



A Culture of Fine Wine:  
Rooted in Family, Inspired by Community

JANUARY 2026  
NEWSLETTER

ABOVE IMAGE: ARNALDO CAPRAI

FAREWELL, ARNALDO CAPRAI  
Reflecting on the Indelible Legacy of the Sagrantino Giant

With deep sadness, we share the passing of **Arnaldo Caprai**, the visionary behind the eponymous winery we proudly represent and the Sagrantino he reintroduced to the world.

A successful textile entrepreneur, Arnaldo bought the Val di Maggio estate in 1971 and dedicated himself to rescuing Sagrantino – an indigenous grape of Montefalco that was nearly lost. Through his vision and passion, he championed it into a symbol of world-class Umbrian wine, before passing the torch to his son, Marco Caprai, in 1986.

In the 1970s, Sagrantino was largely reserved for sweet passito wines made from dried grapes. When few shared his conviction, Arnaldo saw a different future, one where the grape could yield serious, age-worthy dry reds that would ultimately redefine Montefalco. Today, over 90 percent of the world's Sagrantino plantings are in Umbria.

"My father was an optimist and a generous man," his son Marco told ANSA. "And he leaves us the lesson of always looking ahead, of believing in enterprise and development. He was a man who always believed in creating great enterprises, with a generous vision and a deep social commitment. He was 92 years old and until the very end he conveyed to all of us that the future is built with passion and trust."

The wine world has lost a true pioneer, and our sympathies are with his wife, Fiorella, and his three children, Marco, Luca, and Arianna.



INTRODUCING THE 2025 CLASS OF WILSON DANIELS  
Court of Master Sommeliers Americas Scholarship Recipients

We are excited to announce the winners of the 2025 Wilson Daniels Scholarship, in partnership with GuildSomm! Ten wine professionals were each awarded \$2,000 to continue their wine education with the Court of Master Sommeliers Americas. Winners were chosen not only for their outstanding work, but also for the ways in which they support the wine community through mentorship, leadership, and education efforts.

This is a total investment of \$20,000, and one that we are proud to make. Supporting our sommelier community in their efforts toward advancing their wine knowledge is one of the foundational values of Wilson Daniels. Meet the recipients below, as they reflect on the impact of the WD Scholarship on their futures and, through the ripple effect, the futures of their peers.



Roberto Hernandez Castro  
Sommelier, Le Coucou



Chance Robinson  
Sommelier, Noble 33 Hospitality



Joshua Arola  
Sommelier, Server, Four Seasons Resort, Oahu at Ko Olina



Michael Markanian  
Beverage Director, Oyster Oyster

"My journey in wine has always been **driven by passion and sacrifice**. Ever since I invested all my savings into my sommelier education years ago, I've worked hard to keep learning, growing, and giving back to the community. This financial assistance will not just help me advance — it will help me keep building a future that reflects the values my family and I believe in: **hard work, learning, and never giving up.**"

— **Roberto Hernandez Castro**, Sommelier, Le Coucou. *Pursuing Advanced Sommelier*

"As a sommelier and mentor, I want to **continue opening doors for those who might not have thought they belonged** in this world, just like someone once did for me. This journey is about mastery, yes, but more importantly it's about service, purpose, and giving the gift of knowledge back to others!"

— **Chance Robinson**, Sommelier, Noble 33 Hospitality. *Pursuing Advanced Sommelier*

"I feel my studies through the CMS-A has given me the **personal power and confidence to lead** and show others (regardless of position) that anything is possible to achieve even when they themselves may not see it. I look forward to taking the 2026 CMS-A Theory Advanced Exam in February and IF I pass, I hope to soon after take on a larger role where I can reach EVEN MORE aspiring wine professionals."

— **Joshua Arola**, Sommelier, Server, Four Seasons Resort Oahu at Ko Olina. *Pursuing Advanced Sommelier*

"I hope to achieve the Master Sommelier Diploma and continue teaching, mentoring, and supporting the wine community through active participation in the Court of Master Sommeliers-Americas and the beverage community as a whole. **I will continue to invest in mentorship of students and candidates** who are pursuing wine education, certifications, and professional development. I would like to live and work in a wine region and support the wine community through administration of exams, teaching, writing, and mentorship."

— **Michael Markanian**, Beverage Director, Oyster Oyster. *Pursuing Advanced Sommelier*

"The hospitality profession has given me so much: a sense of purpose, connection, and joy. My greatest ambition is to use my CMS-A education to build a legacy of genuine hospitality; one rooted in empathy, generosity, and excellence. **I want to create experiences that stay with people long after the glass is empty**, and to foster spaces where curiosity and inclusivity are at the heart of everything."

— **Jenna Sommer**, Sommelier, Vicia. *Pursuing Certified Sommelier, Advanced Sommelier*

"With this scholarship, I will be able to access the necessary materials and wines to practice effectively, allowing me to **refine my tasting skills and deepen my understanding** of various wine regions, varietals, and production methods. This hands-on experience is invaluable, as it equips me with the practical skills needed to excel in my role as a wine professional and to share that knowledge with my team and our guests."

— **Stacy Morawski**, Restaurant Manager, Reynolds Lake Oconee. *Pursuing Certified Sommelier*

"I **pursue wine as a craft, a language, and a pursuit of excellence**. The Court of Master Sommeliers Advanced certification is not just a credential—it is a tool to push boundaries, sharpen every detail of taste, and elevate the quality of every experience I create. CMS-A is a tool to achieve excellence not only in technique but in impact—pushing me to innovate, contribute meaningfully, and fulfill a vision that extends far beyond the glass." — **Nato Bajeljdz**, Restaurant Manager, Sommelier, and Wine Instructor, The Erlowest, SUNY Adirondack. *Pursuing Master Sommelier*

"This financial assistance will directly benefit my team. Ultimately, **I aim to use this achievement to elevate my resort, empower my team, and serve as a visible example for others** from underrepresented backgrounds who aspire to reach the highest levels of the wine world."

— **Yifei Wang**, Head Sommelier, Rosewood Miramar. *Pursuing Master Sommelier*

"With over 20 years in the industry, **I am deeply dedicated to this path**—not only for my own growth but to elevate others in my community. Achieving my Advanced certification would **strengthen my ability to mentor Spanish-speaking and minority wine professionals** who face many of the same barriers I have experienced. This financial support will not only help me reach this next milestone but also amplify the impact I can have on others who are striving toward higher levels of wine education."

— **Fabiola Hashem**, Wine Specialist, Fujioka's. *Pursuing Advanced Sommelier*

"The more we know about something the more we realize we **don't know**. This is a phrase that gets told to you as you're going through the CMS. I've been fortunate enough to hold just about every position in the restaurant industry. Dish washer, busser, chef, barista, server, sommelier, and wine director. Every time I thought I knew something about a given one of these fields, I spent a few months or years working these jobs only to realize that there is so much more out there. It's impossible to be perfect at any of these professions or know everything there is to know about them. **But that constant drive for perfection (even if we know it is unattainable) is what makes us all better.**"

— **Max Goldberg**, Sommelier, Seline Restaurant. *Pursuing Master Sommelier*



Jenna Sommer  
Sommelier, Vicia



Stacy Morawski  
Restaurant Manager, Reynolds Lake Oconee



Nato Bajeljdz  
Restaurant Manager, Sommelier, and Wine Instructor



Yifei Wang  
Head Sommelier, Rosewood Miramar



Fabiola Hashem  
Wine Specialist, Fujioka's



Max Goldberg  
Sommelier, Seline Restaurant



Rocco Lombardo, President, Wilson Daniels



FROM THE PRESIDENT  
Portfolio Edition Introduction

Dear Valued Wholesale and Trade Partners,

Now as we set course on our 2026 campaign, our company remains inspired and optimistic by the unrelenting thirst for fine wine witnessed over the holiday season. It's our commitment to share even more exceptional wines, educational events, and immersive travel connecting our customers with our family-owned winery partners this year celebrating America's 250th Anniversary.

Quite fitting, with the emphasis on the semiquincentennial events, 2026 commences with the introduction of Chateau Montelena, the newest partner to our national portfolio! The accomplishments of the Barrett family over the past 50+ years in developing Chateau Montelena into one of Napa Valley's premier estates is nothing short of remarkable. Defined by the longevity of their Napa Valley Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, Montelena continues its ascent with water conservation practices and conversion of the entire estate to solar power. In addition, the Barrett family purchased 73 acres in Carneros last year to solidify the legacy of their legendary Chardonnay. We can't wait to introduce you to CEO Bo Barrett and Winemaker Matthew Crafton this February when our sales and marketing teams host a multi-city national launch tour.

Read more about what our family of producers has in store in our [2026 Portfolio Edition!](#)

COMING SOON!

Chateau Montelena Launch Tour

We are thrilled to introduce the incomparable **Chateau Montelena** to the Wilson Daniels family with a multi-city launch tour the week of February 16th!

2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Judgment of Paris, the historic tasting that placed Napa Valley and Chateau Montelena firmly on the global wine stage. Under the helm of second-generation CEO **Bo Barrett** along with Winemaker **Matthew Crafton**, Chateau Montelena continues to stand as a quality icon, consistently producing some of the finest and most sought-after wines in the country. Their Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons and Chardonnays stand the test of time while revealing the special and unique characteristics of each vintage.

We're excited to taste the magic of Montelena with Bo, Matt, and our friends in the trade in New York, Miami, Dallas, and Chicago. We hope to see you in your market, or you can follow the tour on the [WD Instagram](#).



Bo Barrett, CEO and Matthew Crafton, Winemaker

