

EPIISODE #23 WALSH FAMILY WINES/NATE WALSH FOUNDER & WINEGROWER.

SPEAKERS

Nate Walsh, Fred Reno

Fred Reno

Nate, welcome to my Podcast. And thank you for taking the time to meet with me. Likewise, well as I like to start at the beginning. What's your story? How did you get involved in this?

Nate Walsh

Well, everybody has a little bit of a different trajectory into this, which I'm sure you're learning with these. I did not grow up in wine. I grew up in a milk drinking Chef Boyardee eating family. But when I was in college, I spent the summer some summers in the Charlottesville area where there's a lot of wineries and I just needed a job one summer. And it was probably the tail end of when you got jobs from the newspaper. And I opened the classifieds in the newspaper. And the top left was there was a winery that was looking for help. And I thought that sounds as good of a job as any.

Fred Reno

was that Horton? That was at Horton, what year was that?

Nate Walsh

That was in 2004. So, I started working at Horton. And I didn't know that it was harvest. But it was I worked the harvest and really, really enjoyed it not really knowing To be honest, caring much about wine at the time, but it was a fun. I like I always like to have enjoyed hands on physical work. It was a very interesting work. So, I stayed after the harvest was able to stay what I thought was going to be a year. And this is when I should have been getting a real job a real job because I finished, I finished school and had you know, my slacks and my resume and I was supposed to be going and getting a job like as a copywriter. Okay, something like that. But this was the interim period. And I just fell in love with the work I really loved. All I did there was cellar work.

Fred Reno

Well, how long do you were you at Horton?

Nate Walsh

Well, I ended up staying for three years. And I was very fortunate that the winemaker there at the time, Mike Heny turned into a really wonderful mentor. You know, I look back on that time. And it's remarkable how lucky I was to kind of be connected with him at that winery. But the short of it is I took a random job and loved it.

Fred Reno

How'd you end up in? In Oregon after?

Nate Walsh

Yea so, I worked at Horton for three years. And then while I was there, I started reading a lot about wine I'm always like, whatever I'm interested in, I tend to just read about it. That's kind of my, the way I've always absorbed information. So, I started reading a lot. There was like a, you know, that winery was created in the 80s, late 80s, I think. So, there was a lot of textbooks, and you know, books on cooperage and wine Atlas of France. They just had all these books there. And so, I've just read during my lunch break, and I kind of learned about wine that way. Oh, great. And then I also learned that you could travel and get jobs at other wineries. And that I was probably qualified for them after doing a few harvests at Horton, and I'm you know, there's just the flow of the work and inoculations and running chemistries and things. Once I knew how to do all that I thought well, I could if I could travel and do this. Why not? So, I wanted to go to the west coast, but specifically I was interested in Pinot, so I decided to go to Oregon. And I worked a season there. And then I still had the pinot bug. And I wanted to do a southern hemisphere harvest. So, I went to Central Otago, oh you did because there and that's not as well of a known region period, but that is a phenomenal, phenomenal pinot area. And their those wines are hard to find, which is unfortunate in the United States, but so I went and did a season in Otago.

Fred Reno

who was the winery that you work with?

Nate Walsh

Akarua, since kind of changed. It's gone through a little bit of a revamping since I was there, but it was about 100-acre Pinot and Chard producer.

Fred Reno

That's significant, Yea. Well, so Central Otago then you ended up back here in Virginia.

Nate Walsh

Yes. So, I wanted to come back to Virginia. So, by then I was fully Well, you are hands on you had all the experience you need. I was fully, fully had the bug. And I wanted to come back to Virginia for a number of reasons My family is here. And I also after leaving and going to those other regions I it became more appealing to me to be a little bit of the underdog and to have a lot of questions that still needed to be answered in terms of the vineyard And winemaking and I that was and still is very appealing to me. So, I came back to Virginia. And that's how I ended up up here in Northern Virginia. What year was that? That was in 2008. Okay, and I came I took the job as the winemaker at Sunset Hills vineyard. And that's how I ended up in Loudon County.

Fred Reno

Man, that must have been a different landscape just 13 years ago.

Nate Walsh

Yep. Oh, yeah, it was it was very different here. It's the growth. I mean, statewide, but I can specifically speak to this area. Since I came. My first vintage in Northern Virginia was 2009. The full 2009 vintage and it's, it's been a pretty drastic change, since then.

Fred Reno

Interesting. So now you've you, you're at Sunset Hills for well over seven years, then you finally decide for yourself, okay, it's time to do this on my own with your new wife.

Yeah, so we it's interesting. We didn't we never. We never had the conversation that I think a lot of people have over a bottle of wine at dinner. Wouldn't it be fun to start a wine project? We never had that discussion. Despite my background being in, you know, wine production, and hers was in. She works for importer and a wholesaler, right? And then she also has prior to that a background in like wine service and fine dining. But in 2013, because I've been involved in different associations like state or regional associations. It's not that uncommon that when somebody has a property and is looking for guidance on maybe planting or just some guidance on possibly planting a vineyard, it's not that uncommon, that they'll email me. I think it's because the various associations that I've been involved in, so I got an email about a site, the site of the Bethany Ridge in 2013, and a family had purchased the property and it had four-acre vineyard on it.

Fred Reno

Okay, so I already had it already.

It was planted in 2007. And I was looking at it in 2013. So, there's, there were already wines being produced from it. Actually, I had made wines from it. It was managed by Doug Fabboli for a number of years. Okay. And he saw when I was at Sunset Hills, he sold us the Viognier, so I was somewhat familiar with the site, but I had never really inspected it closely. So anyways, we got a call about it. So, I went to look at it. And they were looking to do something new with the site. And I was so blown away by the potential, I mean, it sits up. It's on the Catoctin Ridge, which is one of the two main ridges that comes through this county, the Rolodex of things, we look for in sites, it just ticked all of them. So, I called Sarah, my wife after meeting with the family that had purchased it. And I said, You know, I know we've never talked about this. But if we were ever going to start a brand, I found the vineyard, very fortunate that she...

Fred Reno

and those in that original planting, it was Sauvignon Blanc primarily, is that right?

It was sau Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Tannat, and Cab Sauv

Fred Reno

Okay, so it was split up.

Nate Walsh

Yeah, split. However, we only produced Sauvignon Blanc for the first two years, because we couldn't afford to produce all of it because it would tie up so much money and it required so much capital to bottle and sit on the wines. So, we sold fruit, and we would make a little bit of Sauv Blanc on the side. For a number of years. We did that and then we added Viognier.

Fred Reno

Is that a partnership you have up there at Bethany Ridge?

Nate Walsh

So, it is now for the for the first three vintages. It was just us okay. And so, we farmed it on the I was I worked for Sunset Hills. We both had full time jobs and Sarah and I would go on the weekends and prune and in the evenings to mow or shoot thin or whatever. And then we would sell the fruit to some other wineries and make a little bit of Sauv Blanc. And then in 2017, we formed a partnership with the owner for the entire project. I see. And so that allowed us to we were already Actually, we had already established a second vineyard site which is called Twin Notch.

that we did on our own it was when it kind of got scary because it became real. As we were doing, we were putting significant, no pun intended and significant roots in the ground for this business. And then we were very fortunate to be able to form a partnership that enabled us to really launch it Because what I needed to do was do it full time, right? And that allowed us to be able to make that work.

Fred Reno

So, then all of a sudden, this opportunity Northgate comes along,

Nate Walsh

yes, we were producing the wine at other wineries. And we were on our third winery, because we kept out growing. Because there you know, there weren't a lot of wineries still aren't, at least in this area that are equipped to be producing a large amount of wine for somebody else. So, we kept moving around, trying to find somebody that had tank space that was willing to do it, because you also it's, it's a little bit of a hassle for the production winery to have somebody else in there, not to mention somebody who's a winemaker that wants to do things the way they want to do things. I understand that it's a little bit of a hassle. And on our third vintage, we were down at Early Mountain. you mentioned you spoke with Ben, and that's a four-hour round trip from my house. And for the 17 vintage. I made that every day when we were producing wine. Oh my god during those drives. I was like, we can't keep doing this. This. This isn't sustainable with not we have just had a daughter. I was doing this four hour round just to do punch downs and take chemistries and stuff. It didn't make a lot of sense.

Fred Reno

I can't even imagine I just did that four hour Yeah, just having to come here.

So, we started to look into facilities. And we looked we were exploring building one. But also, it was never the way we looked at it was it was not so much that we wanted to we weren't looking for like a showpiece facility. We just wanted some kind of utilitarian production area. And so, I also was speaking to winery owners in the area saying we don't well maybe there's like a long-term agreement we can take where we would like lease 25% of your winery for 10 years. Right. And so, we were exploring that and one of the wineries we were exploring with was where we are right now which was North Gate. And we were very close to signing the paperwork for that and then they decided they wanted to retire and sell and so we had already we were already six months into discussion with them. So, we were able to make this work.

Fred Reno

Well, that's fantastic. This place is beautiful. It's wonderful. Yeah, it's a great spot one of the places that just pop a vineyard down.

Nate Walsh

yeah, so this they had they had this was except 10-acre vineyard that they have. They planted it's

Fred Reno

now seven acres. And so, the other two vineyards that you manage are rust mountain and Weatherly there's rust mountain.

Nate Walsh

Weatherly, Bethany ridges which we mentioned twin nuts which we mentioned and there's also a new one that's, that's coming online this year. So, we're speaking in 2021. Okay, it's third leaf this year, which is called hickory wind. And there's an additional vineyard that we now on our on our second year of managing called Dutchman Scruton.

Fred Reno

I see you also have some independent growers. We used to Okay, so yeah, yeah, I mean, I can't see how you can manage all these vineyards to begin with. So

Nate Walsh

we now we're at six sites, it's about 55 acres that we manage. And we so we used to work with some independent growers, but we don't need to anymore. Okay, so we worked with some really wonderful independent growers. But it's just circumstance of where we're at. We don't need to anymore.

Fred Reno

Well, so I'm curious. If there's if there is one, what varieties Do you yourself like to work with to grow and then produce wine from? If there's a particular there's,

Nate Walsh

there's, there's a number I mean, we're focused on within red wines. We're pretty Bordeaux focused with the addition of Tannat I'm a big fan of what we can do with Tannat in Virginia, but otherwise, we're Merlot, Cab Franc, Petit Verdot, and Cab Sauv.

Fred Reno

Are you most your sights elevated? Yes. So

Nate Walsh

most all of them are essentially except where we are right now. Right. Okay. Which This is the lowest elevation site that we have. But otherwise, we're up on the two ridges, so you have mitigating circumstances knock on wood? Yeah. Most we've never had a front frost issues in a big way. So, Bordeaux focused for the most part with reds with whites. Sauv Blanc has been wonderful for us, and I've really enjoyed producing it.

Fred Reno

Well, yours is terrific. And let me interject that I've had this folk. And it's really, really good, if you can find it buy it. That's been a wonderful wine for us. I'm a very, very big fan of Virginia Viognier. And we do we have coming from Horton, I would think.

Nate Walsh

Yeah, I was basically raised on it. So, we do a good amount of Viognier, we do Chardonnay, Petit Manseng and then we have smaller plantings of Albariño, Chenin Blanc you've got some Chenin, we've got Chenin and we have an acre of Chenin. Yeah,

Fred Reno

that's exciting.

Nate Walsh

It's very exciting you know, the jury's still out. That's one grape that both my wife and I, our, like, personal love of that, arguably, may have clouded our decision to put some in the ground here. But we had our first harvest in 2020. Okay, and it did well. And so, this is, but this will be our first big harvest.

Fred Reno

That's exciting. I can't wait to taste that. Yeah. Do you? Have you worked with, or do you? Have you ever planted any hybrids at all?

Nate Walsh

So, we don't currently grow any hybrids. However, moving forward, we've made a conscious decision that any vineyard expansion we do from here on out will only be hybrids. When we were really establishing these sites, which was you know, five, six years ago, I was very, the intention that we wanted to do was vineyard designate once so either varietals or blends from these different vineyards because that's what someone who had the Pinot bug strongly that's what's very interesting to me about wine is the kinds of wines that are reflective. And I'm not saying we're there yet, but that's the that's the larger that's the 40-year intent for what we're doing is to make these vineyards designate wines. So, when we started, I was under the belief that vinifera is what you needed to do that in this area. However, I've kind of changed my tune a little bit because we need to look at sites that are going to last 30, 40 years and Sauvignon Blanc is a great example. Are we going to be producing Bethany Ridge

Sauvignon Blanc 30 years from now I don't know? If we're looking at hotter and hotter, Augusts'. It's going to become that we're going to lose the style that we like, which is that great acidity, you can get like wonderful length of texture. But you need a little bit of a cooler ripening period for that. So, we're looking at Well, what what's going to what's more long term. And so, where our future plantings which starts next year will be hybrids, or like these vinifera crosses that are which.

Fred Reno

which hybrids, do you like, What are you looking at?

Nate Walsh

We have we have it's, it's funny, we have like spreadsheets, okay, that we're interested in. So, there's, there's a lot that we're interested in doing, our initial focus will be on whites. Okay. So white hybrids, but we'll be doing essentially field blend plantings. Oh, that's multiple hybrids in one block. Yeah, but I don't I don't, you know, there's, I think there's a lot of really great potential, we also seem to have a customer base that is, is less sold by the fact that it's Chardonnay. And they're more sold by that it's interesting and refreshing and delicious. And so, a lot of the stigma around hybrids, which I would say is that they're either kind of a second thought in the winery, or that they're,

Fred Reno

I think it's a lack of the information understanding, both on the wine growing end, and on the consumer end. Yeah, it's kind of on both ends because I I'm guilty of that. I really didn't know much about hybrids when I moved here, because most of my career was West Coast focused. And I got here and started tasting some I've become a big fan of Seyval Blanc personally. I love good Chambourcin. I'm a big cru Beaujolais drinker. And when that's handled by the right winemaker, and they take that little edge off the back, but it's like a really top Cru. And so, I think there's a lot of potential in fact, what you're telling me right now, tracks right in line with the interview I had with Tony Wolf. And he was telling me he thought by 2050 we might be growing completely different. Yeah, hybrids and varietals. He you mentioned this cross of the vinifera type. He tasted me on that day at lunch and something was Marselan. And I thought it was a private proprietary name. I tasted the wine. And I said, That tastes like a Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec blend. And he goes well, you're half right. I said, What do you mean? He said, it's a Cabernet Sauvignon/Grenache cross and this wines from Uruguay. So, it's pretty warm down there. And now we're putting some in our research station up there to test it because I thought this is interesting. So, I think you've just mentioned it. There's some of those type cross breeding going on, there are much more vinifera strain.

Nate Walsh

There are and we don't know huge amount about them in Virginia, but there's and I'm aware of at least a number of growers that are starting to put them in the ground. And I mean, the other. The other side of this that you just mentioned is like sustainability of farming. And, you know, I look at that as two things, you know, A, we, that anybody that's farming, all things being equal would prefer to do it in as low impact way as possible. But then B. it's also leads into the longevity of the vineyard, right? I mean, if you're really for me, if we're, if we're really going to make a Bethany Ridge Sauvignon Blanc that uniquely shows that place, it's going to take us 30 years to figure out the all the teeny idiosyncrasies of

what we need to do to do that. So, the vineyards got to last. And so, we need to be treating that land well, and those vines really well. And part of that is what are the inputs that we need to put into it?

Fred Reno

So let me shift this a little bit of the wines you currently produce. And you have somebody that is important. It could be a wine writer could be a top trade buyer, whoever it might be, and they're not familiar with your wines, and you want to impress them. What's the one wine that you pull out of Walsh Family and say, have this wine, this is who we are now you'll get it what our signature is?

Nate Walsh

For, for white wine, we would I would say that the Sauvignon Blanc from Bethany Ridge and then for reds, the Russ Mountain Merlot.

Fred Reno

Okay. Yeah. So

Nate Walsh

Russ mountain is 100% Merlot site on the Blue Ridge range. So, it's up at 1200 feet, wonderful, like southeast facing just I've never seen such balanced Merlot we love the fruit when it comes in here. It's a great site to farm and really extracted, you know, has some of the characteristics of like mountain fruit that I associate with true mountain vineyards. There's like a brambly, it's hard for me to describe like a brambly spice quality that we get from it that is really unique to it. So those two wines

Fred Reno

following that trail a little bit. What was the one wine that you had in your life? Where you went? AH! That's it, that was the wine that was that sort of ethereal experience that turned your head. And you went? Man, that's it and, and made that impression? What's that one wine? Yeah. Especially a guy who didn't have any background in wine didn't wasn't drinking wine, regularly, anything.

Nate Walsh

It would, I'm really lucky because I have, I still have those a lot. Those experiences, which I think, you know, it's just like if you if you're a music lover, your passion for something, it's like revamped every year. So that moment for me was a Gewurztraminer from Alsace, one of the other one of the assistant winemakers at Horton, when I was there, he went there on his honeymoon. And the hotel that they stayed at, produced wine. And so, he brought me back a bottle of gewurztraminer from and I don't know who the producer was, but it was made in the basement of this hotel that he stayed in during his honeymoon. Fantastic. And I didn't know. I just didn't know that that was possible. Like the I didn't I it seemed like an entirely other beverage. It just was I still remember that so well. Wow. Yeah. And I don't know, then the ironic thing about it is I don't know who the producer is. I don't know where it came from. I didn't keep the bottle. But I remember that experience like it was yesterday.

Fred Reno

Talk to me a little bit about your consumer, your demographics, who are the people who come see you buy your wine regularly. What's the makeup if you have if you can categorize. I'm curious. It's a gorgeous tasting room.

Nate Walsh

Yeah, there's not you know, there isn't an easy generalization. But I will say from other wineries I've been involved in in Virginia, we have a little bit of a younger demographic that visits us which is probably just a little bit of a mirror of myself, my wife being a little bit younger to be doing this. We, I, I always wanted and like a comment I always made, or I was thought was when we started this as like, we don't need to be making a quarter of a million cases. Volume is not really of interest to me. If we can just find people that have this similar interest in what we're doing. Some years, we'll make two Sauv Blancs. Some years we make two Roses, two Chardonnays because we do separate vineyard. Right? And I always thought if we can just find people to find that interesting. And we can just get them here, that would make it worthwhile for me. And I think we can make that work. So, I think to some degree, we've been successful at that in I think our consumer base is, is a little bit younger, and also a little bit more interested in the subtleties and why that's interesting. Why would a Merlot from one vineyard be different from Merlot from another one and, and why do we care? And I think we've had success in being a little bit of a magnet for some of those consumers.

Fred Reno

What level of production is Walsh Family at? At the moment? We make about 4500 cases. And do you It appears you still make wine for other partners of yours or other vineyards? I mean you have other production here for their wines.

Nate Walsh

Yes, we do. We do. We do some custom crush, which I thoroughly enjoy. So, there's some what I would describe as independent growers in the area that have interesting vineyards. And but they don't have production, so we do their production. And that's been really enjoyable because we get to learn about their sites and contrasts their sites with our sites.

Fred Reno

Do you, do you? I thought I saw a label for North Gate. Is there still a label for North Gate? Yeah. So, we don't still produce the North Gate vineyard wines. But we still have some Yeah, I see. Yeah. Okay. What's this? I saw on your site, these Drinkwell, wines. What's that all about?

Nate Walsh

So, drink, Drinkwell, is the name of the virtual tasting that we started doing? for quite a while it was a weekly virtual tasting where my wife and I would moderate a discussion with other growers, who are winemakers or marketing people or distributors. And we would send out bundles of wine to the viewers. And everybody tastes along and then ask questions. On the live chat yeah. So, we never would have fathom how successful and fun and the feedback that we've gotten. I mean, we got there were. And we still do this. Now. Now. It's a monthly, so we don't do it every, we used to do it every Friday. Now it's one Friday a month. But I've we I've personally gotten more letters or emails from customers about those events than anything else we've ever done, like in a positive way. So just you know that I still

have many of them, because they meant a lot to me, because this was also in the heat of the shutdown. And so, something about Drinkwell, and we're not the only obviously, we're not the only ones doing these virtual tastings. And a lot of people are doing them very well. But something about Drinkwell, struck a nerve with certain people. And we have had a really wonderful viewer, I guess, viewership for these events.

Fred Reno

Well, the intellectual curiosity, as you're describing here is what fuels the passion for wine, isn't it? when people get an intellectual curiosity about? Why is this wine different from that wine? And why is this made here? What is behind this? And that's what excites me about Virginia. To me, this is the most exciting wine growing region in the country today. There's more diversity here. Not just in wine growing winemaking, but things you were talking about where it just seems there's a camaraderie, a collegiality, if you will, amongst the winemakers here in Virginia, that doesn't exist in most places in this country any longer. And everybody's like working together as opposed to, I don't have time for that. Would you say that's fair?

Nate Walsh

a 100% Yeah, I think the from when I was power washing barrel racks at Horton, to now, there's been the one main thread through Virginia, I would say has been that I couldn't name a single winery owner or winemaker or vineyard manager, that doesn't think it benefits everyone. If any of us improve, that, I couldn't name anybody that views, you know, winery, if let's say we've figured something out in the vineyard that makes our Sauv Blanc a little a little bit better in our opinion. Everybody would share that information, and nobody would view sharing it as a mistake. Which, to your comment is probably something that goes away with like the maturity of an industry. Because it becomes more competitive. But for a region that wants to be as good as it can be, it's so crucial. And I totally agree.

Fred Reno

Well, and you know, and when I first started this and started talking to people that I knew around the country about Virginia wine, they looked at me like I was crazy. What are you talking about? And just this really incredible, best kept secret. My opinion now, I've haven't tasted through them all, although I've tried real hard here since I've been here in two years. But at least 10 to 15%, maybe as many as 20 of the 300 plus wineries or so that are in Virginia now. Make as good a quality of wine as anybody in the world, in my opinion, full stop. I mean, the quality Now, can we know the varietals in some cases are a little different? And obviously style and everything else, but just pure quality? Virginia has got it. I mean, it's just really remarkable. You're certainly one of the crowd there. Just had the chance to taste your wines couple weeks ago. But yeah, the quality is there in Virginia. Now getting that word out on a national basis, is what I'm trying to do. It's so exciting to see what's happening here. Have you ever worked with, I'm curious? Bubba Beasley?

Nate Walsh

Yes, yes, we I. So, I've known him for quite a while. We so when we've put new vineyards in, for Walsh Family Wine, and actually, when I was involved in some vineyard establishment at Sunset Hills, we would always get the soils mapped and studied before making any planting decisions. That said, I first was in was professionally involved with Bubba for another vineyard. That's not a Walsh vineyard, but

we were helping somebody get started. But I'm also aware of the work he's done in the industry. And I mean, the that kind of information for establishing of vineyard, I think it's a no brainer. The benefits downstream for a better understanding your soil are hard, it's hard to quantify how important that is, but, but it's crucial. So yeah, I think what he's doing is great. There's a few other soil scientists, companies that kind of do the same thing. We've worked with a number of them.

Fred Reno

interesting, what type of support, if any, have you received or needed from like Virginia Tech, or PVCC, or any of these other academic?

Nate Walsh

I mean, Virginia Tech is I don't think we'd be sitting here. If it weren't for Virginia Tech and the work they've done. So, I. So, I've been very involved with the Virginia vineyards Association, okay, which is the statewide grape growing Association. And so, through that I've worked a lot with Tony Wolf and Virginia Tech on what they offer the industry and what the industry needs. And that could be a whole Podcast Series there. So, they've been I mean, we lean on the extension agents and or Tony, still for questions. viticultural questions. We have.

Fred Reno

well, that's a hell of a resource. Yeah. The state has available to anybody who wants to grow grapes.

Nate Walsh

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. Virginia Tech. We're very, very lucky to have like that. The extension supports the research support, and the like state enologists and state vinicultural.

Fred Reno

Well, Bruce Zoecklein is semi-retired at this point. Yeah. So, he's retired. So, we have Tony Wolf has been in I've interviewed Tony, so Oh, good. So yeah, you know, his? Well, he's he is the viticultural side of this. I look at Bruce Zoecklein as the enologist side of this. Have they replaced Bruce at all? I mean, if he's semi-retired,

Nate Walsh

yes. So, and I don't know the Virginia Tech end of how all this works, to be honest with you. So, I don't think they fully replaced exactly what Bruce was doing, or at least the way I understand it. But they so I think three or four years ago, I think it was three or four years ago, they brought on a woman named Beth Chang. Oh, and she is she is involved in the enology research for the state. I think it's a little bit of a different structure than what Bruce Zoecklein is doing. But I don't know that for sure.

Fred Reno

Are you involved at all? Because I've just started to discover this, the Winemakers Research Exchange. Yeah. Yeah. We've talk to me about that a little bit because I've had people comment about it, but I didn't really understand what it was. Now I've started thinking, Oh, this is bigger than I knew.

Nate Walsh

Yes. So, the winemakers research exchange is a Virginia focused entity that organizes and helps execute a certain amount of research projects in the state every year. So, let's say it's 50. So, they coordinate 50, different winemakers doing research. And they collect the data. They collect the wines and then they share it with everybody else. It's funded by Virginia Wine Board, the Wine Board. Yeah, there's full time employee who coordinates that's Joy Ting, yeah, who coordinates and hold, you know, holds all the winemakers' hands during this because.

Fred Reno

well, there's that collegiality we were just talking about.

Nate Walsh

And then it's very transparent. I've been involved with them. I think since it started. As somebody that does research for them or has them help us do research. One of our main focuses has been clonal differences in Cab Franc and Merlot. So, what's really great about it, in my opinion is so we do we make two clones of Cab Franc wines, and they do analysis on the wine, you know, tannic structure, what are the differences and then we present the wine so people can taste the differences for anyone that's involved in that is very transparent about what they're doing. You can taste the wines, you can decide for yourself, if you have a preference, or if you have a stylistic preference. I think it's I think the research exchange is wonderful.

Fred Reno

Well, it sounds interesting. Sounds like an opportunity for any winegrower, winemaker to learn something that would take them years to learn themselves in the field or doing whatever they're doing.

Nate Walsh

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, absolutely and you can often what they'll do is if we're doing a, let's just using the clonal differences. As an example, if we're doing that research at Walsh family wine from one of our vineyards, she might coordinate two other winemakers to do the exact same thing. So, then you get more meaningful data, because you've got more data points for well are these two clones is a consistent the way these are different in these different vineyards. Right. And that would help new growers. If when they're planting, theoretically decide, well, what's the more appropriate clone?

Fred Reno

Okay, Nate. I appreciate what you shared with me here today. This is going to make a really terrific episode, I'm sure and let me just thank you again for your time. Yeah, thank you. Thanks for having me.