



Charlie

Charlie Barra was born in Calpella, CA (just 5 miles north of Ukiah) in 1926 to Italian immigrants Marie Rovera and Antonio Barra. Descendants of Piedmont, Italy, both the Rovera and Barra families worked in the vineyards of Italy spanning as far back as the mid-1800s. So it was only natural that Charlie and his two brothers spent their young teen years working side by side in their father Antonio's vineyard in Northern California, learning to prune at the ripe age of 10! In 1945, when Charlie was a junior in high school, he leased a ranch from one of his old Italian neighbors. There were scheduling conflicts between going to school and farming the vineyards, and Charlie even threatened to quit school. However, the principal intervened and made an arrangement with all of Charlie's teachers to allow him to go only a half day. After harvest, when the crop proceeds came in, it was easy to determine that Charlie had earned three times as much as the principal for that year!

In 1955 Charlie purchased Redwood Valley Vineyards, 175 acres of vineyard located at the headwaters of the Russian River, nestled at the base of rolling foothills. When Charlie purchased the vineyard, farmers were averaging as little as \$40 a ton for their grapes, as the demand for quality wine based on true varietals had not yet been established. Most growers were still farming what Charlie calls "standard" grapes that were used by the major wine producers to make Burgundy and Chablis--the basic table wines of the times. But after a few short years of growing "vin ordinaire", Charlie could see the tide was turning. He began working with Karl Wentz, Robert Mondavi and others on moving to a varietal-focused vineyard. Charlie was one of the first growers on the North Coast to plant Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Pinot Noir. And over the next 35 years, Charlie would add another six varietals to the soils of Redwood Valley Vineyards including Petite Sirah, Sangiovese, Merlot, Pinot Blanc, Muscat Canelli and Zinfandel.

And while growing the fruit was his first passion, the downturn in the grape market in the late 90s gave Charlie and Martha pause. It was time to take some of the premium fruits that had been nurtured and cultivated with such care and bottle it themselves. The BARRA of Mendocino wines were born in 1997, with the first release being the 1997 Petite Sirah. All BARRA of Mendocino wines are made with 100% estate grown grapes from organic-certified vineyards.

And today, at 85 years young, Charlie is still running the show (even though, with a big wink, he'll tell you Martha is the real boss!). From 3:00 am frost alarm phone calls in the spring to overseeing all elements of harvest in the summer/fall, Charlie is as entrenched in the art of growing fine fruit as he was 65 years ago. And now, with the 5,000 square foot BARRA of Mendocino winery and tasting room just a stone's throw from his Calpella, CA birthplace, you can't help but see how life comes full circle. Charlie's hard work, dedication and unwillingness to accept "no" for an answer continues to serve as the inspiration for all of us at BARRA of Mendocino.

So as you sit down to enjoy your next bottle of BARRA of Mendocino, be sure and raise your glasses to Charlie and toast him for showing up for work to collect his paycheck!

Current favorite bottle of wine: 2005 BARRA of Mendocino Sangiovese

Favorite food: Seafood Pasta

Favorite band: Luciano Pavarotti

Favorite saying/words of wisdom: "Don't ever take no for an answer"



Martha

Martha's foray into the wine industry began in 1980 when she married Charlie Barra, a veteran vintner/grape grower. Since that time, she has worked side-by-side with Charlie Barra farming 200 acres of organic-certified vineyards, creating fine wines, and building successful wine brands.

Often referred to as the "Other Martha", Martha Barra can give Ms Stewart a run for her money when it comes to entertaining, cooking, decorating and most importantly, running a business! A driving force behind the creation of all of the Barra Wine Estates brands (Barra of Mendocino, 59th Harvest and Girasole Vineyards) and starting with just 200 cases of wine in 1997, Martha's hard work, dedication and keen business sense have helped build wine sales to over 25,000 cases over the last 15 years.

Martha currently spends most of her time on the road in support of Barra's global distribution network, working with the winemaker to set flavor profiles, managing all of the organic certification processes, and overseeing all private label and bulk wine relationships.

Martha's special interests include cooking and entertaining with emphasis on food and wine pairings, traveling to Europe, studying architecture and remodeling houses. She also participates in her community by raising funds for museums, colleges and other foundations in need of additional resources.

Current favorite bottle of wine: BARRA of Mendocino 2004 Zinfandel

Favorite food: Any kind of seafood (especially freshly picked mussels from the Mendocino Coast)

Favorite band: Rod Stewart

Favorite saying/words of wisdom: "It's better to burn out than rust out"



Shawn

Fondly referred to within the family as the “bean counter”, Shawn Harmon joined Martha (mom), and Charlie in the family business in 2002 following a 10 year career as a civil engineer. His formal business and engineering training at California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo helped prepare him for a variety of roles in both the vineyard and in the business offices. From the design of irrigation ponds and site development plans to inventory systems and wine tastings, Shawn dove into all aspects of the organization to help streamline business processes that would act as the foundation for future growth.

Fast-forward ten years later, you can still find Shawn wearing a multitude of hats. “Being a small, family-run business, you have to roll up your sleeves and take on a variety of responsibilities”, says Shawn. Shawn currently spends his days managing all financial aspects surrounding the family business, sharing sales and distribution responsibilities with his sister Shelley as well as heading up all bottling, logistics and capital improvement projects.

Shawn resides in Ukiah, CA with his wife and family and likes to spend his spare time remodeling homes, traveling, and entertaining friends and “extended family”.

Current favorite bottle of wine: BARRA of Mendocino 2005 Sangiovese

Favorite food: Filet Mignon

Favorite band: Hanson (kidding)...Nickelback

Favorite saying/words of wisdom: “We’re not here for a long time; we’re here for a good time!”



Shelley

Shelley's first taste of the wine business was at the age of 14 on the back of a tractor during harvest, picking leaves out of the bunches of grapes being dumped into the gondolas. And although she moved away to attend college at Santa Clara University where she minored in Spanish and majored in Business, summer breaks were often times spent back in the Ukiah valley working in the pear packing sheds or on the back of a tractor as a "checker" (person responsible for counting the number of grape tubs per worker dumped into the gondola).

After graduating from Santa Clara, Shelley started her career in sales with magazine publisher IDG, selling advertising space in the world of high tech. A few years later, an impromptu weekend trip (yes, it was sunny!) to the beautiful Northwest resulted in her relocation to Seattle, WA and a 10 year sales & marketing career in the music business heading up direct and indirect sales channels, artist relations, direct marketing and public relations.

Following her music "gig", Shelley ventured into high-tech marketing for several years. Prior to joining the family business at the end of 2006, Shelley was Vice President of Worldwide Marketing for high-tech software firm Secure Computing Corporation. "Having the opportunity to apply the last 20 years of work experience to the family business is such a great feeling", says Shelley. "Like many family businesses, the kids need to go off and prove themselves first...do their own thing. I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to come back now and help take things to the next level." Shelley's current responsibilities include overseeing all national sales & distribution relationships, the Barra of Mendocino website, public relations, direct marketing and whatever else Martha asks her to do!

Shelley lives in Seattle, WA with her husband and 10 year old son, and spends her spare time hiking, skiing, and taking pictures.

Current favorite bottle of wine: BARRA of Mendocino 2004 Petite Sirah

Favorite food: Dark Chocolate (with red wine of course!)

Favorite band: Dave Matthews Band/Big Head Todd & The Monsters/The Killers

Favorite saying/words of wisdom: "Everything happens for a reason!"