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Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards' Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs Shine Bright Part 1

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Sun, surf, sand, and vineyards? Malibu has a secret, and it's not the celebrity gossip that swirls around the Colony. Serious [wine](#) is being made in Malibu, with several [vintners](#) working to resurrect what was once wine country in the 1800's. [Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards](#) has made a splash on the local wine scene. Inspired by the success of their first wine, a Chardonnay grown in their backyard, but constricted by the logistics of adding more vineyards in a prohibitively expensive, highly regulated neighborhood, they have expanded their brand to include Central Coast Pinot Noir, buying fruit from well-renowned vineyards. For Elliott Dolin, this is a natural progression, of doing something really well, and moving on to the next thing.

Elliott Dolin didn't start out to be a vintner, it just evolved out of life events. Like the quote ascribed to legendary basketball coach John Wooden, "things turn out best for those who make the best out of the way things turn out", this seems to be Dolin's mantra. As a teen, Dolin was inspired by the music of the Beach Boys, and worked hard to hone his own musical talent, becoming a skilled musician who was in demand, from 1970's groups such as Manhattan Transfer and country music legends like Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson. Moving to California in the 1980's was a dream come true, but there was little work for studio musicians, so Dolin moved on to his next love, real estate. He quickly succeeded in the commercial real estate market, and moved to Malibu. Meeting his wife-to-be, Lynn, in the early 1990's, Dolin worked hard and enjoyed life, indulging a passion for vintage cars and collecting wine. Elliott and Lynn bought their Malibu estate in 2001, a foreclosure in need of a total remodel. Five years later, as it seemed everything was coming together, there was that matter of a steep slope full of weeds below the house. Their landscape architect had other ideas, a terraced garden, but the Dolins loved grapevines, so an expert was consulted on which wine grape would do best, and Chardonnay was the



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answer.

In 2006, 900 vines of Chardonnay Dijon 96 clone was planted on little less than an acre of prime Malibu real estate. In 2009, the Dolins made their first vintage which surprised everyone. Dolin says, “We got lucky, I would say, I mean we didn’t really know going in how good the fruit would be or what kind of wine we could make from it.” Making that first wine at a local custom crush facility, they didn’t have an official winemaker but knew what they liked. Dolin observed, “I had a style in mind that we worked off of, that we knew we wanted to do, 100% barrel fermented, 25% new French oak, we knew we wanted to do 100% malolactic, a certain yeast we had in mind, all towards the end of having a wine with balance and a great mouthfeel”. Happy with the inaugural bottle, and awarded a **Silver Medal** at the San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, Dolin decided to get serious. He hired Central Coast winemaker Kirby Anderson to craft the 2010 vintage, and notes, “Out of the gate, the 2010 vintage was just a blockbuster, we got a **Double Gold** in San Francisco, and we were in the same class as Rombauer, Trefethen, Cakebread, Sonoma Cutrer, and we outscored everyone of them, except Frank Family, who actually got best in class..”



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Bitten by the wine bug, the Dolins realized if they wanted to expand the brand, they would need to expand their horizons. With Kirby’s introduction to some of the best Pinot Noir vineyards in the Central Coast, Dolin sweet-talked these winegrowers into selling him fruit, explaining his logic, “We felt compelled to make the best possible wine we could make, and the corollary for that is starting with the best possible fruit we could get.” In 2014, **Dolin's Central Coast Pinot Noir** lineup debuted, a collection of four Pinots, three single vineyard wines from Bien Nacido, Talley Rincon, and Solomon Hills, and one Sta. Rita Hills Pinot. So what is his winemaking philosophy for so many different wines? Dolin says, “The regimen is identical, we wanted the vineyards to be the expression of the wine by making them the same and using the same regimen.” They give Kirby lots of leeway in making the best choices, harvest time, barrels, toast levels, and so many other decisions, “it’s like I don’t get involved at that level, it’s the painter and his palette, his brushes, and what he wants to mix together”, Dolin muses. But he does come in at the blending stage, noting that “for the most part our tastes are very much aligned. I think a slight difference in preference in Chardonnay but I think in Pinot Noir, we’re right on. He has a grasp and appreciation of what we like, and what we want to achieve and he respects that.”

continued in **Part 2**



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