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— WINE CO. —

Obsidian Wine Co. | Key Biographies



Arpad Molnar, Co-founder and Managing Partner

When Arpad came across the coffee table book “Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture,” it literally changed his life. “That was my ‘go for it’ moment, when I decided to pursue endeavors in agriculture full time,” says Arpad. “Forests, vineyards and entrepreneurship combine all my loves: nature, weather, growing, long-term thinking and creativity.”

During the wonder years, Arpad spent weekends riding three-wheelers over mounds of pumice at the family vineyard where his dad grew grapes for Napa Valley wineries. In the early '90s, he and his brother Peter moved to Budapest, Hungary, and began exporting barrels from a cooperage that sourced wood from the storied Tokaj forest. Today this cooperage, Kádár Hungary, is the company’s exclusive supplier of oak and is owned by the Molnar family, in partnership with the Taransaud cooperage. Arpad teamed

up with Peter and winemaker Michael Terrien to found Obsidian Wine Co., after discovering an abandoned walnut orchard half a mile above sea level in the Mayacamas Range of California’s North Coast; it was an ideal site, they suspected, to grow mountain fruit. They vinified their first 98 cases of Obsidian Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002, and their first Poseidon Vineyard Chardonnay the following year.

Before beginning his entrepreneurial adventures in wine, Arpad graduated from UCLA and Harvard Business School. Along the way, he picked up skills in strategy, operations and finance, working for GE, The Boston Consulting Group and the obligatory technology startup.

When he’s not managing Obsidian Wine Co., Arpad can be found behind the controls of a Diamond Star DA40. “I have a deep passion for piloting. Besides the joy of flight itself, piloting requires care, judgment, planning and discipline. But flight also means ultimate freedom—you get to chart your own course. Part science, part art, it’s a unique combination—not unlike building a barrel, making wine or growing a company.”



Michael Terrien, Co-founder

After briefly considering a long-line swordfishing career in his home state of Maine, Michael headed west to California, where restaurant work piqued his interest in winemaking. It was around this time that he met Peter Molnar through a mutual friend. They met for a drink, and by the second had decided to make some wine together, starting with just a few dozen cases for friends and family.

Meanwhile, Michael earned a degree in Enology at U.C. Davis and made wine at Acacia and Hanzell under the tutelage of some industry greats. The discovery of an abandoned orchard of bonsaied walnut trees on a steep ridge half a mile above sea level in the Mayacamas Mountains was a delicious turning point. Together with Peter’s brother, Arpad, the three founded what is today Obsidian Wine Co.; vinifying their first 98 cases of Obsidian Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002 and their first Chardonnay from Poseidon Vineyard the following year.

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Peter Molnar, Co-founder

Peter began his adventures in wine as a teenager, suckering and tying vines and driving irrigation tractors during summers in the vineyard where his father grew grapes for Napa Valley wineries. He moved to Budapest, Hungary, in 1990, working in the World Bank and USAID programs to privatize the country's wine industry after the fall of communism. In the four years before returning home to manage the family vineyard in 1994, Peter helped build a winery, started a négociant company and began collaborating with Kádár Hungary, a cooperage in the renowned Tokaj region- the Molnars now own Kádár, in partnership with the de Pracomtal family of Taransaud Cooperage in Cognac, France. In 1995, the Molnars teamed up with winemaker Michael Terrien to vinify their first Pinot Noir from Poseidon Vineyard, aged in Kádár barrels. They discovered an abandoned walnut orchard on the volcanic slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains of Lake County, California, in 1998; it was an ideal site, they believed, to grow mountain fruit. After planting in 1999 and 2000, they debuted their first Obsidian Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon in 2002 and their first Poseidon Vineyard Chardonnay the following year.

When not in the vineyards or at the cooperage, Peter travels to winemaking regions around the world to collaborate with barrel customers. A lifelong sailor and open-water swimmer, Peter is also a licensed Merchant Marine captain and master who applies his skills and experience to support and fund marine conservation. He works with San Francisco Baykeeper, Point Blue's Farallon Patrol and the University of Florida Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience. He resides in Berkeley, California, with his wife, teenage twins and dog, Jericho.



Alex Beloz, Winemaker

For Alex, a college apprenticeship in Siena, Italy, was the beginning of a love affair with wine culture that persists to the current day. After just one year as a civil engineer, Alex ditched that career to head west, driving his Plymouth Neon from Chicago to Sonoma to accept a harvest gig with MacRostie Winery in 1998. Under the guidance of Steve MacRostie, he learned winemaking, while also diving deep into technique and gaining exposure to different varietals during a two-year stint working abroad on harvests in Bordeaux, France; Hawkes Bay, New Zealand; and Casablanca, Chile. In 2006, Alex accepted an opportunity to make wine alongside Michael Terrien at what is today Obsidian Wine Co. For more than a decade, he has played an essential role in the company's success, consistently making wines of quality and distinction for both Obsidian Ridge and Poseidon Vineyards.

When asked what he loves most about his role as winemaker, Alex says, "Working on our blends. After a year in barrel, our wines start to reveal their true character. As they continue to age, I begin to have clarity on the final blend that will go into the bottle. There's so much to do in a winemaker role that it's easy to get distracted from the art of it. Blending is where it's at for me."