

ADLER FELS

OVERVIEW

In highly competitive fields such as the California wine industry, finding a memorable point of reference is essential to establishing a lasting image. Marketing experts call this “brand identification”. Sometimes it’s a colorful history, other times it’s the prized vineyards. With Adler Fels it’s the people.

Since they founded Adler Fels in 1979, Owners David and Ayn Coleman have shared a passion and commitment for producing world-class wines exclusively from Sonoma County vineyards.

With great soils, ideal climate and recurrent coastal fog, Sonoma County is internationally regarded for its tantalizing wines. The textbook conditions of warm sunny days and cool nights ensure the development of full-flavored, well-structured wines. “Sonoma County’s ‘natural air conditioning’ makes it the best place in the world to grow grapes,” says David. “It’s the battleground for low and high pressure.”

David and Ayn personally built Adler Fels high atop the Mayacamas Mountains, the range separating the Sonoma and Napa valleys. This strategic location commands spectacular views extending from San Francisco to Sonoma’s rocky coast.

Following five generations of winemaking in California and her ancestral homeland of Armenia, Ayn Coleman has the wine business in her blood. Her position at the winery includes marketing, sales and public relations. She has brought Adler Fels to the attention of the *crème de la crème* of American wine media, making it one of the most decorated brands in California. An avid golfer, she frequently challenges visiting sales reps to driving balls off the winery’s lofty driving range and into a seemingly bottomless abyss.

The concept of hitting golf balls from a 1,500-foot cliff fits David’s winemaking philosophy to a ... well, tee! The age-old sport of golf, rich in tradition and defined by rules, is played from the mind first, with imagination and creativity. Says David, “I understand the importance of tradition; I just think using your imagination to question what’s been done before and why, is a better approach to problem solving.”

With a degree in chemical engineering from MIT and two more in industrial design, David was trained to question tradition. To David, tradition was just a deceptive word for established rules. “Creativity is a better way to approach winemaking,” says David. “If

I had been educated as an enologist it would be more difficult to break those old winemaking molds.”

When he moved to California in the 1970s, David applied his innovative flair to the burgeoning wine business, designing the industry’s first die-cut gold foil label and forever changing the look of California wine bottles. “I invented the 25 cent wine label,” says David. “Back then no one spent more than a penny for a label.”

Designing labels introduced David to wine through repetitive contact with a multitude of winemakers. He started making a few hundred cases each year to better understand the needs of his clients. The challenge and creative expression of winemaking intrigued him and he was eventually hooked. He stopped designing client labels ten years later when his production reached 10,000 cases.

Well-known for his maverick approach to winemaking, David’s non-conformity transcends ego or “art for art’s sake” — it stems from problem solving methodology learned in engineering and design. Just as he did when he invented the adjustable-top fermentation tank or created the first gold-foiled wine label, David counters conventional wisdom with new winemaking ideas.

While most vintners stress the importance of making wine from estate vineyards, he has never considered purchasing a single acre. David likens vineyard ownership to parenthood, “If your kids turn out bad, you’re stuck with them.”

After sourcing excellent grapes, maintaining their integrity throughout harvest and fermentation is the next priority. Using simple, but well-planned, grape handling and fermentation techniques, David is able maximize extraction and produce well-balanced, intensely flavored wines. According to David, “90% of wine quality comes from the vineyard. I find the best grapes, then do as little as possible to them. I want the wines to taste like the grapes from which they come.”

Adler Fels has been making exceptional wines exclusively from Sonoma County vineyards since its inception in 1979. However the real story is the dynamic people behind the brand and their unique approach to making wine. They currently produce 15,000 cases of award-winning chardonnay, gewurztraminer and sauvignon blanc, and under the Alterra label, sangiovese and syrah.