

# Ep 101: Wine grapes, wine regions, and wine history with Paul Kalemkiarian (Part 1)



**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!

Hello, to all my thirsty and inquisitive wine lovers. Welcome back to another episode. And today I am joined by Paul Kalemkiarian who is the owner of the original wine club of the month. And they are based in Los Angeles. Now having tasted, as he says, north of a hundred thousand bottles of wine, he has an absolute library of wine stories and of course, literal wine. So in this podcast, we are gonna be touching on how things used to be. So Paul talks about the wine trade just 30 years ago and how much it has evolved. We talk about the price of Grand Cru Chablis and yes, it was insanely affordable. And how back then there wasn't the same regulations now, so people could call their Chardonnays Chablis or Rhine wine. Now with all these stories and all these wines, Paul is gonna be taking us back to Armenia where there are 6,000 year old wine caves. He's gonna be named dropping winemakers here and there so pay attention. We're gonna go across to Greece. We are gonna go across to the Canary islands. We're gonna be talking about decent celebrity wines. There's so much packed in this. Tips for you guys. If you're gonna go and purchase a bottle, what you might wanna look for on the label. So sit back, relax, pour yourself a glass of wine and unwind with this really chilled out podcast.

**Janina Doyle 00:02:10** Paul, thank you so much for joining me and making it a little time to talk about what you do and giving us a rundown of California, your favorite wines and some wine tips. So welcome.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:02:21** Thank you so much. It's great to be here across the pond, as we would say.

**Janina Doyle 00:02:25** Across the pond, a very, very large pond really isn't it? Just a little bit. Now I want to ask you the question. It's a boring old question, but people need to, you know, know where you're from and why. So standard question. How did you get into wine? Did you fall into it? Like many of us do?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:02:44** Well, you know, it's kind of interesting. I worked in it all my life ever since I was a teenager. My father was a pharmacist by trade and his last pharmacy in 1969 that he had to purchase that he needed to purchase. Um, he wouldn't buy, unless the gentleman sold him the liquor store that was adjacent. And it truly was, you know, beer, spirits and ice cream

**Janina Doyle 00:03:06** And ice cream?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:03:07** Yeah, it was, you know, it was like a truck stop, but it was in a very, um, affluent neighborhood in Southern California and the beach beach cities. And he turned it into one of the fine wine shops of Los Angeles by 1974. And I used to work there, you know, I used to stock the shelves and I used to steal half pints of vodka from the guy, my poor father. And, so I've been around it all my life, but it wasn't until 1988 that he decided he would sell the company. He had a couple offers oddly from the South African wine of the month club. And he said, you know, you ought to come and check this place out. It's pretty cool. And uh, I did loved it and bought it from him in 1989.

**Janina Doyle 00:03:45** Ah, so that's how it started.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:03:47** Yeah. So we had gone to a tasting together actually. We worked together for about 90 days, about three months and we went to a Bordeaux tasting. We were separated. It was about 25 Bordeauxs, I don't think they were classified, but they were high end Bordeaux and we tasted completely separately. And when we got in the car to compare notes and we have a three point scale that we use very quick, down and dirty, meatball surgery, three point, you don't need a hundred.

**Janina Doyle 00:04:13** How does that work. Oh, okay. How does your, no, I like it. Keep it clean. What's a three point scoring system for you?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:04:19** So, because we're looking for wines to select for the club for users, you know, for our customers to to enjoy it's, a one is you can't, we can never use it. Because it's just too expensive or just really undrinkable. Two is we could use it today. In other words, it's it's it matches all the parameters that we're looking for. And three is, eh, the price came down a little bit and we put it in a club where it's not so expensive, uh, then it would work. So that's it. That's what we use. And I don't tell anybody that except for all your listeners so.

**Janina Doyle 00:04:54** Well, again, keeping things simple life is complicated enough. Okay, cool.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:04:58** When we got in the car, we've compared our notes and we were exactly the same on all of them, except two. And so he thought, I think you're ready. And he sort of gave me the ceremonial dollar. I gave him a dollar, but that's not, I still pay him every month. So don't let don't believe that story, but it was, it was, it was, it was the ceremonial dollar to transfer the, the rights to the company and, um, that was 1989. And we've been doing ever since. And you know, I don't know about you, but I wasn't originally that aha moment hadn't occurred for me. It was, it was down the road, uh, a bit, uh, maybe 10 years into it. So I've been doing it 32 years.

**Janina Doyle 00:05:39** And that came with what, just generally having tasted so much wines or a specific wine trip, or?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:05:47** I think it was the, the, the, the, the former, I think I tasted so many different wines that eventually it, it started to make sense to me and the terroir, uh, portion of wine, you know, the wine, the expression of where it's from and the, and the time it was from started to become apparent and I started to realize, I actually understood part of it. Don't understand most of it, but I still understand some of it.

**Janina Doyle 00:06:11** Yeah. How much do we actually know? This is a valid point. I know we will continue learning till we die. So tell me about the wine of the month club. Many of, uh, my listeners in

America may already know about you, but certainly in the UK, we don't. So tell us a little bit more how it functions and what you do there.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:06:29** It's the, it's the original in America. My dad started 1972 and it started not. And this is the key difference between this organization and any other club that does this. The key difference is it was started and still is a basis to find the best value wines on the shelf. Meaning in 1972, when people came into my father's store, they would ask him, I have \$5, don't remember it was '72, 5 bucks went a lot further.

**Janina Doyle 00:06:54** What would that have been? What would that be?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:06:56** That, oh, you could have gotten Grand Cru Chablis back then for five dollars.

**Janina Doyle 00:06:59** Oh, probably almost, but yeah.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:07:03** No it was, it was six bucks. We, we sold it for \$6.29 or something.

**Janina Doyle 00:07:05** No. Are you being serious?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:07:07** No. No, Yeah. I have the, I have the newsletters to prove it.

**Janina Doyle 00:07:10** No. Okay. God, if only I was born a few decades earlier.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:07:14** Yeah, exactly.

**Janina Doyle 00:07:15** Okay.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:07:16** So he, so he would, he's decided because so many people asked the question that he would just choose the wines at the beginning of the month. And not only was that sort of revolutionary in the industry in 1972, uh, the fact that a salesman would come in with the Jack Daniels and the Jim Bean bourbon and the Gin and say, oh, by the way, I have Robert Mondavi Cabernet. It needs to go on the shelf. My father's starting to say, no, it doesn't go on the shelf unless I taste it. And that was really cutting edge for the wine world in the, in America, in 1972. You did, he just put the stuff on the shelf because there weren't that many choices anyway.

**Janina Doyle 00:07:51** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:07:51** So that was the way it worked. So what was interesting was Tuesdays was his tasting day.

**Janina Doyle 00:07:56** Why Tuesdays??

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:07:58** I don't know. I really never had the answer to that question. But I, I still do it today.

**Janina Doyle 00:08:03** Oh, okay. Yeah. Following the footsteps. Tuesdays tasting day.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:08:06** Still Tuesdays. Uh, he would invite the doctors that supported his pharmacy to the wine shop in the afternoon. I would brown bag the selections I'd go up in the loft. I'd create these 10 seats. My dad used the UC Berkeley, uh, tasting scale, which was a 20 point scale, uh, of the four or five, you know, pieces of it. They would taste and talk and then they would choose. And that

would become the wines of the next month. And it's exactly what we do today. And again, the premise was not to sell more bottles. It was to educate and to provide great value.

**Janina Doyle 00:08:40** I love that. So, you know, that's what I always say. I'm drinking for the masses. I'm doing it for you guys listening, right? You'll agree with me, won't you Paul? So every Tuesday, so you have a group of wine tasters that sit with you and you basically blind taste a number of bottles every week.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:09:00** No. And here's the beauty of this. Maybe it's not maybe it's more work?

**Janina Doyle 00:09:03** It's, I'll decide. Okay.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:09:06** But it's, I have an online calendar, they start at nine o'clock, but the end of Two. It's nobody else, except me once in a while, I have a guest that comes in, but they have to understand that this is meatball surgery. We are, I get through 75 wines, uh, on a Tuesday. So you're opening and tasting, opening and tasting. And that three point scale really comes in handy because you don't spend a lot of time chewing on the wine. I chew on the wine later. You know, if, if, if somebody brings me a Napa valley Cab or a, a Canary island, you know, Listan Negro, I will taste it for what it is worth it, at from where it's from and when it's from. And I guess after about a hundred thousand wines, you start to sort of learn something, even me, right?

**Janina Doyle 00:09:47** You know, I would hope so after that many. Yeah. So, so tell me, like you just mentioned Napa Cab, many people are gonna have heard of, and then you've mentioned Listan Negro, which is amazing, all the Listan varieties. I've mentioned them several times. I used to work for a Chilean winery. So Pais, uh, Listan Prieto is, is actually doing really interesting things now in Chile. So I think it's, it's super exciting things coming from these volcanic soils and such like, so tell us a little bit about maybe your favorite wines that you've put in your wine club subscription recently, or that just stick in your mind.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:10:25** You know, that's a great question. Not even it's just a great study and conversation because you know, it's dynamic cause you know, you, you, your palate changes over time.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:33** Yeah. Mmmm.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:10:34** And when I got married, my wife only drank, you know, Gallo Chablis, which was in a jug, you know, at one, at one point we called 'em jugs back then. Yeah.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:40** Gallo Chablis. I love that they were calling it Chablis at that time.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:10:45** Oh yeah. They had Rhine wine. They had, they had Hardy Burgundy back in the day. And so now she is my biggest critic of, of my reds. So you, your palate changes, but what's kind of interesting. And this is going back to the Listan Negro grape. When I, when I put wines in my database is I'm tasting them. It'll start to pop the, the choices based on my misspellings will start to start to pop up and I'm putting in L I S T and nothing's showing up and I'm like, it's pretty rare that a wine is not, the grape varieties not in my database, meaning after a hundred thousand wines, that there's something that I haven't tasted before. And, and it's not showing up and I couldn't believe it. And here I'm tasting this wine, like you said, there's all volcanic soils and this is a spicy component. So Sangiovese like, and I'm like, wow, this is really cool. I, I couldn't afford it for the club to answer that question.

**Janina Doyle 00:11:37** They are actually, yeah. They're, they're not that cheap. Are they? Cause there's not that much of it made. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:11:43** So I bought it for my cellar, which is available to clients that want to try interesting things that I can't afford to put, you know, the mainstream. That's one of them. Um, have you had any Armenian wines lately?

**Janina Doyle 00:11:54** I can't believe you have said that because I was just at London Wine Fair and there was a whole stand on Armenia and I never got to it. But I did have, I know, but I have had an Areni Noir before. And that one Areni Noir was so elegant, planted on altitude. Um, and it really was Pinot Noir-esque. It was very, very beautiful. So is it was by a producer called Zorah, Z O R A H. I remember had, and it had quite a good labels actually quite, quite modern. So what, what have you been drinking from Armenia? I feel bad now. I can't believe literally yesterday I could have been drinking some. That would've been good for this podcast. Wouldn't it?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:12:37** It would've been, yeah, it would've been interesting study. Uh, but it really puts like, what's interesting right now to me and I I'm Armenian. So you would think that I'd have this predisposition.

**Janina Doyle 00:12:45** Are you? Oh okay.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:12:47** Yes. You'd think I have a predisposition to understand and to care? The Zorah wines are very well known and they're, they're one of the older brands that actually have, you know, quality to... But let's, let's take it back just a little bit, you know? Uh, I was talking to Nicole Rolet, uh, and she is a brilliant, uh, winemaker in the Côtes du Rhône and she, she started an organization called the Areni global foundation and it's um, it's an organization to promote, uh, wine as an ethereal drink and all the things that go with the lifestyle and I said, how did you choose ARENI, you know, that's a weird name. Uh, and she says, well, because they found this 6,000 year old winery in Armenia in the caves with shoes and amphora and the whole thing.

**Janina Doyle 00:13:33** Yes mm-hmm.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:13:34** So there there's quite a history of wine in Armenia in the Caucasus anyway, as you know.

**Janina Doyle 00:13:40** Yeah, of course. It's amazing. Yeah.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:13:42** One of the, one of the winemakers, uh, called Karas, which you would've probably tasted at the fair, uh, which is also well established. They have a lot of backing, uh, they're trying French varietals, not just indigenous varietals, but the point with this conversation I wanna bring up was that Michel Rolland was there, Enologist, the consulting Enologist and he went out to decide whether or not, you know, grapes should be grown there, at least Vitis Vinifera. And he said, yes, we can. Now we needed years to figure it out. Which is when I bring this up with winemakers all the time, like you only, you know, if you're a winemaker, you're only getting like 20 to 40 vintages under your belt before you're done. Right? I mean, that's like, cause it's once a year, that's all you get course, unless you go to the Southern hemisphere and back and forth. And so when Michel Rolland tells this winemaker, well we'll we'll know in a hundred years and she's like, well, I'm only 30, so that's 130. I'm not gonna be...

**Janina Doyle 00:14:33** Yeah.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:14:34** But it's such an ancient, um, beverage in Armenia. And you would think that there'd be more, there would've been more. I went there in 2006, undrinkable, nothing was palatable. It was all just, you know, rustic old stuff.

**Janina Doyle 00:14:48** Yeah. Makes sense.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:14:50** Yeah. But now that there's technologies and, and there's a lot of wineries coming out of there. Uh, and there's a lot of new wines they're starting to develop. Maybe like you, I want them to express something, not red wine. And for the first time, after many years of tasting these wines, uh, last Tuesday I tasted a wine from a winery called Voskevaz. The wine was the same as what you tasted, Areni Noir. And this was the first Armenian wine that I felt was an expression of time and place.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:18** Okay. Okay.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:15:18** It was absolutely mind boggling.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:20** Did that make it into the wine club?

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:15:23** No, cause \$45 wholesale. So it's like a...

**Janina Doyle 00:15:26** So that one's just for you.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:15:28** It's like a \$60 bottle of wine.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:31** Yeah. Okay.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:15:31** But it made it in my cellar.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:33** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It made it into your cellar. Into your own personal wine club for one, right?

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:15:39** Correct. The wine club for one. Want me to, you know, what, what a great idea.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:43** You know listen, I am full of them and that one is for free, but I think it's really interesting is that, Armenia, people really should, I think there was a, I think there was an Areni Noir that was in like the top 10. I don't know. There was this big, wasn't there? There was something a few years ago. This is, I'm not making it up aren't I?

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:16:03** I think it was Yacoubian-Hobbs. Which is Paul Hobbs, um, soiree into the area. There's a, there's a gentleman named the guy that makes the Vosquez. His name is Vahe Keushguerian and I've interviewed a couple hundred winemakers on my podcast. And when he walked in the door, it was like the whole level changed. He was a brilliant winemaker and he goes to Armenia because he's already, uh, made wine in Puglia. He's already made wine in Chianti, and the motherland calls him back to Armenia and he opens a co-op. The co-op plays host to about 12 different wineries, including his own and he is the author of this Vosquez. And I'm gonna, I would guess that you would've tasted also if you had gone to the, the table.

**Janina Doyle 00:16:50** No, I didn't. I didn't that's the point. It was so close to me and I didn't

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:16:55** Yeah. There's a sparkling wine called Keush that you must try. K E U S H. It's probably, I don't know. I don't know what the, the dollar, the pound translation is, but it's about \$20 US. Méthode champenoise, absolutely fabulous sparkling wine. Just absolutely fabulous.

**Janina Doyle 00:17:13** Right? Well. There you go everyone. Somebody to put on your list and something that I feel really annoyed about that I was so close to yesterday and I did not go to. But it happens. It happens.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:17:21** We'll help you.

**Janina Doyle 00:17:23** Thank you, thank you. So what else? So that's, that was actually just already really interesting. We've gone down to Armenia. I did not expect you to take me down there. Where else, what else is currently in your wine club that is perhaps a surprise? I quite like where we're going, where we can actually bring something new to everybody listening, and they can go and investigate.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:17:42** What's interesting about what I do and, and what happens here Tuesdays is really sort of this mini, uh, marketplace of what's going on. And so just because of what's being brought to the table, uh, to taste is, is what is people are bringing to the country or what they're making in America. And it's, it's a dynamic thing. I, I see, I see everything. And so currently there's a lot of Spanish that are coming in and very, very, um, value oriented Spanish. And, you know, the Tempranillo grape, the Garnacha grape, you know, they're not well understood by the American palate. So, uh, I can tell you that if I, if I buy a Tempranillo that says Tempranillo on the label, it's one of the hardest things for me to sell.

**Janina Doyle 00:18:22** Really? Okay. Okay.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:18:24** But if it comes in as Rioja, not a problem.

**Janina Doyle 00:18:26** Yeah. Well, but then I guess the majority of people don't realize that Tempranillo is the main grape variety behind Rioja. But I would say in the UK, that Tempranillo is a little bit more well known, but I could also just be making this up. Everyone listening, let me know.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:18:41** Yeah, no, I think, I think that makes sense. Particularly I'm on the west coast, so it's, things trickle here slower. Rosé just caught on a couple years ago when you know, oh yeah. It's a tougher sell because we, we had White Zinfandel from Sutter Home for, you know, 30 years.

**Janina Doyle 00:18:58** Yeah. Sorry about that.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:19:02** Yeah. So Spanish is one, uh, recently a lot of Greek.

**Janina Doyle 00:19:06** Do you know what? You know, okay. I've been saying that Greek wine is gonna take off it. This is the year. This is the year, and a bit like, it's like Riesling. It's just like for the consumer, it never seems to.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:19:17** Well, that's true. But I've, and I think part of the biodynamic organic movement is supporting Greek wines. So, uh, hand in hand, they're coming to America. They're they're still a little pricey. Uh, but they're well made obviously a very old, um, industry in Greece. So, I mean, it's not Retsina, you know, that pine tar stuff, which you can't drink.

**Janina Doyle 00:19:38** Yes. Oh my God. But you know, Assyrtiko is actually potentially one of my favorite white grape varieties. You know, the, the saline, the beautiful acidity. It, it, it's not, anyone listening who's never had Assyrtiko, I wouldn't go for it if you like your aromatic varieties. But if you like those mineral styles, Ugh, stunning, isn't it. And of course, specifically from Santorini, they, they do the best, you know? Um, but again, they're not the cheapest, are they? I think, which you just mentioned. Yeah.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:20:06** No. Well, I mean, I guess it takes a lot of work to get 'em to America and the UK. Right? So...

**Janina Doyle 00:20:10** Of course

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:20:11** It takes a boat and it takes a...

**Janina Doyle 00:20:13** And the problem as well with Greek varieties is you just don't know how to pronounce them. Uh it's, they're not easy names. And I think that's always been a, a massive struggle, right? People want something that they're comfortable with.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:20:24** Well, if you go to the market, I mean, the supermarket in the UK, I don't know if they have these wines there, but there's probably brands that are similar. If you're walking down the aisle, this is a pet peeve of wine, uh, being a wine industry. And I'm not a wine geek. I mean, I, I certainly geek out on some stuff. I think it's pretty interesting, but I have to be very careful when I choose wines for my consumers, because a lot of times wine geek wines aren't, you know, broadly palatable by the regular consumer. But on the flip side of that, you've got this 19 crimes, you know, sugared up, you know, inked up wine. And I, I prefer that we try to teach these things like the salinity of, of a Greek wine or anything on the Mediterranean or the, or Sicilian to, to detect those kinds of things rather than these opulent, sugared up wines, they drive me crazy. But at the same time, we kind of need those. So your listeners like those, or my customers like those, and then they start to evolve their palates into exactly finding things in the, the nuances of these really interesting wines. But they brought me two samples, two cases of samples of 19 crimes, including Martha Stewart Chardonnay and Snoop dogs Cali Red.

**Janina Doyle 00:21:38** Needless to say, none of them made the cut.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:21:40** Oh my gosh.

**Janina Doyle 00:21:42** Everybody try and broaden your palate and you, your options.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:21:46** Unbelievable. Do you have those there?

**Janina Doyle 00:21:48** Of course we do. Of course we do. And um, I mean, I've, I, you try them because you want to, you want to see what the quality's like, and you don't want to completely slag them off because they're effectively celebrity wines, but yeah, the majority are crap. I have to say, though, I did do a podcast episode on a few celebrity wines, but they weren't the typical celebrity wines. So everyone go back and have a look and they were actually decent, but there's not many of them out there. And they're definitely not ones you're gonna find on the supermarket shelf. That's for sure.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:22:22** So that's, that's a really good question and point about celebrity wines. Like Greg Norman, the famed golfer, you know, he's intimately involved with his winery, both in

Australia and Paso Robles to make good wines. And he's, he's, he's mainstay, he's a mainstay brand. He's he produces, I think 250,000 cases a year. He makes a lot of wine. He's part of the process, uh, Morgan Norman, his daughter is part of the process. Uh, and so when it come and the, the values very high for those wines. As opposed to a celebrity wine where this, their name is slapped on it.

**Janina Doyle 00:22:58** Yes. And they're not even doing anything. Yeah. It's just the name.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:23:01** They're not doing anything. And the idea would be to sell the brand because of the association.

**Janina Doyle 00:23:08** Exactly.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:23:09** And those are easy to spot, that those are easy to find, but there are other ones. Danica Patrick, the famed race car driver. She has a gorgeous, uh, Rosé. We just bought it for the club. Not because Danica Patrick. Uh, the, the Fresh Vine Wines that are, and it's a whole different subject we can talk about the, uh, the idea of a healthy wine, uh, by the two actresses. I forgot their names now, but they, those wines are pretty good. I mean, for, for what they're trying to be.

**Janina Doyle 00:23:35** Okay. I'm not sure if we have them, Fresh Vine Wines.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:23:38** Fresh Vine Wines. Um, there's been a whole host, I mean, I've seen them come and go. There were 16 professional golfers in the, in the early 2000's that had wines, only one survived and that's Greg Norman. So it's a whole different industry. It's it's about branding and you and I in the industry, try to stay away from that stuff, you know bring to the table the good things.

**Janina Doyle 00:23:57** Absolutely. No, for sure. I mean, that's why I decided to do a little bit of an episode on celebrity wines. I mean, you, I'm sure you've tasted Two Paddocks, the Central Otago Pinot Noirs. Um, and they're absolutely fantastic. And actually you know, you are from California. Inglenook. Inglenook, as well. So, but yeah, but they are gonna still cost you a pretty penny for the top stuff. Aren't they? So already they're not mass marketed. They can't be because of the price and hence you get some, some beautiful quality wines. Don't you? So now the fact that you have been tasting wines, and you have said to us that in theory, you may know a thing or two now. How would you, what advice would you give somebody when they pick up a bottle, that they could have some sort of idea, that it might be quality. Have you got anything that, you know, should they read something on the label, something they should look out for that might give them a, an idea?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:24:58** It's still, you know, it's funny, I'm sure you suffer through the same problem. I was asked to supply the wine to an Easter event for my wife's family down Palm Springs, and I forgot, so...

**Janina Doyle 00:25:11** Okay, oops.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:25:12** So we get to Easter and they're like, where's the wine? They're like, oh, well it's in the car. And then I jump in the car and I drive to the store.

**Janina Doyle 00:25:18** Oh, dear. Okay. Yeah. Hopefully the store wasn't too far.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:25:21** And so here I am, you know, in the industry, I, I just walked away from, you know, a hundred thousand cases of wine in my warehouse and I'm looking at the market just like every other consumer would look at the market and say, okay, what am I gonna get? So if I, when, when

it comes down to it, if I haven't tasted it personally, I have really, uh, limited idea of what it, what it should taste like, except for the following information that you'll find on the label that might help you with an educated guess. And that is one, the brand of course. Um, if it's a brand that you understand, like let's just take 19 Crimes as example, you know, the profile, those wines is the same across all of the grapes. So if it's a Cabernet, Merlot, Petit Syrah, Pinot Noir, whatever, they're all, it's still slightly off dry, uh, opulent, you know, extracted wine. You can have a pretty good sense that because it's 19 Crimes, you're gonna have that sort of direction in the wine. That's fine. Okay. Then, um, if you know, the brand Mondavi, or if, you know, the brand of Silver Oak, would be an expensive wine, you have a reasonable assurance that the wine is represented of that company, so that's the first thing. The second thing is, and, and this part of this is gonna come from tasting a lot of wines and having some interest while you're at your friend's house, drinking that glass of wine one night, actually looking at the label and saying, Hmm, this is a Malbec. And it's from Mendoza, Argentina, you know, and it's got this character the next time I go to the market and I see Malbec from Argentina, you know, I, I have a, some expectation of what it should taste like or what it could taste like. And so, and the more granular the district or the, the Appellation the wine is, again, there's a little bit of, of there's a hint there that you're gonna get something of, of regular repute. And so if I love Russian River Pinot Noir, which is one of my favorite districts in California for Pinot noir, I'm gonna seek the Russian River one, cause at least I've got a fighting chance that the characters there from that I like, I may not know the makers that are on the shelf at that day, but I know the district. And so the more granular that is down to the vineyard, and certainly we would understand that anything that's got a vineyard designated, uh, uh, Appellation that there's some pride in those grapes that are going into that wine.

**Janina Doyle 00:27:38** That's a really good point actually, isn't it? Because I think as well, when, when you, if you know, you, you like Pinot Noir, New world is gonna say Pinot Noir so already, that's one hint, but you might not know that say, you know, Burgundy is the Pinot Noir grape. But once you do, if it does say some, once it says Bourgogne and then maybe Bourgogne Villages or whatever it says, but then it says something extra and it is a name of something. And it's not the brand name, you know, it is, as you said, like a, a village designation or it might be a single vineyard. So yes, it still might be confusing, but actually just looking for that extra word, is gonna suggest that it is the more premium wine coming from a more specific site. So it will have more concentration and character from the terroir. So actually that's, that's actually quite a good tip to look out for, even if you don't know what it means.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:28:30** That that's true. You know, it's funny, you just said that. Cause I've thought about this before and it's sort of, the New world and for your listeners, New world being not only, uh, uh, stylistically, which is, um, less rustic and, and more, uh, fresher and younger and brighter, but also, uh, you know, geography, New world versus Old world would be, you know, the wines of Burgundy and Bordeaux and Spain and Italy being Old world. And then, uh, many winemakers from those parts of the world, respect the New world, which would be, would be American wines would be, uh, Argentinian, South, South Southern hemisphere. And now of course, wines from Dorset England, because you get to do whatever you want, but there's some interesting thing that you just said about the pedigree of let's say Burgundy. Bourgogne Rouge means the grapes, the Pinot Noir can come from anywhere in the district, uh, Bourgogne Villages means it has to come from, you know, some smaller piece of that district and then it gets down to the Village district and that's something very special and very indicative of the quality. I mean, it's extraordinarily indicative in Burgundy, France, and particularly indicative in Bordeaux, but we don't have that in America. You know, there is no designation for a

quality level. The only thing I can think of in Cal, if you're looking at a wall of California Cabs or Merlots or whatever is the word Estate. Estate is a, uh, requirement by the federal government of America. That if it is, if you put Estate on there, it has to come from, you know, born and raised in your vineyard and made there. That's the only designation. I mean, you can buy a wine that's labeled America, you know, and you could blend grapes from Virginia to California and that's hardly, hardly granular approach to the winemaking.

**Janina Doyle 00:30:05** Yeah. It doesn't, it doesn't make it easy. Does it? It's certainly very difficult. Now one thing as well that I actually got asked in a private masterclass I was giving, they were trying to say, well, how can I know if it's gonna be big and bold and what kind of style? One thing as well, I'd say for people stylistically, if the alcohol is higher, in theory, it is gonna be a richer wine, a heavier wine because alcohol does raise the body. But also you're not gonna have a light fresh wine at 15% alcohol that just doesn't work. So one, that's always a bit of a tip for, for style and the other one as well. If you're buying a French wine, just in general, if you were to think about where it is on the map, you know, when you've gone on holiday, if you've been at the top of France, you know, that it's a hell of a lot colder to the bottom of France. So therefore if you get anything from a cooler region, the grape will have higher acidity and less ripeness. It won't have had as much sugar, which means obviously slightly less sugar will be less alcohol. So the lighter, fresher, more acidic, refreshing styles will come from cooler climate. So I always just say to people as well, have a look and see where it comes from and just try and imagine on the map where that is, if you can, well just use Google. It's our friend. And then hopefully as well, you'll get an idea of like the heaviness, the richness and the fruitiness. And that's just one style, but you know, it's, um, it's a minefield. So just, if you can look to one grape variety or one area and you like it, it's also good to stick with that for a little bit before, and also ask questions in wine shops and Sommeliers, and gradually grow that knowledge. So it's, it's easier and you feel more comfortable reading the label, right?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:31:42** You know, I had a, a buyer here I used to have a, had a different store in a different location and his name was Dory. He was incredibly good, and that's a really good point you made, incredibly good at understanding the consumer, the customer's palate by person. So as they came in, he asked the right questions. Um, you know, what have you been drinking before? What have you, what have you bought at the market that you liked? What's your budget? Those kinds of questions by a good, uh, store owner or, or department manager can help you down the road to finding something you'll like, but his talent was translating that information into our inventory. I still hear from, and this is, this is probably 10 years ago. I still hear customers walk in my current store and they say, you know, remember Dory was so good at reminding me of what I like the one I didn't. I'm like, but that's a really good point. You know, tap the resources of the wine shop or the department manager, the wine department that could help you understand what's up there.

**Janina Doyle 00:32:36** And I always say, as well, when you find a wine, you don't like that's equally as good as finding, well, maybe not equally, as good as finding a wine you do like. Because you don't like it, why? Is it because it's really bone dry. Okay, perfect. You like wine with a bit more sweetness, you know. Is it because it's really oakey? Is it really heavy? Okay. You like wines that are fresh and unoaked, blah, blah, blah and it, it goes on. So finding wines, you don't like, then you can also present that to anybody who has some sort of wine knowledge and say, I didn't like this because of that. And they will be able to take you into the right direction. So, you know, it's one step further for man, right?

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:33:17** That's right. One great step. You know, it's an important point though. We select wines at the wine at month club to represent time and place. And if I send you a Malbec from Salta, you know, the highest part of Mendoza (meant to say Argentina), let's say, and you don't like it. One I'll replace it for you. That's a guarantee. Cause I know I can't please, all the palates all the time when selecting wines and it's also will, will narrow the field for you when you go to the store and you won't look at Salta based Malbecs, because the one I sent you was a pretty good example. And it won't, they won't veer far from that. And you should stay away from them until you get used to them. So, I mean, we save you money, how about that?

**Janina Doyle 00:33:54** Yeah. It's, it's like a bingo sheet. Right? Just keep on crossing them off, crossing them off until it's until it's complete. Oh dear. So that's obviously, I don't know how much of a tip that is for people, cause it is still a mindfield, but hopefully one, one step at a time people feel like they've got a little extra confidence when picking some wine, but what about tasting wine, pairing with food, collecting wine? What tips do you have for anybody to enjoy wine more? Is there something that you feel always empowered to, to tell people about.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:34:23** You know pairing wines and food is such a wonderful thing. And, and I talk forever on all parts, the marketing of it, the whole thing. But it's an interesting dynamic because it's not always, as you know, uh, it's always, it was white wine with white, white meat, you know, fish with white wine and, and that's, you and I know that's no longer true. Uh, you could certainly have a red wine with a proper chicken dish. And vice versa. And I've been asked to pair things like chocolates, you know, some of these new chocolates with all these crazy ingredients and spices and, and most of my, unfortunately most of my initial ideas, you know, were wrong. And I was on TV show, not too long ago for Valentine's and they sent me all this chocolate and said, please pair some of your wines. And I'm like, oh this obviously it's gonna be good with Syrah. I opened the Syrah, it's like, nah, it doesn't work. So it's a balance between sometimes you, you choose a wine because it, it is the opposite of the wine. If you have a fatty, uh, Alfredo sauce, chicken pasta dish, uh, probably not gonna have this over oak buttery Chardonnay. You're probably gonna want some kind of, uh, clean, crisp, acidic wine to cut through on your palate. Um, wine it's job in, in with the consumption of food is to clear the palate for the next bite, it's to prepare you for the next bite. And so not only does it have to match up flavor wise or at least attempt to, um, maybe you're doing opposite flavors, just like when you plate a dish, you don't always match the flavors between the vegetables and the protein and the starch, sometimes they're opposite. So, uh, you have the same issues with, with pairing wines, but the wines function is to clear the palate for the next taste of food and hopefully be compatible. So sometimes it's the weight of the wine that is in conjunction with the food and opposite the food. And sometimes it's the flavor flavor profile. And I absolutely did no help to your listeners by saying it that way, because it's really, to me as sort of a, a, a craphshoot in that you learn as you go and, and try to match this. I do think of, and I had this conversation with Jonathan Waxman, the famed chef now in New York at Barbuto. And he was on my show and we were talking and my daughter's a Boulangerie trained in Paris. So we've, we're talking about food. And he said, you know, we try to, um, match the foods on flavors. And sometimes we come away and realize that we needed to match it on the weight. Vice Versa.

**Janina Doyle 00:36:55** Texture, texture. Yeah.

**Paul Kalemkarian 00:36:57** The texture of the wine.

**Janina Doyle 00:36:59** Well, absolutely. Cause one is gonna completely overpower the other if it's not equal.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:37:03** Right. And it's, it's a fascinating subject to try and test and keep, keep doing it, uh, until you feel like, uh, and this is the other point I was gonna make. He, he said this and I go, wait a minute. This is what we do too. And that is, I no longer go home and say, what, what are we eating? Let's drink this. I go home and say, what do I feel like drinking? Then I prepare food around what that is. And so my palate has changed over time to, to anticipate the wine at dinner time, than the food. And that's kind of an interesting change.

**Janina Doyle 00:37:38** Me too, me too. But then we are wine focused. One thing I would say as well, just for people pairing, instead of thinking about your protein, your meat, your beef, your chicken, actually that for me, I think is the least important. I think it's what you are pairing it with. So are you pouring a peppercorn sauce over the steak? Now, all of a sudden that spicy, uh, creamy nature is the most important thing that you need to think about. You need a wine, that's gonna be able to handle that peppery sauce. If you are doing loads of roasted root vegetables and there's that earthiness to them, then you're gonna want a wine that maybe has that savory earth equality to go with that. So I always say to people, perhaps don't look at the protein, just think about the, the, the side dishes and the sauces and what is the most powerful thing on that dish. And I think then that comes back to exactly what you said, textures really as well. But I always go like for like really, rather than opposites, I think opposites, um, can be the most amazing, but they're also the hardest to do.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:38:41** I completely agree. I, I will caution, uh, the listeners that I, one chef that had on the show said, look, you know, what we do is if we screw up something, we just cover it with a sauce.

**Janina Doyle 00:38:49** Oh really?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:38:53** So you're right on because it's the sauce that's gonna change the character.

**Janina Doyle 00:38:56** It is. It absolutely is. Oh, dear. Now tell me, before we finish up here, you have already mentioned that you have your own podcast. So, you know, just tell me a little bit about that. There's, uh, you know, many of my listeners may wanna come across and listen to you talking to lots of your other guests. So, so who are you talking to? What's the style of your podcast?

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:39:16** Well, the podcast started because I have many, many vendors, like I said on Tuesday that come in here, there's often, uh, uh, traveling winemakers from either California or Europe or all, all parts of the world that come to LA. LA being a huge market for wine, of course. And they have these winemakers in their cars. They're driving around, they're stopping at restaurants and liquor stores and wine shops. And here I have this incredible studio I built, uh, because I was into the social networking world. And I said, you know, we ought just sit down and start talking. And so I started actually with, with videos about 15 years ago, I've got over 200 episodes of the podcast itself. It's called Wine talks with Paul K. It's generally proprietors and winemakers from all over the world. Just got down with a couple of Burgundian winemakers that are incredible. And, and chefs, I do a lot of chefs, uh, okay. Jonathan Waxman, um, Joachim Splichal, uh, I've had Michael McCarty. I've got Alice Waters coming on the show soon. Um, uh, pretty interesting stuff. I do some, I do some stories on the immigration when it

comes to wine business. People have come to America, the Daou brothers are coming on the show soon.

**Janina Doyle 00:40:24** Ah, okay. Yeah. Great wines. Absolutely. Fantastic. I think they just won some high accolade recently. I saw the, they did didn't they? I can't remember which accolade, but it was high.

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:40:36** I, I had Steven Spurrier on before he passed, which was a very honorable thing to have. A wonderful man.

**Janina Doyle 00:40:42** Amazing

**Paul Kalemkiarian 00:40:43** Yeah. Amazing conversation about the Judgment of Paris. So, um, it's just a it's it's meant to do what you're doing. It's sort of peel back a little bit what goes on behind the scenes? What winemakers are thinking, what passion it takes to do this and how to find that passion in the bottle. And that's, that's what the show is for.

**Janina Doyle 00:41:01** I love it. Okay. So everyone go over, pick your favorite guests and, and have a little listen.

**Janina Doyle 00:41:10** So I hope you enjoyed that episode. Now part two next week, I'm really excited to share with you. I think it's a really interesting episode. We are focusing entirely on the US, its modern history. So the events that changed so much, so we're gonna be talking about the Judgment of Paris, which happened in 1976. We're gonna be looking at the Sideways effect. So this is the Sideways movie and how it reshaped the industry, how Merlot and Pinot Noir sales were entirely affected by this film. And we'll be looking at the French paradox. If you don't know what that is, look it up, but it's dealing with health and some data studies on polyphenols, resveratrol, why it's good for you and um, what the French paradox and some literature and data did for the wine consumption in the US. So loads of amazing, interesting stories. Wine books are gonna be mentioned in it, a few other wine films, so loads of content, and I cannot wait to share with you next week. So as always, I leave you with a wine quote and I just wanted to find one that was chilled, that was funny, that wasn't too serious. And so I have one from Rumi who was a Persian poet and Islamic scholar. And so many of his poems and quotes are beautiful and great. And then there is this one that is circa the 13th century and he says:

“Either give me more wine or leave me alone.”

I think many a time we have all felt that way so we can all identify. Right, that is it as always. Thank you so much for listening. Don't forget to subscribe if you haven't already. Like the podcast. If you can, share the podcast with your wine loving friends, and if you have the opportunity to leave a review on your podcast app, especially apple podcast, please do, as it makes the podcast far more discoverable. Right. You know what is coming next week. So until then, cheers to you.