

**AUDIO: Andy Harris, Host of the SoCal Restaurant Show Interviews
Dave Specter of Bells Up Winery, Part 1 of 2 [TRANSCRIPT]
Recorded December 28, 2019**

Jet Tila ([00:00](#)):

How you doing folks? I'm Jet Tila, the Emeritus host of the SoCal restaurant show. You're listening to the very best in food 411 on AM 830 KLAA.

Dave Specter ([00:10](#)):

And hello again. It is the SoCal Restaurant Show and we're here with you every Saturday morning from 10:00 AM until 12 noon right here on AM 830 KLAA the home of Ducks hockey and Angels baseball, and actually today, right after us home of the Peach Bowl, which is going to be quite a game. I'm Andy Harris, the executive producer, and cohost of the show. We appreciate you joining us during this long and busy holiday period. Do keep up with us on social media. We're on all the platforms, a lot of good information there that connects Saturdays.

Andy Harris ([00:43](#)):

And as a matter of fact, if you look at our Instagram feed right now, which is @SoCalRestaurantShow, you will see some great food imagery of the Bells Up Winery in Newberg, Oregon, which is going to be our next subject of conversation. And we're enthusiastic that presented to you each and every week by Melissa's World Variety Produce and West Coast Prime Meats.

Andy Harris ([01:04](#)):

I've been very fortunate in the last year. The Oregon wine making community is very hospitable and particularly hospitable to the food media. So I've had a chance actually to take three trips in the last year up to various parts of Oregon two thirds of them in the Willamette Valley, which is absolutely huge and had a chance to really get a perspective for the wine and the winery scene up there, both from very small entrepreneurial passion projects, to some larger winery operations that, you know, it's nothing like what we see with the majors here in California, but pretty substantial in terms of quality and case production. Now on the small entrepreneurial passion side in Newberg, Oregon, which is part of the Willamette Valley is a really fun husband and wife, winery called Bells Up Winery in Newberg. They're kind of the new kids on the block, but boy are they working hard and it is a pleasure to welcome winemaker and co owner and co proprietor Dave Specter to the SoCal Restaurant Show for the first time, Dave. Good morning and welcome.

Dave Specter ([02:21](#)):

Good morning, Andy. Thanks so much for having me on

Andy Harris ([02:23](#)):

Well, Dave, listen, it was a real pleasure, not too long ago, spending an afternoon with you and Sara at the winery with some colleagues from the LA wine writers led by Cori Solomon and really having a chance to get to know you, you know, genuinely find out what you are all about. Get the backstory on this incredible passion project, because you left a very successful career to do something quite a bit more risky. And you know, we could tell that you and Sara, it was not only the right move for you, but a good move for you. So Dave, now that we have our audience's full attention, let's talk about geography first, where in Oregon actually, are you, and what sub appellation of the Willamette Valley is your AVA just so we get oriented?

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Dave Specter ([03:20](#)):

Sure, absolutely. So we are located in Newberg, Oregon that's N E W B E R G. And if you looked on the map, we're roughly 25 miles Southwest of Portland, we are in the Northern part of the Willamette Valley. You're absolutely right. When you say the Willamette Valley is a massive AVA area. It stretches all the way from Portland all the way down to Eugene, a good hundred miles to the South. So we're on the North side of that. And, and our winery specifically is located in one of the nested or sub AVAs called the Chehalem Mountains, and that's spelled with a C H eh, mnd we're, we're sort of an up and coming area. Umt's, hctually a very large area in size, but we're right next to the Dundee Hills, which is kind of one of the more famous and, you know, one of the much older and more established AVAs. Umut we were in a wonderful little spot here with South facing slopes. We have this wonderful clay loam, halled Jory soils. Umt just has all the sun you want to see and we have wonderful view. So we, we're extremely lucky to have the 10 acre piece that we're sitting on today.

Andy Harris ([04:31](#)):

Oh, Dave, no kidding. And again, for our listeners, we sat on your deck with this hundred and 80 degree panoramic view. It is a very picturesque and scenic property in addition to producing some pretty high quality wines, you know, fairly early out of the gate. Dave, again is further background in terms of the estate, let our listeners know what you have planted so far for your estate varietals, because of course you'll mention all the grapes you source that aren't estate everything's from Oregon, but you're planting sequentially because again, it's a family effort. And actually before we get into that, Dave how many employees does the Bells Up Winery in Newberg, Oregon have?

Dave Specter ([05:18](#)):

Oh, that'd be a whopping zero. We, we do have my, my wife and I pretty much run the show on a day-to-day basis all by ourselves. You know, there are people that help us along the way. I have a wonderful consultant on the winemaking side that acts as my sanity check and keeps me from doing anything stupid. And I've been working with her since we started producing back in 2013. Erica is a critical part of what we do. We have volunteers that come up and help us process the fruit at harvest time. And it's, it's a lot of fun, even though it's obviously a lot of work that goes on and a lot of chaos going on at once, but on a day-to-day basis, we don't have employees, it's Sara and I, and it's our show. And, and that's exactly how we wanted to do it.

Dave Specter ([06:03](#)):

You know, we didn't want to have a big operation. Our focus was to be very small, very personal. I run all the tastings. When people come in, I make the wine, I run the tractor in the vineyard. You wear a lot of hats doing a job like this and having this kind of thing. But what's great about it for us is that by having, you know, the, the very small operation, it's manageable for two people, we can determine what success means for us. And, and that's sort of what we were looking for when we started this.

Andy Harris ([06:34](#)):

David very well said, and I think very indicative of what you and Sara are doing. And we should mention that in terms of the general public, you are open by appointment. That's so everybody gets one-on-one treatment. And as you were mentioning, you are the one that personally conducts the tastings. And Dave, I know of very few wineries where the winemaker is the one that's doing the tastings for the general visitors. So again, you get kudos for that.

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Dave Specter ([07:01](#)):

Well, thank you. And, you know, it's, it's funny when, when we first visited here in Oregon, back in 2008, these sorts of operations that we're doing now were far more common. And they're not completely gone, but there are far fewer of them now. But I think what touched Sara and I about coming to places like we've set up is just the ability to have that experience, to talk to the people that are doing all the work, to be able to ask a million questions and not feel awkward about it. We know we, as you said, you know, we don't, we don't, we only, when people come in to make an appointment with us, no matter how many you bring two to 12, you will be the only ones there. You know, we want that to be a comfortable environment where people can relax and, you know, not feel like they're having to, you know, people sitting next to them and trying to act important or put on a show. And so Sara and I always say, it may not be the most efficient way to sell wines, but I think it's the one that creates the best experiences for everybody. And, you know, what we found by doing it that way is that that really gets people to connect with us in addition to, you know, the wines themselves. And, and I think that's what really has helped us to get retention with our customer base.

Andy Harris ([08:13](#)):

I certainly would agree. Now let's talk a little bit about in terms of what you have planted on the estate right now. So we can start talking about some of the wines.

Dave Specter ([08:26](#)):

Absolutely. So, you know, I'm probably, as most of your listeners probably know the Willamette Valley is pinot noir territory, and we certainly have pinot noir planted. Our, our vines are still very young. And we may get into this a little later, but when we bought the property back in 2012, there were no vines on the property. So everything that, that we're growing there now is what we have planted. So at this point, the vines are, are still young and they're coming online as we speak. Most of what we have planted is about four and a half acres of Pinot noir. We have five different clones or strains of pinot. We also have a very small planting of a fascinating little grape called Seyval Blanc. And that's S E Y V A L for everybody keeping track at home.

Dave Specter ([09:14](#)):

What is cool about it is this is a great that you normally see grown in the Midwest and on the East coast and Sara and I moved to the Willamette Valley from Cincinnati, Ohio to do this. So we saw this grape a lot in the Midwest, and it's what we call a hybrid grape. It's the, it's a cross between a traditional French varietals and a U.S. Domestic grape. Mostly the reason that you see these types of grapes developed is that if you're planting in the Midwest and on the East coast, you have these very cold winters to deal with. And for the most part, the traditional French varietals just don't do very well in those really cold winters. So kind of building in some of this cold hardiness that the American rootstocks have sort of already got in them is one way to be able to effectively grow grapes in those areas.

Dave Specter ([10:02](#)):

And then what you find is that these grapes kind of, as they evolve, come up with these really cool flavors and, you know, some are cooler than others. Some of them work better in, in, on their own than others, but this one particular grape that we just fell in love with the save. All grapes gives you a lot of Sauvignon Blanc characteristics. It's got a lot of citrus, it's got a lot of lemon and it's, it's just a lot of fun and nobody else in the Willamette Valley has this particular grape planted. There's only one other

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planting we can find in the state of Oregon period. But we really wanted to bring that grape in as a way to kind of be a little different and kind of show, Hey, we, we can kind of be trailblazers and have a little fun with this as well.

Dave Specter ([10:44](#)):

So that's what we have currently planted. And then we have some exciting things that we're going to be starting as we get into next fall. We've kind of taken a look around, we have about three acres or so left to plant at the bottom of our property. And we've come to realize that at this point, we probably have all the Pinot that we're going to need. So we're going to start doing some fun stuff going forward. We're going to start next year, planting some more obscure Italian red varieties. And so if, if folks want to find out how the, how that's going and keep up with us and, and keep up doing that, you know follow along on our website and our blog and social media, and we'll be sharing all that.

Dave Specter ([11:24](#)):

The other wine that we pour here in the tasting room we do, we do pour two others. We pour a Pinot blanc which is a beautiful white grape. It's a sister grape to Pinot Gris, but a lot more interesting in my opinion, in terms of character and just, just so much more going on with it. And then we do Syrah. Now, we don't grow Syrah very well here in the Willamette. It's a little too cold, a little too wet. So this fruit we get from the Northeastern part of the state up in a little town called Milton-Freewater right across the state line from Walla Walla Washington. I make the Syrah in more of a Pinot style. So it's gentler smoother has all the flavor you're looking for, but just a very different feel to it. And what I have found is that here in, in Pinot country, you know, there's so much Pinot already available to people that they just love having some other options available that still have that same kind of feel and texture that a Pinot does. So that's been a huge seller for us. And and yeah, so we do those and there's a, Rosé of Pinot noir that is made from our fruit and always will be, that was the first first way that we started using our fruit back in 2017. And we're rolling forward ever since.

Andy Harris ([12:37](#)):

Absolutely. Dave, this is a good place to take a little break and we're going to pick up the conversation because of course we want our listeners to know where the name came from. And then also we need to talk about the specific names of some of your releases and what the theme is there. Because again, that's just part of the fun about what you and Sara are doing at Bells Up Winery right now. So standby. You are listening to the SoCal Restaurant Show, we are talking with the winemaker and co proprietor of the Bells Up Winery in Newberg, Oregon, which is part of the Willamette Valley and we're proudly presented by Melissa's World Variety Produce and West Coast Prime Meats.