

# THE **SOMM** JOURNAL



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### Tackling a Pinot Noir Blending Challenge

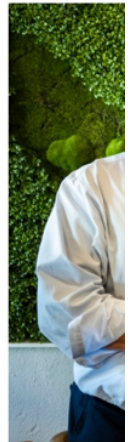
Winemaker Katie Hoggins and director of winemaking and viticulture Tom Gendall then introduced an activity for the afternoon, tasking us campers with blending a 2022 Pinot Noir using wines sourced from three Sonoma Coast vineyards. One was Catapult; located on the east side of the Petaluma Gap, it was planted in 1997 to Dijon clone 115 along with heritage clones 5, 13, and 31 in predominantly clay loam soils on top of compacted volcanic ash and rhyolite. Morning fog lingers on most summer days, followed by persistent afternoon breezes. The diurnal shift can be over 25 degrees, ensuring a longer hang time is required to develop full, rich fruit flavors. The second was Diamond Pile, which faces west on the southern side of Sonoma Mountain in the Petaluma Gap. Here, low-yielding Dijon clone 115 and heritage clone 2A ripen late and tend to yield small clusters of thick-skinned fruit. And the third was J. Poppe: The Clines' home vineyard in the Los Carneros AVA and their oldest property in Sonoma, it was purchased in 1989 and planted to Dijon clones 113 and 114. It takes its name from the 19th-century landowner who built the estate farmhouse now used as Cline Family Cellars' tasting room. Soils here are clay loam with medium fertility; yields are low and



The campers were divided into five groups to present the best blended Cline Pinot Noir. Here, CW Kelley of Dolce Riviera in Dallas, TX, makes the final blend for his team.

the fruit is both concentrated and vibrant.

The campers were divided into five groups and given 375-milliliter sample bottles and graduated beakers for measuring the blends. After a lively discussion, each group presented their designated team name and blend to the judging panel, which included me, Hoggins, Gendall, Meredith May, and *SOMM Journal* COO Bill Brandel. We had our work cut out for us, because they all presented excellent blends, but there could only be one winner: Up Too Early took home the prize offered by *The SOMM Journal*, \$200 per person: Its blend of 70% J. Poppe, 20% Catapult, and 10% Diamond Pile was crafted by Paul Krikorian, wine director



Team Up Too Early took home the top prize in the Pinot Noir blending challenge at Cline Family Cellars. Pictured are winners Paul Krikorian, David Fletcher, Nadejda Cutitaru, Lonna Applegate, and Jim Gallagher.

at The Lodge at Torrey Pines in La Jolla, California; David Fletcher, general manager and director of beverage at L'Escale Restaurant in Greenwich, Connecticut; Nadejda Cutitaru, head sommelier at La Grande Boucherie in New York City; Lonna Applegate, general manager at Restaurant Beck at Whale Cove Inn in Depoe Bay, Oregon; and Jim Gallagher, assistant wine specialist and wine buyer at Diablo Foods in Lafayette, California. While they can be proud that all of the campers will get a bottle of the blend they helped create, they should also know that Hoggins and Gendall were taking notes, so they may have influenced the Cline or Gust wines of the future!

### A White-Wine Send-Off

SOMM and Dad, it seems like just yesterday—OK, 48 hours ago—that we started this adventure with a glass of **Banshee Ten of Cups**. How better to close the circle of SOMM Camp than with a guided tasting of three more Banshee wines led by winemaker Alicia Sylvester?

Sylvester has a palette of vineyards throughout Sonoma County from which she produces site-specific wines as well as blends that reflect the character of the region. Having made wine across the globe, she said she appreciates the freedom she has at Banshee to craft wines with a sense of place. Though Banshee specializes in Pinot Noir, our tasting





*At the Banshee tasting room in Healdsburg, we tasted and talked white wine with "The Wine Guys," Jeff Jenssen and Mike DeSimone, along with Banshee winemaker Alicia Sylvester.*

was focused on whites to appropriately mark the occasion of a signing of the new book *White Wine: The Comprehensive Guide to the 50 Essential Varieties & Styles* by authors Jeff Jenssen and Mike DeSimone, which was simultaneously taking place in Banshee's tasting room in downtown Healdsburg.

There, a generous spread of cheeses, oysters, and caviar awaited us along with the **Banshee 2022 Sonoma County Sauvignon Blanc**. Sylvester called it a "classic porch-pounder," adding that it contains a little Muscat to round it out. A blend from different vineyards in the region, it was refreshing and flinty with notes of kiwi, lime, and honeydew. The **Banshee 2019 Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** showed flavors of ripe melon, kiwi, and kumquat plus a hint of minerality and even a slight waft of petrol; Sylvester described it as "a silk robe with the prize underneath." Finally, the **Banshee 2019 Sonoma Coast Morning Light Chardonnay** is a small-production wine available to Banshee's wine-club members. Crisp and bright, it showed honeysuckle and mint flavors with a hint of dried herbs.

Banshee's tasting room is a popular spot in downtown Healdsburg, and our time there proved why—as it had at every winery we visited in sensational Sonoma. 

## Thank You to Our SOMM Campers

**Amin Alavi**, wine director, J Carver's, Austin, TX  
**Lonna Applegate**, general manager, Restaurant Beck at Whale Cove Inn, Depoe Bay, OR  
**Daniel Camacho**, wine director, Rise Soufflé, Dallas, TX  
**Caylin Caster**, wine buyer, BevMo and Gopuff, Lafayette, CA  
**Paul Coker**, director of beverage, Montage Healdsburg, Healdsburg, CA  
**Nadejda Cutitaru**, head somm, La Grande Boucherie, New York, NY  
**Joshua Fischer**, wine director, Red Ash Italia, Austin, TX  
**David Fletcher**, GM/director of beverage, L'Escale Restaurant (Greenwich Hospitality Group/Delamar), Greenwich, CT  
**Jim Gallagher**, assistant wine specialist/buyer, Diablo Foods, Lafayette, CA  
**Kaitlin Green**, wine director, Halls Chophouse, Nashville, TN  
**Darren Greenspon**, sommelier/wine buyer, KAI at the Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass, Phoenix, AZ  
**Kathleen Hawkins**, wine director, Miru and Tre Dita, Chicago, IL  
**CW Kelley III**, Dolce Riviera, Dallas, TX  
**Paul Krikorian**, wine director, The Lodge at Torrey Pines, La Jolla, CA  
**Jeff Menzer**, wine director, The Mick Brasserie, Scottsdale, AZ  
**Kristin Neumann**, Certified Sommelier, Flagler Steakhouse at The Breakers, Palm Beach, FL  
**Louise Olivares**, sommelier, Napa area  
**Mike Rice**, beverage director, Alexandria Restaurant Partners, Alexandria, VA  
**Patrick Ross**, general manager, Myron's Prime Steakhouse, San Antonio, TX  
**Anthony Salazar**, restaurant beverage manager, Peak, New York, NY  
**Courtney Youngblood**, sommelier, Bern's Steak House, Tampa, FL  
**Alex Zengotita**, beverage manager, CentraArchy Restaurant Group, South Florida



*Our wonderful campers against a backdrop of Gloria Ferrer's vineyards in Carneros.*