



EDITORS' NOTE In 1981, Gerret Copeland and his wife Tatiana, along with a group of partners, purchased and began renovating the oldest winery in the Carneros region, naming it Château Bouchaine. A decade later, Gerret and Tatiana bought out the original partners to become sole proprietors of the winery and renamed it Bouchaine Vineyards. Prior to his involvement with Bouchaine, Gerret developed a successful New York Stock Exchange brokerage firm, which he sold to Dean Witter. He helped establish the Brandywine Conservancy and its Environmental Management Center in Pennsylvania, where he was Director for 10 years. Gerret currently serves as Chairman of the Delaware Art Museum, where construction of the Gerret and Tatiana Copeland Wing was completed in 2007.

Born in Dresden, Germany, Tatiana Copeland soon emigrated to Denmark and then to Argentina, where she spent most of her childhood. She fluently speaks Russian, French, Spanish, German, and English. Her family emigrated to the U.S., settling in California, and she enrolled at UCLA as a foreign student, from where she graduated summa cum laude and then earned her M.B.A. at the University of California at Berkeley. Tatiana went to work for Price Waterhouse, and later, for DuPont's European headquarters in Geneva. A year later, she was summoned back to DuPont in Delaware, where she met her future husband. Tatiana heads her own financial firm in Wilmington, Delaware. She serves on the boards of The Grand Opera House (Wilmington's historic opera house) and the Delaware Symphony Orchestra.

COMPANY BRIEF Established in 1928 by Italian immigrant Johnny Garetto, and purchased by Gerret and Tatiana Copeland of Wilmington, Delaware in 1981, Bouchaine Vineyards (www.bouchaine.com) is the oldest continually operated winery in the Carneros region of Napa Valley. Gerret and Tatiana followed their dream of specializing in their favorite Burgundian varieties, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and have specialized in these varieties for the past 25 years. All vineyard and winery operations are consistent with the sustainable theme and their vineyards have received the Napa Green Certification.

In 1981 when you purchased the vineyard, what excited you about it and what was your vision?

Building Bouchaine

An Interview with Gerret Copeland, Proprietor and Chairman, and Tatiana Copeland, Proprietor and President, Bouchaine Vineyards

Gerret: When we first went in as a limited partner, Carneros was an unknown area for wine-growing.

What I saw when I went in is that Carneros had a climate very similar to Burgundy. Being at the south end of Napa Valley, we were the recipients of the wonderful Carneros winds, which bring in the cool moisture at night from San Pablo Bay, which makes for growing wonderful Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

Tatiana: For me, it was one of those interesting times in one's life where you stand in a certain area and you feel something special happening. There was a connection with me and the earth of Carneros. My husband's vision was to own something in France, but mine was Napa.

Has your focus around Chardonnay and Pinot Noir developed over time?

Gerret: The product has definitely developed over time. Like so many other wineries in Napa, we got hit by phylloxera and had to do a major replanting, which sets you back three to four years.

A lot of research has been done on various root stocks and varieties. The root stocks were important because areas of the winery are literally at sea level, so we want shallow rooted root stocks, and yet on the hillsides, we want root stocks that have deep roots. That was an area of research done at UC Davis and others that paid huge dividends to the whole wine industry in Napa Valley.

We stick with our tried and true clones of Pinot Noir: the Swan and the Pommard, which have done very well for us on our property.

When we bought out all the partners in the winery, we did a lot of restoration of the vineyard – there were areas of the vineyard that had a high water table with a water way. I took vines out and put in grass waterways for erosion control; I made the vineyard a green vineyard; Bouchaine is certified by the California Department of Fish and Game as being fish friendly; and we stopped using pesticides and herbicides as much as we could.

Tatiana: We always wanted a smaller winery, so we are around the 25,000 case level. It's neither too small nor too large, although it's an awkward size from a financial viewpoint.

But it fits our personalities and our way of looking at wine. We can operate with a wonderful team; we can show the winery to people and entertain them there – the way Napa used to be, when wineries were not owned by large corporations.



How has bringing on Winemaker Michael Richmond taken things to another level?

Gerret: Michael started Acacia and lived in Carneros his whole wine life. So he understands the soil, the climate, and the rainfall, and what it can and can't do.

And his feeling on wine parallels mine closely – we want to emphasize the vineyard, the fruit; we don't want to doctor it up. We're not loaded with butter or full of oak.

We present the soil, which comes off our vineyard. So our Chardonnay has a very distinct flavor.

So our emphasis is the fruit; what comes from the land.

How critical is community engagement for the brand?

Gerret: My maternal grandfather always said, try to leave this earth a little better than when you came on it.

That's something that I have worked hard for. The environment has played a major role in my thinking and outlook.

Tatiana: We started off being among the group of big bidders for the Napa Valley Wine Auction, which has raised a lot of money for all kinds of charities in Napa. We're now the leading sponsor of Festival del Sole, which brings music, food, and artists to Napa for two weeks.

When you acquired the brand, did you know this would work?

Gerret: No. Like any product you bring out, you have to find out if there is a market for it. We have, in a way, changed our style of wines, and through better control, we're producing a much better product.

Tatiana: I never envisioned it would be this complicated and expensive. But you blindly go ahead with optimism and no matter how difficult it is, you keep going at it. ●

Gerret and Tatiana Copeland (upper left); the entrance to Bouchaine Vineyards (upper right); Bouchaine 2007 Chardonnay (lower right)