

# [TRANSCRIPT] WineSoundtrack.com Interview of Dave Specter, Bells Up Winery by Allison Levine, Jan. 9, 2020. First broadcast on Oct. 5, 2020.

## Speaker 1 (00:00):

Welcome to Wine Soundtrack USA, listen to the passion with which producers narrate their winery and their world. In 30 answers discover their stories, personalities, and passions.

## Allison Levine (00:12):

Hello, friends and listeners of wine soundtrack. This is Allison Levine. And today I'm with David Specter of Bells Up Winery in Newberg, Oregon in the Willamette Valley. David, welcome to Wine Soundtrack. And tell us about where we are. We're sitting up here in your tasting room, overlooking vineyards, but tell me a little bit about Bells Up Winery.

## Dave Specter (00:29):

Oh, well thank you Allison, for having me on. So we're sitting up on a South facing slope on Chehalem Mountain. We're looking South across the Valley. As we sit here today, we can't see any of it, cause we're sitting in fog thick as pea soup. But on a nice day, you could see all the way down to the Salem Eola Hills area, which is about 45 minutes to an hour to the South. We're on a 10 acre piece of property. It's a relatively young vineyard overall. The oldest vines that we have planted are six years old. At the moment we're growing mostly Pinot noir, but we also have a cool little white grape called Seyval Blanc, which we're the only planting of here in the Willamette Valley. So, we're a small little boutique. We call ourselves micro boutique.

## Dave Specter (01:09):

We say we're too small to be boutique. We make 500 cases a year. And we all we do our private seated tastings. Our goal is to focus on a making great wines, but then to be giving people great experiences when they come and visit us and give you the opportunity to, to sit down and hang out with the folks that are doing all the hard work. Years ago I think we used to have a lot more of those places, but nowadays it's more of a lost art. So, we're kind of wanting to bring it all back.

## Allison Levine (01:37):

Wonderful. So, you said that you have Pinot Noir planted here, and Seyval Blanc. You're making probably more wine than what your vines are producing right now. So you're also sourcing some fruit?

## Dave Specter (01:47):

Yes, we're also sourcing fruit. Right now, as of 2019, our fruit constitutes about 40% of our overall production. The rest of it with the exception of our Syrah comes from very small vineyards located about 20 minutes from where we're sitting here. So, it's all, hyper-local the exception, as I mentioned is the Syrah. I wish we could grow Syrah here in the Valley consistently, but that's, that's the price you pay for being able to grow phenomenal Pinot Noir is that you do limit yourself a little bit. But we are able to get fruit from a wonderful source on the other side of the Cascades. It's an Oregon vineyard out toward Walla Walla. What we do kind of as a compromise for that is that I make my Syrah in a style very much like Pinot. So it's a lot smoother, has all the flavor you're looking for, but it's not as jammy, not as tannic, not as heavy. And for Pinot drinkers here, they have really taken to it.

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**Allison Levine (02:42):**

So you're very small making 500 cases. Intent is not to grow much larger than that, but where can people find your wines? Are they just in the tasting room or are they in any markets?

**Dave Specter (02:52):**

So we're just in the tasting room. We do not distribute. We do however, sell direct to consumer. We ship wine any and everywhere except for Utah and Kentucky, but everywhere else we can, we can get wine to you. But we, we only sell it out of here. And in fact, even just to kind of take the old school approach a little further, our website is not even set up and it's specifically set up not to take orders. We really want to be able to develop relationships with our customers. And even if it's just an email that that's fine too, at least we've had a conversation. So you can call us, you can email us, but either way, we're going to make sure that we have some amount of dialogue back and forth.

**Allison Levine (03:33):**

Fantastic. What is your first memory relevant to wine? I know you're not originally from this area. When were you first introduced to wine that you remember?

**Dave Specter (03:40):**

Oh my goodness. I took a very circuitous approach to getting into this business, which included going to law school. And when I was in law school, I was very fortunate to have some older friends who, I mean, I wouldn't say that they were connoisseurs or anything like that, but they certainly knew how to pick a good, solid wine. And when I was growing up, my parents were not drinkers at all. And so I really was not introduced much to quality wines, quality beers, what have you, until I got into grad school. My friends were kind enough to take me under their wing and kind of introduced me to some things. And the more I got into it, the more interested I got and I started being able to be one of those geeks that, kind of started talking about it from, from place to place and time to time and had a lot of fun with it. And I think that's, that's the big thing. You have to have fun doing this, or you're doing it wrong?

**Allison Levine (04:33):**

Right. So one of your, so your first memories were not until you were an adult, obviously you started to drink a lot more wine. Is there one memorable wine, one particular wine that stood out that really kind of changed your view on wine or set you down a path or was one of those memories, an "aha" moment. I mean, you may have had a few, but is there one that stands out and what was that one?

**Dave Specter (04:52):**

I wouldn't say that there's a specific wine, but, but definitely my "aha" experience came after I'd graduated law school. I went to visit a friend, who was stationed in Germany and we took a trip over into Burgundy for a weekend and spent that three days roaming around Burgundy having really no idea what we were doing, but being able to taste just these amazing locally produced wines. And kind of really seeing the European experience on wine, where there isn't the pomp and circumstance that we here in America so much put on it. It's just beautifully made stuff. It's all local, it's all, almost all of it is

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small batch and it's all goes just perfectly with the local cuisine. And that was really my moment of realizing, even though I was probably — being in my mid twenties at the time — probably too young to be able to put it in perspective. But now that I'm a little older, I came to realize that, I could recognize there was something about, wine that was really special. And then as time went on, I was kind of able to put it in a little bit more context and that's really what's made being part of the wine industry community so enjoyable.

**Allison Levine (06:01):**

So since you started as a more of a drinker and a collector and found your way into being a wine maker, if we were to walk into your wine cellar, whether it's a small little refrigerator or somewhere under the winery or somewhere hidden, I don't know, maybe we can find it. What would we find in there?

**Dave Specter (06:18):**

Oh my gosh. So, so your first problem would be actually getting to it. It's in our house and it's, and I always, I always tell people, because I'll get asked about how you store wine. And I always say, you don't have to have a fancy, thousand dollar system. A basement works great. Well, we have a crawlspace under our house and because we live on a hill, there's a part of the crawl space that does have about a seven and eight foot ceiling. So it works pretty well. But what happens is in order to get access to that part, you have to kind of bend over, crawl over a gas line and a sewer line, and then eventually sort of get your way over to where I put some wine racks at the bottom.

**Allison Levine (06:53):**

Do you actually remember what's in there?

**Dave Specter (06:58):**

I don't remember everything that's in there, but I can tell you, you will find a little bit of everything. You'll find wine that I made as an amateur back before I ever became a professional wine maker. I kept a bottle of every single amateur wine I ever made. God only knows what they're tasting like these days, but we will not be finding that out anytime soon.

**Dave Specter (07:18):**

But my wife and I, some of the best experiences that we have are going to wineries and it's , the wines are great, but it's the overall experience. It's getting to talk to the people there. We've had so many wonderful wines well-made wines and not, from the big fancy wine makers, we prefer places like us, the smaller, more personal touch, where you can hear the stories when you've got the people in there that are so passionate about what they're doing, and they love to share it as much as we do. It's what makes us connect and the bottles themselves, they're great wines. You're not going to find any multi hundred dollar wines in there, but every bottle that you will find is something that we can tell a story about.

**Allison Levine (07:57):**

So is there a particular wine there that you opened recently that tasted really well?

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**Dave Specter (08:01):**

Oh gosh, many, many fortunately, but one of the, one of the bottles that I opened, fairly recently was a Seyval Blanc. From my former mentor, Joe Henke back in Cincinnati, Ohio. Joe is an urban wine maker there and he has a wonderful little operation. And Joe has, has been, has mentored me, basically through the years. And, and Joe introduced me to this particular grape and his style is very different from the way I make it. He makes it barrel fermented more of a Chardonnay style, but I've always just loved it. And it could just kind of brings back memories of working with him and, him kind of guiding me. He was the kind of guy who was a very, very Zen, just, just very laid back, but, intense when he needed to be, but he could put everything in perspective. It's one of the things that made him so special. And so, whenever I'm, whenever I have a bottle of his wines, I can always just sort of close my eyes and think back to those times that we had and learning about the process.

**Allison Levine (08:59):**

Yeah. I don't think most people would think that it would be a wine from Cincinnati that you would refer to, but that's fascinating.

**Dave Specter (09:06):**

It's kind of us. I mean, we always say you have to be a little nuts to be in this business in the first place. And we wear that well, I think. But it really comes down to, it's amazing nowadays you can get fantastic wine in many places that you don't normally expect to see. And some places you have to kind of dig through it a little bit more, but eventually people that know what they're doing and they can get access to good quality grapes can turn out some amazing products in sometimes the most unexpected places.

**Allison Levine (09:38):**

Well said, well said. Do you think there's a such thing as a perfect variety?

**Dave Specter (09:46):**

Heck no. First of all, there, isn't a perfect anything. Let's be honest there. Second of all, everybody has a completely different palate. The things that I tend to look for and really enjoy in wines are going to be the complete opposite. I mean, put it to you like this: If I were the typical, wine consumer, California Chardonnay would almost not exist because I'm not a fan of oaky, buttery, white wines. But many are

**Allison Levine (10:09):**

Old school, California chardonnay.

**Dave Specter (10:11):**

To be fair. Yes. But we all have our different palates. We all have the different things that we enjoy and there are no wrong answers. It really all comes down to what the individual likes. I've had a lot of great wine in my life from a lot of different producers. And, and I think often the differences in what I taste between, let's say a \$200 wine and a \$40 wine are just often in the marketing and in the fluff, great wine

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is great wine. And as long as I said, as long as you've got great grapes and you know what you're doing, you can probably make great stuff.

**Allison Levine (10:48):**

Getting to know wine. And on that note that everyone has a different palate: What's your opinion about wine critics and scores?

**Dave Specter (10:55):**

I think they can be helpful in certain situations, but I have to say that overall, what we tend to see is, every critic has, much like we as individuals do, they all have things that they personally prefer. I have not run into very many critics that I thought were good at judging wines based on this particular style that the winemaker has chosen. We have a saying, you'll, you'll hear a lot in the, in our business of you'll have people that make wines for scores. And usually what that means is bigger, heavier, fuller bodied wines. I don't make wines like that. I make softer, more elegant red wines that are in the traditional Oregon Pinot style. So particularly the larger publications, we understand how that works, we understand and we don't view it as something that's awful, but for us, it's just doesn't make sense for us. So, we stick to our style, we stick to the types of wines that we enjoy. And we do that for a couple of reasons. One is it makes it a lot easier to sell wines that you personally can stand behind and that you like and can get excited and passionate about. And the second reason is that if the business goes in the tank, we've got a lot of wine to drink. So we better like what we produce.

**Allison Levine (12:21):**

I never thought of it that way, but, okay. So for somebody who hasn't tasted your wine yet, what do you think they're missing out on?

**Dave Specter (12:26):**

For me, when I think about what wine should be, it should be versatile. It should be able, we've got enough stress in our lives. We shouldn't need to stress about our wines. And you'll see this so many times when you're preparing dinner and you're looking at what's in your rack and you're thinking, Oh my God, what am I supposed to create that's going to fit with what I'm making for dinner and do I have to... Okay. I want wines that are going to be usable in many different circumstances with, or without food. So I make whites and my rosé fuller bodied, no oak on any of my whites. My Rosé does go into older oak, but the purpose is to make a rounded rosé, but without any oak flavoring. But point is, I want that structure and substance to both of those. I want them to stand up to food. I go the opposite way when it comes to reds, I'm looking for softer, more elegant. I don't want something that's overwhelming your palate. I want something that's going to play nice with many different things that you can do. Pinot Noir is an amazing, great in its ability to do those different things and be able to be used in so many different ways. And it's just one of the reasons why being here in Oregon and making wines here has just been a dream come true.

**Allison Levine (13:41):**

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So if space aliens were to land on your property right now, which of your wines would you want to present to them?

**Dave Specter (13:45):**

Well, first of all, who says they haven't? It's so funny. I get asked a lot of questions about what's the favorite wine you do.

**Allison Levine (13:57):**

Ah! But I didn't ask you your favorite. Cause I would never ask a winemaker to pick their favorite child.

**Dave Specter (14:02):**

But wouldn't, I serve the aliens my favorite child though? Maybe not. I, I don't know. We'll see. I don't, I don't know. I think we're nice. I wouldn't want them to go away. I don't, I don't make any wines that are terrible. So I don't think anything's going to make them go screaming for the hills. I guess what it comes down to is I'd ask them, I guess I'd say, what do you like? everybody likes something different. I, I look at my wines like my kids in that sense of each one has a role to play. When, when somebody comes to the tasting room here, you're going to probably have five wines and they're all going to be very different from each other. that's a little more unusual here these days in Oregon, because there's so much of a focus on Pinot Noir and you'll get so many different Pinots. And our goal is to give people clear choices. So I would say that if I were to pick one, I would give them the best idea of what I do. I would probably give them our flagship Titan Pinot Noir. It's a blend of at least it's a blend of two vineyards, three different clones or strains of Pinot noir. And the purpose of my purpose with that wine is to shape it and structure it to be well-rounded to roll like a wave across your tongue. It is what I would call sort of the everyday drinker. And so I would probably choose to, I would probably choose to introduce it that way.

**Allison Levine (15:21):**

See, you picked your favorite child today. I know some people who will say that on any given day, you could pick their favorite child.

**Dave Specter (15:29):**

And we have, we have one of those too. It depends on the day.

**Allison Levine (15:35):**

So for you as a wine drinker, red, white, or rosé?

**Dave Specter (15:38):**

It depends. As we, as we sit here on a day in mid January, when it's about 35 degrees outside, I'm going red. If we're in the middle of the summer and we're having a cookout, I'm probably going Pinot Blanc or the Seyval. My Rosé would be actually, the Rosé is a perfect fall or Thanksgiving wine. I know it's a little bit unusual, but my Rosé is a little darker, a little fuller bodied. It tends to go better in those situations. I freely admit, I think like most of my customers, it's, it's seasonal part of it. It's, what's my mood, am I,

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am I feeling brooding on a, on a day like this, then I'm probably going to go red. If I'm feeling happy go lucky, I'm probably going to go for a white or rosé. It's just one of those things. You go with what you feel and, that's, that's the, I think one of the beauties of wine is that it kind of lends itself to adding that bit to your day and your mood and your experience.

**Allison Levine (16:37):**

Well, so as you're saying so much goes with your mood and your experience, how do you approach food and wine pairing? Do you think there are rules to follow white wine and fish red wine and meat? Or do you look for something else when you're pairing? Or is it sort of a come, what may?

**Dave Specter (16:51):**

I would say it's more of a come what may. I think that, years ago, a lot of the, a lot of the ingredients that we have available to us now to be able to cook ours are so we're, it's a, so much of a bigger world that the things we have available to us. I mean, I remember when I was growing up, it was, whatever you could find in the grocery store. And oftentimes that was very, very basic spices. Now you have access to darn near everything under the sun in one way or another. So I don't really think so much about, about whites with fish or that kind of thing. What I tend to think about more than anything are, are two things. One is how is the spice? What is the food spice like? That's going to depend whether certain reds will work better than others or what white will work better than others.

**Dave Specter (17:38):**

The other thing I think about is the weight of the food itself. I mean, even, even with something like fish, when I think about something like a, a white fish or something, that's something, a rockfish, for example, which is, is flakier and lighter there, that screaming for a white wine pairing. Of course, the flip side is, with here being an Oregon it's traditionally salmon country. So, of meatier fish, like salmon there, you're looking at something more like a Pinot noir that maybe the white will work. Maybe it won't. But like I say,, I think about weight, I would say more than anything else.

**Allison Levine (18:13):**

I think your rosé, which I'm sipping right now, would go well with salmon.

**Dave Specter (18:16):**

Definitely. Definitely. And it's, it's not, it's not many, it's one of the things that we do a little differently, we, we make rosé in a bigger style, again, because I want this to be a wine that if you want to put this with food fish or otherwise will work very well. On the other hand, Turkey. Sure. It'll work great too. That's that's why we tend to sell a lot of it around Thanksgiving as well. People will stock up around the holidays and, again, just kind of having those options at different ways to use it as has really been, very, very good.

**Allison Levine (18:44):**

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So I'm curious about something. You are an attorney by trade a tax attorney, nonetheless. So very, I don't know if I'd say litigious, but someone who's very detail oriented and someone who's very structured and follows rules. And now you're a winemaker living in a vineyard. You spend time in your vineyards, these are your babies now, and you're intimate with them. Do you ever talk to them?

**Dave Specter (19:10):**

Yes. And some days I have nicer things to say than others. It is, it is interesting. I would, I've never been litigious, but, but you're certainly right. And it's, it's one of the things that has been, at least initially one of the biggest challenges for me being a part of this business is that when you're a lawyer, you are used to micromanaging, you are used to being in control. You are now moving into a business where you are in control of absolutely nothing. You have, and, and it's funny. I say it's kind of in many ways, made me a better parent because I've come to realize that parenting is exactly like growing grapes and making wine. You have influence over what goes on in the choices that you make. Much like I can influence my child, but I cannot control a thing that goes on.

**Dave Specter (19:59):**

And it's mentally, it's one of those things that you sort of have to come to grips with. In one of the things that working with Joe Henke years ago taught me was, it, it's the mental part of this, more so than learning tools, techniques, and those sorts of things. And the science, all those things of course are important, but you have to get mentally prepared as to how to do it, how to be able to accept that you're going to have different results every year. You can do all the same things. You're going to have different results. And, Oh, by the way, if mother nature decides that she's going to roll through tomorrow and put a tornado through your, your vineyard, there is nothing you can do about it.

**Allison Levine (20:36):**

Right? Absolutely.

**Dave Specter (20:37):**

So as I like to say to my friends back in the Midwest on the East coast, I said, I now understand why farmers are so religious.

**Allison Levine (20:45):**

So you've been here a few and, and you're getting, this is a family business. And, and you were saying that it's you and your wife, and you don't have a big team, but I'm sure a few people come in and help you during harvest. And so I'm curious if you've set any rituals that you do at the beginning of harvest to kind of mark a new year.

**Dave Specter (21:03):**

Oh my goodness. Rituals. Well, there's usually a prayer that all the equipment's going to work, I would say that's number one. It's, it's one of those things. During harvest, especially as a small operation, so many things happen so quickly. Once we start to get roughly into the middle of September, everybody



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starts to compare their weather apps on their phones and it's, one says, it's going to pour down rain for the next week. The next one says, nah, it's going to be sunny. And so we're all sort of having these discussions in the industry. You get so busy and so much is going through your mind that it's really hard in that moment, at least to kind of step back. But one thing that we do every year is we do the blessing of the grapes, sort of the way it's been done traditionally in Europe. we, we take, we, we do it a little differently. We're, we're taking a sparkling wine and we're dousing the first, the first vintage through the, or the other first grapes through the line in that particular year. Fortunately, being a small operation, we're not putting in the 20 hour days that, that they are at some wineries, but when you're doing this for what, even as we're doing it, you're pretty tired at the end of the day. So you're not trying to complicate things too terribly much. And, and you're right. We have a lot of amazing people that come up and volunteer to help us sort the fruit during harvest. it is, we, we've really tried very hard to make this a community. And I think that for the people that have really caught on with us, that's what they've appreciated most of all.

**Allison Levine (22:29):**

Well, so you know that bottle of bubbles over the first one, there's your, there's your good luck ritual right there.

**Allison Levine (22:36):**

So when you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

**Dave Specter (22:39):**

Oh my gosh. I wanted to be about a million things. I wanted to first be a football player. Then I wanted to, at some point I thought I wanted to be a farmer for some reason, even though I don't really have farming in my family. And I never once imagined I would end up being a winemaker. it was just like I say, not my parents never really drank. It was just never something that was part of my life until I got a little bit older. And, it's, it's funny a lot of people, as I've, I've learned, a lot of, especially here in Oregon, get into this business as a second career in a second life. I mean, I'm certainly that way too. So, so often, we just learned that life will turn in ways that you just don't expect.

**Allison Levine (23:19):**

And so what do you do in your free time if you have any?

**Dave Specter (23:23):**

There's free time??? Oh my goodness. Well, I have a lovely daughter, and a wonderful wife. And so much of my time is spent on, on those duties. when you're on, when you have a small operation like this, you wear a lot of hats. So, I'm the one that's running the tractor in the vineyards. I'm making the wine. I am selling the wine too. I mean, when people come our tasting room, I'm the one that they're going to meet and I'm the one that's going to be walking them through the wine. So all those things just take time, a lot of the hobbies that, I used to have, collecting and things, a lot of it has sort of been, I'd say the late, a little bit, the building of the business really, which, we're still in, we've come a long way, but it takes so much time and so much effort and energy that it's just hard to find those spare moments.

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**Allison Levine (24:12):**

Well, I'll just as a side note, the winery's called Bells Up and I know you're on Bell Road, but it's also a French horn and you're a former French horn player. Hopefully you'll start picking that up again and get back in shape.

**Dave Specter (24:25):**

I hope so. It would be nice. The first thing that has to, my poor horn — which is the horn that I've had since I was in high school — needs some work. Everything is stiff and the valves aren't quite working, so it would need to get up. Yeah. I played horn for 20 years and one of our first decisions, when we started the winery was how would you brand? And we wanted to brand around the music theme for a couple of reasons. I mean, one is, we, when we, when we pointed, when people walked in, we wanted them to feel like they weren't walking into our place. We wanted them to feel like they were walking into a shared space. So we didn't want to name the winery after ourselves. we, we thought that it was, we thought it was kind of egotistical to do that, but the other part of it was, it's just, just from a marketing perspective, I think the easiest thing for people to forget are people's names. you hear it all the time. Oh, I'm so bad with names. And I was that way too. I mean,

**Allison Levine (25:20):**

What was your name again?

**Dave Specter (25:21):**

Yeah, exactly. Right. I don't even remember what my own name is on some days, but, but I remember I remember Sara's name and Naomi's name and that's, those are the important ones. Right. But, so, so the music theme, we said, okay, I mean, not everybody played the French horn obviously, but everybody loves music of some kind. And I think this was a theme that, that we could brand around and that people could share the experience. Each of our wines are named after a piece of music that has a lot of really great horn parts to it. The name of the winery was actually the very last thing that we came up with. We were waiting to find the property to tie something about the property location in with the theme. And as you said, we're fortunate enough to find a place on Bell Road. And it was just, it was, it just clicked. It was absolute perfect. Couldn't have hit it any better. And for those of you that don't know, Bells Up, has a very specific meaning to French horn players.

**Dave Specter (26:13):**

Normally when we're playing the instrument. Now, of course, I always love to do this visually, but you can't do that on podcasts, but the bell of the instrument, the business end where sound comes out, is normally sitting on your right leg. And with your left hand, you're holding the horn up. But that that's where it normally sits. And the horn, the horn is interesting because it's the only instrument where it's meant to be with the sound comes out sort of backwards. it's not out toward the audience the way trumpets are or trombones, and it's not up the way tubas are. you, you have to be a little weird to be a horn player too. So every so often though, you will get a moment when the composer wants to create a little dramatic flourish. And so when this happens, there'll be a notation in the horn score that'll say bells up. And it's coming at a time when you've got a crescendo in the music and everything's getting a little

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louder. And then when this moment happens, you'll see the horn players lift the bells of their horn up into the air. And this is our moment to be the stars of the show.

**Allison Levine (27:11):**

I love it. It's fantastic. And it's fortuitous to be on Bell Road. And just to reiterate what you had said, your wines are called Rhapsody and Prelude and Titan and Candide and Villanelle. So all after songs and parts of classical music. So I'm curious, do you have a particular favorite singer or group? Are you a classic music junkie or do you venture outside of classical music?

**Dave Specter (27:36):**

I venture way outside of classical music. I, I think, I, it, the great thing about classical music is it can lead to the appreciation of all the other music forms. I, I would, as, as a, kind of a, more of a classic rock guy, as, especially as I get older, I mean, the groups that, the groups that always got to me were kind of the nerdy groups, cause I was kind of that kind of guy. So Rush is probably my favorite band of all time. And I know they're divisive as heck, but I just love them so much. The artistry. I'll tell you how the devices are there. My wife loved my lovely wife, absolutely hates them. And in fact, I think oftentimes we considered ending the relationship because I was a fan, but I mean, you go with, you go with what you like and what appeals to you. And their musicianship always sort of took me back to a lot of the musicianship of being in a symphony. I mean, you had three guys up on stage that were able to create the fullness of sound of something so much larger, you know? And so those are the sorts of things that, that appeal to me, but I'm also a big Ben Folds fan and, in the, in the alt scene, but it's, it's, it's so much fun. It just sort of whatever it's, whatever hits you and means something and, just kind of feels right, I guess.

**Allison Levine (28:51):**

Well, I'm going to have you hold your thoughts on music, cause we're going to come back to that. But, while Rush may create some disharmony between you and your wife to create harmony for the two of you, if you're planning a romantic evening, what wines would you be opening up?

**Dave Specter (29:07):**

Hmm. I don't know, Sara, what wines would we be opening up? I would go back to something I said a little bit ago when I, when I talked about, with the wines that we like to drink, it's about what evokes memories. So what I'll probably pick and, and yes, it'll probably be need picking because Sara's the one that's going to send me down to the basement and crawling over that, that gas line she's going to, I'm going to pick something. That's going to be evocative of a place that we've been and memories that we've shared. And there'll be things that when we open it, whether it's at home, whether it's at a restaurant, we can talk about, Oh yeah, wasn't it fun. And to go back and you can kind of relive just for a few minutes and have a smile, and just considering, how busy we are and how stressful our lives can be. Just take that time to be able to close your eyes and think back to the time when you weren't worried about, what was going on and, trying to do 25 things at once and all that, and just kind of remember those times when things were okay, were a little bit little bits.

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**Allison Levine (30:07):**

Wow. I'm looking over your shoulder to Sara, who's sitting behind you and seeing if she's nodding in agreement, if that makes for a romantic evening. I think, I think so. I think you're winning points there. You lost points on the Rush, but ...

**Dave Specter (30:20):**

I lost points for years on that. I've just, I've just come to realize it is what it is.

**Allison Levine (30:24):**

When you look back at all the years in the different careers you've had and in your life, is there a piece of advice that someone gave you along the way that you kind of carry throughout, whether it's a specific thing or a more general approach?

**Dave Specter (30:36):**

I think that there are two things that for me are incredibly important that various people have said in different ways. Probably the first one is that life is too short to be going down a path where you're miserable. We, we only get one shot at this thing. a big part of our story is, is me walking away from a career that I was good enough at, but that just did not. I was just a miserable person to be around. and I was miserable at it. It was not good for my family. It was not good for me. It was not good for anybody else around me. Do not be afraid to make the change. The other thing is in kind of one of the first things that happened when I left the, my legal profession was that people would ask me, how do you feel like you've thrown away all of that, all of the, the effort of, of going to law school and paying for law school. I always say, no.

**Dave Specter (31:28):**

What you do all of all in the course of your life, whether you're in school, whether you're in a career, you are building skills, those skills you will carry with you, and you will use every aspect of your life. I mean, in this business, for example, we are one of the most heavily regulated industries that you will find. I use my legal training all the time, if for no other reason, even if it's just the same on legal fees to call, call lawyers and say, Hey, can we do this or that? Or what have you. Understanding how to read contracts, understanding how finances work and being able to speak intelligently about those sorts of things. Never feel like you are wasting something because, Oh, you've gone down a path and okay. It didn't turn out the way you were expecting. It wasn't the best thing. Okay. That's all right. You've learned and move on and that's okay. We'll find, find something else. Something that you can be passionate about, even if it takes you a little bit. I mean, it took me 10 years before I found something that really struck me the way making wine does. It will take as long as it takes. The end result is far more important, and you'll learn so much along the way. And it's know, you always hear the journey matters. Well, the journey matters in the sense that what you learn along the way that can help you get to where you are.

**Allison Levine (32:45):**

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Absolutely. Very well said, and in a way, giving us advice at the same time. So your own advice is, is passed on. So when you look back at your career, what would you say is one of your proudest achievements to date?

**Dave Specter (32:59):**

Oh, which career are we talking about?

**Allison Levine (33:01):**

I don't know! I mean, you could have a proud achievement, I don't know.

**Dave Specter (33:07):**

I mean, it's, it's so funny, being here in this business, when we started out, I think a lot of people thought we were absolutely insane to be doing this. And, and as we always say, they weren't wrong, but what I think what I've been the proudest of is actually not so much, the individual wines that I've made, it's the relationships that we've built, both in the industry and with our customers. I mean, I doing things the personal way that we do them here at the winery has led us to have a customer base that is second to none in terms of just quality of people. I mean, it's, you get to know them as individuals, you get to a point where when our club members, especially the local club members come in, we, we spend no time talking about the wines. It's always about life and what's going on and how things are going.

**Dave Specter (33:53):**

And I think, when, when we get pictures that our customers send us of the experiences that they're having with our wines, they're having a celebration dinner and our wine just happens to be sitting at the table when we have one of our, one of our customers is in the national symphony in Taiwan and getting pictures from her as, as she's is she showing, enjoying these wines, as, as we've seen, so many people have just, we've been such a, we're just a small part of their lives, but it's the thing that I'm so proud of. It's the most rewarding part is that those folks think enough of what we've done to include us in the, the memories that they're making. And I think at the end, those are, those are the things that we take with us and, and carry with us. And so it's just, it's so touching to be able to be part of it.

**Allison Levine (34:44):**

A beautiful sentiment. So complete the sentence for me, a table without wine is like...

**Dave Specter (34:50):**

A child without candy... Longing for something it doesn't have.

**Allison Levine (35:01):**

If you were to imagine a table or at a restaurant and the paparazzi, we're snapping photos, because someone is sitting at that table, but at that table, it was a bottle of your wine. Who would you want that person to be?

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**Dave Specter (35:12):**

So I, I think the person that I would, that I would choose and either, or so many that I could choose, but what, from somebody who has really influenced my, my music appreciation and really has helped shape what we've done here at the winery would be Gustav Mahler, the composer.

**Dave Specter (35:28):**

So Mahler wrote, Mahler was as a composer who wrote long brooding symphonies that gave players like the horns horns. So many opportunities to show and shine and just really play out. We, we, the very, in fact, the very first wine that we named our Titan Pinot noir is named after his symphony, number one, the Titan symphony. And I would want him there as a way to say, thank you. Mahler had a very, as did most composers in his day had very complicated life and, and, he was also Jewish. So he had some additional issues to deal with as well. I would want more than anything to say, thank you. And, for, for spending your time to create these amazing works, that, we've been able to appreciate years and years later. And for those of us that played the instrument with as much passion, pieces that challenged us and made us want to be better.

**Dave Specter (36:28):**

and and just, just to be able to, to develop and grow as both, as players and as people. We always say, unless you're being challenged, how will you ever grow? And it's playing pieces like that, that, that make you work so hard, but are so much fun at the same time. You know? So I think it would be, we, we like to say we named the Titan as a tribute to him. And so I think if we were sitting at the table, I think that would be a pretty doggone good way to go.

**Allison Levine (36:57):**

And that went full circle in a way, because the wine you would have given the aliens was the Titan. I mean, look at that.

**Dave Specter (37:04):**

So, and I, and I probably play the symphony as well while I was at it. I mean, it's the problem, is it the only thing about, but, it's funny, one of the questions that I get from people they come in and they say, Oh, how, how can we hear the pieces played on real-time? Yeah. But the problem with some of them is that they're so long, you don't Mahler, didn't write any symphony shorter than 45 minutes. And, that's, the tastings don't last long enough to get the full experience of, of the symphonies.

**Allison Levine (37:33):**

So I'm going to come back to that in a second, because I have a few thoughts, cause we know Mahler was very deep and dark and brooding, as you were saying. So first of all, I want to ask you, if you were going to a deserted Island, what three wines you would take with you? I know that's, it seems off topic, but we're going to get back on topic.

**Dave Specter (37:47):**

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So I, I'm not going to answer by specific makers the way I'll answer it is, is like this. I'm going to take three different types of wine. Let's let's go do that. I would absolutely want to take a, seyval blanc. It's something that I just don't think in the long run I could live without. It would just bring back way too many wonderful memories.

**Allison Levine (38:06):**

Are you able to talk about a region you might want the wine from?

**Dave Specter (38:08):**

Oh, the seyval would no doubt be from, from Oregon. we, we would want, we would definitely want that, do that now that what I probably would take, I would probably take my own, on that. I would, I, as, as much as I love Oregon Pinot noir and certainly one of them would be Oregon Pinot. The third would be one of my absolute weak spots for wine. And that is Petit Verdot. I see. So little Petit Verdot and you do see it from time to time, but you don't see very much of it bottled as a single varietals. My wife and I, just before Christmas, went down to Roseburg about three hours South. And we were able to find a couple producers that were doing Petit Verdot. And, I think Sara could even hear me squeee, with a little "Squeee! Petit Verdot!" Some of my favorite Washington growers do it as well. It's, it's such a neat little grape that, like I said, it's, it's primarily, it's a blender, but when it's on its own, it's just fun. And that's kind of the thing. It, it just makes me close my eyes and smile and say, you know what? It's just fun.

**Allison Levine (39:12):**

It's just not what I would have expected, but I like that. I liked to be a little surprised. So now going back to Mueller and music and how you've named your wines after that, we play a little game where we pair wine with music. So I want to go back and I know that you've named your wines after portions of concertos and things like that. So to pull it out, but it's what you would want to listen to. Now, Mueller's deep and brooding. I know your wines aren't necessarily deep and brooding, but if I pull out a couple wines just in general, tell me what you'd want to listen to or what it would inspire, what style music. So let's start with your Rhapsody, the, the, I mean, sorry, your, seyval blanc, not your pinot blanc, but your seyval blanc. This unique hybrid grape that you're growing here in Oregon as the only people.

**Dave Specter (39:57):**

Yeah. So the, so the seyval is a real fun one. Now the name on that actually works really well because it's a, the name is Helios, which is Carl Nielsen's Overture. And, it's, it's all the idea behind the overture is it's about a sunrise and this wine just speaks so much to the sun coming up and it just feels bright. And this is the beginning of the day. So, I try to, as much as I can, sort of get the names to match the character of the wines, it doesn't always work that way, but Helios is one that just works extremely well with it.

**Allison Levine (40:30):**

Well, and is that the song you would listen to? The piece?

**Dave Specter (40:33):**

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I would say so, yes.

**Allison Levine (40:35):**

Okay, so I'm going to have to venture out of your wines since use your wines have already been paired with the song. What about the seyval blanc of your mentor in Cincinnati? You can pull from your Rush or your other music. Like what you, the mood, it puts you in, what you'd want to, what it makes you think of, or the energy it gives you.

**Dave Specter (40:56):**

When I, when I'm having, when I'm having a barrel fermented white, there is, there is so much body and structure in it. It sort of reminds me of just a very, almost like an A-tonal type of piece where there can be some dissonance and some discordance, but somehow you can take a step back from it because, normally we don't, we don't, with most whites, we don't think about as, as being in Oak and barrels. So when you have this, there's kind of this dissonance sometimes, mentally that I think that we can have. And so kind of some of these, just some of these, maybe like a Schoenberg type of piece where, you've got some of this or an Ives type of piece where you can kind of bring in some of these, very dissonant chords, but that there's, there is structure. There is something there that you can grab on to.

**Allison Levine (41:47):**

Okay. So I'm going to give you one more, since you just got so excited, when you said Petit Verdot.

**Dave Specter (41:54):**

Gosh, Petit Verdot to me is like...

**Allison Levine (42:00):**

Pop music?

**Dave Specter (42:01):**

Petit Verdot is like being at a Rush concert and rocking out to Y Y Z. I mean, where we can all just, we, we, those of us who are Rush fans, we've heard this, we've heard this instrumental 500 gazillion times. And when we go to the concert, it's one of those ones where like, yes, please, please bring it, bring it. And every chord, every, you know where everything's going, but there's just, it just puts that smile on your face and it makes you bounce. And like I said, that's just what Petit Verdot does to me.

**Allison Levine (42:30):**

That's a perfect pairing. David, tell me something, you're busy building your winery here. You're still growing and still developing. But if you got the chance to travel, what's one place at the top of your bucket list, one wine region, that's at the very top that you want to go to.

**Dave Specter (42:46):**



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Italy. I don't even have to think twice about that. Italy has been on my bucket list forever. I am. In addition to Verdot, I'm an absolute sucker for Italian reds. As a matter of fact, at the bottom of our Hill, we've got about three acres that is yet to be planted. And we are going to start putting a little bit of Italian red down there, this coming fall, as kind of a, as part of an answer to how much Pinot there is here in the Valley, we're going to try to do some extreme Northern Italian reds and see. It's an experiment, but see how it works, but we're really excited about that. But, but going to Italy would absolutely. I mean, between the food and the wines, I might not ever come home. I don't speak a word of Italian. I don't think it would matter. I think, I think we would all, I think we would all get it, but it almost even doesn't matter where in Italy, because wherever you go, there is going to be something fantastic. Whether you're in the South, whether you're in the North, it's going to be phenomenal and locally produced and with heart and soul.

**Allison Levine (43:50):**

Well, while you're planning your escape of never returning from Italy, just remind people how they can come visit you before you run off to Italy.

**Dave Specter (43:58):**

Absolutely. So you can find us online at [www dot bells up winery](http://www.bellsupwinery.com). That's all one word, B E L L S U P winery.com. You can also call us at (503) 537-1328. And you can email us at [info. I N F o@bellsupwinery.com](mailto:info@bellsupwinery.com). And if you're going to be in the Newberg area, as well as I said, we do all of our tastings by appointment. We never double book our appointments. So whether it's two of you or 12 of you, you will be the only ones in the winery. And I'll be the one leading you through it and telling you the stories of kind of how we got into the wine business in the first place in and guiding you through the stories on each of the wines. And so please do come and see us. We would absolutely love to meet you and get to know you a little bit.

**Allison Levine (44:42):**

Well, that's perfect. And now I want to go taste your wines. So thank you for joining us on Wine Soundtrack.

**Dave Specter (44:47):**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Speaker 9 (44:49):**

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