

TRANSCRIPT:

Big Blend Radio with Lisa Smith and Linda Kissam Interviewing

Dave and Sara Specter of Bells Up Winery

April 17, 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZOt0eWSKBU&list=PLaqBWtnt9gUKQdrc6aMTDpBF4oKfKH5s>

Announcer (00:07):

Hello everyone. It's time to Eat, Drink, and Be Merry with your hosts, Lisa and Nancy.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (00:24):

Hey everybody. Welcome to Big Blend Radio. You know, we love our first Saturday shows with Diva Linda. Diva Linda is the food, wine, and shopping diva. Her name is Linda Kissam, her true name, but we just call her the Diva.

She is on the show every first Saturday, and she's either talking about a travel destination or food, wine shopping. She likes things that glitter and sparkle but she also likes really good wine. And when Diva Linda says, I'm bringing really good guests on the show, we listen and we know she never disappoints.

And today she's got two special guests joining us with some really special, and I mean, really special exquisite wine. We've got Dave and Sara Specter joining us. They are the owners of Bells Up Winery out of the Willamette Valley region of Oregon. And I encourage you to go to their website, bellsupwinery.com, and also keep up with Diva Linda and All in Good Taste, right? She's a Diva allingoodtaste.info. But first things first, the Diva's on the show. So welcome back, Diva Linda, how are you?

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (01:30):

I'm very good, thank you very much. I'll be getting ready to transition to Seattle in a couple of weeks. So desert behind me and boats in front of me.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (01:40):

Oh, so are you gonna have wine while you float again? Because normally in summer Yeah, I know you, you carry a bunch of wine in the belly of the boat and keep it cool.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (01:49):

We do. We find crazy places to put them that are under the waterline in the boat, and they stay a beautiful 52 degrees or so, eight. And yeah. So we did, each year I try a new winery and then we try them with the stuff that we catch and stuff that we, restaurants that we go to that don't have wines. Because when you're out in the middle of Canada, the wine lists are non-existent or what limited? Yeah, yeah. Oh, oh my Yes. When you, well, when you hit a town of 300.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (02:25):

Oh, yeah, yeah, I see what you mean.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (02:26):

Yeah. Maybe not so much. Yeah, yeah,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (02:28):

Yeah. You're getting that stuff coming out of the box kind of thing. Yeah.

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Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (02:32):

Yeah. Well, if you can find it, actually, you know,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (02:35):

Oh, wine Coolers.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (02:36):

That bad wine, cooler wine coolers are good. And yeah. So anyway, we'll see. We have a new itinerary this year and so we'll see. But we're always stocked with wine and that's the point, the point of your question. And you a lot of fish, a lot of fish go on this.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (02:51):

Listen, Linda's not getting on the boat without her wine. That's truly the thing. Wine, otherwise she's not doing it. I do remember here. I did. I did. I knew you did. I, you know, I'm very excited to have you both on the show, Dave and Sara. We love your wine. We were tasting it last night.

And just you know, especially white wines. You know, Nancy and I are picky about white wines. And it, and I think this country's getting better and better and better about 'em. You know, we lived in South Africa for many years and, and white wines just were, it was, it's the best water you could ever have.
<Laugh>

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (03:30):

<Laugh>.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (03:31):

And, and so then coming over here, it took a little while for us to like, find our, our feet. And whenever you find a really good white wine you're going, yay. And tell us a little bit about that. I, I want Linda to chirp in, but I just wanna start with that because it, it's, it's the Helios right? That we had that this is, tell us a little bit about it.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (03:55):

<Laugh>. Yes. Well, first of all, thank you so much, Lisa, for having us on. So yes, you, what you had was the Helios and the Helios is made from a grape called Seyval Blanc, and that's s e y v a l. I suspect that it's a wine that very, very few of your listeners are familiar with. Mm-Hmm. To be fair, about 99% of the people we get in our tasting room here in Oregon have never heard of it either. And that's one of the reasons for that, is it's a grape that is rarely, rarely found outside of the Finger Lakes in Western New York and the Midwest and the Mid-Atlantic states. It's a grape that was created in France two different two different varieties of a group of a, a grape called Siebel were blended to create this particular grape. But in France it's not considered a noble grape. And as a result of that, none of it is actually planted in France. Where you do find it in Europe is in Southern England where a lot of it ends up getting bubbled

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up made into sparkling wine. But it now in America has a home, as I said, in the Northeast and in the Midwest, colder weather grape. That's kind of the key to it. Mm.

And one of the reasons why we knew that it would do very well here in Oregon where our climate is very, very different than it is in California or in Washington state, where pretty much all the grapes in Washington state are grown in the center and eastern part where it's very hot here. It's, it's cold, it's, it's cool, it's cold, it's wet. So, you know, there are a lot of grapes that we're unable to grow. We can't grow the big heavy reds, but something like Seyval Blanc that's got a little more delicacy to it. And that really does, like the cooler weather and has proven it can really thrive.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (05:46):

Well, it, it was amazing to me, when you talk about those different climates and regions where it's from, which we've traveled through some of those areas it, it isn't sweet. And that would be the first thing you would think. It would be this very sweetie syrupy kinda wine, like maybe a dinner, you know, after dinner kind of treat. But to me, this was, you know, it, we, we tried it and then tried it again later.

You know, we do that kind of like, taste it, let it breathe, and then try it again. And you start getting even more notes. And, and there was some light, light, light honeysuckle, very light. But then like, I was like, you know what, there is a little bit of grapefruit. There is a little bit of this tartness, but not over tart. Oh, we gotta be careful how we say the word tart.

But Diva Linda, I mean, how did you find it too? Did you find that where you would maybe think it would be sweet, but it it was just, it's just the perfect blend, I get to use that word.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (06:41):

Well, this wine is sort of like Pinot in that is either done well or it's not. Mm. And and sometimes if it's not turning out the way winemakers want, it becomes a sweet wine. They just <laugh> and then they label that as such, and that's fine.

But when it's done like this, it's quite beautiful. It, it, for me, it had big notes of citrus, which I love. I like that. And an earthiness. So when you put the earthiness with the, with the citrus, for me, that's a winner. That's almost like a New Zealand wine. And I really, I really like that. I got a little, I got tropicals on it, tropical fruits, which again, is, is a winner for me and a slight thread of diesel actually. Okay. And to me, that's very, very interesting. Now, do not think I'm saying this tastes like gas, it does not.

It's just like when you say some reds can have sort of a, a green pepper sort of taste. It's just, it adds interest. I liked it. I think it's food friendly up the yayzoo. It's also good for patios. And if your guests are tired of being you know, introduced or welcomed with a champagne or always sauvignon blanc, this is a really good conversation starter, I think. And certainly was me when I had some friends over to taste this with me. And you know, what is this, is this sauvignon blanc? No, you know, it's not, did it come from New Zealand? No, it did not.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (08:18):

I know, right. That's the first thing. New Zealand, South Africa or Australia.

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Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (08:22):

Yep. Yeah. Yep, yep, yep. And so anyway, I really and, and it was a bit creamy, which was kind of fun. And which is the, is the smooth characteristic. But I know that this was a wine that was presented to some of our IFWTWA members in a seminar, and they got nothing but raves. We didn't have to exclude anybody because they didn't find it pleasant. So good for you guys. That was

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (08:48):

Diva Linda goes well with pickles and I did try a pickle. I did. You do? I went in, I did, you know, me pickles, like I'm in. Oh, good. So it's, you can get pickles. Did you like that? Did that, was that yeah, just a bite. I just took one bite and a sip and it worked. And, and here's the deal. You said gas and so I have to go, Dave, she's allowed to talk about classical gas, <laugh> <laugh>, explain the classical gas on, on your wine and your name,

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (09:19):

<Laugh>. Well, yeah. The, the gas part I, I can at least talk about. I, I will say one thing about, about Linda, about the, the diesel you mentioned for, for those of your listeners that have had German Rieslings, that diesel will be very familiar to you. That's very much the, the sort of sensation that you will get off of the German Rieslings. Just, it, it happens to be in this particular wine instead. And it's just, as we always say, it's part of its charm.

But yeah, so the classical music, and so our, our whole sort of theme with the winery has been based around classical music. And, and the reason for that is, I, I was a French horn player for 20 years, started when I was in sixth grade. When I was in college. I was in the Symphony, Wind Ensemble. And yes, I was also a marching band geek.

Had a lot of amazing experiences. I, I was good enough to have a chance at a professional career. I like to think I was smart enough to not do it. I had a lot of friends that went down that road, and it is just so difficult to, to make a living and still keep the joy in playing. And so I, I took a very different career path instead, but, but when it came time to start our winery, you know, one of the things we think about is connections. Our, our model, because we are such a small winery, we focus so much on connecting with every customer that comes in and sees us. And that's more important ever than now. I mean, in where we are in the Willamette Valley, we're now up to about 800 wineries.

So you really have to find ways to get people to be able to make connections beyond just what you're tasting. And so what we, I came up with the idea of leveraging what I had done in the classical music realm and said, well, what if we give each wine a personality based on a particular piece of music? And we, we name the wines that way.

So, you know, when we talk about that, when, when folks are here, we talk about the relationship between the particular piece of music and the wine. You know, the, the goal is so that people can kind of, as they're tasting, almost hear the music. And, and of course, you know, we can play it for them so that they can literally hear it. But the point,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (11:37):

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See, I love that.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (11:37):

So that they can actually do that experience themselves. And, and that has been a really fun way to kind of build the emotional connection for between every individual and each individual wine. I mean, you could make Seyval Blanc and you could label it Seyval Blanc, but when you come to us, it's Helios.

The particular inspiration for Helios and I, and I actually have to credit my mother-in-law for this because it, it's a piece that I was completely unfamiliar with. But it was a piece that was, it's basically a tone poem describing a sunrise that Carl Nielsen wrote. And I, my mother-in-law had heard it played on N P R and I went to listen to it, and it was absolutely perfect. And, and tying into what Linda was saying about sort of that, that earthiness. So if you could imagine kind of a sunrise coming up over a dewy meadow and you kind of get that, you know, that little mustiness,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (12:33):

Oh boy.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (12:33):

Now that's, I thought captured the essence of this wine so, so well that I, I just

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (12:40):

See now we need more <laugh>. Now we need it again. We need it again now. See, cuz now then it's like the Dawn's chorus, you know, see, and I am not opposed to trying it at sunrise. I am not opposed to that. I I don't go by the, the rules of that, you know, that kind of timing, but musical timing, yes.

But I think there's something like what you're saying that each wine is an experience. And I wanted to go to Sara on this. What is the experience for people coming to see you? Cuz you're such a small lot winery. I mean that we all feel very special. I know, Linda, you probably feel the same way when you get to taste these wines and, and talk to people about them and write about 'em. You just, you, you feel special that we got to have some because there's, it's so small, right? Sara? So tell us a little bit about how people can interact and, and you know, can they come to the winery and just show up or appointments? How does that work?

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (13:36):

Absolutely. So at

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (13:37):

Sunrise, by the way

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (13:41):

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Yeah. Looking really good at sunrise. So, so, so it is literally just the two of us. We make about 600 cases a year. So we're very, very small. We do a lot of very small production wines. So the Helios was what, I don't even remember...

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (13:57):

Something like 65 cases, something like that.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (14:00):

See what special we got the specials.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (14:03):

Yeah. Yeah. Very tiny. That's actually grown on our estate. We have a vineyard here. We have about 10 acres. Not all of it's planted. And Dave makes all the wine and I do the marketing and answer the phones and do the website and that sort of thing. When harvest comes around, I'm logistics.

But Dave is also host of all of our wine tastings. So we only do by appointment. We do three appointments a day. They are 100% exclusive to one group at a time. So you come in, whether you're one person or up to six people, we can sometimes do eight, but we try to max at six. That you hang out with Dave, he sits down with you, he pours the wines. It's very much conversation like what we're having here. He explains his wine making philosophy, the approach to making each wine the, the music concept. But it's very tailored to whatever the group is interested in hearing about. So it's super customized to each group that comes through. So yeah.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (15:12):

That's amazing. Diva Linda, that is unique, right?

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (15:16):

It's very unique actually. It's very unique and like always if you're, if you're on your wine journey, this has gotta be one thing that's on your bucket list early so that you understand. I mean, it's very easy to go and have tastings at large wineries and you should do a couple of those, couple at medium, couple at small. And then this is like a boutique winery. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

And you just never know when a winery is going to get so large or they're gonna keep their production down and you won't be able to go again cuz it's always sold out. So, you know, I think we have a star here and would be my recommendation to go see this. This should be on your bucket list. This should, this should give you a different view of how wine is made and instead of the great big productions and so forth and and even the small ones that do 1500, 2000 cases a year, this is below that.

And to have an a sit down with the owner/winemaker is just unbelievable. So that you can hear why he did the wines. You can talk about the taste of the wines. You know, some, some people, especially on their on their beginning journeys just don't know how to express what a wine is to them. They'll say, give me something fruity. I'm sure you've heard that. Or give you something dry and they don't really know what dry means, but they wanted it to sound good, right? When I worked for a wine district a while

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back, everybody talked, they were dry and bought fruity or fruity and sweet. So anyway, this is not a sweet winery. This is a very lovely balanced wine and winery that should be on your experience. Give, make that call.

I mean, if you're truly serious about wine, this is where you need to be and experienced people because experienced people, aficionados really don't particularly care to go into a very crowded tasting room where the buses have stopped <laugh> or you know, or the bridesmaids are doing a sendoff or, you know, that sort of thing.

So just, this is just wonderful and, and certainly everybody should, if you're gonna be in California, Oregon, is it Oregon or California? Oregon. Oregon, yeah. If you're gonna be in Oregon, I thought you were on the line. Yeah, if you're gonna be in Oregon, this is something you absolutely have to go to. And since it's by reservation, you have to not call the day before. <Laugh>

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (17:59):

Willamette Valley in itself is extraordinarily beautiful. I mean, it is gorgeous and I mean, it's a big valley and you've got all kinds of things to see and do and to be able to book a time with you, I think is really, you know, an experience as wine should be.

And I think it in a way, I understand what Linda's saying about experience you know, wine enthusiasts who want that ultimate experience, but I also think it's really a cool experience for someone starting out in their wine journey, especially if they love music, no matter what style, because, and, and Dave, you know, this music is dynamics and if you don't have the dynamic, you don't have a symphony. You know, it's about everything that orchestration, that symphony of everything coming together.

And if you can use that as a tasting metaphor for people to understand and slow down and not play Patio pounder, you know, <laugh> cause it, we're getting to that season, right? Oh yeah. You know, pool-side-pat, you know. But I think the Helios is perfect for spring summer. Like, it, it's a perfect wine for that. But to slow down and really understand and appreciate and when you're at a small winery, you start to understand, oh my God, they have to go out there in the dirt. <Laugh>. Dave, Dave had to wash his hands before he came in and talked to you. I don't, don't, I can take

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (19:24):

I do take a shower before people are there,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (19:25):

<Laugh>. Yeah. But you, you know, but that's the thing, right? It's just like zoom, everybody suddenly has to get out of their pajamas like, oh God, <laugh>, we have to do this really, and be like human. You know, if you go from that. So I think that this experience of what you're doing is very educational and slows people down to have something very authentic that they're seeking.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (19:45):

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Yeah. Well thank you. Well, and, and one of the real benefits to doing this model, the by appointment one group at a time, is that we can take every customer that comes in from wherever they are on their wine journey, very important for us. We are not going to talk over your heads.

And I've got, you know, as you can imagine, we will get people from all over the spectrum on, I've had some people where we're literally the first winery they've ever visited, and I've had the exact opposite. You know, I've had folks that have been all over the world and now they're here trying the Willamette Valley wines. So we can really customize what we're talking about to really fit each individual customer or group of customers and just kind of, you know, it sounds silly and simple, but treat them as human beings as opposed to just numbers that just came in.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (20:36):

Yeah. Well and that, that goes into, yeah, that, that connectivity, and that's what music does, right? Is musicians, musicians wanna perform to an audience, not do just a typical livestream. They want that. They, we all learned during covid every musician. I know some did way better actually, but majority said, dude, we want out <laugh>, we want out, we wanna feel that energy back so we can have a better connection. So I think you're really right on that.

On the wine journey, Nancy has a question. Like last night we discussed it and then I'm like, oh no, they do this. And I went, actually, I haven't a damn clue what I'm talking about <laugh>, so I better just bring this up. Cuz then we, we were talking about, you know, the grapes and, and what you were doing, especially with Helios. And we're like, she goes, well, can they plant that right next to like, you know, the pinot noir? Can the reds and whites grow in the same place? And I'm like, well, of course they can. Wineries have different, and then I'm like, well, maybe they do have to move one on a hill, one down below. So can can can, can they be mixed <laugh>?

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (21:38):

Absolutely. Well, so they can be mixed as far as they can go right next to each other. You know, when you're planting, you kind of try to keep, let's say you're planting, you know, Seyval Blanc, you'd like to kind of have what we call a block of Seyval Blanc, which is, you know, a certain number of rows of a certain length just to kind of keep all those plants together. It makes it easier just for farming purposes, but you, it's not, it's not mandatory.

So if you really wanted to be tough on yourself, you really could plant a Seyval Blanc plant. And then the next one you plant a pinot plant and something else. The key to all that is that grapes are wonderful in that they are self pollinating. So we do not need bees or any other insects to come through and pollinate the plants for us. And so for that reason, oh wow, once you've got a vine established, it's very easy to have a crop every year and not have it mixed or interbreed. You know, if you, if you think about a pollinator, you know, if, if you were flying from one plant to another, next thing you know, hey, I don't have the same plant that I started with. Whereas here, hey, we know that the consistency of what we planned is gonna be exactly the same year to year.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (22:49):

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I'm glad I asked. I had no idea. See, I had no idea. I had a feeling. Just don't tell your mother. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But you know, cause she, she, she'll tell you So, Diva Linda, Jupiter, like, did that make you feel like you were flying to Jupiter and happiness? That was like, that's the happy, happy joy juice, don't you think it is? Right? Yeah. Incredible.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (23:10):

That's it's an incredible Pinot, really, really nice big mouthful. So Phil,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (23:15):

Yeah, it just a down, I

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (23:17):

Had to sit down. Yeah, yeah. You really fill it in there. Sit down. I did. And I think maybe, and I think for those of you who are patient buy two at least, and the first one try now and the second one leave in your wine case or wherever you're storing your wines for a year mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and see, see just what this wine can do.

There's an awful lot of power in this wine. And I think you might find it smooths out a little bit. Not that it needs to, but it might, just depends on, once again, I always say this, just because I like it doesn't mean you are gonna like it and it doesn't make either one of us wrong. You know, if you like it, you like it and you don't, you don't.

This one you're gonna like, and it's just kind of fun in your journey to try something new, such as just being the only people at a winery and having a, a session. This other thing is to try, especially the reds, a year after you buy them, to see what happens. Did it become stronger? Is it the same? Did it become stronger? Did it become smoother? Did it have less acid? Blah, blah, blah. These are things that you learn from. But I think this is a good wine, excellent wine to try that with. So how many acres of this do you have this grape?

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (24:33):

So for Pinot Noir, we have five planted acres on our property.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (24:37):

All the same clone?

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (24:39):

It's broken up amongst seven different clones or strains of pinot noir. And the Jupiter that you tasted inclu incorporated three of those clones that we blend. And, and it sort of ties back into the musical theme because the, the best way I can describe it is that when I taste any wine, I hear it in my head as, as much as I taste it.

And when I taste the individual clones or strains that we're talking about that go into this, it's like I'm listening to a different instrument and the idea becomes, okay, what do we wanna create? And you

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know, with Jupiter we wanted, I wanted to create something that felt like it rose all started at the flow at the beginning, rose all the way through mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and onto the finish and took you on a nice ride.

So how do the clones that we use accomplish that? How does it hit those points of your palate that we wanna see? And then it becomes just blend to taste. It's always a little bit different every year, but the idea is that once you taste the wine of ours from one vintage, when you come back to the next vintage, you'll at least have a good kind of a mindset about what this, what the personality of the wine is. And every year, because of our, we're in Oregon and our weather is so radically different every year that the 2021 version will taste different from the 20 version, which will taste different from the 19 version and so on and so forth. But folks can really compare apples to apples when you're starting with wines that have the same personality.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (26:08):

Yeah. Cuz it's a foundation, right. Of this is the root stock, really, but it's gonna change according to weather. I know. It's, it's, it's interesting. I do believe that next time William Shatner beams up, he should take your wine Jupiter with him. I do think so. I think he would enjoy it.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (26:24):

That would be awesome.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (26:25):

I know he loves wine. I don't know if you've ever seen his old series. He would brown bag wine and take celebrities whether they drank wine or not, and take wine. They didn't know what they were drinking and they would have to describe the wine according to their career. So if they're an actor or singer or whatever, and we do that as parties, especially if you don't know a bunch of people and you're kind of bored, you're like, come on, let's see her, you know, <laugh> and then whether they drink wine or not drink it, you know, and then, you know, they didn't know if it's Two Buck Chuck or something really special. You know, it's interesting and I think that's what's so beautiful about your wine, because like I said, even as soon as we opened, we opened Jupiter, I let it air a little bit.

We, we tasted it, I sat down, I went, oh, I gotta sit down, not that I'm gonna fall down drunk or, or stupid, you know, it was sit down cuz like, whoa, this is amazing. Like, you need to sit down and experience exactly what you're saying and then it's a slow lift off. It's not like A to Z. It's, it's a journey. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And so that was, and then we waited again and then tried it again at the end of the evening and it had already started to change a little bit, which was great to, to I think Linda's dead on about that, about see what happens next. I wanna do that <laugh>.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (27:41):

Absolutely.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (27:42):

Keep it at the bottom of your boat, Linda.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZOt0eWSKBU&list=PLaqBWtnt9gUKQdrc6aMTDpBF4oKfKH5s>

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (27:44):

Yeah. Well, and, and one of the things about us is because we are such a small production winery, we so often have to pour wines when they're very young. And it, it really, as much as I would love and, and we do now that we've been in business for a little while, have some library wines that folks can taste when they're here that are a little older, but our latest releases have to get poured sooner than I'd ideally like.

And so you're, you're both are absolutely right. One of the things that we talk about our customers to our customers all the time about is, you know, this will develop if you let it sit. On the other hand, for my for me, I have to make sure that when they're young, they are at least approachable, consumable, and that you can see a roadmap to where they're going.

And then everybody will sort of have to take responsibility is where do we want them to get to? You know, do we want to drink them young? Do we want to let, and and that's, I think Linda nailed it about, you know, get a couple of bottles, enjoy one in the short term, let another one sit even in a year will make such a big difference for all these wines when we, when we're pouring them.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (28:49):

Make brownies. That's what I didn't do. I got your recipe for brownies. We need the brownies. I want brownies with it now. Okay.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (28:56):

<Laugh>. Well that's what you, you asked for recipes and it was funny. We don't actually have any for the Seyval Blanc, but we have had suggestions which is why I told you Dill pickled popcorn was one of those suggestions and we've had somebody suggest asparagus with it.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (29:12):

Yeah.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (29:13):

Another hard one to pair. But it's such an, a unique wine that it can stand up to some of these really oddball pairings. But I did have recipes for the pinot so Yes. That's why I, I sent you I had such, what I picked those two cuz they're the, the most, the two most popular.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (29:30):

I think we have a recipe from Chef Ivan Flowers for asparagus spring asparagus salad. And it's got you slice like, you know, you just grate over fresh Parmesan cheese and a very light balsamic and Oh yeah. That would be, now that I'm thinking about the cheese paired with that and then the the asparagus, that would be, huh? Can we have more <laugh>? Diva Linda that's what you do, is you try all these things. Right. You know, so when it comes to pickles, we could do like a deep fried pickle chips.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (30:06):

Ooh, your Texas is showing out <laugh>.

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Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (30:09):

Yeah, I'm, I'm, you know, I'm here temporarily, but like, you know, that's, we, we travel full time, so it's always something new. So it's kind of interesting to try out, you know, but I think, yeah, I'm, I'm, yeah, you're right. I'm in Texas and that sounds good, Barb, you have barbecue sauce, so that goes with that too.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (30:28):

Barbecue sauce recipe as well.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (30:29):

The Jupiter mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. Yeah. So,

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (30:32):

And I was gonna talk to you, the other thing that we're really known for is that, cuz you mentioned this earlier, lots of pinot in the Willamette Valley. We're actually known for more than just Pinot. So in addition to the Seyval Blanc, we make a Pinot blanc, we have a rose, we also source,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (30:47):

Ooh,

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (30:48):

From Eastern Oregon. We source a Syrah and a Cabernet Sauvignon. So when people come here we are often one of the first places they've been where it's not five Pinots in a Chardonnay dropped in front of them. It's, we do a little bit more than that. So that, that is another thing that kind of sets us apart. Thing

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (31:10):

That's interesting about the Rose. Yeah. Cause rose's finicky to me too. It's like, it's either gone this way or that way and I want that way. <Laugh>. <laugh>.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (31:20):

Yeah. There's a lot of, there's a lot of variety out there and you can pretty much across the board kind of get what you want, you know, for us, you know, I I i's interesting, I, I have a taste with, with our rose, I've taken the approach that I want a rose you can have with a bacon cheeseburger mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. So we make our Rose a little bit bigger, a little bit bolder, a little beefier, and a little rounder.

So a lot of times with Rose, it's either sweet, which I don't want, or acidic, which I also don't want. Right. You know, so, so I, mine is softer on the palate, but big enough to where you can food parrot and we actually sell a lot of it to Texas because when it's 95 degrees and about 95% humidity, y'all are still eating your brisket. So you gotta have something refreshing enough, but gentle enough or, or but strong enough to stand up to the food. So

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Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (32:06):

Has it got minerality in there then to kinda Yep. Yeah, I like that. I like that. That's why I think so now your soil,

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (32:13):

Yeah. Your soil is part volcanic, is that correct?

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (32:17):

It's pretty much all volcanics. That, that's one of the things about our particular site is that it, it's pretty uniform and, and that's one of the reasons that we have so many different clones of Pinot planted. There are sites in the Willamette Valley that have, oh my gosh, there are some that have seven, eight different soil types on it. We don't quite have that. So, you know, the complexity that we're looking for is gonna come, you know, partially from the soil, but then our, also from our clonal selection. So we, we kind of have to play both sides of that.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (32:47):

Many. Yeah. I think many favorite wines. Many, go ahead. Sorry. I think my favorite wines start with the volcanic soil. There's something in that that just adds a little something. Yeah. And a little depth to the wine for sure. There's depth in there, earthiness that really is quite wonderful. So oh gosh, if you were a little warmer, you could do some outstanding red wines, but good for you for not getting roped into doing wines you can't really do, so good for you.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (33:18):

Yeah, no, you, you can't put a square peg in a round hole. But I, I will tell you that we are working on some projects here with some different types of red grapes that are grown in cooler climates that are very unusual, but that have a track record of producing great wines in our types of climates.

They're not gonna be things that are as commercially well known, much like the Seyval but as you've seen, you can certainly create fantastic wines from grapes that, you know, are, are not gonna be on a lot of people's radars. And, you know, if we were a big commercial producer, that might be a problem. But, you know, when you're here at the winery, you get to taste it and, and you get to sort of make your own decisions.

And, you know, the diversification that Sara was talking about in terms of both what we produce and what we grow here is gonna be so important to our future. Because this area is so heavily pinot noir dependent and, and there are very good historical reasons for that. But as the business evolves and develops, we really need to spread out a little bit and, and sort of prove, hey, we're not just a one trick pony here in Oregon.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (34:22):

Yeah. Don't limit.

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Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (34:23):

We can do a lot of different things

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (34:25):

And people have different tastes, you know, it's like art, you know, some people love abstract, some people look at it and go, I have no damn clue what that is. You know, and I'm not doing it, you know, so everybody, it is an art form, you know, to me the wine is.

I think you, what you're saying is interesting, Linda, about volcanic soil. Nancy and I have noticed is from the traveling, it seems to me that when an area either has a volcanic or has some kind of river that's going, or so the sediment right? Or it's an area that's being mined. If there's mining, you normally find wine and roses, <laugh>. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> will grow, roses will grow where wineries are, and some of the best wines come out of minor minorities, <laugh> mined areas yeah, minorities. Let's just do that as a new word. But yeah, I, I don't know if it's just that there's this minerality happening in the soil that if it's, you can, you know, dig gold out of there or silver or whatever, it's, Hey, we can do wine. You know, is it the Iron

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (35:25):

Irons? Iron's the real big one there. You know, one of the things about the soil is much like you'd expect from a volcano, right? The, the dirt has this reddish tint to it. So since we've lived here for about 10 years, we've learned that white clothes just are not worth buying anymore here. And, and so, you know, that that iron that oxidizes once it comes to the surface, that gets into everything, you know? And, and, and like I said, it's, it's just, it's just part of it. But it gives you that minerality that you're talking about there. There are, that's the vast majority of'em.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (35:59):

Well, as women, we need iron. And that's why I drink wine now. See

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (36:03):

There you go. It's good for you.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (36:05):

I just have one more question or point of point of interest. When you bought your land, it was a tree farm, is that correct?

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (36:15):

Well, that might, that might be generous. That that implies there was actually farming going on <laugh>.

Diva Linda Kissam, All in Good Taste (36:20):

There are Christmas trees or there were trees on your, did you, you cleared what you, what you needed and you were able to pick your own clones. Some of the wine countries that I've been to or worked for

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are, are a little stuck because the clones were decided many, many years back before the business of cloning or providing different varieties in different ways came about.

So you had, you had an opportunity to study what clones might do best. Did you have a, did you have any scientists or did you have the local university or the people who do all these clones come out and look at your soil or did you send soil samples in, or how did you go about getting, choosing your clones?

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (37:10):

He had a we white shirt on

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (37:12):

<Laugh>. So when we when we found the property, it actually was not listed. It was covered in dead Christmas trees. It had a relatively new looking house on it, and it had a pole barn that I thought would make a great winery building. And we, we did write an offer. We negotiated a price and the offer was contingent on there being some independent soil testing done. We were pretty sure that we had a good site for a variety of reasons. There is one of the oldest vineyards in the valley is actually our immediate next door neighbor. So, you know, things, things looked good, but you always obviously wanna make sure that you're not sitting on top of a nuclear waste dump or something like that.

And you know, it was a little concerning that the Christmas trees had died repeatedly. They, they had kept replanting and they would get about two feet tall and they would die again. So I wanted to make sure there wasn't something weird going on. But yes, the soil testing came back excellent. Pretty much what we expected.

It did take us about a year to get it cleared off. And then we spent so that would've been 2013. And in 2014 we started planting the clone selection. We knew at that point that we had, like Dave said, 100% of this volcanic soil in the vineyard space. And the only way to really ensure some great variety was to use the clones, right? So to, to plant different types of clones and different types of pinot or strains of Pinot. To your point about how do you pick, right?

Pommard is probably the number one clone grown in the valley, so that's kind of a given. As for the rest of them we settled on some Dijon clones. We were sourcing as well, originally from other micro growers like us in the valley. So we tried to work with people that were really small.

So we, but Dave had done a harvest internship. We joked that he was the world's oldest harvest intern at a large winery in the Willamette Valley, and worked very closely with the wine winemaker there. And learned a lot about being out in the vineyard and what each of the clones tasted like. And so when we were making those decisions, that winemaker actually very generously took us through their barrel room and said, okay, here's this particular clone grown at an elevation and aspect very similar to yours. And so here's what it's probably gonna taste like. And so that was really helpful.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (39:55):

Oh, that's nice.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (39:55):

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Yeah, to identify what we wanted and, and what we thought would work. Well, we've made some adjustments over the years and we've planted things. You know, originally we had planned to plant the entire thing to Pinot. It became fairly evident to us very quickly that a) there's a lot of pinot in the valley and we really didn't need to do that. And b) we wanted to differentiate. So we have changed our, we had changed our plan a few times. I don't know, probably about five years ago we decided yeah, eh, no more Pinot. So <laugh> well, what we have is plenty for what we plenty in fact, yeah. Then we need really. And we have a hyper vig, hyper vigorous site. We knew we had a high vigor site, we didn't realize quite how vigorous it would be. And so we our vines tend to produce quite a bit more than we actually need without sacrificing the quality that we want.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (40:49):

That's awesome though. Yeah.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (40:51):

Yeah. For the last year actually was the first year we were 100% pinot independent. We did not source pinot from anywhere in 2022. And we actually had so much we sold some of it. So that was exciting. You know, actually, wow,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (41:06):

I wonder if the Christmas trees actually helped your soil in a way as like a good mulch kind of.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (41:12):

Not really. We, we literally, they, they popped right out very easily. Oh wow. Yeah. What we were told was if the pH of your soil is not great for Christmas trees, it's probably great for grapes. And that has proven to be true. So yeah.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (41:29):

Things that you would never think you'd need to know in life, <laugh>?

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (41:32):

Nope. Yeah,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (41:33):

No, I had no idea.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (41:35):

Experience.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (41:36):

We've learned a lot.

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Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (41:38):

Yeah.

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (41:38):

Yeah. So it's, it's been it's been fun. And it's been exciting, especially in the last year, to see everything kind of come online finally and be, be independent and not have to deal with grower drama anymore. And so,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (41:54):

No. Yeah, that's that. I think it's so hard. Wineries are so hard, they're not cheap, and it's hard, hard, hard work. And then, then, then on top of it, you're having the human connection of building relationships with people coming into the tasting room. You've, you've, yeah. You need some wine. <Laugh>

Sara Specter, Bells Up Winery (42:13):

<Laugh>. Yeah,

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (42:14):

Absolutely. I think it's amazing, Diva Linda, you always come up with good people on our shows and good wines. I mean, this is exceptional. It really kudos to you guys. I hope you have continued success. And I love that you're diversified because I think, well, we're the blend. So we always think that because, you know, everybody has a different taste, different type time of growing into different wines. And it's wine.

Enjoying wine is a journey in its own thing. You know, you don't hit a hole in one every day and golf. And I wouldn't know how to do that. That would be No, but you, you know what I mean? It, it, it is a journey. So it's a journey for those, you know, savoring the wine and tasting and definitely for you guys. But yeah, entrepreneurs and I love the diversity because it's also adding more to Willamette Valley, to the portfolio, to not just be Pinot Noir.

And we've seen this in places where they get known just for one thing and there's, there's always something more and, but just it gets this one track mind about a region, you know, like Julian and Apples <laugh> just gonna say, Julian San Diego is a four season destination up in the mountains. They do have wine, but all people know is go there for Apple days. And the apples normally are ripe in July, August, and they all go and fall and then the town gets run over because of this one track mind that, you know, you human beings were, we're easy to do that <laugh>, it's easy for us to become one track, you know?

So I think what you're doing is helping your region and helping people understand there's so much more, you know, so, and there is Absolutely. So thank you. Absolutely. Thank you guys. Thank you Diva. Linda's got a great article about our wine tasting journey with the Bells Up Winery up on Blend radio and tv.com. We also have the recipes on the site, so you can see those up there. And of course, keep up with us at bigblendradio.com. Linda is here every first Saturday, cuz she has to be first, she's a diva. And of course a bellsupwinery.com is the place to go. Do you ship wine or is it primarily go in?

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Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (44:22):

We, we ship all over the country.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (44:25):

Did you hear that everybody? Say that again. Yes.

Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery (44:27):

We ship wine all over the country. It, the only, the, the main limitation is weather. There are only two states that are troublesome for us, Utah and Kentucky that we, that usually we have to find a workaround. But other than that, we can get wine to you very easily anywhere you are. So just give us a call.

Lisa Smith, Big Blend Magazines (44:47):

Just drive over the state line, that's all. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, just come on. That's what it's all about. <Laugh>. Awesome. Well thank you so much for joining us. Thank you again, diva. Linda, my pleasure.