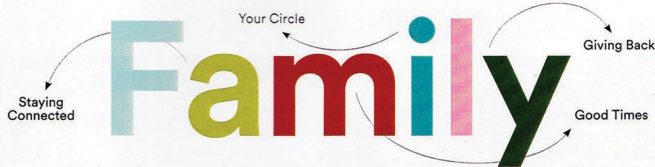


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FamilyCircle®

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ONWARD + FARMSTRONG



"Motherhood and winemaking are very rewarding—both recharge me and invigorate my soul."



From left: Seán Foster, 48, wine industry consultant and winemaker/proprietor of Vintone Wines; Fynn, 14; Owyn, 7; Chloe, 5; Faith Armstrong Foster, 43, winemaker/proprietor of Onward Wines & Farmstrong Vineyards; and Morgan, 12, Napa, California

Modern Life

For this Northern California couple, winemaking is a family affair.

BY SUZANNE RUST

"I spend a lot of time paying attention to my wines and keeping a watchful eye, but I don't push them to be something they're not," says Faith Armstrong Foster. "I actually think parenting has taught me to be a much better winemaker. I want to guide, protect and see what my wine—and my children—will become. I don't want to tell them or force them." This organic style of working and parenting is second nature to her, surely a by-product of her unique upbringing. Faith grew up on a little island in southwestern British Columbia, where she lived off the grid, without amenities like electricity. (Hello, kerosene lamps!) Most of her family's food came from their large garden, and they canned to preserve food for the winter. Her parents, who refer to themselves as back-to-landers, chose to raise their children in a

Family



simpler way, and Faith is happy that she and her four siblings were brought up like this. It's the anchor for who she is and the philosophy behind her successful business.

She chose Onward as the name of her wine company, in honor of the small family boat that ferried her and her siblings to school from their island home. "I learned a lot in

making things, and at the same time she started developing a love of wine. But Faith didn't know how to combine the two into a career—that is, until the proprietors of a Sonoma winery invited her to spend the day in their cellar. "I was captivated by the smell of harvest," she explains. "They threw us into a fermenter full of recently drained Pinot Noir

also in the wine industry. The couple, who met in 2007, didn't want to rush into anything because they both had kids from previous relationships. "Then one afternoon we got together for a beach playdate and realized our connection was about more than just getting our boys together. I knew that day I would marry him...though it still took him a few months to ask me out!" Once he did, everything sped up and they were married less than a year later. "Sean is a lot of fun and makes me a latte every morning, which is pretty darn sweet!"

Last year Sean switched from being a full-time winemaker to consulting, which freed him up to help Faith with the business side of things. "Working together is new territory for us," says Sean. "We're trying to find a balance that won't affect our relationship negatively. We're learning!" Because her

work is so demanding, Faith is grateful that her kids love to help. They hang out with her in the vineyards, checking out the growing conditions as well as vine and fruit health, which they're good at.

In terms of that elusive-as-a-unicorn work/life balance, Faith doesn't let it throw her. "I love being a winemaker and being a mom—I'm fortunate to get to do both," she says. "There are days when I feel like each deserves 100% of my attention and I'm pulled between two roles. In tough moments, the demands are so high that balance is hard to achieve. But those moments pass!"

We're happy to report that Faith's family and vineyards are safe following last year's Northern California fires.

For more on the Armstrong Foster family, go to familycircle.com/modernlife.

"The children want to work the harvest when they are old enough and are keen to learn as much as they can—they already know quite a bit."

that boat; our parents trusted us and there's something very powerful in that. We grew up believing we could handle things—not necessarily that we knew how to do things, but that we could figure it out."

Faith worked in sales when she was younger. Then she realized that she enjoyed

and passed up some shovels. I was hooked. I needed to do more than be in the wine business; I needed to be a winemaker." She returned to school to earn a degree in viticulture and enology (the science of grape growing and winemaking). Faith's husband, Sean, is

