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Interview with Colleen Hardy, Co-owner of Living Roots Wine & Co.

NYWGF: When was the moment you fell in love with wine/wine industry?

CH: I took an online course through UC Davis- Intro to Wine & Winemaking- while living in Chicago, and the fact that I would look forward to my lectures after a full day of work and a long commute was a sure sign, I was keen on the industry. But it was after I first started at Hardy's Tintara in McLaren Vale that really solidified it. After a few weeks of scrubbing tanks and prepping for harvest (quite a new experience for a previous cubicle dweller,) the first grapes arrived. The whole cellar crew, probably 30 of us in total, with a good mix of Aussies, Americans, Brits, and a French man, gathered around the crusher to watch the first grapes of the 2014 vintage come in, crack some bubbly, and toast to the season. I learned a lot that harvest and was hooked from then on.

NYWGF: What's your best experience/event since you've been part of the industry?

CH: One moment that was particularly special to me was when our first shipment of Aussie wines arrived at our winery in Rochester. Our business model is unique, making wine in both South Australia and Upstate New York and bringing together our two worlds. It was surreal unloading these wines [in my hometown] that we had worked so hard on [in Seb's hometown] for the first time, seeing the two sides of the business finally meet.

In terms of events, we're fortunate to be part of inclusive winemaking communities in both the Adelaide Hills/McLaren Vale regions and in the Finger Lakes, and we are excited about any opportunity to collaborate with other wineries and winemakers. We had the best time participating in the Rosé Soirée last year, pouring our Finger Lakes Dry Rosé alongside so many of our peers, and similarly, we just participated in the first Kuitpo Collective event in South Australia, highlighting our little subregion of the Adelaide Hills. Any event bringing together likeminded people and offering an experience that elevates the whole group is something we're proud to be involved in.

NYWGF: What's the one wine you can't live without?

CH: It's a tough call between traditional method Sparkling and elegant Pinot Noir... we're keen on a lot of different styles and varieties, but those are two that we never tire of drinking, and certainly are excited to be making.

NYWGF: What do you think is going to be the next big wine trend?

CH: With some new plantings in the next year or two, we're putting our bets on Sparklings, including with the lesser known Pinot Meunier, richer aromatic whites like Pinot Gris, and lighter reds like Gamay and Pinot Noir.

I also think people are getting more curious, and tastes are broadening in general, so I'm sure we'll see more alternative varieties and experimental styles getting traction as previously emerging examples become more mainstream.

NYWGF: What would your "words of wisdom" be to someone who wants to have fun/learn more about wine?

CH: Have an open mind — there's always more to learn in the wine industry, and tasting outside your comfort zone is a great place to start. It's easy to stick to what you know, but even more exciting to be surprised by a variety, a style, a region, etc. Things tend to get over-generalized, and we love to opportunity to change perceptions, whether it's showing that not all Chardonnays are oaky, not all Rieslings are sweet, or not all Aussie Shirazs are overripe.