

TIME OF RECKONING

KAREN MACNEIL SHARES HER SECOND ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE WINE INDUSTRY

LAST YEAR, MERRIAM WEBSTER'S "Word of the Year" was *feminism*. As we near the end of 2018, this year's choice is anyone's guess, but *misogyny* seems like a good candidate.

In this one short year when women have seemingly achieved so much, we have simultaneously accomplished so very little. Indeed, now that the early waves of outrage and the initial high of the #MeToo movement have passed; now that Weinstein, Crosby, Lauer, Moonves, Ailes, Battali, Lasseter, and a cascade of others are—at least temporarily—toppled, we're faced with a starker reality: We live among men, and some of them subconsciously hate us.



ALEXIS PERCIVAL



BETH NOVAK MILLIKEN



ANNE MOSES



ANNETE ALVAREZ-PETERS



LARA ANDREIA DA SILVA RIBEIRO

The women pictured on the pages of this report were among those who participated in Karen MacNeil's *Women in Wine* survey and research.



It's hard to say that last sentence, but it's also hard to turn away from a year's worth of mounting reports of sexual harassment and sexual "misconduct" and *not* feel as though something very basic is wrong here.

That word, "misconduct," probably needs to be erased from the larger conversation altogether, as sexual misconduct is not about sex and certainly not about mere misbehavior. It's about using your gender to undermine, intimidate, and put someone in their place. It's about abusing your power to render someone else powerless.

Many women have been unjustly forced to navigate around or insulate themselves from situations where a possibility of harassment existed, but for women in the wine industry, there's a big complicating factor: wine itself.

When everyone's job involves drinking—when the professional and social contexts are blurred—how do you determine where the lines should be drawn? And even if you were sure when those lines were clearly crossed, wine often enters the equation again to serve as the perfect "cover." For how many calculating men in the industry have used wine as their excuse, if not their license?

COMPENSATION AND REPRESENTATION

In doing research for this report, I found myself returning again and again to the relationship between harassment and advancement in the wine business. They are, it now seems to me, inextricably linked. Harassment is a direct way of blocking advancement, but blocking advancement is also a form—an especially insidious and often subconscious form—of harassment.

Let's look at the current status of women and their representation in the \$62-billion U.S. wine industry. Last April, a startling cover story in the business section of *The New York Times* revealed that among Fortune 500 companies, there are about the same number of women CEOs as there are CEOs named John (this despite the fact that Johns comprise roughly 3 percent of the population, while women represent 51 percent). Then in October, it was revealed that the already tiny population of Fortune 500 female CEOs had, over the previous few months, shrunk by 25 percent. It now stands at just 5 percent.



CATHY CORISON



CATHRINE TODD



CHRISTY CANTERBURY



GRETCHEN BRAKESMAN



JULIANA COLANGELO

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE SUBJECTS



THEODORA LEE

Applying that same scrutiny to the wine industry yields a higher percentage. A report released this year by The Red Cabinet, an organization of 100 female wine executives in California, found that women CEOs ran 13 percent of the state's wineries with an annual production of more than 10,000 cases. (Wineries producing fewer than 10,000 cases were not surveyed, as small-production wineries are considerably less likely to have formal management structures.)

Interestingly, there were no female CEOs at wineries producing between 100,000 and 500,000 cases annually. But at wineries producing 500,000 to 1 million cases per year, 25 percent of CEOs were women. In other areas of executive management, the report found that women were significantly overrepresented in human resources and marketing and underrepresented in operations, sales, viticulture, IT, and winemaking.

The latter is a particularly interesting area, as a considerable amount of research suggests that women (especially those of child-bearing age) have some advantages over men when it comes to sensory skills. (See my May 10 report, "Women or Men... Who Has Better Wine Tasting Ability?" on winespeed.com.) I asked the trade associations of several of the top wine-producing states to estimate the percentage of female winemakers in their states, and



KIMBERLY CHARLES

while there is no firm research in this area, they responded as follows: an estimated 10 percent of winemakers in California are female, compared to 7 percent in Washington and 5 percent in New York.

This despite the fact that for the past 15 years, women have on average made up 42 percent of graduates from the prestigious Viticulture and Enology program at the University of California, Davis. Women, in fact, have earned more college degrees in general than men for the past three decades, and while the popular assumption is that more education equates to more money, that's not the case here: For the past 20 years, women have made about 80 cents for every dollar men earn for the same work. Last year, that figure rose marginally to 82 cents, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As management level increases, however, the gender pay gap widens. Female chief financial officers, for example, experience the highest pay gap, earning just 77 percent of what their male counterparts do, according to a 2017 report by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR).

GAINS AND LOSSES

Unfortunately, in the wine industry, no broad-based salary surveys exist that track compensation by gender. The educational association GuildSomm, however, does



LAURA DÍAS MUÑOZ

conduct its own annual report on the subject, and while the data set is small, last year's results show improvements over the prior year's. In 2016, women sommeliers were paid on average \$7,000 less annually than male sommeliers, but in 2017 the gap narrowed to \$4,000, adjusting for education, experience, location, and other factors.

One problem immediately apparent in any sommelier survey is that the proportion of women in the Master Sommelier community remains glaringly small. In the U.S. there are currently 182 Master Sommeliers, of whom just 29 are women.

It's hard to reconcile this number with any single explanation, but several women I've talked to say they're turned off by what they see as a "pin-kissing bro culture" proliferating amongst male sommeliers. For Masters of Wine, thankfully, the situation is better: Out of 380 MWs worldwide, 131 are women.

There are, of course, other forms of industry recognition beyond the MS and MW. Traditionally, industry accolades like Wine Enthusiast's Wine Star Awards go overwhelmingly to men, but in this year's *Top 100 People in the U.S. Wine Industry* list by IntoWine.com, 24 out of 100 were women. That includes the person in the number-one slot: Annette Alvarez-Peters, who serves as the Assistant General Merchandise Manager for Beverage Alcohol at Costco, America's largest alcohol retailer.



LESLIE SBROCCO

(Meridith May, Publisher and Editorial Director of *The SOMM Journal*, came in at #15.)

I know that when many of the women on this list—including me—began their careers, very few women had forged a path before them, meaning female mentors were in short supply. In an interview last year for *Prestige* magazine, Master of Wine and prominent wine critic Lisa Perrotti-



LINDSEY WALLINGFORD

Brown, who serves as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Wine Advocate*, revealed that during her 27 years in the wine industry—having worked for nine companies in four countries in more than seven fields from marketing to purchasing to publishing—she’s never once worked for a woman.

Of course, in every aspect of advancement, remuneration, recognition, and support, women of color have it particularly



MAIA PARISH

hard. Not only are they not adequately represented, but when they do end up occupying high-level positions, they’re often treated with shocking dismissiveness.

By way of example, Andréa McBride, a Black woman who owns the company McBride Sisters Wines with her sister Robin, recently told me this story after they both traveled to Cincinnati for a business meeting: “The night before, we went to a



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—KAREN MACNEIL



MERRY EDWARDS AND HEIDI VON DER MEIDEN

restaurant and sat at the only table, which was a communal table," she explained. "There were three gentlemen there, and the conversation went like this:

Them: Hi, are you from around here?

Us: No, we just flew in from California.

Them: Oh, are you flight attendants?

Us: No, we have a meeting with Kroger [the grocery store chain] in the morning.

Them: We had a meeting with Kroger today ourselves. Who do you represent?

Us: We don't represent anyone. We own a wine company.

Them: Really? You guys own the company?

Us: Yes.

Them: Well, good luck with your meeting tomorrow. We know it's difficult for small companies to get into Kroger.

Us: Actually, we've sold our wines to Kroger for many years.

"And then," Andréa recalled, "there was this awkward silence."

It's safe to presume that few women in the wine industry can't relate to Andréa's story. Historically, though, the lack of Latina women in the wine industry has been especially surprising given the ubiquitous presence of Latino men, who now make up a growing percentage of workers in wineries, not just in the vineyards.

Fortunately, the news on this front is good: Quietly but steadily over the last few years, Latinas have joined vineyard crews in numbers that would have been unthinkable even a decade ago. In 2013,



REBECCA HOPKINS

for example, women represented fewer than 5 percent of vineyard workers in the Napa Valley. Last harvest, they represented nearly 30 percent, according to a 2017 report from UC Davis researchers Malcolm Hobbs and Monica Cooper.

That report, titled *Changing Gender Diversity of the California Vineyard Labor Force and Implications for Grape Production*, further revealed an enormous cultural and gender shift among vineyard workers. That shift has occurred not just at the lower rungs on the ladder: The researchers also found that by 2000, Latina women already held a significant percentage of managerial positions in California vineyard operations.

BREAKING BARRIERS

Beyond these shifts in representation—in which much more progress remains to be made—what else has changed? While men in the wine industry have been conspicuously silent on the topics of women's advancement and harassment, several large companies, among them Treasury Wine Estates, Constellation Brands, and E. & J. Gallo, have now established professional advancement programs for their women employees.

Harassment is, of course, a trickier issue, as it doesn't have to be profound or overt to undermine women professionally. The unrelenting presence of subconscious harassment—being belittled, ignored, talked over; looked past, demeaned, interrupted,



MICHELLE METTER

reprimanded, corrected, or addressed as a junior; among countless other slights and abuses—takes a toll on anyone's confidence and sends rivulets of insecurity coursing through one's brain.

And sometimes on top of all that, there's the insidious insult of being sexualized to the extent that one might well begin to imagine oneself as somehow less capable. Social wine events don't "require" men to dress differently, but what of women? Are low-cut dresses and 4-inch heels just part of the cultural expectation? Can one really move on to become the CEO of a wine company if you've also been unfairly cast as the sexually provocative one?

Maybe, but I'm not so sure. I'm reminded of a sign in the women's locker room of a health club I once belonged to: It pictured an older woman with the caption, "My only regret in life is that I didn't tell more men to fuck off."

For this year's status report, I once again surveyed 160 women in the wine industry and asked them the following:

In the wine industry, women remain underrepresented in most professional roles and at most levels, from entry to executive. What are the biggest barriers to women's advancement?

I presented 11 options, but respondents could also write in their own suggestions. The top response for the biggest barrier to women's advancement:



REMI COHEN

“The perception by men that the wine workplace is already equitable when in fact it isn’t.”

Number 2 was:

“Men intrinsically feel more comfortable interacting with and promoting other men.”

And number 3:

“There remains a deep-seated misogyny in American culture that is difficult to surmount.”

All of this has given me pause. The



MEG MURRAY

status of women in the wine industry feels different, yet despite some very impactful gains, it also feels nascent and fragile and tentative. I can easily imagine a 2020 that, for the average woman, is not substantively different than 1990.

But I can also imagine a true New World wine industry that’s a meritocracy—an example, perhaps, to other industries very much in need of their own reckonings.



KIMBERLY HOCKER

It’s ours to build. The time is now. 



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“I CAN EASILY IMAGINE A 2020 THAT, FOR THE AVERAGE WOMAN, IS NOT SUBSTANTIVELY DIFFERENT THAN 1990. BUT I CAN ALSO IMAGINE A TRUE NEW WORLD WINE INDUSTRY THAT’S A MERITOCRACY—AN EXAMPLE, PERHAPS, TO OTHER INDUSTRIES VERY MUCH IN NEED OF THEIR OWN RECKONINGS.”

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