

SB PEOPLE

Photographer **MARK ROBERT HALPER**'s intimate portraits in *Sunlight and Water* celebrate the romance of wine country, the passion of the vintners, and the artistry of great wine. Herewith, is a selection of just a few of those winemakers.

WES & CHANDA HAGEN CHARDONNAY AND PINOT NOIR

Wes and Chanda Hagen spent their honeymoon picking and crushing the grapes from their 2000 Vintage, which resulted in a Pinot Noir that wine critic Robert Parker called 'brilliant', 'complex' and 'promising'; just like their marriage! Wes believes that dining with friends, family, and wine is one of the last meaningful rituals left in the country. In addition to being the assistant winemaker, Chanda is also the shepherdess to the property's flock of miniature sheep, which eat the winter weeds and fertilize the vineyard. Look for their new Syrah label, *Axis Mundi*, named after the symbol, which represents the cosmic center of the world. "I'm trying to stay true to the fruit, the vintage, the place, and the vines in this label," he says. *Clos Pepe Vineyards and Estate Wines*, 805-735-2196, closepepe.com.



JENNE LEE BONACCORSI

VIIGNIER, CHARDONNAY, PINOT NOIR, AND SYRAH

Since the untimely death of Michael Bonaccorsi (master sommelier turned winemaker) in 2004, his wife Jenne has carried on his legacy. She continues to source from some of the best vineyards in the Central Coast including Sanford and Benedict. She considers herself a traditionalist and a realist who is in the winemaking business because of her love for wine, not money. Known for their Pinot Noir, this winery has been named one of the top 30 Pinot producers in California by *Wine Spectator*. *Bonaccorsi Wine Company*, 310-994-3207, bonawine.net.

PAUL LATO

CHARDONNAY, PINOT NOIR, AND SYRAH

Polish born and a professionally educated sommelier, Paul Lato left his native country for Toronto, eventually landing on California's central coast in 2002 to pursue his dream of creating great wine to accompany great food. He brings his experience of the world into his varietals and enjoys cooking eclectic dishes from a variety of cultures to serve at wine tastings. Paul feels that his 2008 vintage is his best yet. "It has great harmony and balance," he says. "The quality of the vintage is evident." Look for his new wine sourced from Hilliard Bruce to be released in spring 2011. *Paul Lato Wines*, 805-260-3210, paullatowines.com.



**JOHN AND STEVE DRAGONETTE, >
BRANDON SPARKS-GILLIS**

PINOT NOIR, RHONE BLENDS (SYRAH/GRENACHE/MOURVEDRE), AND SAUVIGNON BLANC

This family operation, which released its first commercial vintage in 2005, is quality-obsessed and completely hands-on. Every bottle of wine that leaves the winery is 100 percent produced by family members—there are no employees. John, Steve, and Brandon's wives are all part of the effort and in the not-too-distant future they look forward to getting assistance from John's son Nicolas, 8, daughter Sophia, 6, and Steve's son Jackson, 5. The Dragonette logo represents the old alchemist symbol for the "elixir of life" or "drinkable gold." They will be introducing new grape sources from 2009 and beyond, for both Pinot Noir and Rhone varietals. *Dragonette Cellars*, 805-737-0200, dragonettecellars.com.



"We think of winemakers in glamorous terms, but the work is farming. These are passionate, dedicated, and intelligent people," says Halper. "I found myself captivated by my subjects as well as the beauty of the area."



**TOM STOLPMAN,
PETER STOLPMAN**

**GRENACHE, ROUSSANNE, SANGIOVESE,
SAUVIGNON BLANC, SYRAH,
AND VIOGNIER**

The father and son team of Tom and Peter Stolpman pride their family's owned and operated winery and vineyard modeled after the style of the great European grape growing regions. Taking advantage of the various microclimates on their 220-acre estate, they recently released several new wines. The first is Originals Syrah, made from the oldest vines in the vineyard, planted in 1992, and another is the 2009 Rose. Also grown on-site for sale to wineries are Nebbiolo and olives from which they produce a Tuscan-style extra virgin olive oil. *Stolpman Vineyards & Winery, 805-688-0400, stolpmanvineyards.com.*

LOUISA SAWYER LINDQUIST

ALBARINO, GRENACHE ROSE, AND TEMPRANILLO

Louisa Lindquist has spent the last 10 years working with and producing her Spanish varietals: Albariño, Tempranillo, and Grenache-based rosé wine. She sources primarily from her biodynamic and organic vineyards and believes that biodynamic farming's "cosmic influence," such as certain lunar phases, affects both the vineyard as well as the daily lives of people. Look for her wines to have great structure and balance. In her words, she makes wines that will "leave your palate refreshed and satisfied." *Verdad Wine Cellar, 805-784-0747, verdadwines.com.*

KAREN STEINWACHS

**CABERNET SAUVIGNON, CABERNET FRANC,
BORDEAUX BLENDS, MARSANNE, MERLOT, SAUVIGNON
BLANC, SEMILLON, AND SYRAH**

Winemaker, Karen Steinwachs, crafts Bordeaux and Rhone-style wines from some of the oldest vines in the Santa Ynez Valley planted in 1983 by current owner Betty Williams with the help of friend Michael Benedict. Buttonwood Farm's fertile ground is also home to a variety of fruits, vegetables, and cut flowers, available throughout the season. Try their delicious peaches until early September, and their salsas, chutneys, preserves, and jellies are made from the farm's fruits and vegetables. Williams, now in her 90s, still lives on the property providing her input and advice. Pick up Williams' cookbook, *Miss Delphine's Cookbook of Southern Regional Cooking*, a collection of her mother's recipes originally published in 1977. (Available for sale in the tasting room.) *Buttonwood Farm Winery, 805-688-3032, buttonwoodwinery.com.*

PETER WORK

PINOT NOIR, SYRAH, GRENACHE, AND VIOGNIER

After fortuitously canceling a meeting scheduled at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Peter and Rebecca Work decided it was time to leave the corporate world behind and pursue their dream of making and growing wine. They center their philosophy of winemaking around the Amish saying, "You did not inherit the earth from your parents, it is on loan from your children." Peter, president of the Santa Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance, is one of the first growers in the U.S. to be certified for having organic, biodynamic, and sustainable farming practices. Biodynamic farming harnesses the earth's cycles in accordance with moon phases and gravitational forces to enhance fruit flavor, production, and heartiness—requiring the farm to follow the earth's schedule...not the farmer's. Ampelos—Greek for the word vine—is a 100 percent solar powered operation. Look for the 2009 Viognier that just received a rating of 90 points from the *Wine Enthusiast*. *Ampelos Cellars & Vineyard, 805-736-9957, ampelosc cellars.com.*



ON AUGUST 14, 2010, a six-month photographic exhibition held throughout downtown Los Olivos will showcase Mark Robert Halper's portraits to coincide with the release of *Sunlight and Water* (\$40). Available at The Book Den, 805-962-3321, and various wine tasting rooms throughout Los Olivos.