

## EPISODE # 25 JOY TING: WINEMAKERS RESEARCH EXCHANGE CORDINATOR

### **SPEAKERS**

Fred Reno, Joy Ting

#### **Fred Reno**

Joy, welcome to my Podcast. Thanks, Fred. It's great to be here. So, as we start at the beginning always, What's your story? How does someone with a degree in Marine Biology get into wine?

#### **Joy Ting**

It's a good question. I didn't really grow up with wine in the house very much. My parents didn't really drink much at all. And if they did, it wasn't probably wine. When I was in college, my then boyfriend who's now my husband, spent some time at an Air Force Base in Northern California. So, he would go out there summers for training, and then come back when he was in med school. And one weekend he went to visit Napa Valley because they had some leave off the base. And after he came back from Napa Valley, he called me and he's like, you've got, you've got to see this place. You've got to be here. So next time he was out there, I took a trip to visit and we just, I think, fell in love with the whole thing. The wonderful, beautiful landscape, the great family culture of the family-owned business, and family-owned farming, the food, and the wine and just this, this culture of hospitality that goes along with it that makes you want to sit longer and enjoy each other's company a little bit more. What year was that? Oh, gosh, that was probably in the mid '90s, I think.

#### **Fred Reno**

Was that Hamilton Air Force Base?

#### **Joy Ting**

I think he was at Travis. He was at Travis. He was a medical person. So he was at the hospital that was there.

#### **Fred Reno**

When did you end up back here in Virginia?

#### **Joy Ting**

We came to Virginia after my husband had finished his Air Force duty in Georgia. We came to Charlottesville for his job at the University of Virginia. He's an anesthesiologist, so he was an academic anesthesiologist here at UVA. And at that time, as you said, I had finished a PhD in

Marine Biology and there's not a lot of Marine Biology to do here in Virginia. There is on the East Coast, but not here in Charlottesville. So, I started to teach. I've always loved teaching. I taught all through my graduate studies as well. So, I taught at the community college and high school. I taught Chemistry and Biochemistry and biotechnology and of course, biology, which is my first love.

**Fred Reno**

So, was your first position in the wine industry with Michael Shaps?

**Joy Ting**

Well, there were two little things before that. But Michael gave me my first big start. When I was teaching, I did a science of wine class at PVCC. (Piedmont Valley Community College). I took all the PVCC courses when they first started their Viticulture and Enology certificate program. And then I did teach the science of wine class for a short time there. I had one summer stint at DuCard Vineyards. At DuCard, Scott Elliff the owner needed just an extra set of hands. So, Julian had come on as their viticulturist. They were not making their own wine at the time. He was selling his grapes. But sometimes they just needed an extra set of hands. So, they would call me up and I would go out for a day or two to help in the vineyard whenever it was needed. Then there was kind of a lull when I when I went and became a full-time teacher. In 2013 Michael Shaps hired me to be his lab tech.

**Fred Reno**

And then if I'm accurate you did that for several years. Then you got into being the winemaker production manager.

**Joy Ting**

Yes. So, I started out in the lab, just learning the techniques to do the general chemistry that's needed. Wineworks is one of the few places in Virginia that has a full-time lab person, because there's so many different brands through the contract winemaking that there's so much lab testing that you can support a whole position there. So, the first year I was just doing the testing. The second year, they started to call me the enologist, which meant that I was doing some testing development and starting to interpret some of the numbers. That was the year that Ben Jordan left to go to Early Mountain. And so, when Ben left, we made two positions. Jake Bushing came on as the winemaker. But I started to be the production manager at that time. That was sort of managing the day-to-day work that was happening in the cellar and keeping things moving on the ground. All in that complicated environment.

**Fred Reno**

Well, then when Jake exited, did you move into that role.

**Joy Ting**

Exactly. So, it's when Jake ended up moving out essentially to the vineyard, we needed Jake in the vineyard that I started to take on more winemaking responsibilities at that time. I got to train under some great folks, you know, in the course of time there. So, Ben and Jake and of course, and Michael.

**Fred Reno**

Michael. It's amazing what he's doing there. And someday people will recognize all the people who have come through his operation. It reminds me of the early days of Robert Mondavi.

**Joy Ting**

Yeah, I mean, I think about who I got to work with when I was there, not just the winemakers. I just mentioned. But several of the folks that worked in our cellar that have gone on to other positions as well. Hunter Emch was in the cellar when I was there. And then he went in to work in the vineyard at Afton. And now he's back at Wineworks as the vineyard manager. So, it's been fun to watch him get through that, that process as well and many others.

**Fred Reno**

So, the Winemakers Research Exchange, as I understand it, the Monticello Wine Trail originally funded the development of that. Were you involved with the original folks like Emily and others and how did you end up becoming the full-time coordinator running the show? Let's just say, right,

**Joy Ting**

well, the endeavor started as the Monticello Research Exchange, as you said, in 2014, and it was really a group of winemakers right here in the Monticello AVA. So, Ben Jordan, who was the winemaker at Wineworks at the time, was one of the founding members of the WRE. I remember in 2014, Ben explaining the concept to me and saying, you know, I want to write up a couple proposals for experiments, can we work together to write them up because he knew I had a science background. So, I sort of helped write them up a little bit and helped with some of the execution of that just because I was the one who had to take the data along the way. But then as I was moving into different roles at Wineworks, I was certainly a participant in the WRE. I did experiments myself through the WRE in 2015. And 2016 2017. It's hard to remember which years I did experiments, but I would definitely go to the tasting. So, I was aware of kind of how things were working. But it wasn't until 2018 that I transitioned from my role at Wineworks to being the research enologist for the WRE.

**Fred Reno**

is that when the Virginia Wine Board took over the funding and WRE became statewide, was that prior to that?

**Joy Ting**

that was prior, so the Monticello Wine Trail provided seed money in 2014, for it to get started. And honestly, it's amazing the amount of development work that they did that year with just a little bit of funding and only a part time person involved. As the coordinator, Maya Hood White was the first coordinator for the WRE. She was at Early Mountain at the time, but she sort of was also had this part time job to kind of work on that. And then Scott Dwyer, who was working in the cellar at Pollock, at the time took over for Maya sometime in 2014 2015. And it was in 2015, that the Virginia Wine Board, took over funding for the WRE. So, then there's just a little bit more funding available at that point. And so, 2016 so after one year of funding it for Monticello in 2016, the Wine Board asked the WRE if they would expand it to the whole state, and generously provided funding to allow that to happen. That's when the coordinator position became a full-time position. And a gentleman named Michael Attanasi was the first full time coordinator he was there for 2016 and 2017. He was the one along with the WRE board, who figured out how to serve the whole state because it is a big state. And we have many different winemaking regions and different kind of communities of winemakers with sometimes the same questions and, and problems, and sometimes different questions and problems.

**Fred Reno**

I would love to tear into that a little bit here. I do have one overriding question. So, the Virginia Winemakers Research Exchange, what's the mission statement? I mean, what is its purpose?

**Joy Ting**

So, the purpose is to promote innovation through experimentation and education in the wine industry. The idea that innovation could be something brand new, or it could be ancestral techniques that are used in Old World wine regions that we're just trying to apply to our fruit any way, that we would be innovating in terms of quality. The primary way that we do that is through practical experiments on production scale that happen in wineries. But then we make sure that everybody knows about that. So that's the education.

**Fred Reno**

Yeah, it's transparent, isn't it?

**Joy Ting**

It's very transparent. It really is very cooperative in terms of people sharing both their successes and the things that didn't work so well. So, we can all learn from each other. If there is something that works well, that we can make sure that catches, catches hold, and other people keep trying that so that our quality goes up. And if there's something that doesn't work, we save each other wasting time trying it ourselves.

**Fred Reno**

Well, then that's fascinating, because you get a chance as a coordinator to see all these different research projects and the differences from the different areas within Virginia as far as terroir and flavor profile and everything.

**Joy Ting**

Definitely. I mean, so again, as you mentioned, my first job in the wine industry was at Michael Shaps Wineworks. It's a great place to train. I got to train with lots of different winemakers, we see grapes from all over the place. But I'd only ever worked in one place. So, when I took the job at the WRE, part of that was with the intention for myself to get more continuing education, to, you know, what is available in the rest of the state, but also, what are other people doing and why are they doing that? So, it's been a tremendous training for me to get to learn from so many different mentors around the state.

**Fred Reno**

I'm curious as your thoughts, it seems there's a movement now finally, to recognize that hybrids are a good thing for Virginia, not a bad thing. And what has been behind this sort of negativity towards hybrids, because admittedly I didn't have much experience with them before I moved to Virginia, coming from primarily West Coast, and having a European palate background, if you will. But I've become a big fan of Seyval Blanc, Chambourcin. handled correctly, is like good Cru Beaujolais. And so, what do you see happening here with hybrid versus what's been going on? I feel like, and that is, is anybody doing experiments? You know?

**Joy Ting**

Oh, certainly. Yes. I feel like the progression of things with hybrids, you know, it used to be that to be taken seriously, as a wine region, you would need to use the noble grapes. And so, if you're making hybrids, you would be seen maybe more as a rustic wine region, and something that's so very hyper local, and not really being part of that larger communication with the rest of the world. I mean, we think France had hybrids for a time, right? Yeah. But they legislated that you rip them out because they're not noble enough. I do think that hybrids, there are some things in terms of how we farm hybrids, and the winemaking for hybrids, that sometimes we treat them less nobly also. So, we're more likely to over crop them, we're less likely to pay as much attention in the vineyard because we don't necessarily have to. And I mean that historically, I feel like that there's so many folks now that are doing a really great job of farming their hybrids, but also just sort of looking at their some unique challenges to some of the hybrids in terms of their chemistry, when we get them into the winery, that sometimes make them a little bit out of balance, or they their balance point is in a different place than we would we would look for. Some of the Reds don't have as much tannin, for example. Some of the whites have a lot more acidity, which in a warm region like Virginia, we like that. Right?

There're some things in terms of just the nuance of how we're farming those and how we're making those. But I do think this sort of the new generation of wine drinkers are more willing to try new things, they're a little bit less tied to the traditional varieties that they would, would think to be serious wines. And so, I think we do see more market value for that as winemakers and wine growers, I think there's so many things we see about the benefit of growing hybrids in the vineyard, they tend to do better with our hot, humid summers, for example, with rain events, with frost events. There's a whole new generation of hybrids being developed. hybrids themselves are just, they're not genetically modified. Their traditional crosses of different strains. But they're crossing them on purpose for specific resistances to disease, but also then backcrossing them to get as much of vinifera genetics to them. So, we're hoping that we can get to the point where we have some hybrids that have good resistance but have complexity and delicacy and balance that we would expect coming from those vinifera as well.

### **Fred Reno**

When I interviewed Tony Wolf several months back, he brought a wine out for lunch, which was Marselan the grape and I thought it was a proprietary name on the bottle. I tried it, I go well, this tastes like a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. And he says you're about half right. So, what do you mean? He said, Well, it's a cross between Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache. And we are now planting some at the Research Station because it's resistant, it appears to be to powdery mildew and other diseases. And we're looking at this and he says there's just a lot more of this type of vinifera cross going on in Europe. And then he said, you know, in 2050 we could be growing entirely different grape varieties here in Virginia we don't even know about today.

### **Joy Ting**

Yeah, well if we think about how plants evolve over time, how plants become adapted to the environment that they're in. *Vitis Vinifera*, noble varieties, grew up and became adapted to a very particular place. And now we're taking those same components of genetics and trying to transplant them to different places around the world. Sometimes they work better than others. And so, I think there's a lot of questions even in the traditional places that *Vinifera* grow well, that with climate change, folks are thinking differently about what we should be planting? You know, 20, 30 years from now, sometimes that's a different variety. Sometimes it's a variety that maybe doesn't exist yet.

### **Fred Reno**

Well, no, that's fascinating. I thought, well, that's interesting. What's the biggest challenge you see right now in your position?

### **Joy Ting**

Gosh? That's a good question. You know, I think in my position I tend to work with folks on very individual things going on, but there are sometimes larger, larger trends that come out. So, the way I work is I have all the experiments that we do through the WRE are initiated by the winemakers themselves. And so, this time of year, we're in June and July, I go around to talk to winemakers about what's going on in your cellar. Is there a particular problem that you're having? Is there something you read about or that you heard about on a Podcast or webinar or something like that, that you'd like to try in your own winery? Is there something in your own winemaking that you're like, you know, the one place I want to grow next year is this. And so usually when that happens, we end up with about five or six general themes that people are tending to deal with. And sometimes they have to do with whatever happened in the most recent vintages. So, for me, I think so many things are just very, very individual to each different winery, it's hard to come up with, like, you know, a big thing. But I think the overall idea is how do we continue to push quality, consistency, and understanding how these varieties that grow well in Virginia, how we can help them have their Virginia expression of themselves. So, you know, for example, Cabernet Franc is a variety that grows well in Virginia, we tend to really like it here as kind of a medium bodied red wine. But the expression of Cabernet Franc in Virginia is different than for example, what it is in California, or in the Loire Valley or other places around the world. So, we want to think about what are the things that are specific to the variety that those grapes are giving us but then how do we bring out what they're giving us in Virginia versus what they would be giving us somewhere else? And so that might be a different, different amount of oak treatment, different amount of cluster inclusion, different nuances of the winemaking to say, how do we maximize what's happening here? So, I think that's overall, one of the questions that we tend to think about it, it just gets applied differently to different situations.

### **Fred Reno**

You mentioned something earlier in our conversation, and got me thinking, and now I understand the reason for it. But I'd love to understand how this might have the type of impact on Virginia's wine industry to have quality, and that is simply the lack of a central lab service here for the vintners. It never occurred to me until Kirsty Harmon mentioned to me; we don't have a lab like they have in Sonoma or Napa. I thought, oh, that seems like a business ready to be made.

### **Joy Ting**

Well so it's an interesting question. Because there's been multiple types of iterations that have been kicked around and Kirsty herself ran a service lab for a period of time. When I was at Wineworks, of course, we had enough work to be our own lab. But there's you know, I think even if we look at like in California, ETS is the stalwart, you see, we send samples to ETS, because they are large enough that they'll do some specialized work. But ETS has sort of their main headquarters. And then they have little regional outposts in different places. And each of

those outposts does, like the basic chemistry that a normal winery would need on a regular basis. And then if you need specialized things like for the Research Exchange, sometimes we want to know, the specific type of tannin that's in this wine versus that wine. Well, that takes a much more sophisticated analysis, much more expensive experiment, or instrumentation. So those all go that big lab. But even ETS, it's sort of evolved over time along with the winery or with the industry, right? The founders of ETS, they started out like, you know, with a lab in their basement that they were sort of running

### **Fred Reno**

Was this Marty Bannisters' company,

### **Joy Ting**

it's there and I've even met them. They're lovely people, Marjorie, and I can see him, they're still the owners, and they're still very active. I think that's the role that ETS has played here in Virginia. We do have some service labs. Virginia Tech does have a service lab that Bruce Zoecklein was part of setting up and a lot of folks will send things especially during harvest when you need numbers very quickly, they'll send them to the Virginia Tech Lab. And it's really two folks that are kind of running that lab like out of this, this small little space at Virginia Tech. But for some of us, that's a way to get our samples during harvest. When we have done samples or fruit samples, they could start fermenting along the way between here in Blacksburg. There's one new business that is starting up here in Charlottesville. She's been in business for a couple of years, and she's planning to expand her business in the next couple of years to do some more local work. There are a couple of wineries in Northern Virginia that will take in some lab work, but it really requires this set of instrumentation in order to be able to do those analyses with some economies of scale. So, if you must do all the wet chemistry by hand, it can be a lot of time and a lot of effort and a lot of human training. So, I think we haven't figured out that piece 100%. But we do have some of those resources around. And I think each smaller region will end up with their own solution to that or working solution to that.

### **Fred Reno**

So, you still make some wine, your own brand, which by the way folks if you can find a bottle of TING wine buy it. It's really good. The Chardonnay I had from Shenandoah Valley and Mount Airy was awesome. The Cabernet Franc is good, really delicious. Very small amounts but-- find it, buy it. This must be fun for you to do this as well, I would assume.

### **Joy Ting**

Yeah, I mean, it's a lot of fun. When I decided to take the job with the Research Exchange, one of the hardest parts was realizing I wouldn't be making so much wine anymore. Because I love the winemaking, it was very hard to leave the team at Michael Shaps. I loved the team that I got to work with there. But I also really loved getting to make wine. So, I talked to the board

about it when they hired me and they said you know, we not only would be okay with you making a little bit of wine on your own, but we would almost expect you to. And it's just been a wonderful way to stay grounded in the reality of what winery work looks like. I think sometimes when you spend a lot of time, you know, reading papers and looking at lab numbers, you can get a little idealistic about what things could look like or should look like or what kinds of techniques you might recommend for somebody to do. When you're in the trenches doing that work yourself, you realize how much work it is, you are reminded about the practicality of things how much time something really takes. So, I think it feeds my soul to be able to make a little bit of wine here and there. But it also I think, helps me to be better at my job in serving the winemakers around the state just by being more aware of what their life really looks like.

### **Fred Reno**

Well, that leads me to another question. I'm curious about, do you ever see yourself going back into being a full-time winemaker at a much larger operation. Once again?

### **Joy Ting**

I really don't know. I have been so blessed to have had the opportunities that I had at Wineworks to serve each of those different roles and get to learn those things. And I enjoyed that a lot. I've always been a teacher at heart, and I get to teach in my current job, which I love. I love doing research. I love finding out new things. Really, I love learning new things myself. And I love sharing those with other people. I feel like my current job lets me do that. So, you know, I don't think we ever know what the future holds. But I think right now I love what I'm doing, but who knows what will happen.

### **Fred Reno**

So, what is the oldest bottle of Virginia wine you've been able to taste and enjoy? I'm curious.

### **Joy Ting**

When I was at Wineworks Michael has a wonderful library of older vintages. I'm not sure the oldest bottle I've had but I remember enjoying some 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc from Jefferson vineyard. Okay, that if I remember correctly, Michael said was still sort of his favorite vintage.

### **Fred Reno**

Yeah, I hear '98 vintage being talked about all the time.

### **Joy Ting**

And I think for Michael, that might have been one of those first times that everything kind of all came together and a beautiful vintage. It was only a couple of years ago and it was still really doing wonderful things.

**Fred Reno**

That's the biggest frustration I've had since I've been here the availability of tasting Virginia wine with bottle age on it to see how it develops, see the nuances associated with that. I'm starting to collect in my own personal cellar because I want to have older Virginia wines to go back to in 10 or 15 years. To say Wow, that's interesting.

**Joy Ting**

Well, and I think we've we started to do that fairly early on, so my husband and I moved to Charlottesville in around 2000. And I think we started to really explore the local wine scene in probably about 2002 or so. So, we do have, I think a few of those sorts of older bottles stashed away as well. But you know, so many Virginia wineries just don't make a lot of production. It sells out rather quickly, which is great for the business. But it's just a lot harder to find those older vintages unless you stash them away yourself. So hopefully your patience will be rewarded.

**Fred Reno**

Oh, it will be I put them down here, just forget about them. I can't wait to have what I call these one bottle off where it's like, oh, I forgot about this bottle for 12 years. Yeah, wonder what this is tasting like

**Joy Ting**

Actually, as we're talking I realized a couple of years ago at the Virginia Viticulture Association meeting Nate Walsh, who was the president at the time, organized a tasting for some of us after a dinner at Tastings, which is a restaurant here in Charlottesville, and the proprietor had all these really older vintages of, of Virginia wine and I'm sure there were vintages older than 1998 that we tasted that night, he pulled out some really old, some of Jim Law's older stuff. But I remember for me that the best bottle or the most interesting bottle of the night, was one that came from Shenandoah Vineyards. I don't remember the vintage, but I think it was in the 80s sometime and it really held up. And you know, it was special to me because I was familiar with the fruit from Shenandoah from when I had worked with Michael. But there was also a lot of inconsistency amongst the bottles, right? Because there's a lot of difference. And I think our wine industry has really grown up a lot in that time too. So honestly, I would recommend that you go check out Tastings and ask him about some of the older vintages because he's got some of them stashed away.

**Fred Reno**

Well, that leads me to my favorite question to ask everybody. So, what was that one bottle of wine? that aha moment you had? You had this bottle, went wow, that's it. That was that that

one aha moment that the light bulb went off. And you said, Man, that's unbelievable. I get it now.

### **Joy Ting**

You mean for wine in general? You personally, wine in general. So, when my then boyfriend now husband and I first started to explore the world of wine Yeah, I think it took a little while to kind of start to put the pieces together and say what was it that that we really liked? What are the things that we wanted to invest? When we could tell that there was a lot of fun stuff to know out there. But there was one trip and mostly we were going to California at the time. So, most of our impact or influence was California wines. And really, that's when we were living in Atlanta. So that's kind of what was available in our wine shops as well. But there was one day we went to go visit Silver Oak. I think it was a 1998 Silver. No, it was in 1998 it was on our honeymoon. But it was whatever vintage was the release then. So maybe it was the '96

### **Fred Reno**

Yeah, probably '96, which was a very good vintage.

### **Joy Ting**

And it was it was just one of those, it was one of those first red wines that I was like, there's a lot in here. It's really delicious now, but I think if we buy some and put it down and wait, I want to see what else comes out of it after years and years and years. So, I think that was probably the first one that was like, oh, this isn't just a hobby This is like a lifestyle.

### **Fred Reno**

Right and so that that leads me backwards just a little bit. What spirited you and your husband, your boyfriend at the time to start to explore wine then?

### **Joy Ting**

I think we love the idea of hospitality in general. Just having people gathered around the table to have great conversation, enjoy good food and enjoy good wine is a piece of that. But I think wine itself we were we're interested in the flavor of the wine, but we're also really interested in how you make it and the science behind it, but maybe, maybe more so the balance of the science and the art that goes with it. And then also just the idea that that the same variety planted in different places has these different expressions. There's just so much complexity to it. That it's I think we really love the adventure of exploring that complexity and enjoying the different expressions of what happens in different regions of the world.

### **Fred Reno**

Do you have or have you worked with and have any clients outside of Virginia.

**Joy Ting**

So, with the Research Exchange, because we're funded by the Virginia Board, we work exclusively in Virginia wine. How about Well especially professionally when I was at Michael Shaps, we only had Virginia clients. It wasn't a, you know, a stipulation just at that time we only had Virginia clients. So, I've only actually worked as a winemaker with Virginia fruit.

**Fred Reno**

So, it's Virginia, Virginia, Virginia, Virginia.

**Joy Ting**

I'm sorry, there is the one time I did I worked with fruit outside of Virginia, in 2018. I had already moved on to the Research Exchange. But Michael Shaps also has a production in Burgundy. And I got a call a couple of weeks before harvest, and he said, well, would you happen to be able to come out to harvest and Burgundy? And for the first time I had been working professionally in wine, I wasn't tied to a particular winery for the entire vintage. And so, I did get to go to Burgundy. Wow, in 2018, which was a, it was a tremendous vintage in Burgundy, there was no frost, so they had enough fruit. The weather was just right. The fruit was just fantastic. And it was probably the may only time we really get to work with Pinot Noir. So, it was it was absolutely wonderful. I think I was there all of 10 days because the vintage all comes in very quickly. And I did have to come back to Virginia to take care of some things, but I did get to work with some Burgundy fruit, which is you know, what a wonderful opportunity.

**Fred Reno**

What about that town of Beaune? Oh, my goodness. It's beautiful.

**Joy Ting**

Oh, my goodness. It's beautiful. So yeah, and Michael's place is in Meursault.

**Fred Reno**

Meursault yeah,

**Joy Ting**

and so, we were staying at his place, but we're making wine at a place down the street. And you know, at that place down the street in the evenings, like the moon would come up right over the steeple of the church. It just looked exactly like what it should look like in France. But it was very, again, it's not very large production. It was a modest enterprise. But there were some delicious wines that came out of that vintage. So that was very special.

**Fred Reno**

So, what do you think about the future of Virginia wine in this regard? I have been told by some of the vintners, some of the best vineyards may not have even been planted yet in Virginia. But I get a lot of pushback when I talk to people about, I think it's going to require a large player with the capital and experience to come in here and develop some significant tracks of vineyard land, Shenandoah Valley appears to me to be right for that type of development. But I think ultimately, that will happen whether it's European whether it's Californian, somebody is going to come in here. I mean, the Zonin family prove that works. And I'm surprised other people haven't latched on to that with the West Coast burning up. What do you think? I mean, why is it viewed maybe as such a bad thing, as opposed to what I think is a good thing to raise everybody's profile?

### **Joy Ting**

Well, so let me get to the idea of where I would agree with you that I think that there's just a lot of terroirs left to explore in Virginia. I think one of the things we don't think about so much, we tend to think about ourselves as the Virginia wine industry. But Virginia is a big state. And there are some areas of Virginia. You mentioned the Shenandoah Valley, the Shenandoah Valley has wonderful, diverse soils. It's got some nice properties in terms of rain, lack of rainfall for Virginia, to cooler nights. I buy grapes from the from the Jordan brothers from Mount Airy vineyard, which is in the Shenandoah Valley. And when I go up there to visit Tim, I feel like it's always 10 degrees cooler in the middle of the summer. And there's always a nice breeze. And it's just feels like a better place to be growing grapes. But I do think that there's a role for each of the different places in Virginia for what they're doing. I mean Chatham vineyard on the on the eastern shore, they just have a lovely expression of Chardonnay and Cabernet Franc that comes off that vineyard. So, I think we have a lot of exploration to do in terms of which varieties are doing well in which place and how I mean we think in California you don't plant the same varieties you know, on Monterey coast versus you know, in Lodi, those are very different climates.

### **Fred Reno**

And I tell people just look at France. You don't plant Pinot Noir in Bordeaux and you don't plant Cabernet Sauvignon in Burgundy. And then the Rhone.

### **Joy Ting**

Exactly, some of those regions are not that geographically far from one another. But there's enough difference in the mesoclimate to say this grape is really expressing well here and this grape is expressing well here. So, I think in Virginia, when we think about where the best vineyards will be, some of that is the vineyard site itself. And some of that is the fit of what we're growing in which places, and I think we've made tremendous progress in that area in the last 25 years, people who are replanting, now a lot of times are replanting, with different row spacing with different vine spacing, but with different varieties, as well, as

**Fred Reno**

I mean Jim Law is at the forefront of that isn't he, yeah,

**Joy Ting**

for sure, Jim Law is doing that. Michael Shaps when they're replanting, Shenandoah, a number of other places as the Early mountains, doing some replanting, and kind of changing some of those things. So, we're learning from what we've been working on for the last several years. In terms of investment, I would say, I feel like one of the reasons that Virginia remains mostly local, there's not a lot of Virginia wine outside of Virginia, at least it is not well known outside of Virginia, really has to do with scale of production, and the scale of running the whole business. So, you know, getting together enough production to go through distribution, but also then having those distribution channels, understanding the distribution system, having the marketing, having the business to go along with that. And you think with some of these folks that, you know, it's a family run operation, it's already the expertise of growing wonderful grapes and making delicious wine, then there's another set of expertise in terms of getting that business to happen. So, you need a certain scale, to have all those pieces together. And a lot of times scale does require capital investment as well. But I do think one of the things that makes our industry special is that idea that we have all these individual stories, and we have these individual things going on. I think that in that sense, it reminds me a little bit of Burgundy.

**Fred Reno**

We don't have to lose that. I'm not saying that we have to what I really chuckle about is when I talk to people in the wine business who think they know everything about wine, and they talk about Burgundy. And they go well, you know, that's a Negociant. I look at them and I go. Everybody's a Negociant in Burgundy. Exactly. Yeah. Drouhin is a negotiant. Okay, Jadot so go down the list. Listen, yeah, that doesn't mean that they don't make high-profile, high-quality wine and aren't viewed at the upper echelons. Because they happen to be in Negociant.

**Joy Ting**

I agree. But I would say that's probably, you know, if we had our ideal situation, we would have the resources and knowledge to be able to market our wines well, even outside of Virginia, that we would have the quality of wines to be able to back that up with consistency but be able to maintain those individual stories. And I think you, as you've said, I think burgundy might be a good, good way of looking at that right to say, how do we balance those different things as we move forward? as an industry?

**Fred Reno**

Well, my opinion again, there's 300 or so wineries reputedly here in Virginia today, give or take. And I haven't tasted them all, but I'm trying damn hard. But at least 15% now I've come to

the conclusion, there could be a bit more, produce as good a quality of wine as anybody in the world, full stop. Now, the varietals, as we know are a little different that drive this, like I'm a big fan of Petit Manseng. There is a huge future for Petit Manseng in Virginia. But the pure quality level is there, no doubt about it. And that's really the message that must get out. So that people just don't default the way the consumer now does to California Wine, to Oregon wine, even Washington State wine, but think about Virginia wine as part of their whole mix. Just as they think of Burgundy, Bordeaux, or Rhone and Provence, even go down the list of wine regions that weren't thought about 10,15 years ago by the average consumer.

### **Joy Ting**

Well, it warms my heart to hear you say that you in your view that we have that level of quality. I think that within our industry, we like to think that we do but it's great to hear somebody who has your experience saying that as well. I think we do have some real-world class wines being made here in Virginia. And yeah, the question is how do we, how do we make sure that people think of those wines when they're thinking of Virginia? I think at the WRE a lot of times we talk about ourselves as an emerging wine region, as this wine region that's been growing up and we're ready to sort of make our entrance onto the stage. And so, a lot of the questions are Yeah, how do we do that well, so that people associate us with, with quality wines. Interesting wines, unique wines, things that aren't just like you would get somewhere else but are unique and special for Virginia.

### **Fred Reno**

Well, Joy, you're doing your part you're trying, your contribution to the business and what you're doing here is critical to this qualitative and quality component we're talking about right now.

### **Joy Ting**

Well, I feel like and want to be very clear, this isn't just me the WRE consists of a board of directors that are all winemakers themselves that have really been plugging away at this, inventing this system for us to get better

### **Fred Reno**

well for the record, Emily Pelton at Veritas correct, Matthieu Finot at King Family, I assume.

### **Joy Ting**

So, Emily Pelton, Matthieu Finot, Kirsty Harmon, who is at Blenheim, Michael Henny, who is that Michael Shaps Wineworks, Scott Dwyer, who used to be the research enologist, and he's in Oregon, but he stayed on the board. Okay. And Ben Jordan from Early Mountain. So, we have a tremendous Board

**Fred Reno**

oh, that's an incredible team

**Joy Ting**

of industry leaders, right. But also, younger folks that really have more time, they started this essentially toward the beginnings of their career. So, this will be part of their legacy, but also the Virginia Wine Board that has been funding our project at very generous levels, since they came on in 2015. But especially since that state expansion in 2016, this is it really is an investment that's being made by a number of people. And just to say the Virginia Wine Board itself is funded by the producer tax that that all wineries pay. So really, what the WRE is, is one reflection of this, this investment that the industry is making in itself and each other to say that we know that if we get better, and if our neighbors get better, we get better too. David King used to say repeatedly that a rising tide lifts all boats. And I think that's really the thought behind what we're trying to do at the WRE, but also just as a community of winemakers.

**Fred Reno**

On that note, I'm going to draw this interview to a close, but this has been terrific Joy. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Joy Ting**

Thank you. I appreciate it.