



DOLIN ESTATE

A TOAST TO THE MALIBU COAST

Photography by Vincent Gotti

Wouldn't it be Nice: the birth of a vineyard

A short conversation with Elliott Dolin reveals that he never takes anything he does lightly. He has worked hard and stayed true to himself and, in return, fate has guided him through the successful pursuit of his passions. Early on in his life, his passion for music led to a successful career as a professional musician, often playing bass alongside legends such as Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson and the Everly Brothers. Later in life, his work ethic and passion for creativity in business was rewarded in his commercial real estate investment business, Pacific Prime Properties. A childhood passion for cars led to his participation in some of the most significant automobile events in the world. And, his passion for love has been fulfilled by the twenty-two years he has shared with wife Lynn and two sons. Elliott often says, "Something always leads to something," a celestial phrase that is evident in the various aspects of his life.

Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards' origin dates back to 2005, when Elliott and Lynn, who had just hosted their marriage over two days on their secluded Malibu property, agreed it was time to develop the land surrounding their home. Being that much of it was on a sharp slope, the endeavor proved challenging. Suddenly it occurred to Dolin, "There's nothing more beautiful than a vineyard," he recalls, "and with the south-facing exposure on the coast, it just made sense."

Wine and music aficionado Elliott Dolin opens his doors to his stunning Malibu vineyard home to talk about where he plans to take his vision for Dolin Estates this year

"I grew up in Nashville but always wanted to live in California. I spent the summers here with my sister who married someone from Long Beach and immediately fell in love with the place plus I was a major fan of the Beach Boys music."

"While my wife and I were visiting the South of France, we met an entertainment lawyer based in LA who had an 11,000 bottle collection and puts together wine lunches with connoisseurs. Attendees were obligated to bring and share a respectable bottle so that's what really immersed me in the art of wine appreciation. I remember tasting amazing wines from Bordeaux and Rhône and that's what really lit the fire. After that, I took courses in UCLA for wine appreciation and a technical course called "Vintage" which is the study of wines from around the world"



Soon, as has occurred multiple times in Dolin's life, a serendipitous hobby became passionate profession. A true family effort, Dolin worked with Lynn and son Derek to develop the enterprise. They sought the help of Malibu's go-to vineyard manager, Bob Tobias, to plant the vineyard, and they found a local winemaking facility to make the first vintage.

Though Elliott had been an avid red wine consumer and had originally expected to plant Bordeaux varietals, his aim was to make the best wine possible. Quickly, it was recognized that Malibu Coasts' cool foggy mornings and large diurnal shift, with temperatures averaging 54-degrees at night and 86-degrees during the day, were in fact perfect for growing Chardonnay. The site was laid out at a 45-degree eastward facing angle on the property's sharply graded, south-oriented slope. The vineyard's blend of Zuma volcanic soils and sandy loam were a perfect fit for Chardonnay Dijon 96 clone.

God Only Knows: wine's wild frontier, the Malibu Coast

In the history of California wine, much of the focus tends to go to the Napa Valley, but in the mid-1800s Los Angeles County was the state's leading wine region with an annual production of four million gallons. Malibu has since become better known for beaches and celebrities than its vineyards, and the region has yet to establish a foundation of best practices for farming and vinification.

"Following our first vintage, I realized the local infrastructure had not yet developed to a place where we could make the kind of wine to which we aspired," says Elliott. "Our vineyard manager, Bob Tobias, arranged a meeting with Kirby Anderson, a highly respected winemaker on the

Central Coast. I could tell he was a perfectionist like me, so we decided to bring him on as winemaker for the 2010 vintage."

"I came in thinking Malibu was a frivolous place to make wine and best suited to hobbyists, but making wine at Dolin quickly straightened me out," says Kirby. "I can now say with certainty there will be great things coming from Malibu. The land is there; the weather is there; the funds for high-quality farming are there. The only thing missing with most Malibu wines, until recently, was the commitment to make it a serious game."

While the Malibu Coast provides the potential to be a dream region for growing Chardonnay, its unique climate has yet to be fully explored. With the support of Vineyard Manager Bob Tobias, Elliott sought out additional consulting support from Coastal Vineyard Care Associates President Kevin Wilkinson in 2013. As vineyard refinements are made each vintage, Dolin will gain a greater overall understanding of the Malibu growing region, as well as the confidence and experience to implement practices with a proven track record.

Good Fermentations: vinification and winemaking

Upon hiring Winemaker Kirby Anderson, production moved to a facility in the Central Coast which offered more advanced equipment, as well as the needed barrel space and proximity for the Central Coast Pinot Noir expansion. In the winery, Kirby adopts a non-interventionist approach to showcase the characteristics of the vineyard. He pays monthly visits to Malibu during the growing season to meet with Elliott, while closely monitoring ripeness.

Kirby is quick to acknowledge the need for time and experimentation to get to know the Malibu fruit, but the results already speak for themselves. "I try to always keep my emotions in check when making wine, but the potential of the Dolin Vineyard is so tremendous that I can't help but get excited," he says. "We are working with just five barrels, so we don't have the luxury of blending our way to a good wine. The fact that the wines are already this good says a lot about the quality of the vineyard, as well as Elliott and Lynn's willingness to do whatever it takes at every stage of production."

I Get Around: the Central Coast

As Elliott sought expansion, he soon realized immediate resources in Malibu are limited, so he looked north. Knowing he wanted to continue the Dolin tradition of producing wines from the best grapes possible, he developed strong ties to many well regarded vineyards in the Central Coast. Between his positive and focused demeanor, as well as the support of having Kirby as winemaker, Dolin was able to purchase fruit from vineyards that would normally never consider supplying to a new producer. With the 2014 debut of Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards' Central Coast Pinot Noirs, the winery will have a comprehensive lineup of wines representative of the best of the Central Coast and Malibu Coast.

Fun Fun Fun!

Current releases include the 2011 Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards Chardonnay (\$39), and the 2012 Dolin Rose of Pinot Noir (\$22). Wines may be purchased directly at www.dolinestate.com.

For retail outlets and a list of restaurants carrying Dolin, please visit www.dolinestate.com/wheretotaste.php.



Photo courtesy of Dolin Estate

ELLIOTT DOLIN

INSIDE THE MIND OF A VINTNER

Interview by Kaye Cloutman

HIS 2016 GAMEPLAN

"2016 promises to be a breakout year for Dolin Estate wines. We plan to continue to spread the word about the quality and potential of the Malibu Coast region. We just introduced our second Chardonnay from Malibu, which is sourced from the Malibu Newton Canyon AVA. We are also about to release two new Malibu Coast red blends. I think people will be astonished by the quality of the Bordeaux varietal fruit from the Malibu Coast. At the same time, we are continuing to explore additional opportunities to produce wines from the Central Coast. Our portfolio will soon consist of eight different wines.

We do have a very significant event on the horizon in 2016. For the first time, we have been invited to participate in the "World of Pinot Noir" in Santa Barbara. It's an honor to have the opportunity to pour alongside some of the finest producers from Oregon, France and beyond."

EMBRACING YOUR PASSION

"In making a career change, I believe that it is important to have patience and to have reasonable expectations. There's nothing wrong with setting high goals, but one cannot expect to achieve them overnight. If you are pursuing your passion, you must be passionate about it! That will make it easier for you to "do what it takes" and persist until you achieve the results that you are seeking. To the greatest extent possible, try to affiliate, network, befriend, intern or be employed with others who are very successful in the field that you are pursuing. Aside from having the opportunity to learn from them, there may be potential future opportunities that arise from being associated with them. Do your homework in advance—before making the change, learn as much as you can about the career you are pursuing. If there are college or university extension courses available, classroom or on-line, get as well educated as you can."

HIS WINE-MAKING STYLE

"We strive to produce well-balanced wines. The components of fruit, acidity, tannins and the influence of oak must be in harmony with one another. Think of listening to the voices of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, The Eagles or The Beach Boys. Each component (or voice) contributes a different flavor (or note) and they must be brought together in the right proportion to create the most pleasing harmony. If one of the voices is too loud or one note is off pitch, it is no longer pleasing to the ear. Lush, or "smooth" mouth feel is another characteristic that we emphasize, particularly in our Chardonnay. To that end, all of our wines are fermented and aged in barrel, with varying percentages of new French oak (depending on the grape varietal). We are always careful to make sure that the oak plays a "supporting role" and does not overwhelm the fruit. Each of our four single-vineyard 2012 Pinot Noir offerings is produced by the same technique. By doing so, we allow the characteristics of each vineyard to stand out and express their unique landscape, soil and climate conditions."

HIS WINE + MUSIC PLAYLIST

"Before making wine, I had successful career as a professional musician playing bass on stage and recordings with several legendary music acts. It was the Beach Boys that inspired me as a teenager to pick up an instrument and, in the 1980s, to make my way from Nashville to California. I've been a huge fan of the band ever since I was 13 years old, so I'd recommend a mix of Beach Boys classics to go with our wines. To get you started, I suggest "Surf's Up" paired to our Rosé of Pinot Noir. Next, I'd pick up the pace with "Good Vibrations" and a glass of Dolin Estate Malibu Coast Chardonnay. For our Central Coast lineup that's a no-brainer, I have to go with "I Get Around."



Dolin

MALIBU ESTATE VINEYARDS



Nature has been kind.

South-facing slope, seascape of the Malibu Coast on the horizon, the morning coastal marine layer giving way to sunny afternoons, gentle ocean winds, cool evenings, volcanic basalt soils beneath a surface layer of clay soil... Nature has kindly provided the elements that enable us to produce world-class wines.

Visit us at www.DolinEstate.com to find out more.

101 Best Wineries in America for 2015

#100 - DOLIN MALIBU ESTATE VINEYARDS

"Dolin makes juicy, earthy Pinot Noirs from Central Coast grapes, but his masterpiece is his estate-grown Chardonnay, full of fruit and only lightly touched with oak."

- Colman Andrews, TheDailyMeal.com



Dolin

MALIBU ESTATE VINEYARDS

Home of award-winning *Chardonnay*
from the new Malibu Coast AVA and
Pinot Noir from California's finest
Central Coast vineyards.



Visit us at www.DolinEstate.com