

**California's Trailblazing Women Winemakers:  
The First Twenty Years (1965 through 1984)  
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Seated from left to right are Zelma Long, Carol Shelton, Eileen Crane, and Mia Klein.

Photograph provided courtesy of Women for WineSense, Napa/Sonoma Chapter. Christine Mueller, former president of the chapter, and Kerry Kirkham in second row.

Women and men alike have long been involved in the production of wine in California, but historically few women were known as winemakers. In 2012, when we began our project on [California Women Winemakers](#), a key goal was to identify the state's women winemakers and illuminate their contributions to the wine industry. Through our research we learned that of California's 4000+ wineries today, some 10 to 12% have lead winemakers who are women, many of whom appear on our [website](#).

*Here we focus on the trailblazers— the women who have led the way to women's more significant presence among California winemakers today.*

Our article identifies 50 trailblazing women who entered the winemaking field between 1965, the year of the first female graduate of a premiere enology program in California, and 1984, some twenty years later. We organized these path-breaking women into three time periods that were quite different in the opportunities they offered: *1965 through 1974*, *1975 through 1979*, and *1980 through 1984*. The women were identified through conversations with long-time California winemakers and faculty members at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis), available data from UC Davis and *Wines & Vines*, and books on the wine industry (e.g., Heimoff, 2008, Laube, 1999; Matasar, 2006).

## Women Entering The Field of Winemaking 1965 through 1974

In this ten-year period, we identified nine women, eight of whom became recognized winemakers, and begin with **MaryAnn Graf**. The ninth is **Ann Noble**, the first woman to be hired in the enology department at UC Davis and an influential teacher of sensory science for the next three decades.

**MaryAnn Graf** was the first female winemaker in California since prohibition.<sup>2</sup> In 1965, she was the first woman to graduate with a BS from UC Davis's premier program in Fermentation Science (now Viticulture and Enology). After her graduation, Graf gained experience working as a laboratory technician and assistant winemaker at several wineries. In 1973 she was hired as the winemaker at Simi in Sonoma following a four-hour-long interview with Andre Tchelistcheff, Simi's consulting winemaker at the time. Graf was ably mentored by Tchelistcheff throughout her time there, as were many other female and male winemakers of that and subsequent eras.

Following Graf was **Zelma Long**, who in 1968 was the second woman to enroll in an enology-related degree program at UC Davis. She soon distinguished herself, first at Mondavi and then at Simi. **Barbara Lindblom**, **Merry Edwards**, **Dawnine Dyer**, **Genevieve Janssens**, and **Sandi Belcher** were the others to enter the field of winemaking during this time period; **Ann Noble** started at UC Davis as a young professor.

Brief descriptions of their educational and career paths appear below. The order in which they are presented is in accordance with the year they entered the field of winemaking, or teaching in the case of Noble, as best we could determine.



**Mary Ann Graf**



**Merry Edwards**



**Dawnine Dyer**

**MaryAnn Graf**. In 1965, first woman to receive a BS in enology (then fermentation science) at UC Davis and first woman to serve on the Board of Directors of the American Society for Enology and Viticulture. Appointed winemaker at Simi in Sonoma in 1973. Six years later, she left Simi and with Marty Bannister co-founded Vinquiry, a highly successful business that specialized in providing analytical and consulting services to the winemaking industry. Graf is now retired.

**Zelma Long.** BS from Oregon State University in 1965. She enrolled in the UC Davis master's program in food science in 1968, the only woman in her class. Interrupting her studies, she began her winemaking career in 1970 working the harvest at Robert Mondavi Winery, rapidly working her way up to the position of Chief Enologist. She moved to Simi in 1979 where she was winemaker and CEO for nearly 20 years, one of the first women to run both the winemaking and business sides of a California winery. Regarded as one of the early technical leaders in winemaking. Her national and international awards include induction into the James Beard Hall of Fame in 1996, The James Beard Wine and Spirits Professional of the Year Award in 1997, and induction into the Vintner's Hall of Fame in 2010. Long is currently a winemaking partner for Vilafonté in South Africa and a consulting winemaker in California.

**Barbara Lindblom.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1972; first position was Laboratory Director for ten years under Zelma Long at Robert Mondavi Winery in Napa Valley and Simi Winery in Sonoma County. Lindblom has had a successful consulting career since 1984.

**Merry Edwards.** BS in physiology from UC Berkeley. MS in food science with an emphasis in enology from UC Davis in 1973, where she was one of three women in her class and the only one to become a winemaker. After many years as a winemaker for other wineries, she and her spouse built their own Merry Edwards Winery in 2006. A celebrated winemaker, Edwards was the third woman to be inducted into the Vintners Hall of Fame in 2013 and the fourth woman to receive the James Beard Award for Outstanding Wine, Spirits, or Beer Professional in the United States in that same year.

**Mary Sullivan.** First position at Sonoma Vineyards in 1973 where worked in lab under winemaker Dick Arrowood. Joined Sebastiani Vineyards in 1975 as enologist and worked way up to winemaker in 1980. While in this role, initiated the Estate collection of single-vineyard bottlings, including the renowned Cherry Block Cabernet Sauvignon. Promoted to Director of Winemaking in 1986, one of the first female Directors of Winemaking at a major winery. Winemaker at Beringer 2001 to 2009. In 2010, Sullivan joined Bear Creek Winery in Lodi as Senior Winemaker, remaining there until leaving for semi-retirement in 2016.

**Dawnine Dyer.** BS in biology from UC Santa Cruz. Began her wine career in 1974 at the Robert Mondavi Winery located in Oakville. Recruited two years later to the Napa Valley start-up Domaine Chandon where she pioneered use of French Champagne production methods in California's fledgling sparkling wine industry. Also recognized for creating Bordeaux-style single-vineyard blends using Cabernet Sauvignon grapes grown in the Napa Valley. She headed Napa's Domaine Chandon for 25 years and now owns Dyer Vineyards with her husband Bill Dyer. Dyer, who is among the very first women winemakers in Napa, served as President of the Napa Valley Vintners Association and was a member of the founding board of Women for WineSense.

**Genevieve Janssens.** Born in Morocco and raised and educated in France. Received her National Diploma of Enology in 1974, returned to her family's vineyards, operated an enology laboratory in Provence, and served as a consulting enologist in France until the mid-1970s. She moved to Napa in 1978. In 1997, she became Director of Winemaking at the Robert Mondavi

Winery, a position she holds today. Janssens was named Wine Enthusiast's 2010 Winemaker of the Year.

**Sandi Belcher.** BS from College of William and Mary in Virginia; MS in chemistry and agriculture from UC Davis in 1974. After graduation, she worked in wineries around the world before returning to California as winemaker for Long Vineyards on Pritchard Hill in St. Helena until the property was sold in 2005. Named best winemaker of the year by the San Francisco Chronicle, today she is the highly acclaimed winemaker at Arns Winery in St. Helena, which she owns with her partner John Arns.

**Ann Noble.** PhD in food science from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. In 1974, first woman hired as a faculty member in the Department of Viticulture and Enology UC Davis. A prolific researcher and inspiring teacher, she taught courses on the science of flavor and aroma and developed the famous "Aroma Wheel." She took a strong interest in students and was an advisor or mentor to many, including Heidi Barrett, Mia Klein, and Celia Welch. Noble retired from UC Davis as Professor Emerita in 2003. She remains active in her area of Wine and Sensory Science and continues to participate in national and international meetings.

### **Women Entering The Field of Winemaking 1975 through 1979**

In this five-year period, we identified 16 women. We start with **Milla Handley**, the first woman winemaker and owner in California to have her own name on a winery label. We included **Carole Meredith** in this group; she is a geneticist who completed her doctoral degree in 1977 and joined the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis as a faculty member in 1980. Meredith, now retired from UC Davis, is an accomplished winemaker and in 2009 was the first woman to be inducted into the Vintners's Hall of Fame. Many well-known names in the wine world entered the field during this period, including **Rosemary Cakebread, Eileen Crane, Cathy Corison, Julianne Laks, Carol Shelton, and Helen Turley.**

Brief descriptions of their educational and career paths appear below. Again, the order in which they are presented is in accordance with the year they entered the field of winemaking, or worked in the field of genetics in the case of Meredith, as best we could determine.



**Julianne Laks**



**Carole Meredith**



**Rosemary Cakebread**

**Milla Handley.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1975. Worked with Jed Steele as assistant winemaker in Anderson Valley and then struck out on her own, making the first Handley Cellars Chardonnay in her basement. In 1982, she was the first woman winemaker and owner in California to have her own name on a winery label. Today, Handley continues as Founding Winemaker and Proprietor of Handley Cellars and as a champion of Anderson Valley as a winemaking region.

**Kristi Koford.** BS in biology from Santa Cruz. First real job in the wine industry was as microbiologist for Robert Mondavi Winery in Oakville. Under the tutelage of Zelma Long, she became Senior Enologist, directing the work in the cellar and laboratory. Since 2001 Koford has been production manager at Napa Wine Co.-Bonded Winery Number 9 in Oakville, where she continues to work today.

**Alison Green-Doran.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis. **In 1976, after finishing** her degree, began working for Firestone Vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley. Starting as lab technician, she worked her way up to bottling supervisor and then to cellar master, and finally in 1981 to winemaker. In 2000, she decided to return to her family ranch and vineyards in Alexander Valley where she now crafts wines for a number of artisan wineries in Napa and Sonoma.

**Julianne Laks.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1977 where she was one of only two women to earn that degree the year she graduated. After holding enology positions at Beringer and Beaulieu Vineyards, she joined Cakebread Cellars in Napa in 1986 and was appointed winemaker in 2002, a position she continues to hold today. A highly regarded winemaker, Laks is the third winemaker in the winery's 44-year history, and the only non-family member to hold this position.

**Helen Turley.** BS from Cornell University. In 1977, began working in the laboratory for Robert Mondavi Winery, followed by a short period at Chappellet Winery. She subsequently had difficulty finding a California winery to hire her in the cellar and took a winemaking position in Kentucky. In 1984 became the winemaker for B.R. Cohn in California. A few years later, became the founding winemaker for Peter Michael Winery where she helped to define the emerging style of California Chardonnay and also developed Les Pavots, Peter Michael's flagship blend of red Bordeaux varietals. Turley is now owner and winemaker at Marcassin Vineyard in Windsor, where she works with her husband John Wetlaufer, a viticulturist. Among her many awards is the Distinguished Service Award from the Wine Spectator for 2010.

**Carole Meredith.** BS in Biology, PhD in Genetics in 1977. After a post-doctoral year at Michigan State and two years working in private industry, in 1980 joined the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis as a faculty member. Her research group used DNA-typing methods to discover the origins of some of the greatest old wine varieties, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Syrah, and Zinfandel. Retired from UC Davis as Professor Emerita in 2003. Since 1986, she and her husband Steve Lagier have lived on their small vineyard in the

Mount Veeder district of Napa, where they produce Lagier Meredith wines. A Fellow of AAAS, in 2009, she was the first woman inducted into the Vintners Hall of Fame.

**Cathy Corison.** BA in biology from Pomona; MS in food science from UC Davis in 1978. After working at a number of leading wineries, she crafted the first vintage of Corison Cabernet Sauvignon in 1987, establishing her own label and becoming the first woman Winemaker-Proprietor in the Napa Valley. The 2016 harvest is her 30th vintage of Corison Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and 21st vintage of Corison Kronos Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. Among her many awards, Corison was named the 2011 Winemaker of the Year by the San Francisco Chronicle.

**Eileen Crane.** Master's degree in nutrition in the mid-1970s, followed by studies at UC Davis. First hired by Domaine Chandon, where she progressed to the position of assistant winemaker, and then in 1983 as winemaker and vice president of Gloria Ferrer Champagne Caves. Based on this experience, Crane was selected for the position of CEO and Founding Winemaker of Domaine Carneros in Napa in 1987, a position she continues to hold today. She is active in numerous wine- and community-related organizations.

**Jill Davis.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1978. Worked at Beringer and then joined Buena Vista in 1982 as assistant winemaker and named winemaker there in 1983. Only 27 years old at the time, was featured in *Cosmopolitan* in an article about women who love their work. Moved as winemaker to William Hill Estate in Napa in 1994, and, then in 2005, to Lambert Bridge Winery in Sonoma. In 2015, became the winery's Consulting Winemaker. A highly respected winemaker, Davis also teaches the Wine Production course for the Certificate of Winemaking Program at UC Davis Extension.

**Carol Shelton.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1978. First positions included Buena Vista and Robert Mondavi. Beginning in 1981, Shelton worked at Windsor Vineyards for 19 years, where she had the opportunity to bottle some 45 different wines each year, ranging from sparkling wines to Port and Zinfandel. In 2000, she and her husband Mitch Mackenzie launched their own brand — Carol Shelton Wines. Provided with an opportunity to create her own identity and focus on whatever varietals she wanted, Shelton chose Zinfandel. Cited as the most awarded winemaker in the U.S., she has been honored as Winemaker of the Year several times.

**Susan Reed.** BS in biology from San Jose State in the late 1970s. In 1981, took a position in the laboratory at Simi Winery, under the direction of winemaker Zelma Long. She moved to Matanzas Creek in Santa Rosa and then to Gary Farrell in Healdsburg, where she served as winemaker until 2012. Reed is now retired.

**Rosemary Cakebread.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1979. Worked at several wineries before her appointment as the highly successful winemaker for Spottswoode Estate Vineyard and Winery in Napa, 1997 through the 2005 vintage. In 2007, she released her first Cabernet Sauvignon under her own label, GALLICA. Cakebread was instrumental in bringing Napa Valley Cabernet to prominence.

**Julia Iantosca.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1979. After working at Stevenot Vineyards in the Sierra Foothills and William Wheeler Winery in Healdsburg, in 1993, joined Lambert Bridge as winemaker where she worked with Merry Edwards, who was the winery's consulting winemaker. Starting in 2006, Iantosca became a consulting winemaker. She currently is winemaker for Lasseter Family Winery and other wineries in the Sonoma wine region.

**Christina Benz.** BS in chemistry from UC Berkeley in 1979. Enrolled in UC Davis master's program in food science that same year, doing first harvest in 1980 at Roudon-Smith in Santa Cruz Hills. During time at UC Davis, worked at Joseph Phelps Vineyards and Schug Cellars. First winemaking position at Winterbrook Vineyards in Amador then hired as winemaker at Murphy-Goode Estate Winery in Sonoma in 1987, a position she held for 14 years with high praise for her wines; Merry Edwards, was a consulting winemaker and mentor during her early years there. In 2001, moved to Laird Family Estate in Napa to become Production Manager for the custom-crush operation. Her clients included Celia Welch, Mia Kline, and Alison Green-Doran. Benz retired in 2015 but is very active in Napa County issues, advocating for policies that will preserve its natural resources.

**Margo Van Staaveren.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1979. Joined Chateau St. Jean in Sonoma as a laboratory technician in 1980, became assistant winemaker in 1989, and then winemaker and director of operations in 2003, her current position. She has a pivotal role in every facet of the winemaking process at Chateau St. Jean, including final decisions on blend and style for the super-premium and luxury categories. Van Staaveren was named one of Top 20 Most Admired Winemakers in North America in 2014 by Vineyard & Winery Management and Winemaker of the Year by Wine Enthusiast in 2008.

## **Women Entering The Field of Winemaking 1980 through 1984**

We identified 25 women who entered the field during this time period and became recognized as winemakers. As in the previous periods, many well-known names in the wine world entered the field during this period and included **Heidi Peterson Barrett, Kristin Belair, Kathy Joseph, Mia Klein, Pam Starr, Lane Tanner, Celia Welch, and Signe Zoller.**

This was a time of considerable growth in the California wine industry and the career paths of these trailblazers reflect the wider range of wine regions getting attention in the state. Today, these women hold positions in Monterey, Mendocino, Santa Maria, Paso Robles, Napa, Sonoma and the Sierra Foothills. Some are consultants, some are owner/winemakers, and others are winemakers for well-known wineries, large and small.

Brief descriptions of their educational and career paths appear below. Again, the order in which they are presented is in accordance with the year they entered the field of winemaking as best we could determine.



**Lee Miyamura**



**Celia Welch**



**Leslie Sisneros**

**Heidi Peterson Barrett.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1980. After working at several wineries, in 1983 at age 25, appointed winemaker at Buehler Vineyards where she improved the wine quality while significantly increasing the case production. In 1988, she left Buehler to become an independent, freelance winemaker for a number of small super- and ultra-premium wineries. Also Winemaker/Proprietress for La Sirena where she focuses on the wines that she personally loves best — Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Moscato Azul. She is one of California's leading winemakers and was named by Time Magazine, “The Wine Diva of Napa.”

**Lee Miyamura.** BS in biology from Sonoma State University in 1980. A temporary laboratory position at Beringer Vineyards in Napa led Miyamura to a position in 1990 at its sister winery, Meridian Vineyards, in Paso Robles. As Meridian has grown over the years, so has her role. Several promotions and 20 years later, she was named as Meridian's head winemaker in 2007, a position she holds today. Signe Zoller was among her mentors.

**Lane Tanner.** BS in chemistry from San Jose State University. Started her professional career in the air pollution industry, but left it in 1980 after an assignment in Montana for the winter. Returning to California, found a position at Knocti winery. Her laboratory skills so impressed Andre Tchelistcheff, the winery’s consultant, that he recommended her for an enologist position at Firestone Winery in Santa Maria, where she followed in the footsteps of Alison Green. By 1989, she had founded the Lane Tanner label. She went into a partnership as winemaker at Lumen Wines in Santa Maria in 2013, her current position.

**Margaret Davenport.** BS in biochemistry from San Francisco State in 1975. Interest in wine led to lab position at Simi in 1980 and enrollment in enology program at UC Davis in 1981. Accepted enologist position at Wente Brothers in 1983 while completing master’s thesis. Began 16-year tenure at Clos du Bois in Alexander Valley in 1986, moving from assistant winemaker to Director of Winemaking and overseeing its increased production and recognition for wine quality. A highly respected winemaker and operations manager, started Davenport & Company in 2003 and became winemaker at Passalacqua Winery among others. After working more than 30 harvests, Davenport formally retired in 2014 but still provides consulting services.

**Phyllis Zouzounis.** Changed careers, starting in wine industry in 1980 with advice from MaryAnn Graf. Started at Dry Creek Vineyard in tasting room with part-time cellar position. Took courses at UC Davis, worked way up to assistant winemaker at Dry Creek over 15-year period, and then moved to Mazzocco Vineyards as winemaker and general manager. Along with a partner, started own winery, Deux Amis, in 1987; wine critics particularly acclaimed its 2007 Sonoma County Zinfandel. Zouzounis is also the winemaker for several other Sonoma wineries. In 2005, she was among those honored as “Pioneer Woman Winemakers” of Sonoma County.

**Kristin Belair.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1981. She interned at Trefethen Vineyards and then in Australia before being appointed at Johnson Turnbull/Turnbull Wine cellars in Oakville and becoming winemaker there. In 1998, Belair joined Honig Vineyard and Winery in Rutherford as its winemaker, her current position, where she crafts award-winning wines.

**Janice Schmidt.** BS in fermentation science, MS in food science in 1981, both from UC Davis, where she studied with Ann Noble on the sensory evaluation of wine. After spending 20 years at Jordan winery, in 2006, her family established its own winery, Estate 1856 Wines, in Healdsburg, where Schmidt is the winemaker and co-owner. Early supporters of sustainability, the family sources its fruit from a vineyard that has been in the family for over 150 years.

**Tina Mitchell.** BS from UC Davis in 1982. Her first positions were at Louis Martini and Niebaum Coppola. In 1991, accepted a position of enologist at William Hill Winery in Napa and over 12 years worked her way up to winemaker. Mitchell then joined Palmaz in 2003 as its winemaker, her current position, where she works with Mia Klein, Palmaz’s consulting winemaker.

**Celia Welch.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1982, where Ann Noble was an important mentor. After gaining experience in the U.S and internationally, Welch focused on Napa Valley and worked at several wineries there until the mid-90s when she reached a fork in her career path and chose to focus on independent wine consulting. Today, she crafts ultra-premium wines for several Napa wineries and also has her own label, Corra. *Food and Wine* magazine honored her as Winemaker of the Year in 2008 and Women for WineSense named her a "Rising Star." In 2017, Welch was recognized by *Wine Spectator* for her 2013 Cabernet Sauvignons.

**Stacy Clark.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis. After graduation, her first position was as enologist at Pine Ridge, which she joined in 1983, and over time, became its winemaker. She joined Charles Krug Winery as winemaker in 2011, a position she holds today. Clark also has her own brand, Galland Clark Wines.

**Patricia Howe.** BS in fermentation science (1983) and MS in food science (1995), both from UC Davis. PhD in food science from Cornell University in 2015. Worked for nearly 20 years at both Domaine Chandon and Mumm Napa Valley. Co-copyright holder, with Dr. Ann Noble of UC Davis, of the Sparkling Wine Aroma wheel. Howe has extensive national and international winemaking experience and expertise in commercial laboratory management. Currently she is Senior Director of Quality for Constellation Brands.

**Mia Klein.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1983. Transferred from career as chef to that of winemaker. Worked her way up from the cellar at Chappellet under the mentorship of Cathy Corison and moved on to Robert Pepi Winery, where she decided to begin consulting. A highly sought-after wine consultant today, she is considered among the most widely respected winemakers in California. Klein started her own label, Selene, in 1991 and continues as winemaker for several high-end Napa wineries.

**Marta Kraftzeck.** BS in botany from UC Santa Cruz. MS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1983. Accepted job as assistant winemaker at Monterey Peninsula Winery and promoted to winemaker, but after five years moved to Chateau Julien in Carmel Valley as its winemaker/viticulturist, a position she held for 20 years; she was the first female winemaker in Monterey County. A Certified Sommelier who teaches about wine through the "Roads Scholars" program, Kraftzeck has been at Scheid Vineyards in Salinas, California since 2009.

**Susan Marks.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis. Worked as a winemaker at a number of wineries in Napa Valley and Central Coast before opening Cedarville Vineyard in Sierra Foothills with her husband in 1995. The first Cedarville Vineyard wines came from the 1998 vintage. With no other employees, Marks is very "hands-on" as a winemaker and farms organically.

**Sally Ottoson.** Started making wines with friends and learned her craft through apprenticeships, coursework at UC Davis and Fresno, and hands-on experience. In 1983, founded Star Hill Winery in Napa. A native of Mendocino County, Ottoson returned to her roots in 1987 to establish Pacific Star Winery, north of Fort Bragg and perched on the edge of the dramatic Pacific coastline, where she is the owner and winemaker.

**Leslie Sisneros.** BS in plant science from UC Davis in 1984. Participated in global agricultural work program, various harvest positions, and was a tasting room manager before accepting a position in 1993 as laboratory manager at Kendall Jackson Winery when it acquired Vinwood Cellars in Geyserville. Over a 13-year period, she rose to assistant winemaker in charge of operations and flavor for Pinot Noir, ultimately earning title of "Pinot Noir Princess." Winemaker at Arista Winery in Healdsburg from 2005 to 2012. Currently Sisneros is winemaker for several family wineries, and is also the winemaker for and co-owner of Murder Ridge Winery in Mendocino County.

**Denise Shurtleff.** BS in Dietetics and Food Administration from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, in 1983. Started career at Corbett Canyon Vineyards in San Luis Obispo in the tasting room, became its enologist and rose to become its winemaker. In 1999, Shurtleff joined Cambria Estate Vineyards and Winery in Santa Maria, California, as assistant winemaker and was appointed winemaker in 2003. An effective leader who is touted for her incredible ability to pick out various aromas in wine, she is currently Director of Winemaking.

**Nancy Steel.** BS in plant science with an emphasis in viticulture from UC Davis. Worked at a number of wineries in Sonoma and Napa before becoming head winemaker for more than 20 years, first with Mazzocco Winery in Sonoma and then at Perry Creek Winery in the Sierra Foothills. Steel is currently the winemaker at Stevenot Winery in Calaveras County.

**Laurie Hook.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1984. Attributes her first spark of interest in wine to learning her family had roots in winemaking in France before the revolution. After graduation, she first worked at a winery in Australia and then accepted a position at Beringer as an enologist in 1986. She was named assistant winemaker in 1997 and promoted to winemaker in 2000. Hook led Beringer's winemaking team for 15 years before transitioning to Winemaker Emerita in 2015.

**Kathy Joseph.** Chicago native, BS in bacteriology, MS in food science at UC Davis in 1984. Applied knowledge from degrees in microbiology and biochemistry to winemaking. Experience at wineries in Sonoma and Napa Valleys and mentoring by Zelma Long led her to establish Fiddlehead Cellars in Santa Ynez Valley in 1989 where her wines consistently receive high acclaim. She is very active in her community and a mentor for women winemakers in Santa Barbara County. In May 2014, Joseph won the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Award for Agriculture and Wineries.

**Melissa Moravec.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1983. Initiated career at Carneros Creek Winery as research enologist in 1983, becoming its winemaker in 1988. Moravec has led efforts to quantify the impact of Pierce's Disease if introduced into Sonoma and Napa Valleys by glassy-winged sharpshooter. In 1989 Moravec and her husband established Casa Carneros Wines in Napa where she is the winemaker.

**Judy Matulich-Weitz.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1984. After graduation, worked for one year in the cellar at Mirrasou Winery and then moved on in 1985 as winemaker for Inglenook Napa Valley and in 1993 for Beaulieu Vineyards. She moved to Buena Vista Carneros as Vice President of Winemaking in 1994, producing the wines for Buena Vista, Haywood Winery, and Robert Stemmler Winery for ten years. In 2006, Matulich-Weitz joined Laird Family Estate in Napa and is currently its Production Manager/Winemaker.

**Elaine St. Clair.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis in 1984. Started at DeLoach Vineyards, then moved to Domaine Chandon for over 10 years. Became winemaker at Domaine Carneros in 1999, and then at Black Stallion Winery in Napa from 2008 to 2012. St. Clair, also a brewer, has had her own brand, St. Claire Brown Winery, since 2001.

**Nancy Walker.** BS in bacteriology from UC Davis in 1984. From employment after graduation when she worked in the cellar at McDowell Valley Vineyards, moved on to various positions at other wineries in the Sonoma Valley. Currently is winemaker for Vintage Wine Estates, including its Canopy Brands and Windsor Winery wines, as well as Stephen & Walker in Healdsburg, her own brand. Walker also consults with small producers of ultra-premium wines.

**Signe Zoller.** MS in food science at UC Davis. Started career at Kendall-Jackson in the early 1980s when it was a six-person operation. Ran the lab and drove the forklift. After 11 years there, accepted a senior winemaking position at Cambria Winery, and then moved on to the lead winemaking position for Meridian Vineyards in Paso Robles in 1994. Started Zoller Wine Styling in 2007, producing custom lots and teaching others how to make wine. Current business is Zoller Wine Consulting. Zoller was named "Winemaker of the Year" by the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance and the Central Coast Winegrowers Association.

**Lee Miyamura.** BS in biology from Sonoma State University in 1984. A temporary laboratory position after graduation at Beringer Vineyards in Napa led Miyamura to a position in 1990 at its sister winery, Meridian Vineyards (now Treasury Wine Estates, Paso Robles), in Paso Robles. As Meridian has grown over the years, so has her role. Several promotions and 20 years later, Lee was named as Meridian's winemaker in 2007, a position she holds today together with the winemaking responsibilities for Beringer Founders' Estate. Signe Zoller is among her mentors.

**Pam Starr.** BS in fermentation science from UC Davis. Started career path with internship at Sonoma-Cutrer in 1984 working with William Bonetti, followed by second internship at Edna Valley Vineyards, where she was the only woman. From 1985 to 1991 at Carmenet, and then in 1991 appointed winemaker at Spottswoode in Napa, where she received wide-spread recognition for her wine. Robert Parker cited her 1996 Cabernet Sauvignon for its “Château Margaux-like elegance.” In 1997, she began her current winemaking position at Aadastra Wines and also her partnership with Charlie Crocker. Starr is the co-owner and winemaker for Crocker & Starr, which is approaching its 20th harvest and recently celebrated the opening of its own winemaking facility.

## Lessons from California’s Trailblazers

There are several lessons we can derive from California’s women trailblazers who entered the winemaking field during the years 1965 to 1984.

- The first is that nearly all these women winemakers started their careers in the laboratory, but all escaped the fate “of getting stuck in the laboratory,” the traditional role for women in the winemaking field. Cathy Corison observed that in 1978 there were very few women in the cellars. Women went to the labs as enologists. Christina Benz, in her bioprofile on [Women Winemakers of California](#), noted that she had experienced some of the same resistance that many other trailblazing women winemakers encountered. “Women weren’t allowed to work in the cellar. We weren’t considered strong enough, but I think many of us proved this conception to be dead wrong: by hauling hoses, pushing around pumps, shoveling out a tank full of grapes — and yes it’s hard physical labor, but women can do it.” Julia Iantosca further noted that observing Merry Edwards in the cellar (Julia worked with Edwards at Lambert Bridge) showed that women can do cellar work!
- Many were graduates of UC Davis and were the only woman or among the few women in their class. All had an educational background in the sciences and cite this as a key element in their becoming winemakers. UC Davis was the premiere school for studying viticulture and enology (then called fermentation science and food science) during this time period.
- Those who were initially from outside the state or another country were likely attracted to California for the possibilities it promised. In the 1970s, the state was receiving considerable attention as a result of The Paris Wine Tasting of 1976 — known as the

Judgment of Paris — which helped shatter the myth that only French soil could produce the world's greatest wines.

- Finally, all these women had to work harder for the same level of success, were quality-oriented, self-starters, and passionate about their work. All three women inducted into the Vintners Hall of Fame to date are among this group: Carol Meredith in 2009, Zelma Long in 2010, and Merry Edwards in 2013. This represents 6.25% of all those who have been inducted.

In closing, these trailblazing women have all distinguished themselves in their specializations in the wine industry, and they took their role as pathfinders seriously by encouraging, opening doors for, and mentoring others. In a 2007 interview, for example, Zelma Long, who entered the field in 1970, was quoted as saying, "I think I had a lack of consciousness about being a woman, and so I've never had any constraints about hiring women." Those she hired include Barbara Lindblom, who now has a successful consulting career; Dawnine Dyer, who headed Napa's Domaine Chandon and now owns Dyer Vineyards; and Genevieve Janssens, now winemaker for Robert Mondavi Winery. She encouraged Kathy Joseph to establish Fiddlehead Cellars, and she was a good friend and mentor to Mary Ann Graf. There are many other examples. Merry Edwards, who entered the field in 1973, has mentored a number of aspiring women winemakers including Julia Iantosca and Christina Benz, as have Kathy Joseph, Julianna Laks, Celia Welch, and many others.

Cathy Corison remarked in a casual conversation a few years back, "Back in 1978, when I did my first harvest, I never thought that women would be recognized as winemakers." History shows that they have. These women have created a name for themselves in a predominantly male-dominated occupational field, and have brought significant knowledge, vision, and innovation to the field using their personal drive, verve, and ability. They have established themselves as notable winemakers (and educators in the case of Ann Noble and Carole Meredith), and have provided the field with an important and inspiring legacy.

<sup>1</sup> **Author Bios:** Lucia Albino Gilbert, PhD, and John C. (Jack) Gilbert, PhD, both professors, have had long and distinguished careers at The University of Texas at Austin and Santa Clara University and are widely published in their fields. Their research on facilitating women's career success in male-dominated scientific fields such as winemaking combines Lucia's academic field of Psychology and John's academic field of Organic Chemistry. They can be reached at [lgilbert@scu.edu](mailto:lgilbert@scu.edu). Their research website is [www.womenwinemakers.com](http://www.womenwinemakers.com).

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Weinberger was the first female winery owner and winemaker in Napa Valley. She ran the Weinberger winery after her husband's death until Prohibition forced its closure in 1920 (William F. Heintz; History of Napa Valley).

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