

## The Convergence Of Purpose And Passion

An Interview with MaryAnn and Larry Tsai, Co-Founders, Proprietors, Moone Tsai Winery



Larry and MaryAnn Tsai

**EDITORS' NOTE** Growing up in a spirited Italian family in Boston, Massachusetts, MaryAnn Tsai spent summers helping her grandmother tend a verdant garden featuring rows of vegetables, herbs, and an especially precious vineyard. From the last of these, the family celebrated the rite of winemaking; a tradition that young MaryAnn did not fully appreciate until years later. During her college years, she found herself again ensconced in vineyards, this time in a study-abroad program at the University of Angers, France. Located in the glorious Loire Valley, the idyllic town of Angers epitomized French country living and was the perfect place to spark a willing palate for simple, but well-crafted wines and inspired cuisine. It was here that she caught “the bug” that would fuel her interest in wines, and ultimately inspire her move to Napa Valley, her graduation from Harvard Business School, and the launch of a wonderful career in the wine industry.

As a first generation Chinese-American boy growing up in the lively North Shore neighborhoods of New York's Long Island, after earning degrees at Princeton and the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Larry Tsai embarked on a career

that enabled him to indulge his intertwining interests in wine, food, and the arts. By way of his experiences across Fortune 500 companies, and atop emerging gourmet/food/lifestyle enterprises and Napa Valley nonprofits, he has combined his management skills with a calling to create and deliver extraordinary wines and experiences that support the Moone Tsai credo. In 2010, Moone Tsai ([moonetsai.com](http://moonetsai.com)) moved from its single-cabernet infancy to the brand's current annual production of seven acclaimed wines across 3,000 cases, with distribution in selected U.S. markets and abroad.

### What was your vision for launching Moone Tsai Winery and how do you define its mission?

**MaryAnn:** As with many starry-eyed endeavors, the origins of Moone Tsai trace from a shared vision that was hatched with the convergence of purpose and passion. Fresh out of Harvard Business School, I set my sights on a career in the Napa Valley wine industry. I started my career at Beringer Vineyards managing and marketing the Beringer wine brand. During my 12-year tenure at Beringer, I found myself involved in creating some of Beringer's most acclaimed

wines. Beringer earned the number one wine recognition for their Private Reserve Cabernet and critical acclaim for their Howell Mountain Bancroft Ranch Merlot. In subsequent years, while I was able to leave my imprimatur on a variety of other acclaimed wine releases and AVAs, I never forgot the allure of Howell Mountain.

**Larry:** When we started Moone Tsai wines in 2003, we created our label with the dream of making rare and remarkable wines bearing the finest fruit from Napa Valley's most heralded vineyards. Guided by this vision, and with Howell Mountain beckoning, Moone Tsai launched its distinctive, limited production Cabernets, Chardonnays, and Bordeaux blends – among them, Moone Tsai's landmark Howell Mountain Hillside Blend. Coming full circle, we are now pleased to call the magical, mystical Las Posadas district of Howell Mountain home. With our winery and tasting room operations located down the hill in St. Helena, we are pleased to share our bounty.

### How do you focus your efforts leading Moone Tsai?

**Larry:** As founders, proprietors, and full-time members of the Napa Valley community, we are entrenched in every aspect of winery operations and management – from sourcing to production, sales/marketing, hospitality and customer service. With our mission to craft the finest wines that we know how, our philosophy is rooted in our approach to winemaking. Straightforward in concept, but requiring meticulous attention to detail, we leverage our long-standing grower relationships to secure extraordinary fruit available from Napa Valley's most notable vineyards and districts, including Howell Mountain, Pritchard Hill, St. Helena, Oakville, Soda Canyon, and Coombsville. From the brand's infancy to our current annual production of 3,000 cases across seven acclaimed wines, we proudly fulfill our commitment to advancing our vision, mission and craft.

### Will you provide an overview of Moone Tsai's wines?

**MaryAnn:** Moone Tsai is located in the magical Las Posadas district of legendary Howell Mountain. Abiding by our long-standing mission to produce rare and remarkable wines of renown, we are privileged to create wines that are prized for their character, complexity, and scarcity, including our coveted Cabernets, acclaimed Chardonnays, and signature proprietary blends. With winemaker Philippe Melka since 2006, we



carry this through every aspect of our craft, from harvest to declassification, blending, and barrel/bottle-aging. The result is a stunning reflection of a core philosophy grounded in a simple, elegant design, and practiced with ardor, persistence, and inspired winemaking.

**Will you highlight the wine tasting experience when visiting Moone Tsai Winery?**

**Larry:** At Moone Tsai, guests will enjoy guided wine tastings, all focusing

on an interactive, educational and fun, multi-sensory experience. Led by credentialed wine education experts, we offer three experience options, representative of our coveted, remarkable wines: our classic wine tasting, focusing on a flight of new releases; our wine and cheese pairing; and our three-course wine-paired lunch. All tastings are hosted at the Brasswood Estate in St. Helena.

**How do you describe Moone Tsai's culture and values?**

**MaryAnn:** Put simply, the wine business is agriculture at its core. And yet, those who are familiar with agriculture know that there is nothing simple about this. As such, the vagaries and vicissitudes of Mother Nature remind us of the importance of effecting a culture built around values that espouse the practice of modeling respect, humility, integrity, dignity, and whenever possible, taking the time to effect authentic personal connections, whether this be with partners, customers, employees or vendors. For many, these notions can be easy to extol. For what we do, honoring these principles are emblematic of our mission and practice.

**What are your priorities for Moone Tsai as you look to the future?**

**MaryAnn:** 2025 marks an exciting year of promise and innovation – as we look to the launch of an unprecedented addition to our portfolio: a single vineyard, 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon. LEONIDAS, (the Son of the Lion) bears coveted, precious fruit from the acclaimed Montagna Vineyard on singular Pritchard Hill, and pays tribute to our 30 years of creating some of Napa Valley's most celebrated wines. For this wine, only 600 bottles have been produced, making this our most limited production wine to date. This brilliant Cabernet is a resounding testament to Moone Tsai's legacy of producing wines of the highest distinction. In keeping with a belief system that endeavors to find ways to transcend ourselves – from the Latin *Transcende Te Ipsum* – we have created LEONIDAS to surpass the boundaries of expectations and realize our true potential for the sublime. ●



*Moone Tsai harvest (top); and Cor Leonis wine (above)*