



Winemaker / Founder Heidi Peterson Barrett - Full Bio

Heidi Peterson Barrett grew up in the Napa Valley in a winemaking family and was destined to become one of the world's best-known winemakers. It is said that winemaking is a combination of science and art, and with her father a scientist-winemaker and her mother an artist, it's no surprise that Heidi's natural-born talents led her to the wine industry. With her passion, precision, and decades of industry experience, Heidi's gift for integrating the art and science of winemaking is unparalleled and has brought her international renown.

From a young age, Heidi spent her summers in the vineyards and wineries, learning every task from sorting vine cuttings to working on the bottling line. Her father, Dick Peterson, is a well-known winemaker who made his mark at wineries as varied as Beaulieu Vineyards and Gallo, and included Heidi in his work from an early age. As she grew up, she decided to continue her formal education in fermentation science at UC Davis. While at Davis she was a lab assistant to Dr. Ann Noble, developer of the aroma wheel. It was during a college internship at a large winery in Germany that Heidi learned the art of making balanced wines, no matter what the variety.

After graduating from U.C. Davis in 1980 with a B.S. degree in Fermentation Science, she went to work for Justin Meyer at Franciscan Vineyards and Silver Oak Cellars. In 1981, after subsequent crush jobs at Lindeman's Wines in Australia and Rutherford Hill in Napa Valley, Heidi became assistant winemaker to Jerry Luper at Bouchaine Vineyards. In 1983, at age 25, she became winemaker at Buehler Vineyards. Wearing the title of winemaker for the first time, Heidi began to attract critical acclaim with her unique style of winemaking. Demand for the wines grew, allowing Buehler to more than triple their production to 20,000 cases.

Heidi says of her first Head Winemaker position: "It's important to have diverse knowledge in all aspects of winemaking. You can't just step in and be the winemaker unless you have adequate experience in the cellar and the vineyards. I wanted to make sure that when I finally had the title of winemaker, I had earned it."

In 1988, she left Buehler to become an independent winemaker, consulting for a number of small wineries and in the process, pioneering a new model for what a winemaker could be. Within a week she was hired by Gustav Dalle Valle at **Dalle Valle Vineyards**, where she remained as winemaker until the spring of 1996. It was there she took her talents to the next level, creating wines of "cult" status. Her powerful yet elegant Cabernets from Dalle Valle Vineyards include the famous proprietary blend Maya, which received perfect 100 point scores in two consecutive vintages ('92 and '93) from Robert Parker and record-breaking bids at the Napa Valley Wine Auction.

In 1992, she began making wine for **Screaming Eagle**, her most famous project to date. The 1992 and 1997 vintages garnered another set of perfect 100's from Parker. A 6-liter bottle of the '92 Screaming Eagle set a world record for the highest price ever paid for a single bottle of wine (\$500,000) at the 2000 Napa Valley Wine Auction. A vertical offering sold for \$650,000 at the 2001 NVWA. These coveted accolades coupled with her philosophy of winemaking have earned her such great respect from Robert Parker, Jr. that he tipped his hat by proclaiming her the "The First Lady of Wine" and TIME magazine dubbed her "The Wine Diva of Napa Valley".

Heidi, who loves the ocean and SCUBA diving, began making wines under her own label, **La Sirena**, in 1994. "I was looking for a name for my wine which would be fun and magical. La Sirena, which means "the mermaid" in Italian and Spanish, is an expression of my two great passions." Heidi's winemaking style is apparent in each wine she hand-crafts for La Sirena, an expression of both her artistry and devotion to winemaking science.

Since 1988 she has developed an impressive client list of ultra-premium wineries. In addition to her own wines from **La Sirena**, she is currently the winemaker for **Amuse Bouche, Paradigm, Lamborn, Au Sommet, Vin Perdu, and Fantasca**. Past winemaking clients include **Screaming Eagle** (14 years), **Dalla Valle** (8 years), **Jones Family** (12 years), **Grace Family** (6 years), **Vineyard 29** (6 years), **David Arthur, Barbour Vineyards** (15 years), **Revana** (10 years), **Showket** (12 years), and **Kenzo Estate** (20 years).

As well as her winemaking talents, Heidi is an accomplished artist and helicopter pilot and lives in Calistoga with her husband, Bo (winemaker at Chateau Montelena). The Barretts launched their first collaboration wine, **Barrett & Barrett**, in 2008 and have developed a new vineyard and property for the project. Their two daughters work in the wine industry as well, Remi handling Sales & Marketing for La Sirena, and Chelsea as Winemaker at Materra winery.

When reflecting on her career, Heidi says "I always just set out to do the best I possibly can. I'm honored that people have supported me and made it possible to keep doing what I love." As for the future, Heidi still loves her job, and all the challenges and rewards it brings. She looks forward to continuing to make the best wines possible and sharing them with fans and wine-lovers around the world.