

Wine-making forces come together

By **PAUL GREGUTT**
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WALLA WALLA, Wash. — One of Walla Walla's newest wineries brings with it a veteran wine-making team with a rich mix of experience and a penchant for experimentation. It's a sign of growth and a maturing industry that it is capable of attracting excellent talent from outside the region.

Here's the scoop: Force Majeure, which was founded in 2004 under the name Grand Rêve Vintners, has moved from Woodinville, Washington, to a property that formerly was home to the Pleasant View School, a few miles west of Milton-Freewater.

The school's former gymnasium now holds rows of fermentation vessels, including an impressive number of large concrete "eggs." Adjacent is a barrel room where wines from the previous vintage, which was made in a rented facility in Walla Walla, are resting. The old school is nearby and slated to become a tasting room once renovation is complete.

From its first releases a decade ago, the winery caught the attention of critics and customers with its ambitious portfolio of Bordeaux- and Rhône-style wines from Red Mountain's prestigious Ciel du Cheval vineyard. Each of these Collaboration Series wines was made by a different "guest" winemaker. The program concluded with the 2013 vintage, but some of those wines are still available on the winery website.

The high-elevation estate vineyard, planted on Red Mountain above Col Solare, may have paved the way for this move to the Rocks District in the Milton-Freewater area. It was located on almost soil-free, rock-strewn, hardscrabble land.

In the fall of 2010, just as the first estate-grown Mourvèdre vines were ready to be picked, thieves stole the entire crop under cover of night. But still more trouble was ahead. In 2011, a trademark scuffle forced a name change just as the young winery was beginning to establish name recognition.



Force Majeure Winery winemaker Todd Alexander.

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo/Greg Lehman



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A 2018 Voignier from Force Majeure Winery.

Then in June of 2014, founding partner Ryan Johnson left. Winery owners Paul and Susan McBride hired Todd Alexander to oversee the change to estate-grown wines that would be made at a rented Woodinville warehouse. Alexander

had been honing his skills in the Napa Valley, where he worked at the cult-caliber Bryant Family Vineyard among other high-profile estates.

As he explained to me in a recent visit to the new winery, he'd met Mike Mac-



Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo/Greg Lehman

Force Majeure Winery winemaker Todd Alexander.

morran and Mark McNeilly (from Collaboration Series contributor Mark Ryan Winery) in France the previous summer. "We hit it off, had a good time, and my wife Carrie and I had been talking about what's next after Napa. I wanted go elsewhere to apply what I'd learned." Force Majeure was the right place at the right time.

Fast forward to 2018 when long-simmering plans came to fruition with the purchase of the school property and a small vineyard nearby, previously owned by Otis Kenyon. It seems oddly

apropos that the 10-acre site, originally planted in the late 1990s, is partly in and partly out of the official Rocks District American Viticulture Area.

"It finally feels like things are starting to settle," Todd said with a grin. "We have so much opportunity here. In California everything is so expensive that you have to plant what's going to make money, which is Cabernet Sauvignon. That tamps down creativity. It's not like the old days where you could experiment."

As it stands today, the Force Majeure team also

includes vineyard manager Damon Lalonde, who recently did similar work for Corliss Estates and Charles Smith; and consulting enologist Helen Keplinger, another Napa veteran with a resume that includes three years in the Priorat region of Spain. Those Priorat wines inspire such Force Majeure releases as the 2017 Parvata, a stunningly powerful red principally composed of Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre.

It's this combination of two estate vineyards in world-class red wine American Viticulture Areas (and a third in the planning stages), experienced consultants from both within and outside the Valley, a winemaker with energy and creativity, and owners with vision and a proven ability to overcome obstacles that together make Force Majeure such an aptly-named and powerful addition to the local industry.

At the moment, the winery is open by appointment only. A tour and tasting costs \$30 per person (online reservations can be made at force-majeurevineyards.com/wp/visit/). The wines are principally sold by mailing list, which remains open to new members with no minimum purchase required.

Among the current Force Majeure releases, which are expensive but highly recommended, are a 2018 Viognier (\$55); a 2017 Parvata red blend (\$70); a dense and tannic 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$125); and a marvelously fragrant and rich 2017 Syrah (\$70).

A Todd Alexander side project is Holocene. Sourcing grapes from a Yamhill-Carlton vineyard, the 2017 Holocene Memorialis Pinot Noir (\$54) is a ripe, earthy wine. Its lush aromatics roll from spicy cranberry into rich strawberry, blueberry and red plum, along with details of baking spices and composted earth.

A companion wine, the 2017 Holocene Apocrypha Pinot Noir (\$54) gets its fruit from Antiquum Farm. This is a spicy, sleek wine with a strong mineral component. The fruit is ripe, dense and precise, conjuring up brambly raspberry, blackberry and a bit of sandstone.

Sharing a family meal can help those with dementia connect

By **MELISSA RAYWORTH**
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Long before Tim Hollingsworth earned the James Beard Foundation's Rising Star Chef of the Year award and served as chef de cuisine at French Laundry, he was learning to cook by his mother's side at home. As a kid, Hollingsworth would measure ingredients to help his mom make dinner, and he'd talk with her and sample the dishes as they cooked.

Today, Hollingsworth — the winner of Netflix's "The Final Table" and owner of Otium in Los Angeles — returns the favor. His mother, now struggling with memory loss, sits with him as he cooks her favorite recipes, from fragrant pots of chili to comforting platters of chicken and dumplings.

Although she's not really able to participate in the cooking, being present for the preparation and eating of familiar dishes with her son helps bridge the distance that dementia can create.

When we make and share food with others, "we feel a sense of usefulness and belonging," says Sheila Molony, professor of nursing at Quinnipiac University and a gerontology researcher.

If family members with dementia can be involved in meal prep or table setting even in a small way, that may give them some sense of peace and what Molony calls "at-homeness." It helps them feel like part of the social fabric of a family or



AP Photo/Adam Rose, File

Tim Hollingsworth, chef and owner of Otium in Los Angeles, appears in a scene from the cooking competition series "The Final Table."

community.

"Whether we're sharing a recipe or a memory about food, we're really linking into the meaning of being," Molony says. "This food ritual can help older adults with dementia reconnect with their own personhood."

For Kim Borghoff and her family, keeping a tradition of Sunday meals helped maintain a sense of normalcy as her husband and his father were simultaneously struggling with Alzheimer's disease.

Family meals have been a priority ever since the three Borghoff children — now in their 20s — were growing up. So when her father-in-law and husband were both diagnosed with Alzheimer's several years ago, Borghoff began making sure that every other Sunday, the

whole family had dinner together.

"It was the best time, because everyone would sit around and for whatever reason, we were always laughing," she says. Sharing these meals with relatives helped both men regain a bit of their old personalities, even if just for a short time.

The menu didn't really matter: "I could have ordered pizza," Borghoff says. It was the familiar and comforting experience of lingering around the table together even after the plates were empty.

"When you're with the kids and you start talking about memories," she says, it's "good for the caregivers and the family to be able to get that person back and remember those times."

This fall, the Alzhei-



AP Photo/Hugh Acheson, File

Kim and Jeff Borghoff pose at a fundraising event for the Alzheimer's Association. For Kim Borghoff and her family, keeping a tradition of Sunday meals helped maintain a sense of normalcy as her husband and his father were simultaneously struggling with Alzheimer's disease.

mer's Association has been spreading the word about the connecting power of mealtime through their Around the Table program. Along with Hollingsworth, they've enlisted other chefs, including Hugh Acheson, chef and owner at the Georgia restaurants 5&10 and The National, to help spread the word.

Acheson's father, a former professor, developed Alzheimer's about five years ago. Sharing meals was always a part of their relationship, but it's taken on new meaning for Hugh Acheson as his father's memory fades.

"As a single father raising four kids and a full-time academic," Acheson says, his father didn't have much time to cook gourmet meals. So Acheson doesn't cook the

same dishes they had years ago.

"I'm not gonna make him the burnt rice and fish sticks that he made us, which I'm sure was delivered with love," he says. Instead, Acheson might grill a good steak and simply pair it with a fresh, green salad.

"Food is so much about finding a thread of personal history where it means something to you, and I think that's as much for the caregiver as for the person suffering through dementia or Alzheimer's," Acheson says.

A good meal made with love can draw out a person with dementia and bring them real joy, he says, "even if they've completely gotten to the point where they may not have that connection to the family story."

Ruth Drew, director of

information and support services at the Alzheimer's Association, often hears from caregivers about the positive moments that can happen during meals with loved ones.

One caregiver whose husband has Alzheimer's told Drew about a weekly dinner she hosts along with another caregiver whose spouse has dementia: "They've been friends for decades and they love to get together for supper," Drew explains. At these dinners, the caregiver's husband is so comfortable that "he's able to be at his best," she says. "He holds conversations. He can crack jokes."

Drew hopes that during the holiday season, families will embrace the sometimes challenging experience of sharing meals with relatives who are dealing with dementia, and that they won't feel pressure to make everything from scratch.

If caregiving leaves little time for holiday cooking, she says, families can "do something different that is a little bit no-frills and no fuss, and focus the time and the energy on the people around the table."

Acheson agrees that the people are the priority. But he says caregivers can help themselves by making sure the meals are tasty and memorable.

"We just don't make memories over Pizza Pockets," he says. "We make memories over good food that's been cared for and means something, prepared with attention and thought and love."