

A Seamless Harmony Of Tradition And Innovation

An Interview with Violet Grgich, President and Chief Executive Officer, Grgich Hills Estate

EDITORS' NOTE Violet Grgich's passion for wine began at an early age, as she literally grew up accompanying her father, Vintners Hall of Fame inductee Miljenko "Mike" Grgich, in the vineyards and cellar. She spent her summers at the winery, doing everything from bottling line work to laboratory analysis and working in the tasting room. Attending the University of California, Davis, she earned a BA in music while taking classes in biology, chemistry, and enology.



Violet Grgich

After graduation, she returned home to Grgich Hills (grgich.com) to continue her education in the wine business, learning about daily operations of the winery from her father. She received her Master of Music in harpsichord at Indiana University, and then joined the winery full time in 1988. She's now responsible for daily management of the winery, as well as sales and marketing as President and Chief Executive Officer.

Will you discuss your career journey?

My career journey has been a lifelong one, guided by family, tradition, and a deep connection to land. My early years were spent wandering the wineries where my father worked – following him through vineyards and cellars and absorbing all the knowledge I could along the way. In 1978, after my father and Austin Hills founded Grgich Hills Estate, I began working on the bottling line, learning firsthand the discipline, teamwork, and care that defines great winemaking and the people behind it. From my first role at the Estate to my current role as President and CEO, my guiding principles have remained constant: a commitment to doing my best and a belief in continual learning.

After graduating from UC Davis with a bachelor of arts in music, I returned home to Grgich Hills Estate and began my true education in the business of wine. My father was firm in his belief that leadership must be earned, and he insisted I work in every role across the winery. From the laboratory to the tasting room, and through accounting and sales, each position deepened my understanding of the winery as a whole. He was adamant about taking the time to learn every aspect of the business – never acting above any task – in order to understand how all parts must work in balance to create a place of connection.

These experiences taught me that leadership is not defined by title, but by understanding,

respect, and care – for the land, the wine, and the people who make it possible. With steadfast dedication, I carry forward Grgich Hills Estate's legacy while shaping its future, ensuring we remain a benchmark for innovation, authenticity, and excellence in winemaking. Above all, I see my role as one of responsibility: honoring the values my father established while safeguarding the land, crafting expressive wines, and strengthening the community for generations to come.

How do you define Grgich Hills' mission and purpose?

Grgich Hills Estate has a rich history rooted in perseverance, courage, and the pursuit of excellence. Our intentionality is grounded in my father's belief that Napa Valley wines could stand among the world's best – a belief he proved when his iconic 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay won the Judgment of Paris 50 years ago. While our mission is deeply anchored in this legacy, it has always been guided by a forward-looking vision: one that embraces eco-conscious viticulture through regenerative organic farming, global humanitarian efforts, and world-class winemaking.

As a family-owned and operated winery, we have full stewardship over our five estate vineyards, allowing us to uphold an unwavering commitment to the natural farming practices that enable our land to thrive. Each of our estate vineyards are Certified Regenerative Organic, reflecting our conviction that great wines begin in healthy, living soils.

While innovation and evolution in the pursuit of greatness define our path forward, we remain rooted in the balanced, expressive style my father established and the tight-knit community he so thoughtfully nurtured. We are guided by his lifelong principle: "Every day, do your best, learn something new, and make a friend."

From vineyard to cellar, and in the way we welcome every guest, this philosophy shapes everything we do. At Grgich Hills, wine is more than a craft, it is a vehicle for environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and lasting connection. Through our commitment to community and the way we invite others into our story, we strive to be more than a winery, but a place defined by authenticity, careful cultivation, and heart.

Will you provide an overview of Grgich Hills' newly launched wine, Paradise Block?

Rooted in our past and shaped by our vision for the future, Paradise Block marks the next



Violet Grgich in the Grgich Hills vineyards

chapter of Grgich Hills Estate. This remarkable wine resembles the values and commitments that have guided us since our founding, and acts as a celebration of the next generation and their commitment to the future through regenerative organic farming.

My father, an immigrant from Croatia, was inspired by his University professor to come to Napa Valley, which he said was “Paradise”. He thought, “Why should I wait to go to Paradise? Why not walk into Paradise while I’m alive?” When my father first arrived in the valley, he was deeply inspired by the region’s otherworldly beauty and character, sparking a lifelong devotion to crafting world-class wines that would leave an indelible mark on the global wine industry. That philosophy lives on in Paradise Block – a seamless harmony of the tradition and innovation that has long defined our estate.

Paradise Block is our living legacy, capturing both the soul of Napa Valley and the pioneering spirit of Grgich Hills Estate. It reflects the very best of who we are – our values, our craftsmanship, and our commitment to regenerative winegrowing. Sourced from the finest block of Violet’s Vineyard in Yountville, Paradise Block demonstrates the estate’s most concentrated fruit and most refined farming practices, resulting in a halo wine that represents Grgich Hills at its highest level. In honoring my father’s enduring legacy, Paradise Block plays tribute to our ongoing pursuit of excellence. It is a wine that inspires us to keep imagining what’s possible, where innovation, eco-conscious efforts, and the joy of winemaking come together to shape the future of Grgich Hills.

How do the vines for Paradise Block, planted in 1959 and farmed regeneratively, help ensure a consistency of quality?



2021 Paradise Block Cabernet Sauvignon

We have always believed, and continue to believe, that the finest, most true-to-place, mouthwatering wines begin with a deep respect for the Earth. The Paradise Block vines, some of the oldest vines in our care, stand as the greatest living testament to this belief – a celebration of heritage, care, and the regenerative practices we hold in the highest regard. By nurturing resilient soils and fostering a living, interconnected ecosystem, we allow the vineyard to naturally regulate itself, producing fruit that truly reflects the life of the land.

Old vines have wisdom and stability, just like people that have lived long full lives. Vines have the same lifespan as human beings, and Regenerative farming ensures their health for numerous decades beyond what conventional or simple organic farming can. That stability and longevity ensure consistency of exceptional and complex flavors and aromas, qualities that speak to the vitality of a vineyard that has been lovingly and expertly cared for over six decades. The Cabernet Sauvignon born from Paradise Block carries with it purity, energy, and depth, capturing not only the soul of Napa Valley but also the pioneering, forward-looking spirit that has always guided Grgich Hills Estate.

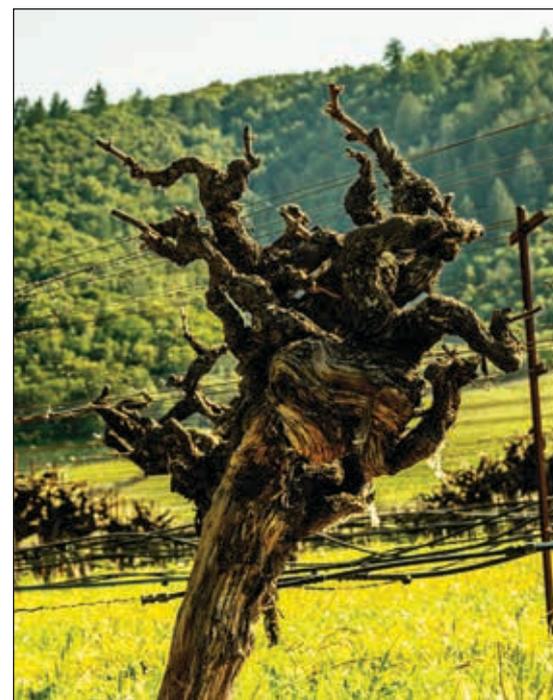
Our inaugural vintage of Paradise Block is this pure expression of terroir and craftsmanship, unfiltered, elegant and deeply structured. Through our continued commitment to regenerative practices, we ensure a consistency of quality that reflects both the enduring health of the vineyard and the precision and care invested in every bottle.

Will you discuss Grgich Hills’ commitment to sustainability?

Since our founding, Grgich Hills Estate has upheld a devoted commitment to sustainability, farming vineyards with responsibility, integrity, and thoughtful care of the land. Protecting and restoring our ecosystem is woven into our history, guiding every effort to protect the long-term health and quality of our vineyards. Beginning in 2000, we implemented organic farming practices, building upon early organic pioneers, and eventually evolving through biodynamics to fully regenerative techniques. This philosophy reflects our belief that vineyards are living, breathing ecosystems, where every element plays a vital role.

In 2023, the winery became Certified Regenerative Organic, reaffirming our longstanding commitment to working in harmony with the ecosystems that sustain us. Regenerative organic farming goes beyond traditional organic practices, emphasizing soil vitality, biodiversity, and the restoration of balanced, self-sustaining ecosystems. We honor these principles by encouraging the plants, birds, insects, and wildlife that allow the land’s natural processes to thrive, strengthening the resilience of our vineyards.

To nurture healthy soils, we utilize practices such as no-till farming, composting, and cover cropping, methods that increase organic matter, retain moisture, and support soil structure and life. Beyond the vineyards, we remain mindful of our broader environmental impact, recognizing



Regenerative farming at Grgich Hills Estate

that our stewardship lays the foundation for generations to come.

What has made the wine industry so special for you?

Wine is remarkable in the way it weaves people together through place and purpose, and the relationships and friendships it fosters have shaped my life far beyond the vineyard. My father always believed that wine is a source of joy and a natural connector, bringing people together while forging a meaningful bond between individuals and the land itself. To me, wine is a form of art, a balanced harmony that reflects the care given to the vineyards and reveals the spirit and truth of the land in every bottle. Our family’s history in Napa Valley has shown me how transformative agriculture can be, not only for those who steward the land, but for the communities they touch.

With all that Grgich Hills has achieved, are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to reflect on Grgich Hills’ impact and success?

My father felt he was only one in a line of many Grgichs, each continuing to pass our legacy and stewardship to future generations. Reflecting on how far we’ve come – from my father’s triumph in the 1976 Judgment of Paris to the fully regenerative estate we are today – is deeply rewarding. My father never stopped learning and growing. From pursuing his belief that Zinfandel originated in Croatia, to finishing his masters degree in Croatia at the age of 79, he made a friend every day and touched countless lives. As pioneers of organic, biodynamic and regenerative farming, we continue to impact not just ourselves but our community, by sharing what has made us successful to help others succeed through education, scholarships and endowments. I take pride in knowing that every bottle we craft carries not only the fruits of the land, but also the care, values, and legacy we have cultivated together. ●