

# 2018 NORTH OF THE GATE WINE COMPETITION JUDGES

## DEBRA DEL FIORENTINO

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International Wine Judge, Sommelier, Certified Wine Professional and Certified Specialist of Wine, Debra Del Fiorentino is a consummate wine professional who brings a dynamic energy and expertise to every endeavor she undertakes. Debra is a familiar face at numerous prestigious wine competitions.

She also is President and Owner of Wine Competitions Management & Productions and Libation Logistics.

She is one of the Founders of Spirited Magazine, as well as the Food and Beverage Director. Debra also serves as an independent wine educator and partner in Russian River Vineyards.

## LINDSEY DUGAN

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Before entering the wine industry, Lindsey worked as a copywriter in San Diego, specializing in promotional material, web copy, and scripts for nationally run TV spots. She received dual degrees in Economics and Writing at the University of California, San Diego. She was reintroduced to the Sierra Foothills when she moved back to Northern California and began taking people on wine tasting tours in the region. After re-igniting her love for good wine, she segued to working in the tasting room, writing tasting notes, and running lab analysis including Brix, TA, pH, EtOH, RS, VA, and FSO<sub>2</sub>. She's now an experienced wine professional with a certification in wine business management from Sonoma State and acts as the Operations Manager and Assistant Winemaker at Grace Patriot Wines in Placerville. She has hands-on experience with managing the production of over 24 varietals and 4 dozen products from grape to bottle, participating in blending trials and decisions, conducting barrel-by-barrel sensory analysis for Brett, VA, and overall wine quality.



## BILL MCNABB

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Wine journalist Bill McNabb has traveled and tasted in all the major wine growing regions of the world from Europe to Australia and New Zealand to South Africa. For the past fifteen years, he has served as the Wine Editor for the Piedmont Post newspaper. Bill has judged at the San Francisco International Wine Competition and at the Grand Harvest Awards.

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### KRISTI MOHAR

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Kristi Mohar started in the grocery business in 1982. She has been the wine buyer for family owned Pacific Markets in Sonoma County for the past 16 years. She is very passionate about wine and is always willing to help and learn. During her tenure in the wine industry Kristi has judged numerous wine competitions and served on esteemed panels. Some of Kristi's credentials include San Francisco Wine Competition, Sonoma County Harvest Fair, Press Democrat "wine of the week" panel member, wine consultant to local wineries and retailers, and coordinator of the Pacific Market Wine Tent at the Sebastopol Apple Blossom Festival.



### ANNA MARIE DOS REMEDIOS

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Anna Marie dos Remedios began making wine as a hobby to relieve the stress of her day job as a newspaper journalist and business owner. She focused on making small lot, single-vineyard designated wines from some of California's best wine-growing regions. She learned traditional winemaking methods from mentor and renowned Pinot Noir producer Josh Jensen at Calera Wine Company. When she began Idle Hour Winery, she used traditional methods – native yeast fermentation, gravity-flow racking, and the use of neutral French Oak – all of which are very gentle in nature, and she applied them to all of the varieties she ferments. She furthered her education by enrolling as a student in the University of

California, Davis, winemaking certificate program to gain an understanding of the chemistry of wine and winemaking. Anna Marie and her partner, Deb Payne, decided to relocate the winery to Oakhurst, which made Idle Hour the first winery in that small town located just outside the south entrance to Yosemite National Park. Idle Hour is named after Anna Marie's paternal grandfather's (Augustinho dos Remedios's) Chinese junk, a sailing and fishing vessel that she enjoyed as a young child with her family in Hong Kong, where she was born. In addition to Pinot Noir, varietals produced by the winery include Petite Sirah, Cabernet Franc, and Tempranillo.

### LARRY VAN AALST

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Retired sommelier, Equus Restaurant and Host of The Sonoma Report, CRN Digital Talk Radio the Equus Restaurant wine list was judged "Best of Show" in the 1995 and 1998 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. The Gallery of Sonoma County wines, nearly 300 bottles hand-picked by their winemakers, sets the tone – wine country splendor in a classic setting. Larry Van Aalst, Equus Sommelier, has been selecting wines for Equus for over a decade. Larry has been judging at the Cloverdale Citrus Fair/San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition for over a decade.



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## WILFRED WONG

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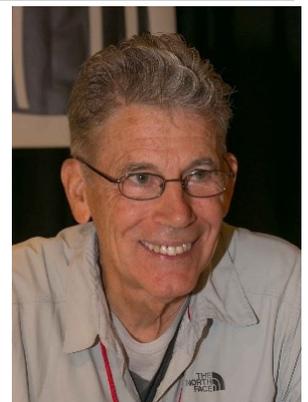
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Wilfred Wong, Chief Storyteller and in-house wine critic for Wine.com is a 40+ year veteran of the wine industry. Each year Wilfred tastes, scores, and reviews thousands of wines to help Wine.com customers choose their next bottle with confidence. He is an extreme researcher and a taster of wines and employs his photography and storytelling skills across the Wine.com site, blog, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.). As a wine judge, Wilfred has participated domestically (Los Angeles International, San Francisco International, Sonoma County Harvest Fair and many others) and internationally (Spain, France, New Zealand and Australia). He lives in San Francisco with his wife Alice and dog

## MIKE DUNNE

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Retired food editor, restaurant critic and wine columnist of The Sacramento Bee, Mike continues to contribute a biweekly wine column to The Bee, as well as occasional other features. During his 30 years as a feature writer at The Bee he focused primarily on food, wine and restaurants, but also wrote travel features, ranging from Idaho to Morocco, Guadalajara to the Finger Lakes. In retirement, he has been judging up to 18 wine competitions a year, from small regional contests (Amador Calaveras, Lake counties) to larger international roundups (Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas). He and his wife Martha live in Sacramento most of each year, but we also spend three to six months annually at another home in San Jose del Cabo, Baja California Sur, Mexico.



## MARK CHANDLER

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Mark Chandler is a 7th generation Californian whose family history revolves around agriculture. He has a degree in Agricultural Business Management from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and is a graduate of the esteemed California Agricultural Leadership Program. Mark's 30+ years in California wine included being Executive Director of the Lodi Winegrape Commission from 1991 to 2011, where he expanded the number of Lodi wineries tenfold. For his efforts he was named *Sunset Magazine's Wine Professional of the Year*, and was recently picked among the *Top 100 Most Influential People in US Wine* by *INTOWINE.com*. Mark is currently serves as Chief Judge at the CA State Fair Wine Competition. Mark and his wife Jan farm 180 acres of vineyards in the Lodi appellation. In addition to these activities Mark serves on

the Lodi City Council.

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### KAREN BENNETT

Karen has worked in the wine industry for 29 years, opening one of the first California wine bars in 1991. In 2004 she became the manager and wine buyer for Bill Hoppe's renowned Hoppe's Garden Bistro on the Central Coast. In 2009 she spent 2 years in San Diego before returning to the Central Valley where for the past 7 years she has directed the wine list for Meir Brown's Cafe' Med Restaurant and Gourmet Shop in Bakersfield, California. Karen is certified WSET Level 2 and Court of Master Sommeliers.



### ROB BLACK



Since commencing in the wine industry in 2002, Rob has just completed his 25<sup>th</sup> harvest – spanning 3 continents and 6 countries – USA, Canada, France, Spain, Australia as well as his native New Zealand.

Rob completed his Masters in Oenology degree at the University of Adelaide in 2007 with a strong viticultural focus. Since then, he has managed to skillfully follow his “proverbial” nose, leading him to become the Associate Winemaker at Screaming Eagle since the start of harvest 2014.

If Rob is nowhere to be found, it is most likely that he is underwater, indulging in his favorite pastime, freediving and spearfishing along the beautiful and rugged pacific coast.

### VON HURSON

With 22 years in the wine industry, Von's career has taken her from wine sales and wine educator, to working harvest and making wine. She is a published photojournalist, wine columnist, holds an Advanced WSET certificate and has hosted a web-radio wine show – interviewing well-known personalities in the wine industry. Now on to her greatest challenge: producing her own wines as co-founder and coowner of Valiance Wines, with profits going to assist America's wounded Veterans and their families. Having been a competition wine judge for many years, she sees it as a way to reward the efforts of talented winemakers and introduce the consumer to some excellent wines.

