

**[TRANSCRIPT] Bells Up Winery Dave and Sara Specter
Interview with Brian Calvert, Northwest Wine Night Radio Episode 135**

Brian Calvert: (00:10):

It's time to cork local and learn more about the Northwest best wines. This is Northwest Wine Night Radio featuring the stories behind the bottle and the people who are part of the growing industry. Northwest Wine Night Radio presented by Willamette Valley Vineyards, Oregon's home of classic elegant wines. Now from the Northwest Wine Night Radio studios in Seattle. Here's your host, Brian Calvert.

Brian Calvert: (00:34):

Welcome once again, Northwest Wine Night Radio. It's so great to have you along this thing to the show where we celebrate all local producers, the winemakers, the brewers, the distillers, the craft cider makers, they're all part of the show as we get to know them, their stories, their products and encourage you that if you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, you support local business people first. That's what we're all about here. Brittany Perrault, our senior producer on the other side of the glass. She's going to keep me in line and she's like hurried up, hurried up, get to our first guest so we got to get you on the road going on the road again to our studios down South at Willamette Valley Vineyards for this next conversation.

Brian Calvert: (01:16):

This segment of the show. We're actually in our remote studio location at Willamette Valley vineyards just outside of Salem, Oregon, where I am going to introduce you to the Specters. They are of Bells Up Winery of Newberg. Winemaker, Dave Specter and the lovely Sara Pearson specter who, who brought a pie to the taping this morning. You know, most winemakers, they come to the show and they bring us wine. But Sara and I, I'm just going to start there because you actually brought a grape pie and I had never heard of it before, but apparently this goes over pretty well.

Sara Specter: (01:52):

They do. And they go over very, very well.

Brian Calvert: (01:54):

What, what made you, I mean, did Dave get mad that you were taking the, the, the grapes out of his bottles and using them in your pies?

Sara Specter: (02:02):

No, no, they're actually seedless. It's a seedless grapes but with wine grape parentage and yeah, we'd started making them couple of years ago I have a you-pick problem, so, so I need a 12-Step for my you pick problem. And so we have a freezer full of frozen grapes.

Brian Calvert: (02:18):

You made pie. I don't consider it a problem, especially because you're sharing your pies. So it's not a problem to me. Yeah. All right, well let's talk wine for a little bit because you know, pie is like that. Oh look something shiny. You know, I get all diverted over there. Dave, tell me about getting into the, take us back to your very beginnings in wine. What, where did you first find this interest?

Dave Specter: (02:40):

Well it started for me many, many years ago, I was actually in law school and I was just beginning my career and I was very fortunate to have some older friends that really introduced a young guy like me into the world of wine. And just kind of started experimenting with a lot of different things. And you know, when you're young and you're just not, you can't get focused on anything, you're just not sure what's out there. It was just great to have guidance, ultimately found Oregon wines and just fell in love with them. And even then after I fell in love with them, it took me a couple of years to realize how deeply I was in love with them. Trying different, you know, the, the Californians and the Frenches. But what we do in Oregon here is just so special and so unique and just loved to have the opportunity to work with them. But back then, geez, I mean, I couldn't even dreamed I was looking at starting a legal career and and you know, the last.

Brian Calvert: (03:30):

Could have made more money!

Dave Specter: (03:31):

Could have made a lot more money...

Sara Specter: (03:38):

Amen.

Dave Specter: (03:38):

Which Sara reminds me every day.

Brian Calvert: (03:38):

Well, speaking of Sara, where, where does the lovely Sara enter this story?

Dave Specter: (03:44):

Well, so this is, this is a good one. So before I went the last, well, I got an MBA and there was a gentleman as classmate there who married somebody who worked with Sarah and apparently now I had not heard this, but introduced the concept of me to her as "I found the man you're going to marry."

Brian Calvert: (04:03):

Oh!

Sara Specter: (04:03):

True story.

Dave Specter: (04:04):

Had I known this, I would've run for the hills. But that's a bit much pressure to put on.

Brian Calvert: (04:11):

She's sitting right here Dave!

Dave Specter: (04:12):

But she'd probably, you know,

Sara Specter: (04:16):

He did run for the hills.

Brian Calvert: (04:16):

So how was this sold to you?

Sara Specter: (04:18):

How was this, which?

Brian Calvert: (04:18):

Go out with him?

New Speaker (04:19):

Oh yeah, definitely. She said, "I have the man that you're going to marry."

Brian Calvert: (04:23):

Really?

Sara Specter: (04:23):

Yeah. And I said, okay,

Brian Calvert: (04:27):

So tell me about the, tell me about the first date.

Sara Specter: (04:29):

Oh, the first date. Well, we actually were introduced at a party at a fundraiser for an art museum in Cincinnati. And she had brought him and that's where we met. And he sent me a note a couple of days later and said, I'd really like to take you out, but I'm getting ready to take the bar exam and then go overseas to Europe to visit some friends and do a few other things, so I'll call you. In three months.

Brian Calvert: (04:50):

So that was, that was like, okay. He just giving me the brush off.

Sara Specter: (04:54):

That's kind of what it was. But yeah. Yeah. Eventually we went out and we liked each other as people and I think we just started spending a lot of time together and then all of a sudden we were a couple. He kind of grew on me, like a fungus.

Brian Calvert: (05:12):

A good fungus.

Sara Specter: (05:12):

A good fungus. With a great wine pairing.

Brian Calvert: (05:15):

Did he tell you, did he tell you in the beginning that that he might have an interest in wine or did he not have the interest yet?

Sara Specter: (05:22):

I think he had the interest, but I don't, at that point we had not even the whole wine making thing was not in in play. It wasn't something that... No, no. I thought I was marrying an attorney. I really did.

Brian Calvert: (05:33):

And you're like, okay, I can do this.

Sara Specter: (05:34):

Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean we thought we were going to have the suburban Cincinnati dream, which is where we came from and we had the house in the suburbs and, two working professionals and it just, things change.

Brian Calvert: (05:48):

But, it sounds like this story has a happy ending, but let's, let's work our way through the story. So you decide that law's not my thing. Did you immediately you could make your own wine or did your journey with wine start maybe you were helping somebody else make wine?

Dave Specter: (06:03):

We kind of started to get into it a little bit, a couple of years prior to my decision ultimately to, to leave law. We kind of just got into it as, as a hobby that we could do together. And what we started to find was I really fell in love with the nuts and bolts of making the wine. And I mean, we started with box wine making kits that we went and got at the store and you know, and it was a hobby. And then over time, as you hear

from so many winemakers that get into it the way I did, it becomes a hobby that spirals out of control.

Brian Calvert: [\(06:38\)](#):

Right.

Dave Specter: [\(06:38\)](#):

And it's more and more stuff. And then you have to move on to the real grapes. And, and then at some point I started to realize, you know, I'm really, really enjoying this in a way that I was not enjoying myself in my legal career.

Brian Calvert: [\(06:51\)](#):

Interesting.

Dave Specter: [\(06:51\)](#):

It had all of the things that appealed to me, attention to detail and really focusing on quality, but it gives you at the end of the day, something tangible, something that all of the memoranda that I wrote and all of the opinions that I put together just at the end of the day couldn't. And so this strangely, and I found as I've kind of gotten in more into this, that that this getting into wine really is a common path for frustrated professionals.

Brian Calvert: [\(07:19\)](#):

[Laughter].

Dave Specter: [\(07:19\)](#):

And you meet more and more of them all the time.

Brian Calvert: [\(07:23\)](#):

And you're so frustrated, nothing like a glass or two or three of wine to take that frustration away. Right?

Dave Specter: [\(07:28\)](#):

Well you're killing two birds with one stone. I mean you're getting not only the benefit of product, but you're also getting that, that benefit of satisfaction of making something that like I say, appeals to those parts of your personality.

Brian Calvert: [\(07:41\)](#):

And thus, Bells Up Winery was born,

Sara Specter: [\(07:44\)](#):

Sort of.

Brian Calvert: [\(07:44\)](#):

But how well sort of, how did it get that name? We're going to find out what we continue our conversation in just a moment.

Speaker 4 ([07:56](#)):

Let's mix up something delicious. It's time for the drink of the week presented by heritage distilling company. Here's Brian and heritage distilleries. Justin steeple. Let's mix up something delicious. Just the Stiefel, what will we call our drink of the week this week we call this our B S B cooler. The BSB. Now the BSB, that's that Brown sugar bourbon. You guys put the Brown sugar bourbon, BSB, it'll change your life forever. Okay. And so this drink again is called the BSB cooler. And what ingredients do we need? You need to get BSB Brown sugar bourbon announcing a half of that. You need two and a half ounces of lemonade and two ounces of club soda. How does this all come together? You just mix it up and combine it all. Serve it on ice. There's no special order. You have to do it for the magic. No, that's right. And the BSB is available in retailers all over and now on Amazon prime. And if you are in Seattle, Bellevue or Kirkland, it can be delivered to your house in less than 60 minutes. You can find out more by going to the website. It's heritage distilling.com that's the drink of the week presented by heritage distilling company, America's most awarded cracked distillery. Find buy and ship heritage products through their website, heritage distilling.com.

Brian Calvert: ([09:07](#)):

Stay with us more Northwest wine night radio to come, including part two of our story with our favorite couple from Bells Up Winery. You won't want to miss it. More fun still ahead.

Brian Calvert: ([09:21](#)):

[Inaudible]

Speaker 6 ([09:26](#)):

So much wine in one great place. We could only be talking about Woodinville wine country. Just 30 minutes from downtown Seattle. You have access to more than 100 wineries and tasting rooms, so whether you have an afternoon or an entire weekend, you can taste some of the best wines being made locally in one wonderful area of nestled in the beautiful Sammamish river Valley. For more information, be sure to check out their websites. Woodenville wine, country.com there are all kinds of resources. Of course, you'll find a list of Woodenville wineries. You'll also find tour information, food and lodging resources, everything you need to make your trip to Woodinville one country even better, and there's always something going on in Woodville. Check out the event calendar at Woodinville wine, country.com big plans now to spend time in Washington's premier wine destination. Less than a half hour from downtown Seattle Woodenville wine country visit online@woodinvillewinecountry.com

Speaker 7 ([10:21](#)):

When dad needed help getting around, I became his driver and he daughter would do the same but soon enough he needed help doing more things and it was up to me to be

his personal shopper and financial manager too. And before I knew it, dad moved in with me so I became his cook, his personal assistant, his physical therapist and even his nurse. When I started taking care of Ted, I didn't realize all the roles I'd have to play, but no matter what I know I'm still his daughter. We understand the many roles you play. And to help, we created an online care giving resource center at arp.org/caregiving you can find resources and connect with the caregiving community. Together we can better care for ourselves and the ones we love. Visit aarp.org/caregiving to learn more. A public service announcement brought to you by AARP and the ad council.

Speaker 4 ([12:21](#)):

[Music]

Speaker 5: ([12:25](#)):

We are back with more Northwest Wine Night Radio presented by Willamette Valley Vineyards and heard every week on radio stations across the Pacific Northwest. Once again, here's Brian.

Brian Calvert: ([12:38](#)):

Welcome back to Northwest Wine Night Radio. If you weren't with us in our last segment, I'm going to reintroduce you to winemaker, Dave Specter and Sara Pearson Specter of Bells Up Winery in Newberg. Basically we learned that Dave was studying to be an attorney and he was headed down that track and the wine bug bit and decided that he would have a more fulfilling LIFE making wine instead. But does he have a more fulfilled WIFE by making the choice to go from law to wine?

Sara Specter: ([13:06](#)):

Right? Yeah, and it's interesting. We actually came out here in 2008 on vacation and we stayed at Chehalem Ridge Bed and Breakfast, right up the hill from where our property is now. And we fell in love with the view. And you know, when you go on vacation, you're like, Oh, I could totally live here. This was the first place I ever said, we're going to live here and you're going to make wine, and we're going to do it. And we got back from that vacation and my mentor let me know that she had just been diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer. She was 40 and had three small children and we were both 35 at the time. And Dave had just kind of had it with work and he sort of just, he was miserable. They were, you know, he was very successful at what he did, but he didn't like what he was doing. And I looked at him and I looked at her and I said, you know, life is just too short. And imagine how much more successful you'd be if you were doing something you loved. So we he kept making wine. He took a an internship at an urban winery called Henke Winery in Cincinnati, learned everything he could and made a bunch of wine in the basement and in 2011 won two amateur national wine making competitions with two different wines that I said, that's our sign. And we put the house on the market and we moved out here in 2012 and here we are.

Brian Calvert: ([14:21](#)):

So, so are you responsible for Bells Up or for the name?

Sara Specter: (14:25):

Not exactly. I found the property, which is on Bell Road.

Brian Calvert: (14:29):

Oh?

Sara Specter: (14:29):

Um but Dave will tell you all about the name.

Brian Calvert: (14:33):

Oh. Apparently this is your story.

Dave Specter: (14:36):

This part is my yes. And a name I had to kind of fight for it because the marketing department at first didn't like it.

Brian Calvert: (14:41):

As in Sara?

Dave Specter: (14:41):

As in Sara. Exactly. We have a very simple operation. And it's basically the two of us. So either one of us is doing something or the other is.

Brian Calvert: (14:50):

And we all know which one's in charge.

Sara Specter: (14:54):

Absolutely.

Dave Specter: (14:54):

And which, which I've never denied. And I found that really helps our marriage quite a bit.

Sara Specter: (14:59):

Absolutely.

Dave Specter: (14:59):

Um so Bells Up. So one of the things that I did way back. I was a French horn player and I started playing in junior high and I played all the way through law school and some points thereafter. Which is why our logo for the winery is a French horn. Bells Up. Sara was hounding me for a long time, "I need a name, I need you to pick a name." And I said, "I know, I'd love to pick one too, but it's, we have to find the property, whatever it is, it's going to come organically from the property." And we found this particular

property on Bell Road. I had wanted to work the music theme into it somehow and I thought, ah, this is perfect because you have the bell of the French horn, you have Bell Road. What Bells Up specifically refers to is normally when you're playing a French horn, the bell of the horn actually sits on your right leg. You're sitting down, you play the valves with your left hand. It's actually the only instrument really that's meant to be played backwards, pointing in the other direction.

Brian Calvert: ([15:55](#)):

That explains a lot about you.

Dave Specter: ([15:57](#)):

Pretty much. Yeah. People have been saying, I've been pointing myself in the wrong direction for years, so this was nothing new. But then there are certain moments in music where the composer wants you to project and really play out. And at that point you'll see something in the score that'll say "Bells Up." And the idea is that you lift the bell off of your leg, up into the air and you project this is your time as a French horn player to shine. Because we're not like trumpet players or violinists. We don't get very many moments like this.

Brian Calvert: ([16:26](#)):

It's not like you get the solo very often.

Dave Specter: ([16:29](#)):

Not very often. So when you get one, you're really out for it. You gotta take advantage while you can.

Brian Calvert: ([16:35](#)):

I love the story behind the name. It's always a fun adventure.

Sara Specter: ([16:39](#)):

He just alienated your entire trumpet listening and performing audience.

Brian Calvert: ([16:44](#)):

Fortunately we have more wine lovers than trumpet lovers.

Sara Specter: ([16:48](#)):

That's good.

Brian Calvert: ([16:49](#)):

Let's, let's talk real quick about the lineup at Bells Up. What are the different varietals that you guys specialize in there?

Dave Specter: ([16:54](#)):

Exactly. So what we've put out so far, and you know we've really only been around for about a year that we've had the doors open. So our goal has been to start very, very simple to just kind of see where we go from there. What we're pouring right now is we have a Pinot Blanc. We do a Rosé of Pinot noir. We do a couple of different Pinot noirs and we do a Syrah. Obviously Pinot noir is what the Willamette Valley is known for. We love being able to show off the different sub AVAs with some different tastes and do that. We work with some fabulous small growers and I think it's important for me, for us to point that out. We love to work with small growers for a couple of reasons. One is we don't need a lot of fruit. We're a 400 case place. We are "garagiste" and proud of it and tiny. So working with the small growers, you know, we can really have more attention. They pay more attention to detail on their own vineyards. We can get far more say in farming techniques and it's just much easier to grab, for example, an entire small block versus a couple of rows from big guys that don't really want to deal with you.

Brian Calvert: [\(17:56\)](#):

Well Sara, here we are in the first big year of releasing wines and this is, this is the dream. Have your dreams come true?

Sara Specter: [\(18:05\)](#):

Well, not quite.

Brian Calvert: [\(18:08\)](#):

I was building you up for this huge Cinderella ending.

Sara Specter: [\(18:11\)](#):

The marketing department was really hoping we would sell out of everything last year and we sold out of three, and about the half of the other half of the other two.

Brian Calvert: [\(18:19\)](#):

But that's not a bad first year.

Sara Specter: [\(18:21\)](#):

Oh, not bad. Not bad when you're again only 400 cases. But yeah, I mean it's, we're getting there. It's a process. It's a lifestyle. I am reminded regularly.

Brian Calvert: [\(18:30\)](#):

But it's fun.

Sara Specter: [\(18:32\)](#):

It is fun. It is fun.

Brian Calvert: [\(18:33\)](#):

You're never short on a bottle of wine?

Sara Specter: (18:35):
Never. No, no. Never.

Brian Calvert: (18:37):
And you don't ever, you don't turn down a bottle of wine.

Sara Specter: (18:40):
Oh never! No, Absolutely not.

Brian Calvert: (18:43):
So this is working out well for both of you. That's what I wanted to make sure it.

Dave Specter: (18:47):
Oh absolutely.

Sara Specter: (18:47):
It can be better. [Laughs].

Brian Calvert: (18:52):
[Laughs.]

Sara Specter: (18:52):
He's shooting daggers at me.

Brian Calvert: (18:53):
For our friends who would like to find out more about Bells Up Winery in Newberg? Can we send them to your website?

Sara Specter: (18:58):
Absolutely. It's bellsupwinery.com.

Brian Calvert: (19:01):
All right, and we don't have to put any special characters or anything.

Sara Specter: (19:04):
Nope. No French horns!

Brian Calvert: (19:04):
All right you guys, it was a pleasure meeting you, Dave and Sara, thank you so much for joining us on the show and we wish you all the best at Bells Up.

Dave Specter: (19:13):

You bet. Thanks so much for having us.

Sara Specter: [\(19:15\)](#):

Thank you for having us, Brian.

Speaker 8 [\(19:15\)](#):

Wasn't that fun? Hey, we have some more fun on the radio coming up. We have a food pairing, a something that you might make for dinner. We've got a wine idea for you to pair it with all coming right up. Willamette Valley Vineyards. Visit them in person just South of Salem, off [inaudible] or visit them online. Wvb.Com and chef TJ McIntyre is with me and if I'm somewhere in the Oregon area and I'm planning a special event, I don't suppose you have an event space around here. Here. Yeah, we've got a couple events, spaces. Let's see. We've got our original tasting room, which was what we started with about 30 years ago, is now, actually, we call it the peanut room, and that's actually a great private spot.