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*The WineFashionista*

## A NEW START WITH A FIRST CRUSH AT CONTINUUM ESTATE

Posted: 01/07/2014 at 3:34 pm

“This is from the first day of our first harvest in the winery,” says Tim Mondavi, holding a glass filled with a dark purple liquid. “This was one week ago today, Cabernet Sauvignon that’s just down the hill from here. It’s an early harvest for the vintage and it shows great promise.” Tim is speaking to the folks he and his family have invited to the blessing of the grapes for the 2013 first crush at the new Continuum Estate winery. It’s a family effort by Tim, his sister Marcia Mondavi Berger and Tim’s four children Carissa, Carlo, Dante and Chiara.



This blessing of the grapes is not only a celebration of harvest, it is a milestone for Tim and Marcia’s family. The 2013 vintage is the 100th year anniversary of Robert Mondavi’s birth, the family patriarch. Thanks to Robert’s belief that his and other Napa Valley wineries could make wines to rival the best of the French wines, Napa is now recognized internationally for world class wine.

This day is also the first time the Continuum team has been able to harvest and crush 100% of its estate grown grapes in its own winemaking facility. After the sale of the Robert Mondavi Winery to Constellation Brands in 2004, Robert’s children, Tim, Marcia and Michael, went off in different directions in the wine world.



Tim Mondavi with children Carissa, Dante, sister Marcia Mondavi Berger, Carlo and Chiara

Michael Mondavi opened Folio Fine Wine Partners; Tim and Marcia teamed up to find a vineyard site where they could achieve a dream, making one wine from one estate and making the best wine possible.



CONTINUUM  
2010

Chiara Mondavi is one of Tim’s children and she is the one “leading the charge,” Tim says, in the vineyard and winery. She works with vineyard manager Ryan Gerhardt and winemaker Kurt Niznik. Chiara also designed the label art for Continuum, taken from her life size painting of a Cabernet Franc vine that Tim planted in 1975. Her other siblings hold various positions in the family business: Carissa is involved in hospitality and Dante and Carlo work in sales. Continuum didn’t happen overnight.





It took Tim and Marcia years to find the perfect spot, a combination of the soils, the climate and geography. “My dad blows me away with his vision,” Chiara says. “You can only imagine the pressure. We went to so many estates and so many vineyards in the valley and nothing felt right. Up here immediately, ‘this is it,’ he knew it immediately.” After all, To Kalon, the famous Mondavi vineyard in Oakville, is a hard act to follow. “Our grandfather [Robert Mondavi] was able to see it before we were in escrow, you could see it on his face, he knew it, my aunt [Marcia] knew it,” says Chiara. “It was ok, wow, we found a place we can call home now.”

The new home is 73 acres of land, with 62 acres planted to vineyard, at elevations ranging from 1,300 to 1,600 feet. The hillside vineyards are above the fog line, with



south, west and southwest facing aspects. There are 180° views from Mt. St. Helena to the north all the way to San Francisco in the south. Indeed, the views from here are stunning, as are sunsets. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc are grown here, going into the Continuum bordeaux-style blend.



“Come on in, come on in,” Tim ushers us into the winery, which is not yet complete, but operational enough to crush the entire Continuum 2013 harvest. Just picked Merlot grapes are coming in as we gather around the sorting table. “They’ve been sorted many times already in the vineyard, says Tim.



Here Father Gordon, who has officiated at Mondavi harvests for the past 10 years, offers a blessing for the vineyard and winery workers and the construction crew. Tim says, “rather exciting rather exciting,” and Father Gordon replies, “and the grapes are good too.”

Marcia points out that the winery, designed by architect to the Napa Valley stars, Howard Backen, has been situated to take advantage of the line of sight from

where the cave entrance will be, straight through the tank rooms and out windows, where on clear days and nights you can see the San Francisco skyline.



While the new winery is exciting, “the vineyard is the star,” says Tim. “We want this to be something that works incredibly well, that is beautiful, but the building is in support of this great site.” While the basic structure of the winery is complete, Continuum expects to put on the finishing touches by spring 2014. Caves will go in two to three years later.

To help celebrate the new winery and the blessing of the grapes, members of the Mondavi family and many former and current employees were on hand, including Warren Winiarski and Miljenko “Mike” Grgich, the first and second winemakers at the Robert Mondavi Winery, beginning in 1966.



Warren Winiarski

“I have goosebumps when i think about the history that’s involved, and my part in that which went back to 1966,” says Warren Winiarski. He referred to Thomas Jefferson’s belief that America could produce wine to rival France. “I refer now to your winery, where you are continuing a tradition started 47 years ago. With that

continuance you will make wines that are different but they will be as doubtless as good as those before you.”

Mike Grgich says “I have to recognize Mondavi family as home.” He tells the story of how he and Robert Mondavi were both proud when the 1969 Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon that Mike made won a blind tasting organized by the Los Angeles Times. Mike says Robert held a tasting of that wine 25 years later, and invited him to come and talk about how he made the wine. “Robert Mondavi after 25 years he did not forget me. I feel honored,” he says.



Miljenko “Mike” Grgich

The blessing of the grapes is a Mondavi family tradition that goes back to the founding of Robert’s winery in 1966. Back then that new winery was also under construction during the first crush. “It was scaffolding as you see here, and now scaffolding a few years forward,” says Tim. “It was the beginning of yet another step in our family’s journey, and today marks another step on that journey.”

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