

Malibu's Burgundian Point of View

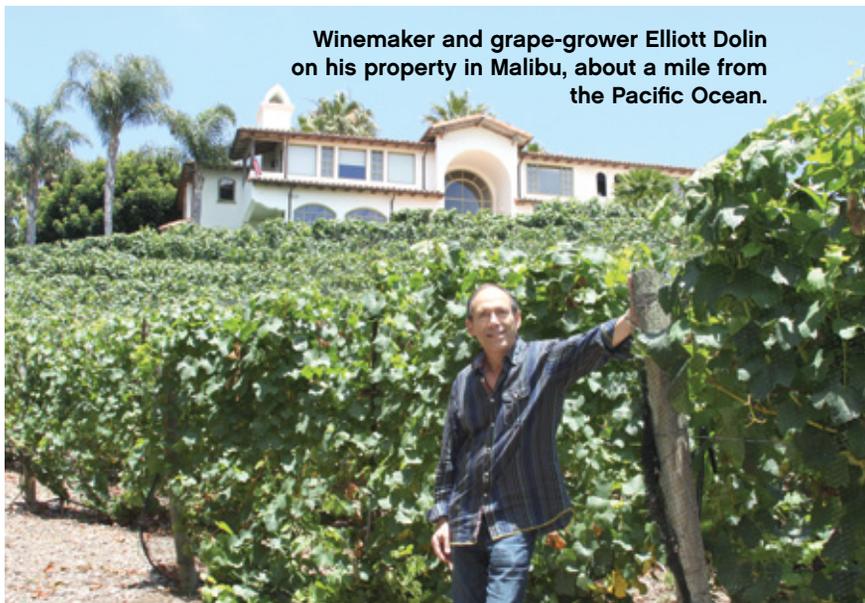
story and photos by Meredith May

Overlooking Point Dume on the Zuma Mesa in Malibu, California, one would expect to experience visions of surfers; Chardonnay and Pinot Noir vines, maybe not so much. While the two current Malibu AVAs—Malibu-Newton Canyon and Saddlerock-Malibu—have a recorded history now with Bordeaux varietals and other sun-shine-inspired grapes, the Burgundian pair has been omitted: It's just too warm.

But with a petition to the TTB for an AVA called Malibu Coast, there are a couple of exciting Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs to discover a seagull's flight from the ocean. Volcanic basalt soils, fog and afternoon winds are just a few of the elements that legitimize the up-and-coming region. That, and spectacular minerality and aromatics.

"Our vines may not look big, but they deliver the fruit," says Charles Schetter of Malibu Sanity, a strong Malibu Coastal AVA proponent and grower of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir along the mountains that overlook the beaches of Malibu. He walks with us along rows of 1,400 vines on his five-acre estate and even monitors these vines from a weather station in the vineyard that is hooked up to a computer on his bedside table. "If a man only has one vineyard in his life, it better be a good one," he points out. He is adamant—positively driven—to make sure he does not miss his 14- to 17-day window of spraying: The plight of living so close to the ocean is the onset of powdery mildew. "I never ever miss," the U.C. Davis Certified Winegrower (the only one in Malibu) insists.

Elliott Dolin grows 900 vines of Chardonnay, just under an acre, on his stunning hillside property. But there are no actual wineries in Malibu—no thanks to state and county restrictions. Most local growers utilize crush pads along the Central Coast. A commercial real estate developer, Dolin is also delving not just into the growing of grapes, but also into the business of wine. He is taking the wine business symposium course at Sonoma State run by Tim Hanni that covers the bases of production and marketing, from vine to shelf. "I'm learning how to prepare spread sheets," he says proudly. "But I can tell you right now, it's easier to make the wine than sell it."



Winemaker and grape-grower Elliott Dolin on his property in Malibu, about a mile from the Pacific Ocean.

Kisses to These Wines

Once the Malibu Coast AVA is approved, these wines will carry the new designation; for now, they are labeled with broader appellations. I scored them equally—they both deserve hugs and kisses. —M.M.



Malibu Sanity 2010 Single Vineyard Pinot Noir, California

(\$42) has a nose of cinnamon dusted roses. Cherry on the palate, and a slightly chewy texture, makes it a unique character. Mincemeat and subtle autumn spice rounds out this pretty, feminine, yet earthy beach beauty. 94



Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards 2010 Chardonnay, Los Angeles County

(\$39) sees 100% ML and is barrel-aged and -fermented. A nose of lemon caramel carries through to a minerality that makes its way into a succulent toasted caramel. The fruit winds up in a rush of lemon curd and pineapple. 94 ■■

