

# Wine Spectator



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## DOGS OF CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY

Kim Stare Wallace of  
Dry Creek Vineyard  
With Holly

**2018 BORDEAUX**  
CLASSIC ON THE  
LEFT BANK

**OREGON REDS**  
TO SAVOR AND CELLAR

**LIQUEURS**  
FOR MORE  
FLAVORFUL COCKTAILS



# Wine's Best Friends

**THE CANINE COMPANIONS OF CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY MEET, GREET AND BRING CHEER AT WINERIES LARGE AND SMALL**

**D**ogs are always there for us—lifting our spirits, bringing us smiles and encouraging us to stay active and engaged. Recent studies suggest that having a dog around can help decrease a person's stress levels and even lower the risk of health issues such as high blood pressure.

That's all no surprise to the California vintners who share their canine family members and favorite dog tales in this cover story.

"I appreciate the calming influence of a dog," says Barbara Banke, chairman of Jackson Family Wines and owner of three happy-go-lucky ranch dogs.

Vintner Kathryn Hall says of Rocky, her globe-traveling spaniel: "We do long for companionship, and when your dog is with you, there's somebody there who loves you."

Likewise for Caymus founder Chuck Wagner and his son Joe Wagner, owner and winemaker of Copper Cane, dogs are all about companionship, whether they're carousing in the vineyards or riding along in the truck, head out the window. "They seem to pick up on feelings," Joe says.

In the following pages, you'll meet more than a dozen dogs that work and play alongside their winemaker owners and also serve as ambassadors at top estates in wine country. It's just a sampling—there are many more wagging tails waiting to welcome you at tasting room doors—but we hope this story introduces you to a few that you'll know by name when they trot up to greet you on a future visit.

Joe Wagner of Copper Cane with the company's top-dog team of Theo, Grizzly and Carlos (from left).

FRANK GUTIERREZ

**BY TIM FISH**

# Siri and Foo



Siri (above) and Foo (right)

Dogs have been a part of Robin Lail's life since her childhood at Napa's famed Inglenook winery, where she grew up with her parents' Great Danes and a Springer Spaniel named Trooper. Since 1997, she and her husband, Jon, have had Bernese Mountain dogs, beginning when fellow vintner Leslie Rudd gifted her with a puppy.

Today the Lails have two females, Siri and Foo, whose endearing qualities, says Robin, are their gentleness and that they are good watchdogs—a plus in the rural environment where the Lails live on Howell Mountain east of St. Helena. “They’re family, and how lucky we are to have them. There’s something wonderful to pet a warm, cuddly animal that loves you. I really want to be like that when I grow up,” Robin smiles.

Siri and Foo have a lot to be thankful for too. They were in bad shape when the Lails purchased them from what turned out to be unscrupulous breeders. “I felt anger toward the previous owners,” Lail explains. “It was shocking. These dogs looked like they had come from a puppy mill.”

Their calm demeanor was a plus in the recent fires that hit Napa Valley. The couple's home is across the canyon from where the Glass Fire ignited in September of 2020, eventually scorching 67,000 acres. They got a call from a neighbor warning them, and they were out the door within an hour, with Siri and Foo in tow.

“It must have been very confusing for them, but they were perfect. They made it through in good shape. I felt so lucky. It was a lot to go through. You can imagine the amount of fright in my body, and animals pick up on that, but they stayed well-behaved and at our side throughout,” Robin recalls.

—K.M.

## OWNER ROBIN LAIL

*Lail Vineyards*

**BREED** Bernese Mountain Dog

**AGE** Both 6 years old

**FAVORITE TREAT** Almonds

**STAR QUALITY** Very affectionate

**BEG FORGIVENESS** When they get on the couch

**FAVORITE HIDEAWAY** Under Lail's home desk

**ANNOYING HABITS** Siri is a licker; Foo steals pillows

**IN A WORD** “Brilliant”



## CALM & COLLECTED

Robin (above) and Jon Lail's Bernese Mountain dogs were at their side during the Glass Fire of 2020.

ALANNA HALE