





Women in WINE

Meet three
local ladies
who are
outstanding
in their
field

In the historically male-dominated world of wine, Twin Cities women have quietly been making strides for years. Though the vast majority of winery and vineyard owners are male, as are most sommeliers and wine distributors, the “boy’s club” mentality doesn’t always make much sense. After all, it is women who are known for a highly discernible sense of smell and acute taste buds. Surely occupations in this field are ideally suited for the XY chromosome.

Here are the stories of three Twin Cities women who are closing the viticultural gender gap and taking bold steps forward in oenophilia.



Marianne Miller

Profession // Proprietor of Saga Hill Cooking School (612.281.1846; www.sagahillcs.com)

Home // Orono **Food and Wine Education** // I became interested in the field when I took a Marriage of Food and Wine course in London. Eventually, I graduated as executive chef and received my sommelier accreditation from Le Cordon Bleu in London and Paris (1991–1997), where I also worked as an apprentice at The Grosvenor House Hotel and Kensington Place Restaurant.

What have you learned about wine that surprises you?

It's living; it's a product of the land; each bottle is a story. There are so many nuances in a glass of wine, and maybe that's the most amazing thing.

As a sommelier, what do you know that we don't? European wines are often overlooked because labels are harder to read. The difference between me and the average guy is I can discern the label. But the only real difference is we all have taste buds and preferences.

How can we get more from a bottle of wine? Get a basic wine 101 book. Then buy the bottles of wine as they talk about them and write notes in the margin as you go.

Where do you recommend going for a great food and wine pairing in the Twin Cities?

At La Belle Vie, a great pair is the bouillabaisse (\$22) and Chateau de Pibarnon, Rosé 2002 (\$65). Or for something else, you could go to Fugaise and pair their braised veal cheeks with soft polenta (\$30) with Renato Ratti, Nebbiolo d'Alba Ocheti, 2003, (\$44).

When you want to enjoy a glass of wine, where do you head? Jean-George at the Chambers has a great wine list. Also, Sam's Wine Shop. Sam [Hazlett] is a wonderful source of information and not pretentious.

What's the best thing about the food and wine scene in the Twin Cities? Minnesota is full of really creative people, and they know their wines. Our residents are some of the smartest, most engaged, intellectual people around.



Homemade in Wayzata

After moving to the Twin Cities in 1999, Marianne Miller became a constant fixture on the Twin Cities culinary scene. Holding executive chef positions at several locations, including The Marsh in Minnetonka, as well as sommelier positions at Nicollet Island Inn and Aquavit, Miller quickly established a presence as one of the area's prominent food and wine experts. When Miller decided to start a family last year, she began looking for ways to incorporate her expertise into a career more conducive to raising children. *Voilà!* Saga Hill Cooking School was born. Perched above Five Swans on Wayzata's East Lake Street, the school offers scheduled classes as well as private and corporate events. —KK

Jessica Nielsen

Profession // Wine manager for the Guthrie Theater and Cue at the Guthrie (www.cueatguthrie.com)

Home // Minneapolis

Wine Education // I've taken the first of four levels of the Court of Master Sommelier Guild. During that level, I studied extensively with an advanced level sommelier for a year and a half, and I will be taking my second level within the next year.

Job Description // I meet with local wine representatives and decide which bottles will go on our list. But the primary part of my job takes part during dinner service, when I'm on the floor assisting people in finding the perfect wine for them.



How did you get into the scene? While I was in college at the [University of Minnesota], I worked in upscale restaurants, and I've traveled quite a bit—I've lived in Italy, Spain and California—which translated to a lot of self-training in wine. [After starting at Cue,] my training became more intense.

What have you learned about wine that surprises you? In studying wine, there are so many other things you need to learn about, like climate and geology, which really comes through in the wine you drink.

What wine should we be drinking more of? The Spanish reds and whites, especially in the fall. They're starting to pick up in price but I think they're a better value.

What can you tell the average wine drinker to give them an edge on the wine scene? I notice a lot of people sniff the cork, and you don't need to.

Where's your favorite establishment to enjoy a glass of wine in Minneapolis? Anywhere I can sit on a patio. Besides

Cue, I love the lounge at La Belle Vie. It's so comfortable and it's never really that busy. I think it's one of those great secrets you don't have to get a \$300 dinner—you can get a glass and sit by the fireplace and just enjoy.

What do you love most about wine? That it doesn't taste like grapes; it tastes like everything else. I think that's so cool. I want people to feel excited and enthusiastic about wine and never feel any reason to feel intimidated. It's fun.

Three to Try

Melissa DesAutels, from Minnetonka's The Wine Shop, shares her top wine choices.

White // "I love the elegant, fresh **Ajello Majus 2006** (\$13) from Sicilia, Italy, anytime I'm enjoying salmon or making sushi."

Rosé // "When I'm not in the mood for red, but need a bit more attitude than white, I pop the cork on **Las Rocas Rosado 2007** (\$12)."

Red // "**Tait 'The Ball Buster' 2006** from Barrosa Valley (\$20) is a rich, full-throttle red blend of 80-percent Shiraz, 10-percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 10-percent Merlot."

The Wine Shop, 17521 Minnetonka Blvd., 952.988.9463, www.the-wineshop.com.
—Caitlin Heidbrink

The Difference a Glass Makes

When I was invited to a “glass tasting” event hosted by none other than Georg Riedel (pronounced REE-dle), I was about as skeptical as they come, wondering what possible difference a glass could make when enjoying wine. By the end of my last eye-opening sip, though, I was convinced that shape does, indeed, make a difference. I spoke with Riedel about four of his Flow glasses (www.riedel.com) that are truly formed with reason. —AB



Montrachet Glass |

To highlight your best white wines, use the Montrachet glass.

Pinot Noir Glass |

“This glass’s volume coaxes aromas and pleasure ... and its generous bowl assists in aerating the wine. The outward curving lip acts as a bumper that influences where the wine hits the palate,” Riedel says.

Cabernet Glass |

Like the rest of the Flow collection, the thick stem on this glass gives the wine drinker a stronger sense of stability.

Viognier/Chardonnay Glass |

If you can have but one glass, choose this. Its shape “is ideal for showcasing the fruit and aromas of a broader range of wines,” Riedel says.



Anna Katharine Mansfield

Profession // Enology Project Leader for the University of Minnesota

Home // Chaska **Wine Education** // Master of Science from Virginia Tech. Ph. D. in food science with an emphasis on wine flavor, from the

U of M. **Job Description** // We determine which new grapes from the breeding program are enologically viable—whether or not they'll make good wine—and then how to optimize the processing and the best way to make wine from them.

How does Minnesota's wine scene surprise you? There's a pride in product here I haven't seen in other places. I hadn't thought [local wine] would be successful, but now that we have so many cold hardy grapes available ... we've seen huge growth in industry.

What's your favorite Minnesota wine? Port style wine made from Frontenac (a U of M variety) is a really good, unique product.

What draws you to wine? As a scientist, I'm intrigued by wine flavor and how growing and processing grapes changes it. I'm excited to see how we can express the terroir, and make

a regionally unique product that's world quality.

What do you think about women's presence in the wine culture here? I'm excited to find more women interested in wine making ... We're seeing more who are interested. Angie Winter, whose father runs Winterhaven Vineyard, is interning at a winery in New York and will come back here to run a winery. Last fall, I met Katie Cook from Prior Lake who is getting her national diploma in enology at the University of Burgundy. She plans to come back here eventually. It's exciting to see all these women getting into it. [LM](#)

Angie Bromeland is the food editor for *Lake Minnetonka Magazine*.