like I need to sit down with both of these wines and actually stop and not be talking to you and really, but you know, meditate over them. So everyone check out my Instagram later and I'm gonna do full on, you know, tasting notes because they deserve that. You know, because it's quite hard to just really sum everything up on just first, first sniff and first smell. But I was gonna say interesting the connections with Chile, cause as you, you may not know. I actually represent a Chilean winery, Ventisquero Wine Estates. And I love how everything always connects because what I find fashion is at the moment you are on a new stage in the vineyards because you've used Chilean Dr. Pedro Parra, who actually helped us with our soil mapping back at the beginning, like in 2000. And I adore him, I adore his wines. He is Dr. Terroir isn't he?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:22:05 Yeah. He has a PhD in terroir.

Janina Doyle 00:22:08 He literally is just a rock man. In fact it was the Wine Spectator that has said he's the modern day Indiana Jones, which is, I love that because he's just he's I, I haven't actually met him, but I mean, you can tell me, dirty...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:22:21 Oh, he's wonderful.

Janina Doyle 00:22:23 Dirty fingernails. Always like crawling around and jumping in and out of like holes that he's dug in the ground right? Yes.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:22:29 Yes. Yeah. Except, except wearing like a, you know, like a jazz or classic rock, like jazz musician t-shirt so.

Janina Doyle 00:22:36 Okay. Now what, what is, what has he been doing for you and how is that going to help you?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:22:41 So he has helped us, we have embarked on a new era of discovery at Quintessa. So we had 20 years growing these vines, understanding through that kind of observation, what this terroir is. So seeing, like following and, and previously to working with, um, Pedro, I understood the different parts of the estate. I had these terroir units based on how the vines reacted and how the wines taste. And now we're embarking on this next step to be able to anticipate. So the work with Pedro first starts with doing a electro conductivity map. So you map out using electro conductivity, the entire estate, like, so, um, the idea here is that there is only one, um, component of soils that conducts electricity, which is clay. And so you are seeing the, this electro conductivity map is like all these different colors, the entire estate. And it's telling you where there's differences in the clay content or some sort of difference in the estate. And then from that, Pedro, we decide where we're going to actually physically dig pits so that we know, we know that there's a difference, say like there's blue and there's yellow, but what you have to get inside the pit to know what blue is and what yellow is,

because this is specific to our estate. So it's telling us where we can dig these pits to understand more. And the, previous to working with Pedro, and what's kind of typical here is that you do soil work. So we had done soil work before, but you do it when you're replanting, when you're planting. Cause you do it in a very transactional way. Like I need to know what amendments I need it to make. What root stock should I use? The work we're doing now is to understand better our terroir so that we do not have to replant so that we can maintain these vines that are, were planted in 1990 and allow them to become 50 years old, which is not common here. Typical I, I went to UC Davis. I was taught that you would replant a vineyard every 25 years.

Janina Doyle 00:24:49 Oh wow. Yeah. Now...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:24:50 Average age. Yeah. I mean that's why, but why? Like once you start to think about the, why, why do you do that?

Janina Doyle 00:24:58 I guess profit. Well, I guess it's profitability in the past. It was, we want high yields.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:25:02 Profitability of whom?

Janina Doyle 00:25:03 The company. They just wanna sell...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:25:06 The company that's doing the planting?

Janina Doyle 00:25:08 Well, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, either way people...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:25:12 The people that are selling you?

Janina Doyle 00:25:13 Mm-hmm yeah.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:25:13 No, no. There's there are reasons, you know, to replant. We've done some replanting here, but, but not just cause the vines are old. I mean, old vines give you better, um, consistency, um, more depth of flavor. And so digging these pits were understanding what to expect and I had mentioned that for here, with Pedro, we had, he came on the first visit. He had not tasted any barrel samples, uh, before, we had not, we were just doing pits first and we dug a pit in the white soils and I mentioned that those are on our Eastern Hills. These are the volcanic rhyolitic ash, and they are something special for Quintessa. I think that they're, they're a real distinct character here. They are. I mean, in this region, they're not necessarily considered the greatest soils. Um, but I think that they are, um, some of our most unique and special part of Quintessa, but they are difficult to understand and the vines, so we were digging a hole in this block called Mont Cleave and this is a block that, um, prior to, I loved it. But prior to my arrival, I think the previous winemakers hadn't really liked it and digging this pit kind, it made so much sense. So Pedro goes down there and he feels the soil and it is all white volcanic ash. And it has this kind of gritty feeling. And he's like, well of course he's like, this is going to be, um, have a, a texture, like Barolo, it's going to be chalky. That's gonna be the tannin. And it was like, how does he know that? That's exactly right. And that's exactly why it's so important to do this work because if you are just thinking that typical Napa valley Cabernet Sauvignon needs to be about density and power and um, concentration and body, that's never gonna happen with those soils. So if you are trying to make that happen, you're not going to. If you are farming to make that happen, it's not gonna succeed. If you are fermenting and macerating and, and doing your winemaking operations to, to make that fit into this, you know, it's a, it's a square peg in a round hole. Um, but in doing this pit,

understanding, you can say, oh, okay, I understand this. This is what this block is going to give me. Not density and broadness, but linearity and finish and this very distinctive tannin. And I need to farm accordingly, understand the capacity of these vines, you can see the soil and also understand how to treat them in the winery. And, um, he came in 2018 and we had already, um, been thinking a lot about how to understand though that particular part of the property. And in 2018, I also had done a redesign of the winery cause I had noticed by observation, so kind of after that observation that those soils, the, the vines, grapes from those soils did really well with concrete fermenters.

Janina Doyle 00:28:13 Ah, ok.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:28:14 And so I redesigned the winery to better respect that part. So I put in 22 custom designed, concrete fermenters, so unlined concrete to be able to allow all of that kind of linearity, fine chalky texture, um, show through in its best light, because the concrete allows that to show in its best, most fluffy way with a little bit of suppleness.

Janina Doyle 00:28:37 Because at the moment, these wines are seeing like 20, 22 months of French Oak barrels and it just, right. So it's gonna be from the 2019 onwards that there's gonna be used...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:28:49 So the 2018, no, it's a, it's actually a tank, so it's fermented in concrete.

Janina Doyle 00:28:53 Okay. Okay. And then it goes to barrel.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:28:55 Yeah. So we had the great combination of having these concrete fermenters come in and the 2018 vintage and have Pedro come in and you know, it was like, he hadn't even tasted the wine yet, but he, what he was saying was exactly what I had been observing. And it was just mind blowing.

Janina Doyle 00:29:10 Yeah, there's, I've seen an article that was written about an interview with Dr. Pedro Parra, and it was like, I don't, I'm saying things incorrectly now, so nobody quote me, but it was like, oh, uh, wine made on granitic soil, oh, you can taste it in the front palate and then wine on a much more you know clay soil or a, or limestone soil. You, you taste it in the mid palate or the back or, you know, and, and so you...

Rebekah Wineburg 00:29:33 And it's an exciting way. And I, and it, it's a it's way I like to think about wines. Cause it's what it's not about what's, like in the world of wine, it's not, what's better or worse on one scale. It's what's most expressive and true of its own character. It's unique. Um, Quintessa should only taste like it's from Quintessa. So it's been an incredible work with him and he is, he is one of the most amazing tasters I've I've ever had the opportunity to taste with. Pretty, it's pretty exceptional. So we've continued to do this work. Um, you know, when he wasn't able to travel, we were doing a little bit of, um...

Janina Doyle 00:30:09 Good old Zoom.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:30:10 FaceTime, FaceTime in a pit. Um, and it's, it's really exciting. And, and you combine that kind of knowledge with a vintage like 2018 and then following it 2019, where mother nature is very easy and it allows you to see the results of the work that you're doing. So you don't have any kind of like mitigating effect of, um, you know, these, these, you know, weather events that we can get. Um, and it's, it's been incredible. Um, I think the, we are, our understanding and our, um,

connection to the estate and to the place Quintessa has just been, um, deepening at a like exponential scale over the last, um, five years.

Janina Doyle 00:30:53 Amazing. And I think that with Napa valley, anyway, we all know that you went through a stage where it was all about big juicy, uh, intense fruit, high alcohol, power, power, power, and that's been changing and everyone is starting to find the finesse. And certainly what you're, and apart from the fact that I can taste this in the wine. There's beautiful concentration. It's more about finesse and a freshness. And also with all your now new findings, I can see how the wine is going to probably come together even more of that, with those individual, uh, areas. How would you for somebody saying, okay, well this is a Bordeaux blend. You're using the Bordeaux varieties here in Napa. How would you say that compares to Bordeaux? Just so somebody can understand, you know?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:31:45 Oh, I think about this all the time. Cause even Napa is, uh, Napa's different than Bordeaux. Um, but Quintessa is in, an estate in the classic sense. Um, where we grow our own grapes and we make our wine and we are distributed. Um, we are actually distributed the Quintessa on La Place de Bordeaux, so we are internationally distributed.

Janina Doyle 00:32:05 Well of course you are because these are, I think I'm sorry. I'm just gonna pause. Everyone needs to know these are, this is not just a typical, uh, Cabernet Bordeaux blend that we are drinking. I mean the 2017 is something that you need to get on a very special occasion, £187 a bottle, and you can get half bottles apparently from Hedonism, everyone. So that is gonna be cheaper. That is your way to get a Quintessa. Um, but the normal bottles you can get apparently from Tannico and also from Crump Richmond & Shaw Fine Wines. And then the 2018, £150, bargain. And by the way, I actually prefer the 2018 cause I like the, the blueberry freshness and the slightly more herbacious nature. But I mean, I'm not complaining, I'll have both, um, and you can get it from Uncorked, Cru World Wine London, uh, Farr Vintners, Burnett & Herbert Fine Wines. I will put all this in the show notes, but I just, that's why you're in La Place de Bordeaux. These wines are high end, top, top, top, top of their game premium, stunning examples of what can come out of Napa. Okay. There you go. You can continue now.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:33:22 So I, you know, again, it's we have a volcanic, um, terroir, so we're not, you know, defined just by like gravels or, or clay. But I think that, um, I mean I have, I have my, a couple of Château's that are like my dream and my, I love to follow every year and I get to know very well, cause they're so exciting to me. Um, but I think that we are more like Pauillac or even Saint-Estèphe. Cause we have, we in the world of wine, like it Quintessa is elegant and has finesse, but it is a powerful wine, so we do have that kind of power and that structure component, um, to ourselves.

Janina Doyle 00:34:01 I'd go with more Saint-Estèphe. For me I get with Pauillac more of the gravelly, more of the earthy nature but Saint-Estèphe I get a little bit more of plusher fruit, rounder fruit. And I think the nice thing about these wines is even at 2018, it's so approach because the tannins are, they're chalky, they're sweet, chalky, soft tannins that give you this minerality maybe from the volcanic soils. But the point is they're incredibly approachable. It's not, we are not doing it justice cause I can only imagine this wine is gonna be superb in 15 years time or more.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:34:37 Oh I mean, yes.

Janina Doyle 00:34:37 But hey, you know.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:34:39 But isn't it nice to be able to drink it, like, you know, I don't even always decant, so.

Janina Doyle 00:34:45 Oh, well I poured this in the glass at the beginning of our conversation. It has had some time in the glass, but it's not decanted and it is drinking beautifully. Again, everybody, I will give my full conclusion later once I have spent time just looking at it, smelling it and sipping it because they're just, they're they're beautiful. So just uh, just to finish off, I just wanna conclude with one, oh god, I bet this is not gonna be short. But when you're at the University of California, you wrote a thesis on the effects of winemaking techniques of the phenolic composition of Cabernet Sauvignon. I mean, is there a quick takeaway here? You know, phenolics are good, everyone, by the way, they're healthy. They, they help us live longer. So that's that's good.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:35:30 So phenolics are interesting. My undergraduate, my bachelor's degree was in chemistry and biology. So I was always been interested in phenols and I like, you know, one of the things I like about wine is that it's, it is an incredibly complex matrix. Like you cannot, I like to know and to understand like why things are happening. I, I like process like studying phenolics or thinking about seed tannins. Um, but you can never, wine is so complex that you can never actually know everything. You can never break it down. You can just learn different things. So I did do my thesis work on the effect of different winemaking techniques on the phenolic composition of Cabernet Sauvignon. So I worked with different vineyards and different, um, techniques, so different, um, like pump over style, pump over, punch down, delestage, um, tannin additions, enzyme additions and utilizing different, um, vineyards and you know, analyzing them by component, by phenolic component, which is, um, phenolics are the color and the building blocks of tannin in wine. So mouth feel and color in wine.

Janina Doyle 00:36:39 That comes from the skins, everyone, by the way, just in case.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:36:42 It comes from the skins and the seeds. Yes, not pulp and yeah you know, it was really fascinating to me. One of, I mean basically my conclusion was it depends.

Janina Doyle 00:36:52 I, do you know what? That's a really, really good answer because you know, so many times people ask me wine questions and I'm not a specialist in one subject, I'm an ex sommelier. I represent a winery. I do education on a, you know, looking at the wines of the world. But you know, it's like even when you get into the nitty gritty of one thing, I mean, there's always a wine rule, but then there's the opposite, you know, like there's a rules, but they can always be broken. Conclusion: Depends.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:37:20 It depends.

Janina Doyle 00:37:21 And that is how we end the episode. Ladies and gentlemen, that's amazing. Um, I feel quite, I feel calmed by learning about Quintessa's story. It feels quite magical and you kind of feel, I feel energized.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:37:38 I would love it if you who come to visit.

Janina Doyle 00:37:40 Well, I will absolutely take you off on that offer cause it just it's you, we said about the, the electricity and for me there's an energy. And maybe that's coming from you. Maybe that's coming from the soil. Maybe that's just coming right now because I'm listening to the story. I don't

know, but that is kind of what being transmitted. So it's been beautiful going through these very, very special wines. So thank you for taking us on that little journey. It's been fabulous.

Rebekah Wineburg 00:38:07 Oh, well thank you for spending the time with me. And I do. I welcome you to come visit or any of your listeners. We are, as I mentioned, only about an hour away from San Francisco, Napa Valley does hospitality. It's a, it's it's an adult playground. Um, what we do here is hospitality and there is nothing, there is nothing like tasting a wine in the vineyard so.

Janina Doyle 00:38:29 Beautiful. Lovely. Well, I'll see you there, right?

Rebekah Wineburg 00:38:33 Yes, thank you.

Janina Doyle 00:38:33 Thank you so much, Rebekah. Thanks. Bye.

Janina Doyle 00:38:41 All I can say to you all is I hope that one day you are able to transport yourself to Rutherford Napa by having a sip of Quintessa. Now to finish off as always I have a wine quote and it's from another best-selling award-winning author, Sandra Bird, American and female to stick with the episode from a Napa valley winery. And of course my nod to women's history month. Now, rightly or wrongly she said:

“If your arteries are good, eat more ice cream, if they are bad, drink more red wine. Proceed thusly.”

Now don't forget, she certainly has a point with that red wine. Many studies have shown drunk, of course, in moderation that red wine and its polyphenols are organic compounds of medicinal magic. They can help prevent cardiovascular disease, apparently inhibit cancer cell growth, lower that bad cholesterol. So what are you waiting for? Grab that glass of red. Get yourself a bottle of Quintessa for the next special occasion on the list. And let's all get healthier together. Big thanks to you all for listening. Don't forget you can get in touch with me with suggestions of what you want to listen to in the future, or just to give me feedback. My email and Instagram are in the show notes, ah, as is the transcript should you want to download? And if you're feeling extra feisty and generous then please do leave me a review or a comment on your podcast app, especially if you are listening through apple podcasts. Do a good deed of the day by sharing this podcast with another wine loving friend and do not forget to like and subscribe. Now next week I will be talking to another inspiring woman, Anne Kriebiehl, a Master of Wine, and we're gonna be talking Pinot Noir clones, or as you would say in Germany, which is where Anne is from, Spätburgunder. So tune in next week for some deep conversation. Until then cheers to you.