

# The Wine Blueprint for Climate Change

*Lail Vineyards Takes the Lead in Protecting the Environment*

By **Mark Spivak** - January 21, 2020



For California vintners, climate change is an existential threat rather than a cerebral concept. The 2019 wildfires were the worst in history, with nearly 8,000 separate blazes and over 732 structures damaged or destroyed. Fueled by drought and high winds, the flames proved as destructive to wineries as they were to private residences or other commercial buildings.

One vintner in particular has taken up the battle against climate change. Last February, Robin Lail was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Porto Protocol, a sustainability initiative founded by Taylor's Port. The Protocol encourages both individuals and companies to do more to help the environment, and it holds summits which serve as brainstorming sessions for solutions to the problem.

Few people have Napa Valley etched more deeply into their DNA than Robin Daniel Lail. She grew up in the vineyards of Inglenook, founded in 1879 by her great-granduncle, Gustav Niebaum. If you started drinking in the 1970's you probably remember Inglenook as a low-grade jug wine, but historically it was one of the iconic Napa estates that established California in the fine wine universe. Ownership of Inglenook passed down to her grandfather and then her father, John Daniel Jr., before being sold in 1964.

Lail went on to launch Dominus with Christian Moueix in 1982; the following year, she co-founded Merryvale Vineyards with Bill Harlan and served as president for 12 years. In 1995 she realized her dream of re-establishing her family's legacy by starting Lail Vineyards with her daughters, Erin and Shannon. The winery has garnered critical acclaim for their releases crafted by superstar winemaker Philippe Melka, but the Blueprint wines are directly related to Lail's crusade against climate change; 10% of the online sales from Blueprint are donated to organizations that work to better the environment. The name itself is a reference to the winery's design by her husband, Jon, a noted Napa Valley architectural designer.

The expressive nose of Lail's 2018 Blueprint Sauvignon Blanc (\$40) offers a wide panorama of aromas: citrus, melon, guava, lime blossom and orange zest. Grapefruit and Meyer lemon dominate on the palate, underlined by crisp acidity. As the flavors fade onto the finish, they're amplified by echoes of white pepper. This is a wine of considerable character, focus and energy, one which grabs your attention and never wavers.

Scents of new oak, crushed dark berries, anise and fresh herbs rise from the nose of the 2017 Blueprint Cabernet Sauvignon (\$80). This deeply colored and nearly opaque wine is blended with 11% Merlot and 6% Petit Verdot and sourced from vineyards in seven of Napa's appellations. Full-bodied and concentrated, it reveals a palate of spicy black fruits complemented by a creamy, unctuous texture; the young tannins reverberate on a long finish. This will be a fascinating wine to revisit in five years; in the meantime, it's a charming companion to a cold night by the fire.



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