

**Life Between the Vines [TRANSCRIPT]
Interview with David Specter, Owner & Winemaker of Bells Up Winery
Newberg, Oregon**

[00:00:05.05]

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[00:00:08.09]

Every wine tells a story.

[00:00:10.07]

Each growing season it's our goal

[00:00:12.05]

to create an artisan Napa Valley wine

[00:00:14.06]

of exceptional quality.

[00:00:16.04]

Join us as the story of this
ultra-limited wine continues.

[00:00:20.04]

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[00:00:31.05]

- We opened our doors here in 2015,

[00:00:33.04]

Memorial Day for our
very first open house.

[00:00:36.02]

When we did that we opened with red wines

[00:00:39.07]

that were produced in the 2013 vintage,

[00:00:41.08]

Pinot Noir and Syrah.

[00:00:43.05]

And with the 2014 Pinot
Blanc and Rosé of Pinot Noir,

[00:00:47.06]

the plan was always when we opened up

[00:00:49.04]

to make sure we had a full diverse lineup.

[00:00:52.05]

We want to make sure
that we have a wide range

[00:00:55.09]

of wines for folks that
want to experience things

[00:00:58.07]

maybe other than just Pinot Noir here.

[00:01:01.03]

And so we wanted to make
sure that everybody's first

[00:01:04.08]

introduction to us was
as a full service winery.

[00:01:10.07]

Correct and my Syrah is
actually not grown here either.

[00:01:13.08]

It's grown in the town
of Milton-Freewater,

[00:01:16.07]

so right across the state line
from Walla Walla, Washington.

[00:01:20.02]

I however make Syrah a
little bit differently

[00:01:22.08]

than a lot of people do
and I always talk about it

[00:01:25.02]

when people come in because here we are

[00:01:27.02]

in the Willamette Valley.

[00:01:28.02]

It's obviously Pinot country and
so many wonderful Pinots here

[00:01:32.05]

and I think what is so
special about the Pinot

[00:01:35.02]

that we do here in the
valley is the delicacy,

[00:01:38.02]

the layers, the texture.
And I don't want to lose

[00:01:40.07]

that just because I'm making Syrah.

[00:01:42.08]

So I always say I make
Syrah for Pinot drinkers,

[00:01:45.08]

not for Syrah drinkers.

[00:01:47.06]

So my Syrah is very different,

[00:01:49.07]

it ends up being much lighter,
much more approachable.

[00:01:52.05]

You know, I wouldn't say it's
completely old world Rhone

[00:01:55.02]

but it's certainly a lot
closer to that than what

[00:01:57.04]

you would normally find
in a Walla Walla wine

[00:01:59.07]

or in a California Syrah.

[00:02:03.08]

I was an attorney, yep.

[00:02:04.09]

I was a tax lawyer for 10 years.

[00:02:07.06]

I did corporate transactional works.

[00:02:09.04]

I was based out of Cincinnati, Ohio.

[00:02:13.04]

But just because you're
based somewhere doesn't mean

[00:02:15.05]
that you're going to spend
most of your time there.

[00:02:17.03]
It's wherever the particular deal goes.

[00:02:19.02]
So I would get pulled to kind
of wherever the transaction

[00:02:22.05]
was happening.

[00:02:23.03]
So I would go all over.

[00:02:25.01]
I've been to New York
and Chicago, Houston,

[00:02:27.08]
Detroit, and then a bunch
of smaller towns as well.

[00:02:31.04]
I did that for 10 years and that was

[00:02:36.00]
my previous career where I
figured out I did not want

[00:02:38.06]
to spend the rest of my life doing that.

[00:02:43.08]
Kinda sorta yeah.

[00:02:45.02]
It was back in 2006, it was my wife Sara

[00:02:48.03]
and my fifth year wedding anniversary.

[00:02:51.00]
And we were looking for something
to do as a couples hobby.

[00:02:53.05]
And we were, we really

enjoyed consuming wine,

[00:02:57.04]

we knew a little bit about wine

[00:02:59.02]

but you would never

confuse us with sommeliers

[00:03:01.09]

or people doing the masters in wine exams

[00:03:04.02]

or anything like that.

[00:03:05.08]

But we thought it might be a fun idea

[00:03:07.07]

to try to make wine

ourselves and we were told

[00:03:10.01]

that hey, there are these

kits in a box you can buy.

[00:03:12.07]

So we went over to the west

side of town to the supply store

[00:03:16.05]

and we talked to the

folks behind the counter

[00:03:18.05]

and they stocked us up

on everything we needed

[00:03:20.06]

and then at the end they

say, "Oh by the way,

[00:03:22.02]

there's this class."

[00:03:23.02]

"There's a retired gentleman

who runs this class

[00:03:25.06]

on how to make the kit wines."

[00:03:26.09]

And well you know we don't
want to do it the wrong way

[00:03:29.03]
so we signed up for the class

[00:03:30.06]
and they take you
through an entire session

[00:03:33.01]
of making a batch of this kit wine.

[00:03:35.07]
Yeah I mean the wine was drinkable,

[00:03:38.03]
but what was really important was

[00:03:40.01]
I really fell in love with the process

[00:03:42.06]
and really trying to
understand what I was seeing,

[00:03:45.09]
smelling, tasting.

[00:03:47.03]
It started to teach me so much behind

[00:03:50.04]
what it was in the end
product that I was drinking.

[00:03:53.07]
"Oh this is why it does and
this is what does into it."

[00:03:57.01]
I think so many times,
you know that humans

[00:03:59.09]
have been fermenting grape
juice for 6,000 years.

[00:04:02.07]
It's not rocket science.
But so many of us,

[00:04:06.03]

we've never been that close
to what's going on during

[00:04:09.00]
that process when the magic is happening.

[00:04:11.05]
So it was just something that I,

[00:04:13.08]
it hit me on a very soulful
level and I started to want

[00:04:17.06]
to learn more and more about it.

[00:04:19.07]
My wife will say that I started
to become obsessed with it.

[00:04:23.00]
Won't necessarily
disagree with her on that.

[00:04:25.05]
Because what is started to see
was, we started making more

[00:04:28.06]
and more wine and it started
to take up more and more

[00:04:30.04]
of the house.

[00:04:32.01]
So we started to incorporate,
as a result of that,

[00:04:34.08]
we started to incorporate
wine trips into our vacations.

[00:04:38.04]
But we have never been
the type to go to the big,

[00:04:42.00]
we're not Napa / Sonoma people.

[00:04:43.08]
We wanted to go to the places

[00:04:45.03]
that were a little bit
more under the radar.

[00:04:47.08]
And what's great about those places is

[00:04:49.03]
you get so many opportunities
to interact and learn

[00:04:52.06]
and talk to people that are
involved in all the day-

[00:04:55.05]
to-day operations.

[00:04:57.01]
You're not getting a lot of hired hands.

[00:04:58.09]
You're getting a lot of
owners and wine makers

[00:05:01.00]
and folks that are directly
involved in the process.

[00:05:03.01]
But then in 2008 was our first visit here

[00:05:05.08]
to the Willamette Valley.

[00:05:07.04]
We spent four days in
early August roaming around

[00:05:10.09]
at a time when there were
probably half the number

[00:05:13.04]
of wineries that there are now.

[00:05:14.08]
But so many of them were
like what we have built here.

[00:05:18.09]
They were very small, and when
you went in you were talking

[00:05:23.00]
to the people that were doing the work.

[00:05:24.05]
And here I was as sort
of a newbie winemaker

[00:05:27.04]
and asking probably a lot of questions

[00:05:29.04]
that sure in retrospect
I probably would roll

[00:05:32.01]
my eyes if I was asking these
really accomplished folks

[00:05:35.03]
these very basic newbie questions.

[00:05:37.00]
But what was great about
being here was the folks

[00:05:40.03]
that I talked to never made
me feel like I was some sort

[00:05:43.02]
of second-class citizen.

[00:05:44.06]
They really treated me
like, "Hey, here's somebody"

[00:05:48.00]
"who's interested and wanting to learn."

[00:05:49.06]
And they really gave so much of their time

[00:05:52.01]
and patience, quite frankly,
to just walking me through it

[00:05:56.02]
and showing me the insides.

[00:05:58.04]
And when Sara and I
came back from that trip

[00:06:01.05]

we were just so overwhelmed

[00:06:03.03]

and we felt "Wow, wouldn't
this be something fun"

[00:06:05.06]

"to do in 20, 25 years when we retired."

[00:06:09.07]

We were still in our careers

[00:06:12.09]

and still thought that was gonna go.

[00:06:15.06]

But when we got back from that trip,

[00:06:17.02]

within about a month we
had two things happen.

[00:06:19.05]

One was my firm started to really push me

[00:06:22.08]

to go on partner track.

[00:06:25.01]

Which by then I had really decided is not

[00:06:27.04]

what I wanted to do.

[00:06:28.03]

And the typical firm has
the up-or-out mentality.

[00:06:31.08]

So I kinda suspected that over time

[00:06:34.01]

my days would probably be numbered, given

[00:06:36.03]

that I wasn't wanting to go up.

[00:06:38.03]

The other thing that happened, sadly, was

[00:06:40.07]

that Sara's professional mentor at age 40

[00:06:43.06]
was diagnosed with stage
four pancreatic cancer.

[00:06:46.09]
And she had three young children

[00:06:48.09]
and a husband. And this
was somebody obviously

[00:06:51.08]
that Sara looked up to immensely,

[00:06:53.06]
was so critical in forming her career.

[00:06:55.06]
And somebody who I got
to know a little bit

[00:06:58.01]
but I could really tell
was a powerful person

[00:07:01.03]
and just somebody who you would
absolutely want to emulate.

[00:07:05.04]
And seeing her slowly
fade away over the course

[00:07:08.05]
of about the next eight, nine months

[00:07:09.08]
was that real kick in the butt for us.

[00:07:12.05]
That the future is not guaranteed

[00:07:14.05]
and if you have an
opportunity to do something

[00:07:17.06]
that might really make
a big change in your

[00:07:20.08]

and everybody else's life,

[00:07:22.06]

try it before you lose that opportunity.

[00:07:26.05]

(upbeat music)

[00:07:29.01]