

Authenticity And Balance

An Interview with Violet Grgich, President and Chief Executive Officer, Grgich Hills Estate

EDITORS' NOTE Violet Grgich's passion for wine began at an early age, as she literally grew up accompanying her father, Vintners Hall of Fame inductee Miljenko "Mike" Grgich, in the vineyards and cellar. She spent her summers at the winery, doing everything from bottling line work to laboratory analysis and working in the tasting room. Attending the University of California, Davis, she earned a BA in music while taking classes in biology, chemistry, and enology. After graduation, she returned home to Grgich Hills (grgich.com) to continue her education in the wine business, learning about daily operations of the winery from her father. She received her Master of Music in harpsichord at Indiana University, and then joined the winery full time in 1988. She's now responsible for daily management of the winery, as well as sales and marketing as President and Chief Executive Officer.



Violet Grgich

regenerative research and execution in the vineyards, to our passion for agricultural education and social responsibility with various philanthropic organizations, our goal is to positively impact the agricultural sector, environment, and the world. In order to do this, we have to be ever-evolving and learning – like my father said: "Every day, do your best, learn something new, and make a friend." This notion pertains to everything we do – from the vineyards, to our winemaking, to our hospitality.

How do you focus your efforts leading Grgich Hills?

With unwavering dedication, I'm committed to preserving and continually enhancing the Grgich Hills Estate's status as an icon of innovation and winemaking. As a second-generation steward of Grgich Hills Estate, not only do I have an innate connection to the winery, but a deep-seeded commitment to leaving the world better than we found it for future generations. Put simply, my focus includes crafting world-class wines, regenerating the Earth, and fostering peace through friendships, which have always been everlasting aspects of our ethos.

Will you highlight the history of Grgich Hills Estate and how the winery has evolved?

Grgich Hills Estate has a prodigious history rooted in resilience, passion, and the pursuit of excellence. My father, Miljenko "Mike" Grgich, made history when his 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay won the Judgment of Paris in 1976, proving that Napa Valley wines could stand alongside the best in the world. That moment changed the course of California winemaking and led my father, a Croatian immigrant who overcame adversity, to ultimately fulfill his American dream of freedom and owning a winery. In 1977, he partnered with Austin Hills of the Hills Bros. coffee family, who had established vineyards and an extensive business background, to establish Grgich Hills Estate, which has since remained family owned and operated and committed to crafting wines of the highest quality, always with a deep respect for the land. From the very beginning, we focused on winemaking and farming methods that allow our vineyards to thrive naturally, and today, we are proudly 100 percent estate-grown and Certified Regenerative Organic. Over the years, we've evolved by embracing innovation while staying true to the classic and balanced style my father established that enhances the purity and vibrancy of our wines. Through our constant efforts of regeneration, we evolve every day with the goal of making our Earth a better place, environmentally and socially. From our

I work closely with my cousin, Ivo Jeramaz, our Vice President of Winemaking and Vineyards, and his team to uphold the traditional values and style my father championed, while also embracing intentional innovations that enhance the complexity and expression of our wines. Our vineyards are the foundation of everything we do, and maintaining their health and vitality is paramount. Beyond the vineyards and cellar, I am deeply involved in philanthropic work that helps create positive change in the agricultural and humanitarian veins. Some notable organizations I'm proud to work with are Roots of Peace, The World Food Prize Foundation, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and WiRED International. My leadership is guided by a sense of responsibility – to my family, to our partners, to our dedicated team, and to the land itself.

Will you provide an overview of Grgich Hills' wines?

At Grgich Hills Estate, the commitment to authenticity and balance is at the forefront of our winegrowing philosophy. We strive to craft wines that embody a true sense of place, utilizing minimal intervention winemaking to allow the vintage and vineyard to create exquisite aromas



The vineyards of Grgich Hills Estate (above and opposite page)



and flavors in the wine. This approach draws everything needed from the vineyard, letting the soil, vines, native yeasts, and grapes structure the style of the wine fully. This achieves a balance that allows for infinite variation while preserving character – we believe that wine, after all, is a living thing. While we embrace evolution in our techniques, the essence of our house style remains consistent, ensuring that each bottle reflects the legacy and exquisite quality of our estate vineyards, bringing people together, creating moments of joy, conversation, and connection, just as my father always believed it should. That philosophy continues to guide us today.

Our portfolio is both diverse and consistent, offering something for every palate and occasion. Our five estate vineyards, complete with 365 acres spread throughout the finest sites in Napa Valley, allow us to produce wines that express the unique terroir of each site. Whether it's our expressive Sauvignon Blanc, our iconic, age-worthy Chardonnays, or our balanced and complex Cabernet Sauvignons, every bottle reflects our deep dedication to quality and longevity. At the heart of Grgich Hills is a welcoming, down-to-earth hospitality, both in the wines we make and the way we share them. We believe wine should be inclusive – there's a wine for everyone, and every bottle tells a story of our family's passion, history, and relentless pursuit of excellence. We are always experimenting, invariably learning, and habitually striving to make wines that are both timeless and innovative.

What have been the keys for Grgich Hills to remain relevant for almost five decades?

We have remained a small, family-owned and operated winery since our founding and plan on continuing with future generations. This personal attention resonates with guests who appreciate meeting and connecting with us directly. Our

continued focus on sustainability and innovation, particularly in our 100 percent estate grown vineyards with regenerative farming, is especially relevant to the younger demographic for whom climate change is a keenly felt concern for their future. Regenerative farming practices capture and store CO2 in the soil, and we have already achieved our goal of being carbon negative. Our wines are made with minimal intervention, and fermented with native yeasts, capturing the essence of our terroir and giving them a truly unique and authentic sense of place. Our dedication to making some of the finest wines in the world by staying true to our natural style of elegant, balanced, and



mouthwateringly delicious wines has continued to ensure our relevance to people of all ages and experiences. Our winery experiences are tailored to our guests' needs and are down-to-earth while still creating special memories with attention to detail. Most importantly, our values of every day doing our best, learning something new, and making a friend, continue to guide us.

How important has it been to keep a family feel and culture as Grgich Hills has expanded and grown over the years?

Keeping a strong family feel and culture has been essential to Grgich Hills Estate, no matter how much we've grown, as family has always been the core foundation of our winery. From the very beginning, we built this winery with the belief that wine is about bringing people together and making them happy. That philosophy extends beyond the bottles we produce – it's woven into the way we operate as a business and how we treat our team, our guests, and our community. Even as we've expanded, we have remained a family-owned winery, which allows us to stay true to our values. From myself to my cousin, Ivo, to family members in sales, marketing, and beyond, this helps to ensure that the Grgich Hills legacy of excellence endures. We foster a collaborative environment where every team member is valued as family, and many of our employees have been with us for decades. That sense of continuity and shared purpose ensures that the passion, dedication, and hands-on approach that defined us in the beginning is still present today. This family-driven culture extends to our hospitality as well. When people visit Grgich Hills, we want them to feel that they are the most important people in the world – as if they're coming to our home. Whether it's through our tasting experiences or the personal way we tell our story, we strive to create a connection that is genuine, warm, and inclusive. At its heart, Grgich Hills is more than a winery – it's a legacy built on togetherness, hard work, and a love for winegrowing. ●