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Fifth-generation winemaker Joe Wagner is the owner of Copper Cane Wines & Provisions, whose portfolio includes Pinot Noir-centric brands Belle Glos, Elouan, and Böen.

Belle of the **BOLD**

EXPLORING THE
BRAVE NEW WORLD
OF PINOT NOIR
WITH **JOE WAGNER**

PHOTO: ALEXANDER RUIB



The Goodness of Grandeur:

SCHEID FAMILY WINES

"When we started farming in 1972, 'sustainability' wasn't a word," says Heidi Scheid, executive vice president of Scheid Family Wines. "There were no certifications." How times have changed. With consumers increasingly interested in environmentally friendly practices and products, the California producer is especially proud of Grandeur, its first label to be certified organic—which isn't to say that it hasn't been a pioneer in sustainability since day one.

"We always looked at the environment as something we needed to nurture and protect. These are permanent crops, so we needed to take care of the soils and vines," Scheid notes, adding that the winery itself was designed to be eco-friendly: Skylights were installed to capture natural light and reduce electricity usage, and wastewater and grape-skin recycling were implemented at the outset. Since 2014, the company has been earning certifications from the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, Sustainability in Practice (SIP), GLOBALG.A.P, and more; it has also invested in alternative energy by installing a wind turbine that powers not only its entire winery operation but over 125 homes in southern Monterey County.

So when Scheid Family Wines acquired the 90-acre parcel of land in the Hames Valley AVA that was to become White Flower Vineyard five years ago, the decision was made to farm it organically from the start. As Scheid recalls, "We thought this might be a great place to take the next step in the sustainability journey and see where it takes us." Planted mainly



to Petite Sirah, plus ten rows of Cabernet Sauvignon stationed atop its highest hill, White Flower is the primary source for Grandeur's Petite Sirah Rosé and Red Blend of Petite Sirah and

Cabernet. (The adjacent Hames Valley Vineyard, which has been farmed since 1998, was subsequently transitioned to fully organic farming methods and certified in March 2023; Scheid now has just over 600 acres of vines certified organic by California Certified Organic Farmers [CCOF].)

Winemaker Casey Di Cesare, who has been with Scheid Family Wines for over six years, describes his winemaking style across most of the portfolio as "very minimalist." That dovetails especially neatly with ensuring Grandeur conforms to standards on added sulfites, one of the key factors in organic wine certification. Grandeur's bottles boast the words "Made with Organic Grapes" as well as a CCOF Certified Organic label. To bear the USDA Organic seal, by contrast, even naturally occurring sulfites must be limited to 10 parts per million (ppm). That can be a problem, says Di Cesare: "Yeasts, when they ferment, can go above that naturally," he explains. Di Cesare and associate winemaker Ellie Loustalot opt to add up to 100 ppm of sulfites to Grandeur as needed to preserve shelf life and quality.



White Flower's native bee colony inspired the design of Grandeur's label, which depicts a bee among blossoms.

Yet instead of adding sulfur at crush and several times prior to bottling, as is common, says Di Cesare, he and Loustalot utilize a non-saccharomyces yeast, *Metschnikowia pulcherrima*, at crush. "It outcompetes any spoilage and allows us to not add any sulfur" until just before bottling, he explains. "It's a super-natural process."

"I've enjoyed the technical challenge," he continues. "How do you go even farther in minimalism? What new tools and techniques can we use? Some of those bleed into our overall winemaking." Loustalot also voices her appreciation of the winery's approach: "I'm drawn to Grandeur as a beautiful wine founded in good ethics at the forefront. Scheid Family Wines, as a leader in sustainability, continues to display a sense of responsibility to the community as good stewards of the land." Next up in its journey: a Bee Friendly Farming certification that honors the native colony at White Flower Vineyard—while no doubt helping to build buzz for Grandeur. —Amy Antonation

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCHEID FAMILY WINES

Scheid Family Wines' White Flower Vineyard in the Hames Valley AVA.