

Top 100 Most Influential U.S. Winemakers

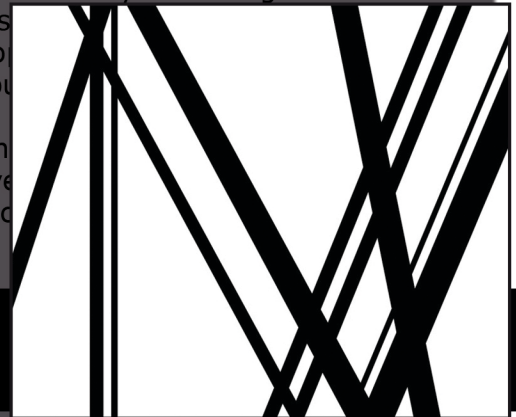
by Michael Cervin



Ah the ubiquitous list. Everywhere you turn these days there is a top 10, the best 50, or some iteration of a who's who list. So we can't resist, besides, our Top 100 Most Influential Wine Industry list scored a lot of buzz, created a lot of chatter and even made a few enemies. This list is all about winemakers, those currently making wine here in America – not the great ones who have come before, but folks who make wines you can find now. There are some 7,000 bonded wineries in the U.S., and there's a lot of forgettable wine being made. And in a world of homogenization of wine styles and a sense that our domestic wine industry is not legitimate without a French or Italian flare, we desire to celebrate and recognize, and names you may not know, but whose list is influencing the public, large and small ways. Use this list to explore the wineries and regions you may not have heard of, but are worth knowing with everyone, but above all else.

1 - Philippe Melka

Philippe Melka Is one of the most in-demand red winemakers working today. Melka, whose list of clients includes highly regarded producers such as Seavey, Quintessa and Vineyard 29 is not following in anyone's footsteps. Trained in Bordeaux but passionate about California, this Frenchman has his own take on Napa Cabernet and cut his teeth at Chateau Haut-Brion, Badia O Coltibuono (Italy), Chateau Petrus (France) and Chittering Estate (Western Australia). Realizing the potential of Napa he's dedicated his life's work to consulting and eventually starting Melka Wines. Other consulting projects have included Gemstone, Dominus Estate, Cliff Lede, Hundred Acre, Parallel, Moone-Tsai, Dana Estates, and Lail Vineyards. Though Melka remains somewhat under the radar, his influence is apparent in his fingerprints being at more wineries than anyone else.



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