

WINES THAT BEGAN WITH A LOVE STORY



EDUARDO DINGLER WINE TO SAKE JUNE 13, 2019

It all started with a love story, but not just any love story. When young Jodie and Luc met in France, they already knew about each other. Jodie's stepmom, a Morlet relative, would go to France and tell stories of Jodie to Luc and his brothers, while Jodie would hear stories about them.

The Morlet Family has deep roots in Champagne where Luc's great great grandfather, Auguste, purchased a piece of land in Avenay-Val-d'Or, dating to the 1800s to grow grapes destined for Champagne production.

Later on, the family continued the legacy with Gaston Morlet, who founded Pierre Morlet under his son's name. Eric Morlet, Luc's father, took on the winery and acquired more vineyards to create a world-class Champagne.

Inevitably, Luc and his brothers Nicolas and Paulin fell in love with winemaking.

After years of knowing Jodie, Luc knew they were in love and relocated to the United States [to replace] renowned vintner John Kongsgaard to oversee production at Newton Vineyards.

Luc's winemaking trajectory began in Champagne and his thirst for knowledge took him to Dijon where he earned an MBA in wine business and experience in Bordeaux and Burgundy.

Luc arrived to Napa in 1996, with all the credentials and driven by love. In 1997, Luc and Jodie got married— three years after meeting each other in Paris.

In a serendipitous fashion, Newton Vineyards sold to LVMH, a firm that also owns a few Champagne houses. So Luc had to make a move — he couldn't work for the competition. At the same time, Sir Peter Michael was in the hunt for the right winemaker to oversee the wine production for his Eponymous winery.

It was then they connected. For a number of years, Luc shined at Peter Michael Winery in Knights Valley until Luc and Jodie knew it was time to start their own legacy. Lucky for Sir Peter Michael, Luc's little brother Nic was the right candidate to take over operations after a harvest at Joseph Phelps Vineyards.

Luc agreed to stay as consultant, working with his eager brother who had followed his wine-making footsteps.

In 2005, Luc and Jodie purchased their first vineyard in Knights Valley, a 12-acre lot that would fulfill their dreams of starting a winery.

The couple later came across a property in St. Helena; the property was sold by Charles Krug to William Castner, a son of German immigrants and former shipbuilder who planted vines, fruits and vegetables and built the winery in 1880.

The Morlet holdings grew even further in 2015 when Luc saw a "For Sale" sign in Oakville near the famed To Kalon vineyard and sharing some of the soil characteristics. This was a unicorn piece of land so they managed to acquire the 24-acre property, which they planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc immediately after the purchase.

As for the wines produced under the Morlet label, there is a well thought-out range that extends from Sauvignon Blanc to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc.

Here some of the notes from my recent tasting:

- **Multi-vintage Pierre Morlet Champagne "Grande Réserve"** Brut Premier Cru, Avenay-Val-d'Or France. *A true celebration in each sip, roasted almonds, bright citrus pop, orchard fruits led by green apple and pear. Appropriate for any occasion.*
- **2017 Morlet Family Vineyards "Les Petit Morlet"** Sonoma County. *Serious and captivating Bordeaux Blanc blend driven by Sauvignon Blanc and rounded with Sémillon. Meyer lemon zest with notes of nectarine, toast and a river rock mineral component.*
- **2016 Morlet Family Vineyards "Ma Douce"** Chardonnay, Fort Ross-Seaview. *Generous, well rounded and full of stamina. Hazelnuts, vanilla custard and freshly cut pineapple.*
- **2014 Morlet Family Vineyards "Joli Cœur"** Pinot Noir, Fort Ross-Seaview. *A wine that has been shared in the White House a couple times. A black cherry core with holiday spice and voluptuous concentration finished with a lifted hint of coffee.*
- **2014 Morlet Family Vineyards "Mon Chevalier"** Knights Valley. *A Cabernet Sauvignon Blend with Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot. Lush with dark fruit concentration, earth driven and charismatic with plenty of spice and violets.*
- **2014 Morlet Family Vineyards "Passionnement"** Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville. *A masculine and majestic display of purple flowers, espresso, cassis and rich tannins that creates a pleasurable and long lasting memory.*

Truly a remarkable story with no shortage of amazing wines. Thank you, Jodie and Luc for sharing the fruit of your efforts.