

<https://www.hautelivingsf.com/2021/01/25/brion-boasts-a-bevy-of-fine-winemakers/>

Haute Living

San Francisco

[Drinks](#), [Wine Country](#), [Wine Reviews](#), [Winemaker Interviews](#) 1 week ago

[BRION Boasts a Bevy of Fine Winemakers](#)

by [Fran Miller](#)

In creating his new eponymous wine brand and winery, **Brion Wise** chose a novel approach. Rather than hire one famed winemaker, Wise gathered three, each at the top of his game, and each focused on interpreting the individual vineyard sites that fall under their respective Napa and Sonoma Valley purviews.



Julien Fayard, Mark Herold, and Massimo Monticelli make up **BRION's** esteemed winemaking team. Together, they are dedicated to producing site-specific, terroir-driven Cabernet Sauvignon, expressed through a collection of small-lot, handcrafted wines from unique single-vineyard sites. Each site is selected for its inimitable soils and superior farming as well as its ability to produce wines of intense, concentrated flavor and aromatics. Fayard is responsible for interpreting the Sleeping Lady Vineyard in the Yountville AVA. Herold handles the Caldwell Vineyard from the Coombsville AVA as well as the Oakville Ranch Vineyard wine from the Oakville AVA. And Monticelli is responsible for the B. Wise Moon Mountain Estate wine from Sonoma Valley's Moon Mountain AVA.



Julien Fayard. Photo by Suzanne Becker Bronk



Massimo Monticelli and Mark Herold. Photo by Suzanne Becker Bronk

Wise's decision to pair winemakers with a specific vineyard site is rooted in his belief that great wine can only result from an intimate vintner relationship with the land. Terroir includes the unique imprint of the winemaker, so matching the right vineyard with the right winemaking personality was paramount in Wise's development of the BRION winemaking philosophy.

"It has been my vision and commitment to create high quality, terroir-driven wines with a true sense of spirit and place," said Wise. "Working with some of the industry's most celebrated farming and winemaking talents, BRION seeks to capture the essence of the single-vineyard sites from which they are sourced and reflect their distinct characteristics in every vintage. For me having the excitement of BRION in varying styles to match the flavor of the vineyard is very exciting."



Wise

Brion

Wise grew up on a fruit orchard in Washington state where he learned about farming and the hard work it entails. He also learned the intricacies of fruit flavors. "My grandfather, uncles, and father made money budding or grafting different fruits, so understanding the flavors of varying Cabernet grapes was a natural for me," said the Washington State University grad. Post college, Wise entered the petroleum business and started his own company where he traveled the world and discovered a love of wine. "But my real understanding came through traveling each winter to the great wineries of Europe with my good friend John Caldwell.

“It was a dream that one day I would retire on a vineyard/winery rather than a golf course. It brings me back to my childhood. My second dream when very young was to fly. I started that dream at the same time as I started wine making.”



Sleeping Lady Vineyard

Located on Sleeping Lady Vineyard, south of downtown Yountville, BRION sits at the base of Mount Veeder in a region synonymous with the finest Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. The 46-acre property encompasses a restored ‘bank’ barn, one of two in California dating to 1876. The 8,400 square-foot gravity flow winery is dedicated solely to the vinification of BRION wines and was built to exacting standards that afford the winemaking team every resource necessary to make the best possible wines.



BRION, at 5537 Solano Avenue, Napa, offers by appointment tastings. BRION wines are currently made available via allocation twice yearly. Interested parties can join BRION's allocation list to receive the Moon Mountain and Caldwell Vineyards wines in the spring; the Sleeping Lady Vineyard and Oakville wines are made available in the fall.

All photos courtesy of BRION