

**Bells Up Winery Dave and Sara Specter
Interviewed for Oregon Wine History Archive [TRANSCRIPT]**

[00:00:06.00]

- [Stephanie] My name is Stephanie Hofmann

[00:00:07.05]

and we are here with Sara and Dave Specter

[00:00:09.08]

at Bells Up Winery.

[00:00:11.05]

It is June 19th, and we're just gonna

[00:00:14.07]

start this interview off with why wine?

[00:00:17.05]

(laughing)

[00:00:19.00]

- Well, I think that
both of us have always

[00:00:21.08]

had a passion for drinking it,

[00:00:24.06]

and that started really for me

[00:00:27.01]

at a, in my mid 20s.

[00:00:28.06]

I had a lot of friends that were older

[00:00:30.05]

and were very into it, and
so that kinda helped me

[00:00:33.08]

to get along faster than
I think normally it would.

[00:00:38.09]

We never, though, as far as producing it,

[00:00:41.06]
we never really even
started thinking about it

[00:00:43.08]
until we got sort of into our mid-30s.

[00:00:47.03]
- Yeah, we were happy consumers.

[00:00:49.01]
(laughing)

[00:00:51.06]
- And--

[00:00:52.04]
- Well I was gonna say
we started making wine

[00:00:54.04]
in 2006 in our basement in Cincinnati.

[00:00:58.04]
And it was our five-year anniversary

[00:01:01.08]
cute coupley thing to do.

[00:01:04.05]
So I bought a wine kit,

[00:01:07.05]
and signed us up for a
home winemaking class,

[00:01:09.07]
and we started making wine.

[00:01:14.00]
And I thought it was really fun

[00:01:15.08]
to make the labels and drink it,

[00:01:17.03]
and Dave just got fascinated with wow,

[00:01:21.03]
I use this yeast it does this,

[00:01:23.00]
I use that yeast it does that.

[00:01:24.02]
This is just an amazing process

[00:01:25.08]
and it creates something tangible.

[00:01:28.04]
Dave was a corporate tax
attorney doing mergers

[00:01:31.07]
and acquisitions for a
major accounting firm,

[00:01:35.00]
and I'd been a freelance
marketing consultant

[00:01:37.07]
for a couple of decades now at this point.

[00:01:41.07]
And we just really got
interested in making wine,

[00:01:46.07]
and he really got
interested in making wine,

[00:01:49.00]
and so it started to take over the house.

[00:01:51.08]
- I think most people that are winemakers

[00:01:53.09]

will tell you it's a hobby

[00:01:55.03]

that gets out of control very quickly.

[00:01:57.05]

I say I might be the only married man who

[00:02:00.01]

increased their space in
the house for their hobby

[00:02:03.04]

as time went on.

[00:02:04.05]

- Yep, yep, took over the
basement and then the garage,

[00:02:07.00]

then the whole house.

[00:02:08.04]

So we started taking wine vacations.

[00:02:10.04]

Because suddenly this was
our passion and our hobby.

[00:02:13.07]

And we wound up here in the Willamette,

[00:02:17.02]

in Newberg actually, in 2008,

[00:02:19.09]

and we stayed at Chehalem
Ridge Bed and Breakfast,

[00:02:22.00]

which is literally 400 feet up the side

[00:02:24.05]

of Chehalem Mountain from our property.

[00:02:27.04]

And you know, when you're on vacation you're always like,

[00:02:29.03]

oh I could totally live here.

[00:02:30.06]

And I remember saying to Dave, "We're gonna live here,

[00:02:33.02]

"we're gonna get property on Bell Road.

[00:02:36.00]

"we're gonna get,

[00:02:37.08]

"you're gonna be a winemaker.

[00:02:39.00]

"We're gonna have a vineyard.

[00:02:40.01]

"This is what we're gonna do in 20 years."

[00:02:42.01]

And Dave said, "Yeah, 20 years sounds about right."

[00:02:44.00]

Because we were living suburban dream in Cincinnati.

[00:02:47.04]

That's not what, normal people don't

[00:02:49.00]

chuck it all in their 30s and start a winery.

[00:02:51.07]

And so we came back from that vacation

[00:02:54.05]

and my mentor called me two weeks later

[00:02:57.05]
and she had just turned
40 and was diagnosed

[00:02:59.09]
with stage four pancreatic cancer.

[00:03:01.08]
And she had a nine-year-old son

[00:03:03.03]
and six-year-old twin girls,

[00:03:05.04]
and she died 10 months later.

[00:03:07.00]
And so as I was watching
her get sicker and sicker

[00:03:10.06]
and sicker our daughter was born,

[00:03:13.05]
and we are adoptive parents,

[00:03:15.09]
and so we brought her home
right before Christmas of 2008.

[00:03:19.09]
And then Dave, they were
pushing Dave to make partner

[00:03:23.00]
and giving him more
and more and more work,

[00:03:25.00]
and he just kind of finally

[00:03:27.09]
had a nervous breakdown basically.

[00:03:29.06]
It was just too much.

[00:03:30.07]
And I remember in January
of 2009 looking at him

[00:03:34.03]
and looking at our baby
and looking at my mentor

[00:03:36.04]
and saying, this is ridiculous.

[00:03:37.09]
Why are we doing this to ourselves.

[00:03:40.08]
We don't even, why are we trying

[00:03:41.07]
to keep up with the Joneses?

[00:03:42.08]
We don't even like the Joneses.

[00:03:44.03]
This is just not what life is about.

[00:03:47.04]
And I said to Dave if
you're this successful

[00:03:50.05]
doing something that
makes you really miserable

[00:03:52.08]
and sick and unhappy,

[00:03:53.08]
then how much more successful would you be

[00:03:55.05]
if you were doing something you love,

[00:03:56.08]
and you really love making wine.

[00:03:59.01]

So,

[00:04:01.08]

we decided that he would take

[00:04:03.02]

a year leave of absence from his job,

[00:04:05.05]

and they were very generous
and let him do that.

[00:04:08.09]

And we went around to all
the wineries in Cincinnati,

[00:04:11.07]

all six of them, and asked
if anybody would take him on

[00:04:15.00]

to learn the business as a professional.

[00:04:17.05]

And one gentleman did.

[00:04:19.05]

He worked for an urban
winery called Hanky Winery.

[00:04:23.04]

And the gentleman that ran it was

[00:04:26.08]

very much a hobbyist turned professional.

[00:04:30.00]

They made 2,000 cases of wine annually

[00:04:33.04]

out of the basement of
a hundred year old house

[00:04:35.06]

on the west side of Cincinnati.

[00:04:37.07]

And it was very bare bones,
back-to-basics winemaking.

[00:04:41.02]

No expensive toys, nothing fancy about it.

[00:04:44.05]

No gravity fed anything.

[00:04:47.01]

The ceilings were eight feet tall.

[00:04:48.08]

There were spots where you
had to watch your head.

[00:04:52.00]

It was really, really, really
the best place in the world

[00:04:57.01]

to learn how to do this as a pro.

[00:04:59.01]

And Joe was very generous with his time

[00:05:01.09]

and with what he shared,
and I mean it was open book.

[00:05:04.09]

It was I'll show you the
good, the bad, and the ugly.

[00:05:07.00]

I want you to know what
you're getting into.

[00:05:10.01]

And so that's what Dave
did for three years.

[00:05:13.01]

And then in 2011,

[00:05:15.03]

he had continued making
wine in our basement.

[00:05:17.07]

In 2011 he entered and won two different

[00:05:21.01]

amateur national winemaking competitions

[00:05:23.01]

with two different wines
in the space of two months.

[00:05:25.00]

And I said, oh, there's our sign.

[00:05:27.09]

As Dave said, that's our sign
that my wine doesn't suck.

[00:05:30.01]

And so we felt like, okay, that's it.

[00:05:34.03]

We're on the right path.

[00:05:35.03]

So we put the house on the market.

[00:05:37.00]

It took a year to sell it.

[00:05:38.04]

And exactly, just about
exactly five years ago today

[00:05:42.06]

we moved here.

[00:05:44.01]

So, yeah, so and then this property,

[00:05:47.08]

we were very fortunate, it was not listed.

[00:05:50.09]

But we were able to basically
network our way to it

[00:05:53.09]

and negotiate an off market sale.

[00:05:56.08]

And yeah, that's how we wound up here.

[00:05:59.06]

Started to make wine, so.

[00:06:03.09]

- [Stephanie] Awesome, so
why did you guys decide,

[00:06:07.01]

I know you stayed in
Newberg whenever you guys

[00:06:08.08]

came here on vacation,

[00:06:09.07]

but did you guys look at other places

[00:06:11.08]

in the Willamette Valley or
just in Oregon in general?

[00:06:13.07]

Why'd you guys decide here?

[00:06:15.04]

- We knew we wanted to be in Oregon.

[00:06:18.00]

And also we understood that
the balance of our lives

[00:06:22.00]

was going in such a way that with a child

[00:06:24.05]
we needed to be relatively
close to civilization,

[00:06:29.09]
so to speak. (laughing)

[00:06:31.06]
I mean there are some places that are

[00:06:32.04]
wonderful winemaking places
but that are very far out,

[00:06:35.01]
and if you have to drive
20 minutes to get milk,

[00:06:38.09]
that kind of makes it difficult.

[00:06:40.04]
So in some ways we
understood we were looking

[00:06:43.01]
for a needle in a haystack
as far as property goes.

[00:06:46.09]
Something that had vineyard potential

[00:06:48.05]
but that wasn't too far away.

[00:06:51.00]
And we were just very, very lucky

[00:06:53.02]
to be in the right
place at the right time,

[00:06:55.01]
and when we networked to these folks,

[00:06:56.06]

we hit them at the exact spot
when they were ready to move.

[00:07:01.04]
They had six children and the last one

[00:07:03.03]
was graduating high school,

[00:07:04.07]
and so they were ready to make a change

[00:07:06.04]
in their lives as well.

[00:07:07.05]
And we were just very, very lucky.

[00:07:11.07]
- We love the Chehalem Mountains.

[00:07:13.01]
It's just beautiful.

[00:07:14.04]
This spot is just incredibly beautiful.

[00:07:16.07]
And I remember, like I said,
when we were 400 feet higher

[00:07:20.08]
we were just blown away by how gorgeous

[00:07:24.00]
this view is from here.

[00:07:25.09]
And I was like I want this
view, this is incredible.

[00:07:29.00]
And so yeah, we feel so lucky

[00:07:32.04]
that this worked out the way it did.

[00:07:34.09]

The other thing was we knew we wanted it

[00:07:36.07]

to just be the two of us,

[00:07:39.02]

and so the further south you go,

[00:07:41.01]

the parcels start getting
bigger and bigger and bigger,

[00:07:43.03]

and I remember people
trying to convince us that

[00:07:47.09]

five acres probably wasn't
gonna be big enough,

[00:07:50.08]

but 10 acres might be a little too much,

[00:07:53.03]

and we have 10 acres, and
there are days when I think,

[00:07:55.07]

well this is a little too
much for two people, so.

[00:07:58.07]

- Says the one who never

[00:07:59.09]

is on the tractor.

- Says the one who

[00:08:00.08]

doesn't on the tractor, no, no.

[00:08:01.07]

I don't do the tractor, but yeah.

[00:08:04.03]

- I'd say the other thing
is the industry itself.

[00:08:06.06]

I mean, one of the things
we knew from our visit here,

[00:08:09.09]

just going around to a
lot of these smaller,

[00:08:12.00]

noncommercial wineries,

[00:08:14.03]

it just felt home for us.

[00:08:16.07]

It's kinda hard to put into words.

[00:08:18.01]

But the people who own these places

[00:08:20.08]

and who work in the tasting rooms

[00:08:22.03]

were some of the most
warm, welcoming folks.

[00:08:24.08]

And it was just something
that was unusual for us

[00:08:28.09]

when we thought about comparing
it to some other areas

[00:08:31.09]

where they're bigger, more corporate,

[00:08:35.01]

and just, we wanted to create a very

[00:08:38.03]

homelike feel with our winery,

[00:08:40.09]

and as you went around
to places around here,

[00:08:43.06]

that's really where we felt
like we were fitting right in.

[00:08:47.08]

And we, I believe, had
just kinda had that feeling

[00:08:51.01]

that over time we were gonna bond

[00:08:53.05]

very well with the industry,

[00:08:54.09]

and I think fortunately in
the time that we've spent in

[00:08:57.04]

we've done a pretty good job of that.

[00:08:59.09]

- Yeah how--
- Go ahead.

[00:09:02.02]

- [Stephanie] Sorry, what was it like

[00:09:03.01]

getting into the industry as a new winery?

[00:09:07.02]

With some of these more established winery

[00:09:09.02]

for 20, 30, 40 years have been around.

[00:09:11.06]

What was it like joining that group?

[00:09:13.09]

- I think the biggest thing was,

[00:09:16.00]

we understood we had to
establish some credibility.

[00:09:19.01]

And so there are, I think there are

[00:09:21.05]

a number of ways to do that.

[00:09:23.00]

In our case, I think we just
kinda came in and were honest.

[00:09:26.04]

We said, look, we know enough
about the business to know

[00:09:30.09]

that it's a ton of work,

[00:09:33.04]

it was gonna be very unromantic stuff.

[00:09:37.03]

We were willing to do that hard work

[00:09:39.01]

and we were willing to listen.

[00:09:41.01]

One of the good things I think about

[00:09:42.06]

coming from an amateur
winemaking background

[00:09:45.05]

is that you don't come in with the ego

[00:09:47.04]

to think that you know all the answers.

[00:09:49.02]

I don't.

[00:09:50.01]

We're learning stuff every day.

[00:09:52.01]

And I think that's one of the reasons

[00:09:53.08]

people have sort of bonded with us,

[00:09:55.06]

because we talk about our mistakes.

[00:09:58.03]

We talk about the lumps.

[00:10:00.01]

And the reason we do that is because

[00:10:02.01]

other people in this industry have been

[00:10:03.08]

so wonderful to share
their experiences with us.

[00:10:07.01]

The good and the bad.

[00:10:08.07]

I don't think that happens just anywhere.

[00:10:10.08]

I think this place is special for that.

[00:10:13.00]

Folks come in and once they
realize that you're serious

[00:10:16.06]

they wanna see you succeed.

[00:10:18.07]

They want to see you fit in

as a part of the industry,

[00:10:22.02]

and they, as I always say,

[00:10:24.00]

it's like once you
establish you're not a jerk

[00:10:25.08]

it's amazing how many people

[00:10:27.06]

will go out of their way to help you.

[00:10:29.01]

And in this sport we've
been very fortunate

[00:10:32.06]

to have some wonderful
friends in the industry,

[00:10:35.04]

from within just a five
to 10 minute drive,

[00:10:38.03]

people that have been very supportive,

[00:10:39.09]

have helped to push customers to us early,

[00:10:43.00]

people that were sounding boards for us

[00:10:45.00]

in planting the vineyard
and in getting going,

[00:10:49.00]

I think we've just tried to establish

[00:10:50.05]

that we were here to do things honestly,

[00:10:52.07]
and this wasn't a vanity project for us.

[00:10:55.07]
This was a passion thing.

[00:10:56.09]
And I think that's been respected.

[00:10:59.07]
- I would say also we,

[00:11:01.09]
we're pretty veracious networkers.

[00:11:04.02]
And so from the beginning,

[00:11:05.09]
I think when we were still in Cincinnati,

[00:11:08.05]
Dave was connected to Myron

[00:11:11.07]
Redford.
- Redford.

[00:11:13.04]
- Of Amity Vineyards.

[00:11:15.03]
And Dave happened to be
out here at one point

[00:11:17.05]
and set up a meeting with him,

[00:11:19.01]
and they wound up chatting for, what?

[00:11:21.08]
- About three hours.
- Three hours.

[00:11:23.09]

- Yeah, and just, they were an open book.

[00:11:27.01]

And it was just amazing.

[00:11:29.00]

I still have about seven,
eight pages worth of notes

[00:11:32.06]

taken from that meeting.

[00:11:33.07]

And again, just somebody
who was very open and honest

[00:11:37.06]

about what his mistakes were
and what his successes were,

[00:11:41.01]

and with great advice,

[00:11:43.05]

and things that we've certainly

[00:11:45.02]

taken to heart to help us get set up.

[00:11:47.00]

And there were a lot of people
that were in that vein, too,

[00:11:51.02]

just like Myron.

[00:11:52.06]

Willing to share that
knowledge and insight

[00:11:54.05]

and really have a passion
for the Oregon wine industry.

[00:11:57.02]

And Myron was kinda getting to

[00:11:59.04]
the end of his time in the industry,

[00:12:01.07]
and I think is looking
forward to saying, hey,

[00:12:05.01]
I've got the next
generation that's coming in,

[00:12:06.09]
and we want to see them pick up the mantel

[00:12:09.01]
of what folks like him
laid down and run with it.

[00:12:12.08]
- But coming in and
asking a lot of questions.

[00:12:15.01]
Dave and I both, our
backgrounds are more business,

[00:12:19.06]
and neither of us, maybe it's 'cause we

[00:12:22.08]
moved here from the Midwest, I don't know,

[00:12:24.01]
but we never approached this
like we knew everything.

[00:12:28.02]
We aren't those people who say, oh yes,

[00:12:29.09]
we just innately know how to make wine,

[00:12:31.06]
and we have the answer to everything.

[00:12:33.04]

We often will go and ask people,

[00:12:36.02]

we don't know what we don't know,

[00:12:37.03]

so please tell us what did you,

[00:12:40.01]

what was your biggest mistake?

[00:12:41.01]

And how can we learn from it?

[00:12:42.04]

And what was the most
successful thing you did?

[00:12:44.07]

And what can we learn from it?

[00:12:45.07]

And we've been very aggressive,

[00:12:48.09]

and some people are very passionate about,

[00:12:51.03]

this is what I did, I screwed up you guys.

[00:12:53.02]

This was bad.

[00:12:54.05]

And then they get kind
of fired up about it.

[00:12:56.07]

And then they'll be
like, oh but I'm sorry,

[00:12:58.00]

you might wanna do it that way,

[00:12:59.01]

and that's okay.

[00:13:00.03]

And we're like, no, no, we
wanna know what you did wrong

[00:13:02.06]

because we don't want
to repeat your mistake

[00:13:04.09]

and thank you for telling us.

[00:13:06.05]

So I think that's been a lot of what

[00:13:09.02]

when we do things, we
don't, we ask people,

[00:13:12.05]

the other thing that we do is

[00:13:13.07]

we take that advice and we do it.

[00:13:15.05]

And I remember we've worked
with Mark and Tina Hammond

[00:13:20.02]

who are two doors away at Prive Vineyard,

[00:13:22.00]

and I remember initially we came,

[00:13:24.03]

we were introduced to them
and we sat down with them

[00:13:26.02]

and we explained what we wanted to do

[00:13:27.07]

and we had a list of questions,

[00:13:29.08]
and they were kind and
generous and they gave us

[00:13:32.01]
a lot of time and they
answered all the questions,

[00:13:34.00]
and we went away and I called
them back three months later

[00:13:38.00]
and I said, "Okay, I
have some more questions,

[00:13:39.04]
"can we take you out to lunch?"

[00:13:40.05]
And they were like, "Okay sure."

[00:13:41.08]
So we took 'em out to Jory
and we had a long lunch,

[00:13:45.02]
and we're sitting there
and I said, "Okay, so,

[00:13:47.09]
"you told us to do this
and this and this and this

[00:13:49.07]
"and so we did this and
this and this and this

[00:13:51.04]
"and so now we have questions about

[00:13:52.07]
"that and that and that and that."

[00:13:54.01]
And they just sat there

and looked at us like,

[00:13:57.02]

and we said, "What, what did we do?"

[00:13:58.06]

And they said, "You're the first people

[00:14:00.00]

"that have ever done everything
we've told you to do.

[00:14:02.05]

"We've gone through this
conversation so many times,

[00:14:05.09]

"and you guys actually went and did it."

[00:14:07.03]

And we said, "Well yeah,
because we wanted to be

[00:14:09.02]

"like you guys when we grow up.

[00:14:12.03]

"We love your model,
that's what we wanna do.

[00:14:14.05]

"And why wouldn't we do
what you told us to do?"

[00:14:19.04]

If somebody tells you
that and takes the time,

[00:14:21.08]

why wouldn't you do it?

[00:14:22.07]

So I think that really, when
Dave says establish credibility

[00:14:25.03]

I think that really went a long way toward

[00:14:27.08]
being accepted among as outsiders.

[00:14:32.03]
And so that's been one of the things

[00:14:35.00]
we really appreciate from people, too.

[00:14:36.05]
If they're gonna tell us how to do it,

[00:14:37.09]
we're gonna do it.

[00:14:38.08]
So, yeah.

[00:14:42.09]
- [Stephanie] What does
the name Bells Up mean?

[00:14:44.09]
And why did you guys choose it?

[00:14:47.08]
- So, I should say to begin with,

[00:14:49.07]
Bells Up was my name and my suggestion.

[00:14:52.08]
The marketing department--

[00:14:54.04]
- Hated it.
- At first hated it.

[00:14:55.07]
(laughing)

[00:14:57.04]
Not anymore you don't.
- Well.

[00:14:59.08]
(laughing)

[00:15:01.07]
I have my moments.

[00:15:03.06]
It has grown on me, just like you did.

[00:15:06.03]
(laughing)

[00:15:07.01]
Just like a fungus (laughing).

[00:15:10.09]
- Thanks.

[00:15:12.04]
So I was a french horn
player for about 20 years,

[00:15:15.02]
and I wanted to tie the music theme in,

[00:15:17.09]
and she was on me for years
before we had the property,

[00:15:22.05]
she wanted to come up with a
name that she could market,

[00:15:24.08]
and I kept saying the name will come

[00:15:27.08]
when we find the property.

[00:15:29.01]
Because with our luck we'll
have this name in mind

[00:15:32.02]
and then somehow something

about the property

[00:15:34.01]
will end up not making
any sense with the name.

[00:15:37.06]
But I wanted to tie the music theme in

[00:15:39.04]
because I wanted to honor
that part of my history.

[00:15:42.08]
I started playing when
I was in junior high

[00:15:45.00]
and I played all the way through college.

[00:15:46.09]
I was in symphonies and ensembles.

[00:15:49.05]
I was a really good player,

[00:15:51.01]
but I wasn't anywhere good
enough to have a career in it.

[00:15:54.02]
And I knew it.

[00:15:55.01]
But I also knew, I also
have such wonderful memories

[00:16:00.05]
and experiences from my playing days.

[00:16:03.01]
I mean, I got to do
things that most people

[00:16:05.02]
couldn't dream of because I played.

[00:16:08.00]

And I wanted to honor that time.

[00:16:10.06]

And even though I really
don't play anymore,

[00:16:13.00]

I just don't have time
to practice anymore,

[00:16:15.07]

but I wanted to honor that.

[00:16:17.07]

And so when we ended up with
this property on Bell Road,

[00:16:21.07]

it just clicked and I knew
exactly how to tie it in.

[00:16:25.07]

And so what Bells Up means,

[00:16:27.02]

normally when you're playing the horn,

[00:16:29.08]

the bell of the horn,
called the business end,

[00:16:33.01]

sits on your leg and you play,

[00:16:34.08]

with your left hand you play
with the valves up here,

[00:16:37.06]

but you get this moment
every once in a while where

[00:16:40.00]

the composer wants to create

this very dramatic effect.

[00:16:42.03]

So in the score of the horn
part it'll say bells up,

[00:16:45.03]

and at this point the
music's getting louder

[00:16:47.08]

and crescendoing and then
you'll see, as an observer,

[00:16:50.07]

you'll see the horn players
lift their bells in the air,

[00:16:53.04]

and this is just kind of
their moment for dramatic

[00:16:57.01]

and to play out and to
really be expressive.

[00:16:59.07]

And for me it felt like with
all the blood, sweat, and tears

[00:17:03.04]

and all those things are
literal in the case of winery,

[00:17:06.03]

that go into creating a place like this

[00:17:09.02]

and fulfilling a dream,
that it was our time.

[00:17:13.00]

It was really our time to play out

[00:17:14.05]

and to express and to shine

[00:17:16.00]
and so I think it fit
perfectly with kind of our,

[00:17:20.07]
it's very personal, and
it also ties in, I think,

[00:17:24.07]
very well with our wines
and its something that,

[00:17:28.07]
it's great that people ask about it,

[00:17:30.03]
and everybody that comes in asks about it,

[00:17:32.03]
unless they're already musicians,

[00:17:33.07]
in which case they already
know, which is cool, too.

[00:17:37.01]
But we didn't wanna have, we
didn't wanna have kind of a

[00:17:41.05]
run of the mill name.

[00:17:42.06]
I think those things
are easily forgettable.

[00:17:45.00]
We were also told by Kristin,

[00:17:47.07]
the bed and breakfast owner
that we stayed at that,

[00:17:50.09]
don't name it after yourselves,

your kids, your dog.

[00:17:54.03]
And she was right.

[00:17:55.06]
I mean, all those things
have kind of been done.

[00:17:58.01]
And I can say they've
become easily forgettable.

[00:18:00.07]
But when you have something like this,

[00:18:03.00]
it causes people to ask,

[00:18:04.06]
and it's part of our story.

[00:18:05.09]
And people seem to bond
with that, so that's great.

[00:18:08.04]
It's also gotten us a lot of attention

[00:18:10.04]
from symphony players across the country.

[00:18:13.03]
For all the bad things about social media.

[00:18:15.06]
Social media's been a huge
part of our brand development.

[00:18:20.02]
I mean, we've gotten just
unsolicited calls for wine orders

[00:18:24.07]
from Minnesota, New York, Georgia,

[00:18:28.01]
people that are professional players

[00:18:30.01]
that have had pictures shared

[00:18:32.06]
or have somehow heard about us,

[00:18:34.07]
and didn't realize that
there was this unmet need

[00:18:37.07]
for this symphony themed winery,

[00:18:39.08]
but you know, it's a need that

[00:18:42.05]
we're more than happy to fill.

[00:18:46.06]
- [Stephanie] So, what
are each of your roles

[00:18:48.05]
here at Bells Up?

[00:18:49.03]
And how did you guys kind of decide them?

[00:18:51.04]
You kinda talked about how
winemaking was your passion?

[00:18:53.04]
But what are the other things?

[00:18:54.06]
'Cause so much goes into
making wine and selling it.

[00:18:57.02]
- Yeah, well.

[00:19:00.07]

- Sarah's the marketer.

[00:19:01.08]

- Yes, I'm the marketing department.

[00:19:05.02]

- And I do about everything else.

[00:19:06.06]

- Well, yeah, that's probably true.

[00:19:08.07]

I'm the one who pays the mortgage.

[00:19:11.02]

But the winery, our goal is to stay small

[00:19:15.02]

and be stuff that we
could do without having

[00:19:17.06]

really any sort of full time staff.

[00:19:19.07]

We have occasional, we have a great friend

[00:19:22.03]

who comes in and helps
us a few hours a week

[00:19:25.05]

but doesn't wanna be full time,

[00:19:26.08]

so that's been great.

[00:19:29.03]

But when it comes down to
making all the decisions

[00:19:32.00]

and making the wine, we have a
consulting winemaker as well,

[00:19:37.01]

but for the most part,
yeah, I do the marketing.

[00:19:40.01]

And then when it's harvest,

[00:19:42.00]

I'm out there on the sorting line, too.

[00:19:45.09]

I pop in during some
blending trials and tastings,

[00:19:50.02]

but mostly take pictures.
- And you help when we have

[00:19:53.05]

larger groups, groups of
above eight and we need

[00:19:58.00]

an extra hand to help pour.
- I help pour.

[00:19:59.05]

- Then Sarah helps move things along.

[00:20:01.02]

- All open house things, yeah.

[00:20:02.07]

But mostly it's Dave's,
this was Dave's show.

[00:20:05.00]

I mean, I'm here, I think people associate

[00:20:08.03]

both of us with the winery.

[00:20:09.04]

And it's not that I'm not involved a lot,

[00:20:12.06]

because I am, but yeah,
Dave's the one that makes

[00:20:16.03]
all the winemaking decisions.

[00:20:17.09]
And I don't really have a whole lot.

[00:20:22.00]
You make the pick decisions.

[00:20:23.03]
You

[00:20:26.02]
do all the tasting through.

[00:20:27.01]
And he always invites me to
come up and taste through,

[00:20:29.03]
and sometimes I do and sometimes I don't.

[00:20:32.03]
- Not that we listen to what she says.

[00:20:33.02]
- Not that he listens
to what I say anyways.

[00:20:35.05]
But I think it's just being curious.

[00:20:36.06]
I don't think it has anything
to do with my opinion.

[00:20:41.00]
- Well, I've gotta listen to your opinion

[00:20:41.08]
around everything else.
- Everything else.

[00:20:42.09]
- So I've gotta get

[00:20:44.00]
my say somewhere.
- That's his one thing.

[00:20:45.02]
Yeah, that's his one thing
he's allowed to have.

[00:20:47.08]
Yeah, so I think, technically
we make some joint decisions

[00:20:54.07]
with regard to the vineyard
and things like that,

[00:20:57.04]
but I would say Dave's probably
85 to 90% of the decisions

[00:21:03.01]
are what he thinks is best.

[00:21:04.08]
He's done, in addition to being an amateur

[00:21:08.03]
he did go and do the one year
vineyard program at Chemeketa,

[00:21:13.09]
which I'm not gonna get
the name of it right.

[00:21:15.08]
But you did the year there.

[00:21:17.04]
And then he had done a distance oenology

[00:21:19.07]
winemaking program at Washington State,

[00:21:21.05]
which was like an 18, 19-month program.

[00:21:24.02]
So he did go along the way
and get some additional

[00:21:27.09]
education, more formal.

[00:21:30.00]
As well as worked in a retail
wine shop and did some other

[00:21:32.06]
wine related things.
- But also, we've

[00:21:35.09]
brought in people to work
with us to be partners

[00:21:38.08]
that are very experienced.

[00:21:40.05]
I mean, we have a vineyard manager,

[00:21:42.00]
that he and his family,

[00:21:43.00]
they've been doing this for 20 so years.

[00:21:46.09]
And we work together.

[00:21:48.08]
But certainly, it's his area of expertise.

[00:21:51.09]
I know enough to be able to
have intelligent conversations.

[00:21:55.02]
We talk about what we want to accomplish.

[00:21:58.06]

And then there's only so
much I can have my hands on,

[00:22:02.05]

so he's responsible for that.

[00:22:04.08]

And then Sarah mentioned our
consulting winemaker, Erica.

[00:22:07.05]

She's wonderful.

[00:22:08.03]

She's second generation.

[00:22:10.04]

Her father owns another winery,
ADEA Winery over in Gaston.

[00:22:15.05]

And she's been absolutely
wonderful as an idea person,

[00:22:19.07]

as a sounding board.

[00:22:20.08]

She really keeps us from
doing anything dumb.

[00:22:25.03]

And that's important.

[00:22:26.07]

And like I say, it's like we always say,

[00:22:28.08]

we think we're,

[00:22:30.02]

we do pretty good at this but
everybody needs some help,

[00:22:33.09]
everybody needs to have that person

[00:22:36.06]
that kinda helps you

[00:22:38.08]
keep just kinda stay centered and stay,

[00:22:42.00]
keep you on the path,

[00:22:43.01]
and she's done great with that.

[00:22:45.09]
- Yeah, yeah, I mean even
I'll even go to her and say,

[00:22:48.05]
what about this?

[00:22:49.08]
Because I'm thinking from a
sales or marketing perspective.

[00:22:52.07]
And she'll be like, okay,
yeah, we can do that.

[00:22:56.02]
We'll keep that in mind.

[00:22:57.01]
I'll make sure we, for example,

[00:22:59.05]
we're finally going to have
our first harvest this fall

[00:23:02.05]
of our oldest vines, and
we're planning to make rose',

[00:23:06.00]
but I had said to both Dave and Erica,

[00:23:08.02]

"Could we try to get maybe
like a carboy's worth

[00:23:10.09]

"of just straight pinot
from each of the clones

[00:23:13.00]

"just to see what we've got?"

[00:23:14.07]

Just as an experiment, really.

[00:23:16.02]

Not that we would bottle or sell it,

[00:23:17.05]

but more like let's just see.

[00:23:19.02]

And Erica's like, "Yeah, we can do that.

[00:23:20.09]

"That's a good idea."

[00:23:21.09]

So it'll be kinda, it'll be fun.

[00:23:24.06]

So yeah, she's definitely
been a great resource

[00:23:28.00]

and sanity check, I think, a lot of times.

[00:23:31.04]

- I don't think you can do
something like this without help.

[00:23:33.09]

I don't think that, for people coming in,

[00:23:37.02]

but I think that's part of it, too.

[00:23:38.09]
I think it's part of
being successful at this

[00:23:42.04]
is surrounding yourself with people

[00:23:44.03]
that are really good at certain things

[00:23:46.03]
and letting 'em do their
jobs and listening to 'em,

[00:23:49.05]
and there are, like I say,

[00:23:51.01]
there are things that
we're really good at,

[00:23:52.06]
but we're not really good at everything.

[00:23:54.05]
And it helps to have
those other folks come in

[00:23:57.06]
and supplement where we aren't

[00:24:00.08]
maybe quite there on our own yet.

[00:24:06.09]
- [Stephanie] So, for you, you
guys have different answers,

[00:24:09.09]
what's the most important part

[00:24:12.09]
when it comes to making good wine?

[00:24:14.08]

Does it start in the vineyard?

[00:24:16.00]

Is it with the winemaking?

[00:24:17.05]

What part of it makes good wine?

[00:24:20.07]

- I really do think that
it starts in the vineyard.

[00:24:24.09]

And we learned that up close and personal

[00:24:28.02]

in our very first harvest in 2013.

[00:24:31.01]

One of the things we love
about Oregon Pinot Noir

[00:24:34.02]

is that every year tells
the story of the season

[00:24:37.03]

through the vintage.

[00:24:39.07]

And 2013, our first year,
the year's goin' along okay.

[00:24:44.00]

We get to September and it starts

[00:24:46.07]

dumpin' buckets of rain on us.

[00:24:48.07]

And you know, we're
kinda having these looks,

[00:24:50.08]

you're driving through other vineyards

[00:24:52.07]
and you're getting, so you
go by some of these places

[00:24:55.04]
and you're just getting the smells

[00:24:57.01]
of just molding and rotting grapes,

[00:25:00.02]
this vinegary, disgusting,

[00:25:02.07]
and but the thing was
all through these rains

[00:25:05.06]
we kept going back to
our source vineyards,

[00:25:08.01]
and we source from very,
very small vineyards.

[00:25:11.05]
The local, but people that
don't have a whole lot of space,

[00:25:15.00]
I mean five acres and under.

[00:25:17.01]
People that live on the property.

[00:25:19.08]
And as it turns out, we kinda
stumbled into this answer.

[00:25:23.04]
But when you deal with farmers like that,

[00:25:25.08]
they are going to be on
their maintenance programs

[00:25:29.01]
throughout the season.

[00:25:30.03]
In June, July, and August,

[00:25:33.00]
things where if you let
your spray program slip,

[00:25:36.00]
if you don't pick, pull
leaves and thin out the fruit

[00:25:39.09]
when you're supposed to do it,

[00:25:41.05]
you set yourself up for disaster

[00:25:43.05]
if the weather turns sideways on you.

[00:25:46.03]
And yeah, it does happen
in Oregon occasionally

[00:25:48.05]
when the weather goes
sideways on you in September.

[00:25:50.05]
So there were a lot of people

[00:25:52.05]
that lost a lot of crop in 2013.

[00:25:55.09]
There were people I know that
didn't make 2013 vintage.

[00:26:00.03]
When the pickers came to pick
our grapes in early October,

[00:26:05.02]

they were astonished at
how clean our fruit was

[00:26:07.08]
from both of our vineyard sources.

[00:26:10.01]
And so that saved that vintage.

[00:26:12.09]
We really didn't have an option.

[00:26:14.02]
That was our first vintage
and failure was not an option,

[00:26:17.03]
and we had to run with what we had.

[00:26:19.03]
And our growers made that possible.

[00:26:21.07]
So as a winemaker, frankly,
my job is two things.

[00:26:26.08]
One is to find people that
can help us to get clean,

[00:26:34.00]
ripe, wonderful flavored
grapes that are healthy

[00:26:39.01]
and strong and good to go.

[00:26:41.01]
And then my job as a
winemaker primarily becomes

[00:26:44.03]
about not screwin' it up.

[00:26:46.03]
I become a caretaker for all

[00:26:48.07]
of the hard work that
they've done out there.

[00:26:51.02]
And it's about, for me it's
about doing very simple things

[00:26:56.07]
but doing them consistently
and doing them well.

[00:27:00.00]
It's just keeping things clean,

[00:27:01.03]
keeping your barrels topped.

[00:27:03.07]
As you're going through your ferments,

[00:27:05.09]
you're going through
'em as you normally do

[00:27:08.00]
and you're testing and you're smelling

[00:27:09.06]
and you're kinda doing all those things

[00:27:11.00]
and looking for issues as they develop

[00:27:13.06]
and dealing with them right away.

[00:27:16.09]
Just the little simple things
of keeping areas clean.

[00:27:21.02]
Things that never really get talked about

[00:27:22.09]

with the general public,

[00:27:23.08]

but I think anybody in the industry will tell you,

[00:27:26.03]

as winemakers that's probably about 90% of what we do.

[00:27:29.08]

And it really pays off.

[00:27:32.04]

I hear our style referred to as very clean, very elegant,

[00:27:35.07]

and it's all those things that make it possible.

[00:27:38.01]

- Yep, yep.

[00:27:40.01]

I would agree.

[00:27:41.09]

We're on the same page on that.

[00:27:44.02]

- And you know, I also think that's the Oregon way, too.

[00:27:47.07]

I think one of the important things,

[00:27:50.02]

we've always kinda tried to figure out

[00:27:51.06]

what's different about the wine industry here

[00:27:54.04]

versus California.

[00:27:56.03]
And one of the things the
biggest thing, I think,

[00:27:58.03]
is that I think this area is
still very much farm focused,

[00:28:03.00]
versus winery focused.

[00:28:05.09]
And so farmers, as a general
rule, will collaborate

[00:28:09.06]
and cooperate because no farmer

[00:28:11.08]
wants to see another farmer fail.

[00:28:13.08]
And I think that's the biggest difference.

[00:28:16.09]
We've had a little bit of
corporate money come in.

[00:28:20.03]
And there's a little bit
of the vanity project,

[00:28:23.06]
but nowhere near what it is in California.

[00:28:26.05]
And I really think that
the heart of this area

[00:28:28.09]
comes down to the people
that started this industry

[00:28:32.02]
and their families are

focusing in farming first.

[00:28:35.08]

And so I think if that's the case,

[00:28:38.00]

we're always gonna be
different from California.

[00:28:40.02]

Always gonna be different from
anywhere else in the world.

[00:28:44.04]

- [Stephanie] So what are
some of the challenges

[00:28:46.08]

of being a small boutique winery?

[00:28:50.07]

- I'd say one of the first ones

[00:28:51.09]

is getting people to know you exist.

[00:28:55.01]

The industry is great about
referring other customers

[00:28:58.09]

and being helpful, but the reality is,

[00:29:01.02]

as we're sitting here today there are,

[00:29:03.02]

just in the Willamette Valley
about 500 other wineries.

[00:29:06.09]

By the time this goes out that
number will probably double.

[00:29:12.01]

That's really where Sarah

has done a ton of work

[00:29:17.04]
with social media, with networking,

[00:29:20.05]
just kind of trying to figure out

[00:29:22.07]
what are the ways that we're gonna

[00:29:24.05]
be able to get people to come in the door.

[00:29:26.03]
I mean, I believe that
once we come in the door,

[00:29:28.07]
once people come in the door,

[00:29:31.01]
the wines and the views and
kind of all those things

[00:29:33.06]
can speak for themselves.

[00:29:34.09]
I don't really even need to
get in the way that much.

[00:29:37.02]
But it's getting the attention of people

[00:29:41.01]
that have a lot of other choices

[00:29:44.09]
and have their existing favorites

[00:29:47.05]
and getting them to take a chance.

[00:29:52.01]
- Yeah, I would agree.

[00:29:55.01]

The other reason we're small, again,

[00:29:57.06]

Dave and I bring a business background to this, both of us.

[00:30:01.01]

He has, in addition to a law degree,

[00:30:03.03]

he has a bachelor's in business and an MBA as well.

[00:30:07.05]

- Overeducated.

[00:30:08.03]

- He is way overeducated, yeah, totally.

[00:30:11.03]

Overdegreed.

[00:30:13.00]

But for us, when we did this,

[00:30:16.05]

one of the first things we said,

[00:30:18.06]

and Dave particularly, is we don't make a lot

[00:30:23.03]

because we don't anticipate being able

[00:30:25.06]

to sell a whole lot in the beginning.

[00:30:27.02]

So we're 300 to 400 cases a year.

[00:30:31.06]

And the difference is do we make a white wine or not?

[00:30:34.07]

A straight wine like a blanc, pinot blanc.

[00:30:37.03]

So that's the difference
between 300 and 400 cases.

[00:30:40.02]

The sum total of our
production is right now,

[00:30:42.04]

what, 16 barrels in?
- Oh less.

[00:30:44.07]

Oh yes, yeah.
- Right now,

[00:30:46.01]

there's about 16 barrels
in there right now.

[00:30:48.04]

That's it.

[00:30:49.09]

And for us it's not,

[00:30:52.04]

it's about not making
more than we can sell.

[00:30:55.00]

And that's been a really,

[00:30:59.07]

I guess, I don't know,

[00:31:01.02]

I don't wanna pat ourselves
on the back too much.

[00:31:02.08]

- It's been a challenge to

discipline (voice muffled).

[00:31:05.08]

- But a smart strategy business-wise.

[00:31:07.05]

We don't, we're always
amazed at brand new labels

[00:31:10.05]

that come out with 1500 cases.

[00:31:12.03]

We're like, wow, who are you selling to?

[00:31:14.01]

And can you send them to
us, because that's awesome.

[00:31:16.02]

We don't do, we're in awe
of anybody who does that

[00:31:19.03]

because it's like wow.

[00:31:21.01]

You have so much more money than we do.

[00:31:22.06]

But yeah.

[00:31:23.04]

- Well everything we sell is out of here.

[00:31:25.03]

There are a few exceptions to that.

[00:31:27.05]

A restaurant or two
and a wine shop or two.

[00:31:31.00]

But those are very much exceptions

[00:31:34.00]

to what we do 99% of the time.

[00:31:36.06]

I mean, we have always believed

[00:31:38.01]

that the way to survive long term

[00:31:40.05]

is to establish great
relationships with your customers,

[00:31:44.01]

and I think the only way
to do that is to have

[00:31:46.05]

the personal touch and
the personal connection.

[00:31:49.05]

Sarah's always known for saying,

[00:31:51.07]

everything we do is high touch.

[00:31:54.04]

Our website, for example,

[00:31:56.00]

isn't even set up to take orders directly.

[00:31:58.04]

It tells you what the wines are,

[00:31:59.06]

but you're gonna have
to call me or email me

[00:32:01.08]

and we're actually gonna have to have

[00:32:03.00]

a conversation, darn it.

[00:32:05.04]

Because I think that
that is very important.

[00:32:08.01]
It can get very impersonal if you let it.

[00:32:10.02]
And when things are impersonal,

[00:32:11.07]
I think that encourages folks

[00:32:14.00]
to go billions of other places.

[00:32:16.07]
Whereas I think once you bond

[00:32:18.08]
and get to know somebody
on the production side,

[00:32:21.07]
you're far more likely to come back

[00:32:23.04]
and hopefully bring your friends

[00:32:25.03]
and family and coworkers and all that.

[00:32:28.01]
And hopefully we can make
those things happen over time.

[00:32:32.01]
It takes longer.

[00:32:33.03]
And it's a lot more work and it is a grind

[00:32:37.07]
to keep doing this over and over.

[00:32:39.09]
Every time somebody new

comes through the door,

[00:32:41.08]

you're telling your story over and over,

[00:32:45.02]

and we love sharing it,

[00:32:48.01]

but kinda like anything else,
it's how do you keep your

[00:32:53.02]

pitch, for lack of a better word,

[00:32:55.00]

from getting stale when you tell it?

[00:32:56.09]

And that's hard.

[00:32:58.04]

We struggle with that sometimes.

[00:33:00.02]

And you have those days when you're

[00:33:02.03]

on your fourth appointment
of the day and you're like,

[00:33:04.07]

I'm so happy we're having
people coming in the door,

[00:33:06.09]

and on the other hand my
voice is about to die on me,

[00:33:09.06]

and I just wanna go take a nap.

[00:33:11.06]

And that's the thing.

[00:33:14.00]

Now the hope is that
all of this time will,

[00:33:17.05]
over the long run, will be able
to kind of get more and more

[00:33:22.01]
and we can do more sort
of personal chatting

[00:33:25.00]
with our guests as
opposed to story telling,

[00:33:28.06]
and build relationships that way.

[00:33:31.09]
But I would say that's the thing.

[00:33:33.04]
There's a cost to building
those relationships.

[00:33:36.01]
But, from what we see in the long run,

[00:33:39.03]
we think that that's
for us, the best model.

[00:33:42.04]
And it'll, I think, put us
in a much better position

[00:33:45.09]
as time goes on.

[00:33:47.00]
- I mean, again, we didn't
wanna have employees.

[00:33:49.09]
I've worked for myself long enough.

[00:33:51.06]

I've worked for other people, too,

[00:33:52.06]

but I've worked for myself long enough

[00:33:53.09]

to know, no thank you.

[00:33:55.03]

I didn't wanna manage people.

[00:33:57.04]

I have a husband to
manage and that's plenty.

[00:34:00.00]

But (laughing)

[00:34:01.06]

but yeah, and Dave, I
think, felt the same way.

[00:34:05.05]

I mean, he came from corporate America,

[00:34:07.00]

and he saw what it was like,

[00:34:08.02]

and he wanted to create something tangible

[00:34:10.09]

and not have to deal with the
headaches of managing a staff

[00:34:13.08]

and having somebody else
represent who you are

[00:34:16.07]

and what you're trying
to make with the wine.

[00:34:18.02]

And so yeah, for us is it's really,

[00:34:20.01]
yes, we make wine, yes we have people

[00:34:21.08]
come in and taste it by appointment,

[00:34:23.02]
yes we're selling wine.

[00:34:25.02]
But really what we built
it around is the experience

[00:34:28.05]
that you have when you're here.

[00:34:30.01]
And that's really a whole lot
more than just selling wine,

[00:34:34.00]
because we want people to walk out of here

[00:34:35.03]
and feel like they made a new friend

[00:34:36.09]
and that happens to sell wine.

[00:34:40.00]
That's our goal.

[00:34:41.02]
So yeah, so we approach it
a little bit differently.

[00:34:43.02]
But yes, it's working so far.

[00:34:48.00]
- [Stephanie] So, is the
goal to then get bigger?

[00:34:51.07]
How big do you guys want to get?

[00:34:53.07]

- My absolute max, as Sarah said,

[00:34:55.08]

we make about three to 400 now.

[00:34:58.00]

We could, over the,

[00:34:59.09]

we could do a little bit
more than double that.

[00:35:03.05]

But there is a maximum.

[00:35:05.02]

And I think for us that maximum

[00:35:06.09]

is in the neighborhood of 1,000 cases.

[00:35:10.05]

And as far as growth, and we
get asked about this a ton,

[00:35:14.05]

I mean, it is funny,

[00:35:15.08]

I've seen people, they'll
have a really good year

[00:35:18.06]

and they'll double production,

[00:35:20.00]

and then they'll struggle to sell.

[00:35:21.07]

I'm like, no, no, we'll go from

[00:35:23.06]

let's say three to 400 to 350 to,

[00:35:26.07]
we're gonna build very, very slowly,

[00:35:29.04]
and bump up by maybe

[00:35:30.08]
a barrel or two at a time.
- By the barrel.

[00:35:32.06]
And that's the thing.

[00:35:33.08]
You can make as much wine as you want.

[00:35:36.04]
And if you can't sell it
or sell nearly all of it,

[00:35:39.03]
it doesn't really do you any good,

[00:35:41.00]
and it creates more
problems for you in the end.

[00:35:44.02]
And it has to always,
as we've been saying,

[00:35:46.03]
it always has to be
manageable for two people,

[00:35:48.06]
plus some friends and some part time help.

[00:35:51.03]
I look at our physical space and say,

[00:35:53.08]
yeah, we could, we'll
have the ability to add

[00:35:56.05]

a few more barrels here and there,

[00:35:58.00]

and we can stack them up a
little bit toward the ceiling.

[00:36:00.06]

But the building that
we have is pretty much

[00:36:04.01]

what the barrel room ever will be.

[00:36:06.08]

And that's sort of
where we want it to end.

[00:36:10.04]

We don't want this to become
just another business.

[00:36:14.00]

I mean, yes, financially
it has to support itself

[00:36:16.07]

and we want it to put in that position,

[00:36:18.02]

but from everything we've
seen, it can do that,

[00:36:21.06]

without getting big size wise.

[00:36:24.08]

And we don't wanna have to look
into national distribution.

[00:36:28.02]

I don't wanna have to fly to New York

[00:36:30.04]

and internationally to
make sales to distributors.

[00:36:35.05]

We're just not in the volume business.

[00:36:37.02]

I have no interest in doing that.

[00:36:39.02]

We're not high end or anything like that.

[00:36:42.08]

We're not the cheapest wines in the valley

[00:36:45.09]

but we're far from the most expensive.

[00:36:48.06]

And that's exactly where we wanna be.

[00:36:51.00]

And so just kind of when
you put all that together,

[00:36:54.02]

that means that you really have to follow

[00:36:56.02]

a very, very certain model and
a very certain set of steps.

[00:37:00.05]

And it works for us, but that's the thing.

[00:37:02.05]

I think you've gotta have,

[00:37:04.06]

you've gotta take that time

[00:37:06.01]

and you've gotta be willing to get down

[00:37:08.06]

and spend all that real quality time

[00:37:10.09]

with everyone that comes in the door.

[00:37:15.05]

- [Stephanie] So is there anything,

[00:37:16.03]

you kinda touched on this a little bit,

[00:37:17.06]

is there anything else in
the future for Bells Up?

[00:37:21.04]

- Well probably the biggest thing is our

[00:37:23.01]

estate vineyard--

- Estate vineyard.

[00:37:24.08]

- Is gonna be coming online.

[00:37:26.04]

Starting this year we're
gonna start with rose'.

[00:37:30.06]

I think the grape quality will
be perfectly fine for rose'.

[00:37:34.06]

I don't think we're gonna be
ready probably for another two

[00:37:38.01]

to possibly three years,
but I hope it's almost two,

[00:37:41.01]

for an estate pinot noir program,

[00:37:43.02]

but we'll get there eventually.

[00:37:45.09]

- The seyval blanc is probably the most--

[00:37:48.02]

- Yeah, yeah, so why don't you

[00:37:49.04]

tell 'em a little about that.

- I can.

[00:37:50.06]

So we have what we believe
to be the Willamette Valley's

[00:37:54.03]

first planting and only
planting of seyval blanc.

[00:37:58.06]

- That's S-E-Y-V-A-L.

[00:38:00.01]

- Yeah, B-L-A-N-C.

[00:38:01.09]

And we believe also that it's
the second planting in Oregon

[00:38:05.02]

with from what we can tell
the first one was in the 80s

[00:38:09.00]

by Girardet down in Roseberg.

[00:38:12.02]

And I believe they maybe have maybe

[00:38:14.03]

an acre of it or a half acre.

[00:38:15.06]

It's not very much.

[00:38:17.09]

But yeah, it was a grape that Dave

[00:38:21.02]

worked with a lot in Ohio.

[00:38:23.00]

It's a hybrid.

[00:38:25.02]

We don't have a lot planted.

[00:38:26.05]

What, did we plant 250 vines or so?

[00:38:28.07]

- About.

[00:38:32.03]

- You can do a lot of things with it.

[00:38:34.04]

But really we planted it
because it tells our story

[00:38:37.06]

very well from Cincinnati.

[00:38:38.07]

It was one of the wines that
Dave won one of his amateur

[00:38:42.05]

national winemaking competitions with,

[00:38:44.04]

and we felt like it was
a really good story,

[00:38:46.05]

and we also feel that
it's important to have

[00:38:49.00]

a little bit of diversification
in the tasting room.

[00:38:52.00]

So, whereas a lot of places
are a 100% house of pinot,

[00:38:56.05]

we absolutely love Oregon pinot and, what,

[00:38:59.06]

three of our, typically
three of our five wines are--

[00:39:03.03]

- Or six.

[00:39:04.01]

- Yeah, are pinot based.

[00:39:07.02]

We've also tried to have something

[00:39:09.00]

a little bit different as well.

[00:39:10.09]

So, we have been sourcing a pinot blanc,

[00:39:13.05]

which will eventually
become the seyval blanc,

[00:39:16.03]

and then we also make a syrah

[00:39:18.06]

from the Oregon side of Walla Walla.

[00:39:21.03]

- From the Freewater area.

- Yep, yep.

[00:39:23.02]

So yeah, we like to have a
little something different

[00:39:26.08]

in our tasting room because not everybody

[00:39:30.02]

wants to taste pinot and
sometimes people come in

[00:39:32.05]
and they say, oh, we're
really pinoted out.

[00:39:34.05]
Do you have something other than pinot?

[00:39:35.04]
Thank heavens.

[00:39:36.05]
So, we try to be a little bit more varied

[00:39:40.01]
and respectful of what people want.

[00:39:43.01]
So yeah, so that's kind of exciting.

[00:39:44.08]
- It is interesting, though, too,

[00:39:46.00]
one of the things we're
kinda trying to figure out,

[00:39:48.07]
I think, is that we've seen even just in

[00:39:51.01]
the last couple of years, we've
seen a shift in the market.

[00:39:54.01]
I think it used to be,
when people used to come in

[00:39:57.00]
and were just looking for pinot.

[00:39:58.09]
And now they're coming in
looking for pinot, yes,

[00:40:01.05]

but for other things as well.

[00:40:02.09]

I think they're looking to
diversify their experience.

[00:40:05.01]

So one of the things we're
trying to figure out is

[00:40:08.01]

how much do you get
into making other wines?

[00:40:13.01]

It's something as an industry we've spent

[00:40:14.06]

a lot of time talking about,

[00:40:16.01]

how, if you're gonna
make another red or two

[00:40:19.06]

or a series of whites, kind
of what's the right balance?

[00:40:23.08]

And for a small winery like ours

[00:40:25.02]

that doesn't make a
whole lot of wine anyway,

[00:40:27.01]

I think it's particularly challenging

[00:40:29.03]

because you have to make
enough to make it worthwhile,

[00:40:32.02]

but at the same time you
don't wanna make too much

[00:40:34.02]
and get caught with
stuff that isn't selling.

[00:40:36.01]
So that's kinda something
that we're watching

[00:40:39.07]
and we'll work our way through

[00:40:42.03]
and eventually we'll figure that out.

[00:40:46.04]
- But the blanc, the seyval
blanc we planted in 2015.

[00:40:50.06]
So, we had really one really
beautiful cluster last year.

[00:40:54.04]
It was gorgeous.

[00:40:56.00]
So this year we're hoping for two.

[00:40:57.03]
No, I think we'll have
a little more this year,

[00:40:58.09]
but I don't think it'll be
enough to make anymore than,

[00:41:01.06]
again, maybe carboy's
worth, if we're lucky,

[00:41:03.09]
just to see what we've got.

[00:41:04.07]
Not for bottling,

[00:41:05.05]
but we're hoping maybe next year, like 18.

[00:41:08.02]
- We'll see.

[00:41:09.00]
The seyval grape has sauvignon
blanc parentage to it.

[00:41:12.00]
And I've often wondered
why more sauv blanc

[00:41:15.01]
isn't planted in this area because I,

[00:41:17.04]
well personally I've always loved it,

[00:41:18.09]
but it grows very well here.

[00:41:20.07]
And I've never really understood,

[00:41:23.01]
maybe it's just because chardonnay

[00:41:24.04]
is getting back into fashion again.

[00:41:26.06]
I know pinot gri
obviously is very popular.

[00:41:29.02]
But it does seem like there is a place

[00:41:30.08]
for kind of these other white grapes,

[00:41:33.01]
and it's, the seyval is just an absolute,

[00:41:36.09]

it's full of flavor and just,

[00:41:38.08]

there's a lot going on with
it complexity wise, too.

[00:41:41.06]

So, that's gonna be a lot
of fun to bring forward.

[00:41:44.03]

And I think that's gonna give us

[00:41:45.07]

a pretty good lineup goin' forward.

[00:41:51.09]

- [Stephanie] As new
additions to the industry,

[00:41:55.04]

where do you think the Oregon
wine industry is going?

[00:41:58.02]

In more particular, the Willamette Valley.

[00:42:01.07]

(laughing)

[00:42:02.06]

- Boy, that depends on
the day and who you ask.

[00:42:05.00]

It's changing.

[00:42:06.09]

Well the last couple of years

[00:42:08.03]

things have changed quite a bit.

[00:42:10.06]

You see now the Kendall-Jackson's come in

[00:42:14.05]
and made some big time acquisitions.

[00:42:17.02]
And that's kind of already
having a trickle down effect

[00:42:22.04]
on the rest of the industry.

[00:42:24.00]
I certainly don't expect
those acquisitions to stop.

[00:42:27.05]
And I'm sure that other companies

[00:42:30.03]
will try to get involved as well.

[00:42:31.09]
And you know, it's
interesting, when you go around

[00:42:34.07]
and you talk to folks and there's

[00:42:36.08]
a lot of hand wringing about it

[00:42:39.00]
and kind of are we losing our way?

[00:42:42.00]
Are we losing our soul?

[00:42:43.07]
I guess it depends on how you look at it.

[00:42:46.09]
On one hand, being corporate gets

[00:42:51.02]
more notoriety to the area.

[00:42:52.08]

It allows some of these wines

[00:42:54.02]
to get into retail
establishments across the country

[00:42:57.05]
that they may otherwise not.

[00:42:59.09]
On the other hand, it
definitely changes when you go

[00:43:02.03]
to the tasting room what
the experiences are like.

[00:43:05.03]
And from our perspective,
since, as a small place,

[00:43:08.00]
we're not really interested
in competing with them

[00:43:10.09]
for store shelf space.

[00:43:13.01]
So they don't really affect us there.

[00:43:16.04]
And I don't think that the
desire for a place like ours

[00:43:21.07]
that's small and intimate and
personal is ever gonna change.

[00:43:25.04]
And so I think, if anything,

[00:43:27.02]
the more corporate influence that comes

[00:43:29.09]

and the more ritzy some of
these tasting rooms get,

[00:43:33.07]

I really do think it will
help us in the long run

[00:43:38.01]

because I think at the
end people are gonna want

[00:43:40.08]

to come to a place where they
feel like they can connect

[00:43:43.07]

with the folks that are
pouring the wine for 'em.

[00:43:46.02]

And that's harder to do when you're in,

[00:43:50.01]

when you're a corporation
or when you're in just

[00:43:52.08]

kind of an over-the-top marble palace.

[00:43:55.03]

I think it makes people long
for something a little simpler.

[00:44:00.07]

And that we can do.

[00:44:05.03]

- I don't think I really
have anything to add to that.

[00:44:08.05]

I think from a grape volume perspective,

[00:44:12.07]

when we moved here in 2012 we
had several people say to us,

[00:44:15.08]
oh you guys, you gotta
plant your own vineyard,

[00:44:17.03]
'cause originally we
weren't even thinking about

[00:44:19.03]
really having a, I mean, yes,

[00:44:21.06]
it would be romantic to have a vineyard,

[00:44:22.04]
but we weren't really thinking, oh yeah,

[00:44:23.09]
we need a vineyard, too,
so that we have a source.

[00:44:27.07]
And because we were very
familiar with the sourcing model.

[00:44:31.07]
But when we moved here we
had so many people say,

[00:44:33.07]
oh grapes, it's really hard
to find grapes right now.

[00:44:35.07]
Gosh, it's really hard.

[00:44:36.08]
And maybe it was in '12,
but in the last five years,

[00:44:41.07]
that's not the case anymore.

[00:44:42.08]
Several vineyards have come online.

[00:44:45.00]

And prices are going down,

[00:44:47.06]

whereas five years ago it was,

[00:44:49.02]

oh they're likely to
keep going up, up, up,

[00:44:51.00]

and so I think it's
been interesting to see,

[00:44:54.07]

I don't know, the people
that were telling us that,

[00:44:58.00]

I don't know what they were thinking.

[00:44:59.03]

Maybe they just didn't realize
how much was coming online

[00:45:02.04]

or would be coming online.

[00:45:03.09]

So I think from that perspective
that's been interesting

[00:45:07.05]

to see how many more people are growing

[00:45:10.02]

and putting grapes out on the market.

[00:45:14.06]

And it seems like every time I turn around

[00:45:15.05]

there's somebody else, oh
I wanna have a vineyard.

[00:45:17.08]

I'm like maybe you should
look into filberts.

[00:45:21.05]

But yeah, it's been,

[00:45:23.09]

that's been a real interesting thing

[00:45:25.02]

just from a market perspective

[00:45:27.03]

that I think a lot of
people got into vineyards

[00:45:29.02]

maybe 10 years ago, or 15 years ago

[00:45:32.03]

and thought, oh, they were gonna cash out.

[00:45:34.00]

And that really, more of them got into it

[00:45:36.05]

than they all realized.

[00:45:37.07]

And so it hasn't really
been the big cash cow

[00:45:40.02]

that I think people
thought it was gonna be.

[00:45:42.04]

So from a sourcing perspective,

[00:45:44.08]

there's certainly a lot
more grapes out there.

[00:45:46.02]

And certainly, the

economy's good right now.

[00:45:48.07]

People have cash and if
people wanna have a label

[00:45:52.05]

they can have a label
and they can buy grapes

[00:45:55.01]

and that's, I think that's one reason

[00:45:56.09]

we have 732 wineries
in the state right now.

[00:45:59.07]

It's a lot easier right
now in the good times

[00:46:03.04]

to get into this,

[00:46:04.03]

and so what do I see for the future?

[00:46:07.04]

I'm really interested to see what happens

[00:46:09.03]

the next time we have
an economic correction.

[00:46:11.09]

It'll be interesting to see what happens

[00:46:13.03]

with all these new
vineyards and new labels.

[00:46:18.00]

And I don't know.

[00:46:21.03]

It'll be interesting to see

[00:46:22.07]
where the market goes here in the valley.

[00:46:29.05]
- [Stephanie] And then,
you guys have kind of

[00:46:32.01]
gone around this question a little bit,

[00:46:33.07]
but not many people start
completely from scratch anymore,

[00:46:37.08]
making their winery
and planting a vineyard

[00:46:40.05]
and doing that whole thing.

[00:46:41.07]
That's kind of a dream for some people

[00:46:44.02]
that they end up just buying something

[00:46:46.01]
that's already been made.

[00:46:47.02]
What advice do you have for
people that have that dream

[00:46:49.09]
and wanna start from
scratch like you guys did?

[00:46:53.01]
(laughing)

[00:46:54.09]
- I better answer this question.

[00:46:57.08]

- Hazelnuts, go into hazelnuts.

[00:46:59.08]
Or pot, go into pot.

[00:47:01.07]
(laughing)

[00:47:04.09]
- I honestly think that
the biggest thing is

[00:47:06.08]
when you start, ask
people that have done this

[00:47:10.06]
a lot of questions and listen to them,

[00:47:13.06]
because they've done this,
they fought the battles,

[00:47:15.09]
they will teach you how to
avoid the toughest battle.

[00:47:19.02]
And to save money.

[00:47:20.07]
That's one of the biggest things

[00:47:23.01]
that we can point to
specifically as benefits.

[00:47:25.09]
We have not made any mistakes

[00:47:28.05]
that have been crippling financially.

[00:47:31.03]
I mean, we've made plenty of mistakes,

[00:47:32.06]
but none of which have been crippling.

[00:47:35.03]
And we have heard a lot
of stories from folks

[00:47:38.01]
that have made exactly
those crippling mistakes,

[00:47:40.03]
and that's one thing you
just can't afford to do.

[00:47:44.00]
And then keep it simple and
understand your limitations.

[00:47:48.08]
I think that's something both Sarah and I

[00:47:50.09]
have done very well.

[00:47:53.02]
We understand there are
things that we're very good at

[00:47:55.05]
and then there are things
that we really need help with.

[00:47:58.01]
Bring those people in and
listen to what they say

[00:48:01.06]
and just do it.

[00:48:03.03]
And get into it for the right reasons.

[00:48:05.05]
You are not gonna get
rich ever doing this,

[00:48:08.06]
but if it's your passion
people will love you

[00:48:11.08]
and they will come back.

[00:48:13.00]
It does work,

[00:48:14.08]
but people will see it.

[00:48:17.07]
And they will see it when
your heart is into it.

[00:48:20.05]
They will see it when
your heart is not into it.

[00:48:24.00]
And so will the rest of the industry.

[00:48:26.08]
- Yeah, I think you better
have the kind of winery

[00:48:30.05]
that you like.

[00:48:32.03]
So if you like doing
weddings and special events,

[00:48:35.07]
great, go do it and tell me who you are

[00:48:37.08]
because I'll send lots of people

[00:48:39.04]
so you'll get calls all the time.

[00:48:41.07]

And yeah, if you, I mean
for us, we like being small.

[00:48:46.00]
I mean, this is what we like to do.

[00:48:47.08]
And we've had people that I guess are,

[00:48:53.08]
they can't believe anybody
would wanna be this small.

[00:48:55.08]
And we're like, yeah.

[00:48:58.06]
So we get that a lot.

[00:49:00.06]
I mean, if your thing is
you're a trust fund baby

[00:49:03.04]
ad you've got the money and you want

[00:49:04.09]
a marble palace winery, go for it.

[00:49:07.08]
Why not?

[00:49:08.06]
Own it at least.

[00:49:09.05]
But, yeah, I think you really
have to know what you wanna do

[00:49:14.03]
and be very confident in
that and not be swayed

[00:49:17.09]
by what other people say.

[00:49:20.06]

And I know we've had,

[00:49:23.04]

Dave's winemaking style
tends to be very gentle.

[00:49:27.07]

He is not a heavy extraction,

[00:49:31.04]

heavy tannin, heavy oak kind of maker.

[00:49:35.00]

And that's not everybody's style.

[00:49:36.07]

And occasionally people don't get that,

[00:49:39.03]

and that's okay.

[00:49:40.06]

But that's what we're passionate about.

[00:49:42.04]

We like classic Oregon pinot,

[00:49:44.05]

and that's what we're gonna make

[00:49:46.02]

because that's what we like to drink.

[00:49:47.05]

And that's what we want
to share with people.

[00:49:50.03]

And it's not everybody's
cup of tea, and we get that.

[00:49:53.06]

We are not--

[00:49:55.04]

- But that's the great thing about being small.

[00:49:56.04]

We don't have to make wine for everybody.

[00:49:57.05]

We just have to make wine for us, the right people.

[00:50:02.00]

And then they'll keep coming back.

[00:50:05.04]

That's the goal.

[00:50:06.04]

- We're just, this isn't, I mean you can look around.

[00:50:09.00]

We're not a marble palace winery.

[00:50:10.04]

We call ourself undomain.

[00:50:12.09]

Because we're just not, we're not pretentious.

[00:50:16.03]

We're not, the image buyer doesn't come here,

[00:50:20.01]

and that's totally fine.

[00:50:21.09]

We don't make wine for the 1%,

[00:50:24.01]

and that's a deliberate choice,

[00:50:26.07]

but that's what we wanted to do,

[00:50:28.07]
and that's what,

[00:50:30.02]
I mean, that's, yeah,

[00:50:31.09]
so I think you have to
really know who you are

[00:50:33.09]
and what you wanna be and stick with it

[00:50:36.07]
and don't let other people
try to convince you to be

[00:50:40.08]
any other way.

[00:50:42.05]
So, yeah, that would be what I would say.

[00:50:47.02]
- [Stephanie] Well, that's all

[00:50:48.00]
the questions I have for you.

[00:50:48.08]
Is there anything else
that you wanna talk about

[00:50:51.07]
that I should have asked that I didn't?

[00:50:55.05]
- I don't think so.

[00:50:56.06]
- No you covered it.

[00:50:57.04]
I mean, really, it's, I think.

[00:51:00.01]

- We had somebody, I had
somebody ask me the other day

[00:51:02.00]
how have the two of you managed

[00:51:04.04]
to do this without getting divorced?

[00:51:07.09]
And I think that their comment was

[00:51:10.08]
I've been married 17 years
and I've never even been able

[00:51:13.07]
to paint a wall with my husband

[00:51:14.09]
without a major disagreement.

[00:51:16.06]
And I think, in our case
we have a lot of respect

[00:51:21.07]
for each other's strengths

[00:51:23.01]
and we're willing to
listen to each other--

[00:51:24.05]
- Well thank you, dear.

[00:51:25.08]
- Yeah I do.

[00:51:27.03]
But--

[00:51:28.04]
- That's the first time
I've ever heard that--

[00:51:29.03]

- Yeah, whatever, now it's documented for posterity.

[00:51:32.03]

But we do have a lot of respect for each other's strengths,

[00:51:35.00]

and we know when to stay out of each other's way.

[00:51:37.09]

And we know, we had a disagreement the other day,

[00:51:41.04]

but we compromised on it,

[00:51:42.09]

and I think--

- yes we compromised,

[00:51:44.07]

we did what she wanted.

- Yeah, pretty much,

[00:51:46.00]

yeah, so it was good.

[00:51:47.06]

(laughing)

[00:51:49.03]

- No, I think that's true.

[00:51:50.09]

It's in a ways like any other working relationship

[00:51:53.08]

that you're gonna have with anybody.

[00:51:55.03]

We're around each other.

[00:51:56.04]

We're also raising a child.

[00:51:57.06]

So we have that to deal with as well.

[00:52:01.00]

And I think that's exactly right.

[00:52:03.05]

You have to have respect for each other.

[00:52:05.01]

You're gonna disagree.

[00:52:06.05]

I mean, both of us have,
both of us are stubborn.

[00:52:09.08]

We have strong opinions,

[00:52:11.06]

and we think that when we
get an idea in our heads

[00:52:15.02]

we think that we're right about it.

[00:52:17.05]

I think what helps is
that there is a point

[00:52:20.09]

where we open our ears and
we listen to each other.

[00:52:25.00]

And we take, we take that
old Benjamin Franklin quote

[00:52:28.08]

about doubting our own infallibility,

[00:52:31.01]

and we kind of take a step back and said,

[00:52:33.05]
does she have a point?

[00:52:35.08]
Sometimes no.

[00:52:37.01]
But most, most often yes.

[00:52:40.00]
And you know, when you
kind of realize that,

[00:52:42.07]
that's when you have to say okay

[00:52:44.02]
and live to fight another day.

[00:52:46.06]
- Well and I would say, too, it's that

[00:52:48.09]
when we are at a stalemate with something

[00:52:50.09]
with regard to the winery, whatever it is,

[00:52:53.06]
we always have this deep well of mentors

[00:52:56.06]
that we can say, you know what,

[00:52:58.03]
okay, we're not gonna get.

[00:52:59.07]
We can't agree on this.
- We need a mediator.

[00:53:01.04]
- We need a mediator.

[00:53:02.02]

We need a third party.

[00:53:03.01]

But I'm sure somebody
else has had this argument

[00:53:05.00]

with their business partner, too.

[00:53:06.02]

Let's call so and so
and see what they say.

[00:53:08.03]

And so I would say having that
network of trusted mentors

[00:53:11.07]

that you can ask anything
and they will give you

[00:53:14.07]

the straight, 'cause actually,

[00:53:17.03]

just about everybody
that's ever mentored us

[00:53:18.08]

we have said, by the way,

[00:53:19.06]

there is a degree of marital
counseling involved in this.

[00:53:21.09]

And so that's, they take that seriously.

[00:53:25.05]

Most of the businesses that we
have modeled ourselves after

[00:53:28.04]

are pretty much typically
husband and wife.

[00:53:32.04]

Or maybe one of them is more involved than the other,

[00:53:35.09]

but yeah, that's been a big,

[00:53:37.05]

that's often a comment that we'll ask.

[00:53:40.03]

Well how did that business decision impact your marriage?

[00:53:42.05]

That's something we ask people.

[00:53:44.01]

And I would say that's been, that's been really good.

[00:53:46.08]

So yeah, I would say, too, if you're considering

[00:53:49.07]

doing this with your spouse it's helpful

[00:53:52.06]

to have some other folks to weigh in

[00:53:56.01]

and give you that sanity check and be the person to blame

[00:53:59.02]

if it screws up, if it doesn't work out.

[00:54:00.09]

Well, we did what you told us,

[00:54:02.00]

and it's his fault, not ours.

[00:54:05.06]

So that's it.

[00:54:07.08]

- [Stephanie] Any questions?

[00:54:08.07]

Okay.

[00:54:09.05]

Thank you so much.

[00:54:10.09]