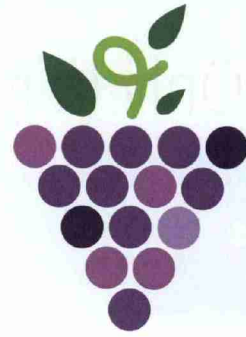
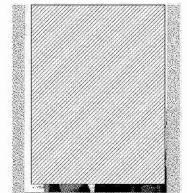


WINE



NONPROFIT CHAMPIONS WOMEN



WOMEN

WORKING IN THE WINE INDUSTRY

Co-Founders of Wine Women [left to right]
Marcia Macomber, Christine L. Mueller, Ellen
Reich Luchtel and Jackie Egidio.

[Photo courtesy of Rick Bolen Photography via Wine Women]



By Sarah Stierch

In 1886, Josephine Tychson founded and built a winery and made vino in St. Helena, making her the first woman to own and operate a winery in California. Today, Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon producer Freemark Abbey resides in Tychson's former winery. By 1890, 10 percent of lead winemakers were women in California and surprisingly, that percentage hasn't changed, according to a 2015 report from Santa Clara University.

While the percentage of women winemakers remains stagnant, women's roles in the wine industry are not limited to the production side. In 2014, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 63 percent of public relation specialists and 75 percent of human resources managers are women. Women comprise 59 percent of wine consumers, according to a 2015 Sonoma State University study.

Women and wine

Much like women enjoying a bottle of fine wine with girlfriends, finding the right support system is important to succeeding professionally and thriving personally in the wine industry. That's why Christine Mueller, Jackie Egidio, Marcia Macomber and Ellen Reich Luchtel founded Wine Women. Wine Women is a nonprofit professional trade organization with a mission to advance women's careers in the wine industry by fostering and nurturing talent, providing network and training opportunities, as well as advocating for better opportunities in the industry.

"We all know the challenges of pay and equity and representation in management positions."

—Christine Mueller, Wine Women

Women have played an important role in the California wine industry since its inception. And the roles women play in the wine industry are even more important than ever before, but there are challenges.

Mueller, a marketing professional and president of Marketing Made Simple/2Alibis LLC, recognized the need for Wine Women after volunteering for a consumer-facing wine organization, where she noticed a lack of support for the advancement and health of women's careers in the wine industry. "We all know the challenges of representation in management positions," says Mueller, and her colleagues are all on the same page. We agreed this would be a great opportunity to focus in on women's careers in the wine industry," she says. Hence, the launch of Wine Women in 2016, covering Sonoma and Napa.



At Raymond Vineyards in St. Helena, winemaker [Jean-Charles Boisset](#) addresses guests at "How to Succeed in the Wine Business," a Wine Women event.

[Photo courtesy of Wine Women]

Networking opportunities

With more than 140 members, Wine Women provides members networking opportunities with a diverse set of colleagues working in numerous industry fields, including winemaking, marketing, human resources, finance and sales. Professionals are encouraged to apply for membership if they either work within the industry or work with clients in the wine industry. Members can participate in forums, focused on specific industry areas such as winery executive management, winemaking, finance, marketing, viticulture and career education, which provides skill development workshops, lectures and related activities. Forums may meet as often as they wish, in-person, to be supported with online collaboration at the discretion of forum members. Wine Women also works with organizations and educational institutions to provide career development tools at a discount, including discounts on training and wine competition opportunities.

Winemaker Linda Trotta is a founding member of Wine Women and serves as the chair of the winemakers forum, which comprises 20 women winemakers and enologists. The forum provided Trotta and her colleagues a place for open and safe dialogue about their work and opportunities to further develop it. But, for Trotta, the biggest



Linda Trotta, chair of the winemakers forum for Wine Women

benefit has been the relationships she has begun to develop since Wine Women's founding nine months ago. "Wine Women provides me with the opportunity to interact with leaders and gatekeepers in areas of the business to which I would not otherwise readily have access," says Trotta. "I look forward to building upon my skill-set and professional network, and supporting and mentoring other winemakers—established and aspiring—on their career paths."

The wage gap

Wine Women also seeks to support women in gaining equal footing among men, regarding the gender wage gap. Nationwide, men's salaries average \$20,000 higher than those of women, according to a 2016 analysis by *TIME* and *Motto*, and the wine industry is no exception. Mueller envisions Wine Women

serving as the "voice" of industry women. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 62 percent of women working in the private sector are contractually prohibited or strongly discouraged from discussing their salaries.

This "forced secrecy" increases the earnings-based gender gap and Wine Women wants to change that by providing safe spaces to discuss the wage gap and opportunities to take the necessary actions to change it. Says Trotta, "We cannot afford to *not* have Wine Women

and organizations like it to empower women in the workplace.”

Taking action is a major reason why Debra Del Fiorentino is involved in Wine Women. Del Fiorentino wears many hats: she’s the chief executive officer of Wine Competitions Management & Productions and Libation Logistics. She’s also the founder and food and beverage director of *Spirited*, a new trade magazine. Del Fiorentino deeply supports Wine Women’s mission to help advance women in the wine industry, and expects to see Wine Women’s achievements directly impacting women also in the spirits industry. Del Fiorentino actively participates in Wine Women’s forums, where she gets immediate responses to questions from other

“I like action
and results—I have
found them with
Wine Women.”

—Debra Del Fiorentino, *Spirited*

members on subjects including technology, strategic planning and marketing. “It’s a group for women who truly want to break into the business, not just sit around, chat and drink wine.” In 2016, Wine Women sponsored the International Women’s Wine Competition, an annual wine competition, which seeks to celebrate women winemakers and wine specialists. The event is organized by Del Fiorentino and includes an all female wine judging panel. “I like action and results—I have found them with Wine Women,” says Del Fiorentino.

“It’s important to have Wine Women in the industry to broaden women’s perspectives and allow them to work outside their respective bubbles,” says Linda Higuera, a senior bilingual human resources consultant at The Personnel Perspective. A founding member of Wine Women, she participates in the forum advisory committee and is active in two human resources forums. Higuera has worked in the industry since 2003, and for her, Wine Women is a chance to continue evolving professionally, and give back to the next generation of human resources professionals. She is a passionate advocate for the importance of Wine Women and professional organizations. “It’s an excellent

platform for women to gain visibility in their profession, maximize their effectiveness in the workplace, advance their careers and pursue their long-term goals with support from other like-minded women," Higuera proudly shares. "Long-term friendships are also an inevitable outcome that the members consider an added value."

The platform Wine Women provides, and the friendships made, are important components to ensuring the success of women in the industry, especially a male-dominated industry where women are more likely to experience not only the aforementioned wage gap, but also sexual harassment, challenges with climbing the corporate ladder, and ongoing battles to gain equity regarding paid parental leave and maternity-related benefits. Providing women a place to find support is important for the overall success of the industry.

However, Wine Women isn't only for women. The organization also includes a small percentage of male members. According to Mueller, the majority of male members either work with a large female staff, want to show support for their female colleagues, playing the role of ally, or both. Male members might participate in forums alongside



Taylor Eason, director of marketing for Gundlach Bundschu

women, occasionally participating as guest speakers and providing venues for events. At these forums, male members may possibly learn about the concerns and goals of their female colleagues, but it's more likely to happen at a general event. These events provide open networking to discuss issues such as the state of the industry, social media observations, DTC and wine club and possibly females and males in the workplace.

The organization also offers corporate memberships, which provide businesses benefits including opportunities to promote their brand amongst members, preferences on speaking opportunities and sponsorships, and discounts for individual memberships for their employees.

Gundlach Bundschu Winery, based in Sonoma, is a Wine Women corporate member.

"At Gundlach Bundschu, we foster a culture of learning and personal development. We joined Wine Women to empower our staff to expand their industry networks and to learn from peers and experts," says Taylor Eason, director of marketing at Gundlach Bundschu, "And, as a company primarily staffed by women, it seemed a natural fit in many ways."

The Business of Marketing Wine

Wine Women's monthly forums provide women interested in specific areas of the wine industry opportunities to meet with industry leaders who provide valuable insight and guidance through lectures, workshops and networking opportunities. One of these leaders includes Ashley Teplin, co-founder of Teplin+Nuss, a Napa Valley-based marketing and public relations firm. Teplin, along with her business partner Holly Nuss, provide marketing support to notable wine industry businesses and organizations, including the Carneros Wine Alliance, CK Mondavi, Liberation Distribution, *Mutineer*, Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association, Stewart Cellars, The Diving Rod, the Wine Market Council and Zinfandel Experience.

At a Wine Woman Marketing Forum, Teplin provided valuable insight into technology advances and trends in wine industry marketing. It was at events like this where Teplin gained mentorship in the past, helping her break into the industry and learn the skills she needed to succeed. "I wanted to give back, and hopefully inspire others to think

outside the box and grow and develop their own career paths in marketing, public relations, and new media," says Teplin.

Teplin is a leader in a field that is predominantly female and she hopes she can inspire others to grow and succeed in the marketing and public relations field. "It's been a great career choice that is typically led by women and while there are certainly men in this space it continues to support strong and motivated individuals who are interested in growing wine brands, products and regions."

As a young leader in the field, Teplin believes that organizations such as Wine Women are vital to providing the support women need in both successful and challenging times, whether professionally or personally. "I think the more groups, events, and organizations you can participate in, the better your career and life will flourish," says Teplin. "It's so important to continue to expand your own knowledge and at the same time giving back to the entire wine industry at large." For more information, go to teplinnuss.com.



Ashley Teplin

Staff members at Gundlach Bundschu are active in membership forums, participating in direct-to-consumer forums, finance and marketing forums. She also appreciates the way that Wine Women is open to evolving as an organization, based on member satisfaction and feedback. "They're nimble, member focused and willing to evolve, something that resonates for us as a company that is always looking to improve and be innovative," Eason shares, regarding her experience with Wine Women leadership and volunteers.

For Gundlach Bundschu, and other corporate members, gender diversity and equality in the workplace is vital to success as a business. According to a survey of more than 800 businesses by Gallup, gender-diverse businesses have a 14 percent average comparable revenue than less diverse businesses. This is even more important for the hospitality area of the wine industry, including tasting rooms, membership management staff, and sommeliers working in fine dining: hospitality businesses with diverse gender workforces report 19 percent higher quarterly net profit than their counterparts. The benefit of supporting women in the workplace through internal engagement, including providing staff opportunities to participate in professional development organizations like Wine Women, combined with gender diversity in the workplace is even more powerful, with businesses reporting a 49 percent higher increase in comparable revenue. "We believe that by investing in our staff's membership to Wine Women, we're investing in the growth of the company as a whole," says Eason.

Mueller and Higuera also hope Wine Women will provide businesses with access to a diverse pool of wine industry professionals to recruit. According to Silicon Valley Bank's "State of the Wine Industry 2017," the biggest concern reported by surveyed wine industry businesses is a shortage of skilled workers in industry, including those that work hands-on with the vineyards that produce award-winning grapes, and an aging workforce. Wine Women wants to make it easier for more women to enter the wine industry. This year, the organization will launch their grant program, supporting anyone interested in breaking into the industry, including students working towards a wine degree and those women members seeking a second career change within or coming into the industry.

Breaking the glass ceiling

Aside from helping women break into the wine industry, Wine Women's mission is also to help women break the glass ceiling. "Our overarching intention is to increase the number of women in leadership positions," says Higuera. "Our forums, special events, and conferences and other benefits of membership are relevant and timely in all functional areas of the industry." Wine Women provides women the opportunity to maximize their soft skills in public speaking, negotiating, networking and personal branding, all of which help enhance their current professional roles, advance through the ranks and be open to new career opportunities. Says Mueller, "This is the place to be if you want to thrive in the wine industry." ■

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