

THE SOMMELIER JOURNAL

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THE SOMM JOURNAL

THE *Pacific's* CALLING CARD

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SAN SIMEON EMBODIES
THE ELEGANCE OF THE
CENTRAL COAST



{ q&a }



PHOTOS: KENT LEUTZEN, GLOOMWIND/COMMUNICATIONS

San Francisco restaurateur and author Shelley Lindgren with vintner Joey Wolosz of Napa's Gentleman Farmer Wines.

Turning the Tables

IN WHICH THE WINEMAKER ASKS THE QUESTIONS

THE SOMM JOURNAL is known for our interviews with winemakers, but now we're turning the tables: This time, Joey Wolosz, the winemaker and tastemaker behind Gentleman Farmer Wines, is interviewing one of San Francisco's most lauded restaurateurs, Shelley Lindgren, who has managed to weather some of the city's most challenging storms at her restaurant and wine bar, A16.

Lindgren's third book, *Italian Wine: The History, Regions, and Grapes of an Iconic Wine Country*, was co-written with Kate Leahy and is set to publish on August 29; around that time, The Gentleman Farmer's tasting salon, formally called The Bungalow: A Studio for Gustatory Well

Being, will be close to opening in downtown Napa. There, Wolosz and his partner, vintner Jeff Durham, will host private multicourse lunch tastings they'll prepare from scratch—just as they currently do out of their own home for industry professionals, wine club members, and other guests.

Q: Joey Wolosz: To us winemakers, restaurants require the hardest work. We bow down to you guys.

Shelley Lindgren: Well, you and your husband would know! We've known each other since Jeff was my manager at Left Bank Brasserie [the Bay Area restaurant that Lindgren and Durham helped to

open in the mid-1990s]. I remember Jeff always had a brisk pace on the floor and he, you know, threw his tie over [his] shoulder and things [laughing]. I'm sure it's the same way when you guys host your famous wine lunches.

Q: Our Napa lunches are hopefully a bit more relaxed! So much has changed since our early days in restaurants. Have you observed any recent trends that might actually stick around?

In terms of wine, everyone seems to be gravitating toward lower alcohol. We also get a lot of requests for wines with some skin contact. You see it more and more often with the younger generations.

Q: Do you see that influencing the wines that come through your door?

Winemakers are picking up on this evolving consumer palate for sure. My focus is still on Italy, but there are so many more grapes being planted now in California, and there's definitely a growing pool of varieties like Vermentino now being grown in previously Chardonnay-dominant regions like Cameros. We're starting to see more blends being made as well.

Q: Yes, we love a good blend, especially with our cooking backgrounds. One ingredient can get kind of boring, but once you start to blend, that's when the flavor possibilities

start to become really interesting.

I love your Gentleman Farmer Red Wine blend.

Q: Thank you! When people talk about the iconic restaurants in San Francisco, A16 is right up there with Zuni and the best of them. What do you think defines a restaurant as iconic or classic?

I think it's about being an original, never a cover band, you know? When we first started, no one in the city was doing pizza like we were. We'd done the research in Southern Italy and tried to honor those traditions—like this macaronara pasta we're enjoying, which is always on the menu. It's a Neapolitan ragu, and we got



"I think [a restaurant's success is] about being an original, never a cover band, you know?" says Lindgren.



this recipe from a chef in the hills outside of Avellino, in a town called Nusco. He's still there, and he permitted us to use it and sends people our way. We're not trying to pretend we invented this, but we're always learning and sharing.

In the same vein, I didn't realize I was solely focusing on the wines of South[ern] Italy when we first opened. I didn't know it was such an unknown region to everyone else!

Q: Speaking of, you just wrote your third book!

Yes! It's a more general overview on Italian wine. It covers the history of Italy as well as some exciting tidbits that are still being discovered. There's always something new. Even yesterday, I heard about a new white grape being grown inside the actual walls of Pompeii which, up until a few years ago, was mistaken for a grape called Coda di Volpe. They realized it's a new variety, so they're calling it Pompeii now. I actually met the winemaker yesterday; he was here from Campania. He makes just 1,000 bottles of this wine. In the end, A16 somehow now has the only eight bottles that made it to the U.S. ☺

Lindgren's new book, Italian Wine: The History, Regions, and Grapes of an Iconic Wine Country, is a nod to her own experiences and discoveries in Italy as well as an overview of its history and wine culture.