



BREATHLESS

SPARKLING WINES

BREATHLESS FEATURED IN FORBES MAGAZINE

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Wine-Loving Sisters With A Bubbly, 'Breathless' Mission

Kim Westerman, Senior Contributor, Wine & Travel

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Sharon Cohn, Rebecca Faust, and Cynthia Faust are sisters who grew up in Northern California with a mother who loved adventure. Their childhoods were filled with hikes to spectacular vistas and road trips up and down the coast. Their idyllic summers came into stark relief when their beloved mother was diagnosed with a rare lung disease that would take her life in 2008 — and the three sisters were inspired to create a sparkling wine brand in her honor. Flash forward to 2015 when the “Breathless” label was launched. The winery has just reopened its Healdsburg tasting room after the Covid-19 closure, and guests can now visit (by appointment only) to taste through a nuanced portfolio of sparkling wines (and several still wines, to boot).

Sister Rebecca was no stranger to the wine industry. In 2007, she had co-founded Rb Wine Associates, LLC — now known as Rack & Riddle Custom Wine Services in Hopland — which her mother was able to witness just before she died. When Rack & Riddle was relocated to Healdsburg, there was a small piece of land adjacent to the warehouse that was reserved for the burgeoning Breathless concept, now an outdoor garden area and tasting room made of four shipping containers. Cynthia brought in her expertise in finance and operations, and Breathless was born.

Is it a coincidence that this women-owned company also has a woman winemaker? Well, yes and no. Sharon says, “We just kept hiring those we thought were the best fit and most talented to fill our needed roles. We are very pleased and proud that so many of our key roles are filled with talented and inspiring women.” She had seen the rise of women in the California wine industry as early as 1984, when her husband Bruce



Cohn, founder of B.R. Cohn, hired Helen Turley as the property's first winemaker. Breathless winemaker, Penny Gadd-Coster, who was mentored by André Tchelistcheff of Jordan Winery (where she worked for 13 years), learned the art and science of méthode champenoise, which she applies to Breathless wines today with grapes sourced from Carneros, Russian River Valley, Dry Creek, Alexander Valley, and Mendocino County.

What about the wines themselves? Besides the meticulous sourcing and vinification process, which results in a range of crisp, elegant sparkling wines — blanc de blancs, blanc de noirs, rosé, brut, and Moscato — this brand is joyous and playful, as represented by the label, a 1915 English magazine illustration for a story about Champagne.

Gadd-Coster didn't set out to be a renegade, but Breathless wines are, in fact, disruptive in terms of their departure from brands in the male-dominated wine industry. Stylistically, she strives for a cross between the elegance of France and fruit of California, and her chief mission she describes as “bringing bubbles to all.” And it's refreshing — literally — to discover a wine brand that consciously creates a lineup and a space that is woman-centered.

Breathless sparkling wines are excellent with seafood and other classic pairings, and both the rosé and blanc de noirs can stand up to foods with a little spice. The brut and blanc de blancs are ideal with raw oysters and delicate crudo and sushi preparations.

