vinetur

New Sonoma winery Sphaerics gains acclaim for luxurious chardonnay and ambitious expansion

Founders Laura Jones and Brian Ball focus on single-vineyard wines and secure estate vineyard for future growth and red wine production

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A new winery in Sonoma County is making waves with its commitment to rich, full-bodied California Chardonnay. Sphaerics, founded by Laura Jones and Brian Ball, focuses exclusively on Chardonnay and has quickly gained attention for its complex, balanced wines. The couple met as students at U.C. Davis and both have extensive experience in the wine industry. Jones is currently the winemaker at Skipstone Ranch in Alexander Valley, while Ball serves as general manager at the same estate.

Sphaerics began production three years ago after the Jackson family offered Jones and Ball access to Chardonnay grapes from the Upper Barn Vineyard in Alexander Valley. This vineyard has a notable history, having supplied fruit to some of California's most respected producers of opulent Chardonnay, including Peter Michael Winery and Marcassin. Jones, who previously worked as assistant winemaker at Aubert Wines in Calistoga, brings her expertise in crafting lush, creamy Chardonnays to Sphaerics.

The winery's flagship wine, If and Only If, is made from Upper Barn Vineyard fruit and sells for $140 a bottle. The 2023 vintage is described as expressive, with flavors reminiscent of marzipan, ginger, and apricot. Despite its richness, the wine maintains a refreshing acidity. Jones employs long barrel fermentations with indigenous yeast and allows malolactic fermentation to finish naturally over several months. She avoids filtering or fining the wines and does not use battonage, relying instead on the quality of the grapes for depth and texture.

Sphaerics also produces two other single-vineyard Chardonnays: Overline from Carneros ($65), which offers tangy yogurt and yellow peach notes, and On Days and Nights from Russian River Valley ($80), featuring flavors of fennel, toasted hazelnut, and Meyer lemon. These wines are priced alongside other high-end California Chardonnays from producers like Aubert, Peter Michael, and Kistler.

This year marks a significant expansion for Sphaerics. In May, Jones and Ball purchased their own 13-acre vineyard near Occidental on the Sonoma Coast. The site includes both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay plantings. The couple selected this location for its Goldridge soils, which are prized for growing Burgundian grape varieties. Many of the Chardonnays Jones made at Aubert came from this area, making it a natural fit for their new estate.

The name Sphaerics was chosen after much deliberation over trademark availability. It references an ancient Greek text on geometry by Theodosius of Bithynia and plays on Ball’s last name while also nodding to the spherical shapes central to winemaking: grapes, the earth, and the moon.

With their own vineyard now secured, Jones and Ball plan to add red wine to their portfolio using estate-grown Pinot Noir. They are optimistic about the future of Sphaerics as they continue to champion a style of California Chardonnay that balances richness with precision—a style that has sometimes been overshadowed by trends favoring leaner wines but remains deeply satisfying when executed with skill.