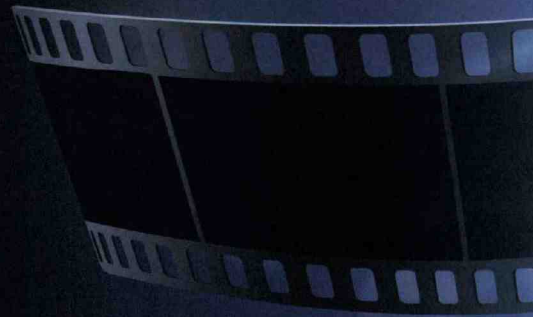


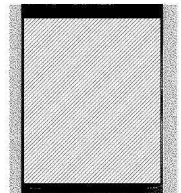
# SHOWTIME!

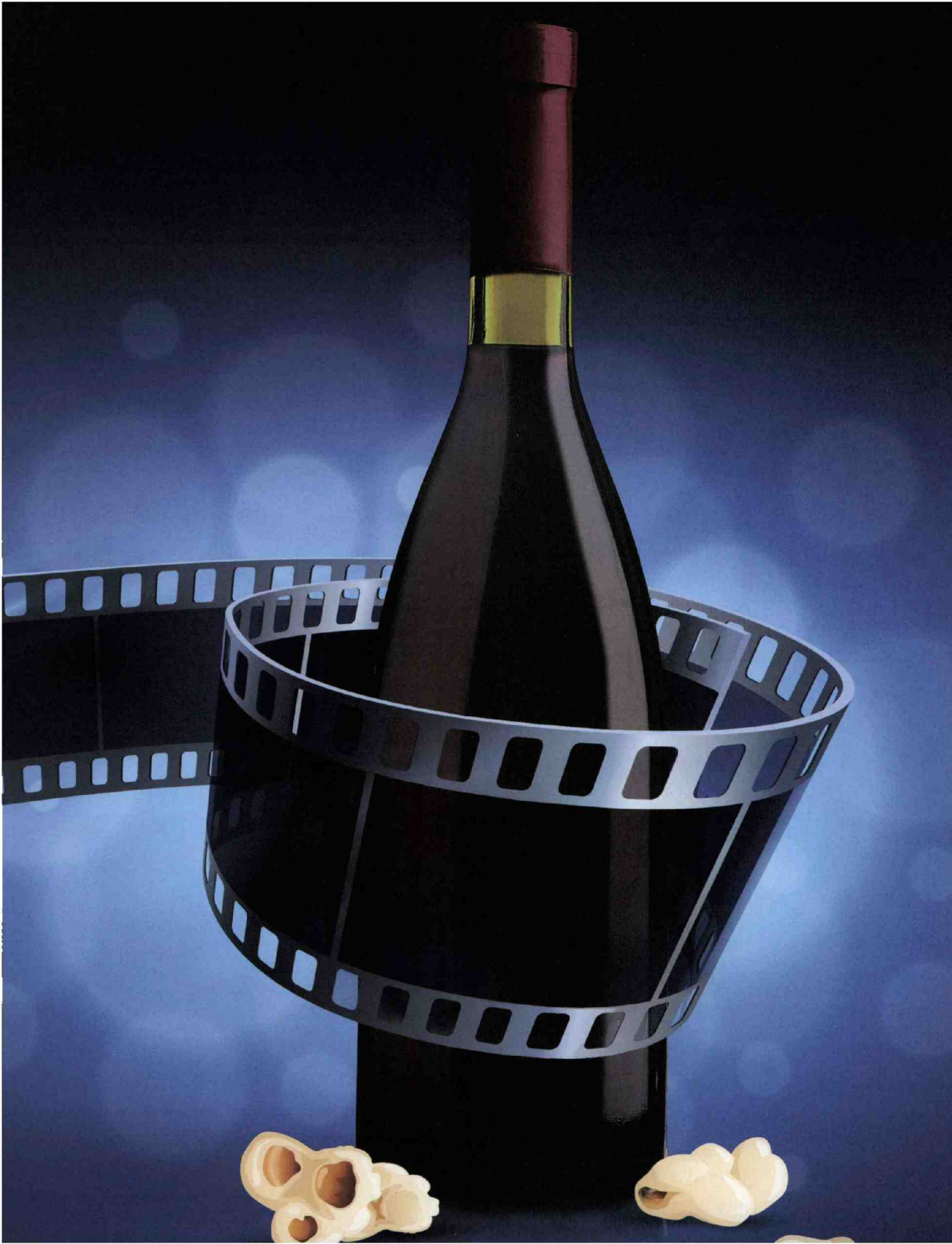


## From Napa to Sonoma to Hollywood, wine-related programming goes mainstream

By Christina Julian

A reality craze was born on “Celebrity Apprentice” the moment “The Donald” barked out “You’re fired!” No one could’ve predicted the landslide of expose-style film and TV that would follow (nor the creator’s ascent to the White House). While the state of the nation remains uncertain, the future of reality TV is not. With the proliferation of streaming film and television through service providers like Amazon and Netflix, the accessibility of original content feels boundless and the time ripe for wine-related programming to go mainstream. Here’s a slice of what’s coming your way.





**Best Bottle**

If kid chefs and cupcake wars can commandeer airtime, why not wine? Or so went the thinking for the "Best Bottle" reality TV show executive producer, Scott Krauger, whose career in the wine business began at Pine Ridge Winery in Napa Valley under the tutelage of Gary Andrus, and sprawled all the way to Oregon, where he followed Andrus to build Archery Summit Winery. Krauger conceived of the show with partner Robert Richards (executive producer and writer) as a way to introduce America to the intimate world of winemaking and to extend the Best Bottle brand and company, which was founded in 2011. "We market and tell stories of wine producers from around the world. We have a wine club and online store and also sell travel packages that offer exclusive wine experiences from such regions as Venezuela and South Africa to New Zealand, and all around the world." He describes the show as a mix between "Top Chef" and "How It's Made."

The first season, which is expected to air this fall (visit [www.winebestbottle.com](http://www.winebestbottle.com) for details), pits the wine regions of California and Oregon, against each other, in the ultimate challenge: to craft the "best bottle" of Pinot Noir (the wine of choice for season one). Six on-the-rise winemakers (three on each team) will compete in a vine to bottle mission to not only craft the best bottle, but to become what Krauger calls, "the next American rock star winemaker."



Members of the Best Bottle Red Team, led by Jean Charles Boisset (left), represent California's winemakers in the Pinot Noir competition. [Photo courtesy of Best Bottle]

Every team needs a captain so he turned to industry veterans, Don Lange of Lange Family Winery (Team Oregon), and global personality and vintner, Jean-Charles Boisset of DeLoach Vineyards (Team California). "They're both making dynamic Pinot. Don is the more casual, insightful wine guy, where Jean-Charles is debonair, extravagant and flamboyant. Once America and the world sees this, they will be saying, 'I didn't know someone like this existed.'"

**The players**

When it came time to commandeer contestants, the producers held a nationwide casting call to discover the brightest, most promising

and entertaining vintners they could find. "The way I look at it, to be a chef you have to be really crazy, but to be a winemaker you have to be even more crazy, because you're at the mercy of Mother Nature," says Krauger. For local winemaker and contestant Fabiano Ramaci of Mora Estate (Sonoma Valley), the potential for exposure was appealing. "[This] is a lifetime opportunity," he says. "I'm kind of like a magician, I can do it, but it's best to have an audience. And to be able to get out and let customers know what I'm doing, it was a perfect fit."

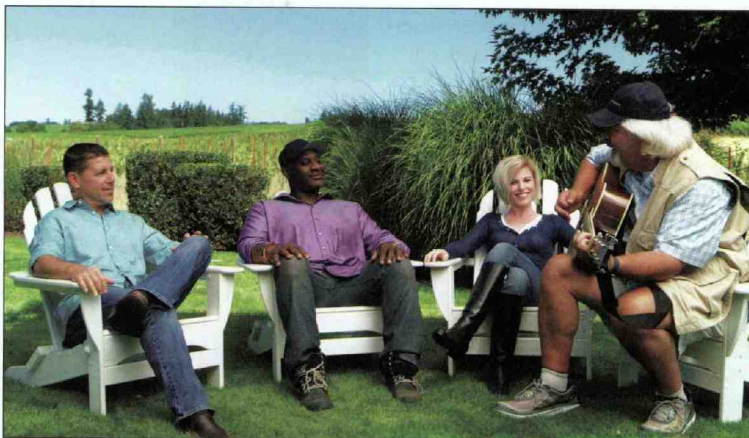
Krauger hopes the contestants will benefit from the experience. "These are up and coming winemakers and this is their shot on the worldwide stage. A lot of people don't realize that winemakers work really hard. I hope they also come away with increased exposure for the brand they're making and to launch their career in a profitable direction."

#### How it works

The show follows a similar format as American Idol. Contestants compete in challenges that either advance or eliminate them off the show, leaving only the finalists whose fate is determined by the viewers. "In the season finale, the American public will purchase the wine and cast a vote for their favorite wine and the person who made it," says Krauger. Season 2 will introduce the wine region of Washington state as contestants vie for the top dog status by crafting the best bottle of

Merlot. "The film Sideways really hurt Merlot producers. We want to make Merlot cool again," says Krauger.

Beyond the buzz (and drama) that can come with reality TV, he hopes the show will impart a meaningful message. "It's not just about region versus region," he says. "When you are a wine drinker you embrace amazing food, family, friends—your community. What I hope to see as a result of the show is that we as humans start to slow down, that we invite neighbors and friends over and enjoy a meal with great wine. If we do more of that as human beings, we will change the world."



The Blue Team represents Oregon in the wine competition series Best Bottle. [Photo courtesy of Best Bottle]

**Passion unplugged at Zan Media**

In speaking with Zan Media associate producer Niki Scioli, the topic she turns to time and time again is: passion. Be it the common denominator that links wine industry pros in the company's documentary, "The Routes to Roots: Napa and Sonoma," or in the name-sake of the star-studded "A Passion for the Vine," for this family-run production house, it's the mantra to live by. She also credits this same sentiment in explaining how the production crew was able to commandeer a cast (between both films) that includes rock and roll front man David Coverdale (Whitesnake, Deep Purple) Tamera Mowry-Housley ("Sister, Sister" & "Tia and Tamera"), Mario Andretti and wine legend Fred Franzia, to name a few.

The company is helmed by Don (director/ editor/principal) and Christine Scioli (writer/ producer/principal) and Scioli's sister, Alex, who serves as the company's marketing director. Says Niki, "We like to tell great stories, across different topics. We just did something with the California Air Resource Board, and another on the wisdom of aging with Peter Coyote, actor and Buddhist monk. We even mix it up with a lot of political campaign videos." The company is also in production on "A Cocktail Orange," which follows the craft cocktail craze.



Jonathan Cain, keyboardist for the band Journey, discusses his foray into wine in *Passion For the Vine*.  
 [Photo courtesy of Zan Media]

**The Routes to Roots: Napa and Sonoma**

The film opens with a controversial question, answered by an extensive roster of wine industry vets including Daniel Baron (Silver Oak), Mike Martini (Taft Street), Bob Foley (Pride Mountain Vineyards), Dr. Liz Thach (Sonoma State), Robert Parker, and many others. "We thought it would be fun to cover the classic fight between Napa and Sonoma [who makes the better wine] and have viewers learn about some of the industry terminology while we did it," says Niki Scioli.

The question sparks smiles, head shakes and adamant cries. "No contest!" "Napa!" "Sonoma!"

"The trick is how to make great wine out of the grapes we grow," says Mike Martini, general manager, Taft Street Winery. "Grapes are like a weed, you can plant it anywhere and this thing will sprout. The trick is knowing what type of grapes to plant and where...there are many places in this world that produce wonderful wine."

Bob Foley of Pride Mountain Winery shared his take on which valley reigns. "Neither. The wine is better when it's mountain grown!" Amid all the playful regard the real stories emerge, which turn out to be less about which valley rules and more about the unique approach and style that each winemaker brings to the bottle.



The Zan Media films discuss the philosophies behind winemaking and the legendary competition between Napa and Sonoma counties on who makes the best WINES. [Photo courtesy of Zan Media]



Tamera Mowry-housley (second from right) and her team. [Photo courtesy of Zan Media]

### Passion for the Vine

For every scene in "The Routes to Roots" that shines a spotlight on the technical and philosophical intricacies of winemaking, "Passion for the Vine," uncovers a different truth. "We decided to step outside those whose main career is wine. You read about all these celebrities who have wine brands. We wanted to know why, that on top of everything else they do, they would want to make wine," says Scioli. "What we found was that the one key thing that everyone had in common was passion. They loved wine and the lifestyle."

"The most important thing in football is quality players, and of course teamwork. Ironically, I found that it's the exact same formula that comes into play with making a cult style, unique wine."

—David Coverdale, former Whitesnake frontman  
and wine entrepreneur

With subjects that span the celebrity spectrum to include everyone from NFL coach Dick Vermeil and former U.S. Ambassador to Austria, Kathryn Hall to Fox News correspondent Adam Housley and "Journey" songwriter and keyboardist Jonathan Cain, it's no surprise that the reasons for their entry into the wine game were as entertaining as the subjects themselves. For White Snake front man David Coverdale, it was simple. "Wine is a lot like having your own record label. It's meant to be loved and cherished and drunk," The rock star was so enthralled by wine he went as far as titling one of his songs "Wine, Women and Song."

For NFL team owner Carmen Policy, winemaking is also a logical choice. "The most important thing in football is quality players, and, of course, teamwork. Ironically, I found that it's the exact same formula that comes into play with making a cult style, unique wine. You have to have the right pieces in place, the right team, dealing

with right farmer, on the right terroir on the right piece of ground to produce a product you're going to put your name on."

### Balance

The films ebb between the serious and silly, like when Coverdale partakes in a Lucile Ball-like grape stomp, and a rock band belts out a song-turned-riff about Franzia's infamous "Two-Buck-Chuck" wine. It was this exact type of banter that the crew had in mind. "While both films are educational and take you into the world of wine, we tried to [move] away from the hoity-toity of wine. We wanted it to be entertaining. It was neat to see that for everyone in the two films, one thing is the same. Whether you're a million dollar rock star or a teacher at Sonoma State, it's the love and culture of wine and what it represents—passion." (For more on each film, visit [www.zanmedia.com](http://www.zanmedia.com)).

As for answering that age-old question, who makes the better wine, Napa or Sonoma? "I think that question will be debated forever. There will always be that Hatfield and McCoy."

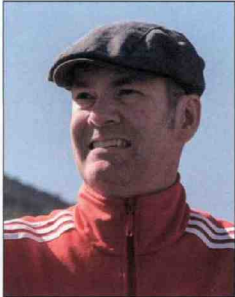
### Decanted

As the opening shot of the documentary Decanted rolls, the audience is granted a bird's eye look at the Napa Valley as winemaker Heidi Barrett hovers over a Calistoga vineyard. The fact that she can conduct an interview, while also flying a helicopter is both disturbing and dramatic. As is the fact that this intimate look at the Napa Valley comes from a Baltimore-based film crew, whose director, Nick Kovacic, copped to knowing little about the wine industry before the onset of production. Any concerns about an outsider telling the Napa





Julien Fayard, winemaker at Fayard Wines



Aaron Pott, winemaker at Pott Wines

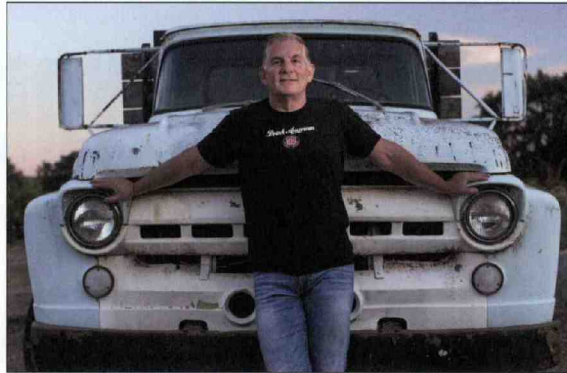
his parents, who had connected and bonded with Reynolds during, you guessed it, a winemaker dinner. "Steve showed me some of his footage and asked, 'Is there anything you can do with this?' A few months later, I started to become more interested in wine and asked if he could connect me with some other cool interesting personalities into winemaking in the Napa Valley," says Kovacic.

Reynolds was in the beginning stages of scouting winery locations for his partner, Mike Martin, who was looking for a winery property in Coombsville—what would ultimately become Italics Winery, over the course of the shoot. "It all came together very organically. We didn't even know if the Italics deal was going to happen at the time. We just brought the camera along and started filming," says Kovacic. "The timing was perfect. We were able to follow the project, from the start of the brand coming together through to the bottling of the 2014 and 2015 vintages."

The crew took full advantage of the natural surroundings and shot the film in a "Cinema Verite" style to capture natural moments of truth in wine-making. "We always try to come up with a cool way to get the audience 'in' so that it feels like you are really in on the action," he says. Considering the opening sequence with Barrett in the driver's seat of a whirlybird—mission accomplished. "We didn't want it to be a film that was very observational, we wanted the audience to feel like they are participating. There are moments where you step back and the audience observes the time lapses and the beauty all around. For me, it was like a Love Letter to Napa Valley."

The film offers a varied perspective with each winemaker commenting on craft, the Napa Valley and their place in matrix. Reynolds' vision for the film evolved as the project unfolded. "Napa is an approachable place, it's a great and beautiful valley, but there seems to be this wall that we have to get over. This level of sophistication or that it's only for only the wealthy. I want people to realize that wine is not this secretive thing. It is meant to be shared. Great things happen over a bottle wine. In reality, it's more about passion and the American dream."

The final cut of the film, which premiered at last year's Napa Valley Film Festival, sur-



Steve Reynolds, winemaker at Reynolds Family Winery

prised Kovacic in certain ways. "We had so many other scenes that were more about the technical sides of the winemaking approach that we wanted to show, but in the end, what we wanted to come across, was that no matter what you're doing or trying to achieve, you may get there. It may be long road, but you'll get there." (See [decantedthemovie.com](http://decantedthemovie.com) for upcoming screenings)

Whether it's a vine-to-bottle fight to the finish, solving the age-old, Napa-Sonoma conundrum, or decanting the mystique of the Napa Valley, the last word on wine for all these projects can be distilled to one word—passion—the force that unites each project and drives the people behind them. ■

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