



Sandra Jordan

# WINE OFFSPRING

WINEMAKING MAY BE HARD WORK, BUT NO ONE CAN DISPUTE THE ROMANCE OF THE VINTNER'S LIFE. TRUE, SOME WINEMAKERS VENTURE INTO OTHER ENDEAVORS, BUT MORE OFTEN, THEIR TIES TO THE VINEYARD REMAIN STRONG. HERE ARE THE STORIES OF FOUR ENTREPRENEURS FROM WINEMAKING FAMILIES WHO HAVE FOUND UNIQUE WAYS TO SHARE THEIR PASSION FOR WINE

by Kimberly Olson |

## SANDRA JORDAN: A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE

Wine enthusiasts from around the world have enjoyed many a sumptuous meal at Jordan Vineyards and Winery, where founder Tom Jordan and his wife, Sandra, have perfected the art of entertaining. When dinner guests began admiring the elegant, handcrafted items in their midst—designed and made by Sandra herself—an idea took hold.

Inspired to share her unique creations with a larger audience, Sandra launched Sandra Jordan Collections, a line of luxury products for the table and wine cellar—from silver tasting cups to silky alpaca textiles—inspired by the beauty of Wine Country. “The graceful tendrils of a grapevine appear in many of my designs,” she says. “Wine Country living is about the attention to detail that makes your guests feel special.”

Jordan loves history, so when she finds an antique with a story to tell, an interpretation of the piece often pops up in her collection. “In Burgundy, I spotted a marriage cup that a bride and groom received,” she says. “It was next used as a sipping cup for mulled wine by a mother in labor. I decided to reinterpret the design of the cup—the scary gargoyle handles were changed to embracing grape leaves, and I added soft hammering to capture the sense of a piece that had been lovingly used.”

Her collection can be found at Gumps, Jordan Winery, and other luxury stores, and is also sold to high-end restaurants, hotels, and wineries. But keeping old-world craftsmanship alive is only part of Jordan's mission. “I feel

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very fortunate that I can create jobs,” she says. “We’ve built two factories in Peru, my native country. I’m very proud that I’m able to give back.”

#### **CARLO MONDAVI: BEAUTY THAT’S (GRAPE) SKIN DEEP**

Having grown up in one of the world’s leading winemaking families, Carlo Mondavi—grandson of Robert Mondavi—has been involved in nearly every aspect of the business, from grape picking to winemaking to marketing and sales. But one day, while working on his father’s team at Robert Mondavi Winery, his aspirations began to veer in an unexpected direction. (The family has since sold Robert Mondavi Winery, but Carlo still works at the new family winery, Continuum, when time permits.)

“I was working in a 5,000-gallon oak fermenter, shoveling the pomace—the by-product of grape skins and seeds that results from the winemaking process—and I started questioning what we do with this,” Mondavi says. He knew that wine was packed with health-boosting antioxidants and, after poring over the scientific literature, discovered that pomace contains several antioxidants crucial to fighting the free radicals that age skin.

“I sat down with my *nonno* [Italian for “grandfather”] Robert to talk about the idea of skincare based on the antioxidant power of pomace,” Mondavi remembers. “He took one look at the business plan, noted its potential for growth, and gave his blessing.”

Mondavi promptly teamed up with his good friend, marketing whiz Josh LeVine, to cofound Davi, a luxury skincare line that contains a proprietary mixture of antioxidant-rich botanicals including grape, grape leaf, and fermented wine extracts, along with green tea, bilberry, and black currant oil. The Davi line quickly garnered passionate devotees, who have been snapping up the products at Bergdorf Goodman in New York, Selfridges in London, and Meadowood in Napa Valley.

As business heats up, Mondavi says his close-knit winemaking family has been key to his success. “When Josh and I founded Davi, our families not only supported the concept but encouraged us with great help and advice,” he says. “My family knows that I can’t stay away from the wine business; everything I do is an extension of my wine-making background.”

#### **JULIE SOLOMON ATWOOD: CREATING MEMORABLE MILESTONES**

Born into a family of produce brokers and raised on California ranches, Julie Atwood feels a profound connection to Wine Country. “My favorite thing is hanging out at the base of the Mayacamas Mountains at night and listening to the owls and the breeze in the ponderosa pines,” she says.

Despite her love of the outdoors, her career initially focused on indoor spaces. For 16 years, Atwood was one of the area’s best-known interior and architectural designers—until an inherited eye disease left her legally blind for several years. “I couldn’t drive or read blueprints, so I looked for a new career that I could run from my base in the Sonoma Valley,” she says. “I had experience planning fundraising events, so I went to some of my old design clients and offered to produce some parties for them up in the country.”

ALTHOUGH SUZANNE GROTH EVENTUALLY RETURNED HOME TO WORK IN HER FAMILY’S BUSINESS, GROTH VINEYARDS & WINERY, HER INNER ARTIST LIVED ON.



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Carlo Mondavi



Julie Solomon Atwood

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN SUNDBERG

Thus was born Julie Atwood Events, which specializes in rustic Wine Country weddings, food and wine events, and charity events. In keeping with her respect for the natural environment, Atwood chooses local resources when planning events, opts for sustainably grown flowers, and uses energy-conserving resources whenever possible.

Many events are held at Atwood Ranch, a 170-year-old family farm where Atwood and her husband live. True to the spirit of Wine Country, the celebrations are always elegant but never stuffy. “We encourage barn swallows to nest in our barn, and during formal dinner parties, we put scrapbooks out with pictures of the bird families,” Atwood says. “It gives people a sense of communion with the environment, and it’s amazing what occurs. During the evening, someone will get up to shut the door and their tablemates will say, ‘No, you can’t—the swallows need to come in and feed their babies.’”

Offering guests a taste of country life is, after all, her greatest reward. “Each year, we reach from 7,000 to 10,000 people who visit Northern California,” she says. “They might go away with a clearer idea of what it means to be a family farmer, or they might learn how fresh food tastes when you get it locally, and hopefully it will make a difference in how they live. Each pebble we drop spreads a circle, and the circles widen.”

#### SUZANNE GROTH: VINEYARD VISIONS

Back in her college days, Suzanne Groth had an art professor who was so hard to please that the students nicknamed her Dr. No. “Everyone was terrified of this woman, but she was a great artist,” Groth remembers. “She taught me to paint, and I loved it.”

Although she eventually returned home to work in her family’s business, Groth Vineyards & Winery, her inner artist lived on. “One year, for my mother’s birthday, I made her a painting of the best portion of our Cabernet vineyard,” Groth says. “She liked it so much that she reproduced it for an invitation to our Reserve Cabernet Release Day. And the next year, she said, ‘So what are you painting this year?’”

Since then, Groth has produced a painting for every reserve release. She still works at the family’s Oakville winery full time, but in spare moments, she pulls out her brushes and lets her imagination spill onto the canvas. “Painting is completely relaxing because I get to use a different part of my brain,” she says. “And I love color, so it’s really my outlet for that.”

Groth’s vibrant style was inspired by fauvism, a short-lived movement launched by a group of French painters, including Henri Matisse and Maurice de Vlaminck, who espoused a strict doctrine of color juxtaposition. “The concept is to create something vibrant in the eye by using opposing colors on

#### Where to Find them

##### Sandra Jordan

Sandra Jordan Collection  
(707) 836-9240  
www.sandrajordan.com  
(Also available at stores across the United States)

Jordan Winery  
1474 Alexander Valley Road  
Healdsburg, CA 95448  
(800) 654-1213  
www.jordanwinery.com

##### Carlo Mondavi

Davi Napa  
(212) 872-8712  
www.daviskin.com  
(Also available at Meadowood and Bergdorf Goodman)

Continuum Winery  
(707) 944-8100  
www.continuumwine.com

##### Julie Solomon Atwood

Julie Atwood Events  
(707) 935-0621  
www.sonomacatering.com

Atwood Ranch Vineyard  
12099 Sonoma Highway  
Glen Ellen, CA 95442  
(707) 935-0621  
www.atwoodranch.com

##### Suzanne Groth

Groth Vineyards & Winery  
750 Oakville Cross Road  
Oakville, CA 94562  
(707) 944-0290  
www.grothwines.com



Suzanne Groth

the spectrum wheel,” Groth explains. “Some people say the paint I use looks neon, but it’s not. It’s just the choice of colors I use, and how I use them.”

Groth’s paintings emblazon invitations and posters for Groth Vineyards, and her art has been commissioned by clients like the Wine Institute and Auction Napa Valley.

Perhaps best of all, Groth’s work justifies her choice to study art history in college, a decision that raised her father’s eyebrows at the time. “My dad is one of the smartest people I know, and he’s very driven and practical,” Groth says. “He always makes fun of me, and he never understood the purple mountains I paint. But on my wedding night, we were sitting in the middle of the vineyard watching the sun set over the western range and he said, ‘I think I see the purple mountains.’”