

Uptown Magazine – Drink

Pour the Amor

Arizona's own Heart Wood Cellars fuses love into its wine

By Alison Bailin Batz

Located in Verde Valley, Heart Wood Cellars is true to its name, producing wine full of heart – quite literally, as its owned by husband and wife, Valerie and Daniel Wood. The Woods first met as peers, working in California at a Fortune 200 company in the mid-1990s. Her career took the couple, who married in 2001, from California to Chicago to Tokyo.



And though Valerie was from Michigan and Daniel from Hawaii, when the time came for them to move back to the states in 2009, Arizona was already in their hearts.

“I visited Sedona and the surrounding Verde Valley in the 1980s and felt so passionately about area that I proclaimed I would one day make it my home,” says Valerie, who purchased a vacation home in Cornville in 2003.

When she suggested retiring at her Cornville vacation home, she did so delicately, expecting Daniel to want her to at least consider the island paradise of his native Hawaii. But to her surprise, Daniel (who had family in the area), jumped at the chance to settle there.

“We went from a metropolitan city with millions of people to a farm-filled, unincorporated area of about 3,000. Within a week, all of our senses came alive in the fresh air and the star-filled nights,” Valerie says. “And after we reacclimated to U.S. life, we wanted to take on a retirement adventure together, choosing winemaking after becoming members at several local wineries and taking a riverboat wine cruise in France with fellow Page Springs Cellars and Pillsbury Wine Company members.”



At this time, early in 2013, Yavapai College was launching its first viticulture and enology program, the Southwest Wine Center. The Woods enrolled in the program’s classes, eventually becoming members of the school’s first graduating class. “Through the program, we helped plant 13,000 acres of vines. We also developed a business plan for our own winemaking endeavor,” Valerie says. She and Daniel put the plan into action in 2015, launching Heart Wood Cellars. “Our vision was to create bold, complex, elegant red wines from 100% Arizona-grown grapes.” Each of their first five vintages won gold or silver medals at the San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. Their 2016 Heart Wood Cellars Tannat was also an AZ Central Arizona Wine Competition winner.

Today, Heart Wood has nine total wines, ranging in price from \$38 to \$48. And while the gold medal award-winning Tannat and Love are sold out, both of the San Francisco Wine Competition silver medalists – the 2016 Petit Syrah (\$48) and 2016 Heart (\$44), a red blend with petite sirah, syrah and tannat – are available. They also have two port-style wines, including a white port with notes of honeysuckle and apricot called Diamond Reserve (\$40), and ruby port with blueberry, dark plum and dark chocolate called Ruby Reserve (\$40).

The Woods, who previously only sold their wines to wine club members or by referral, have now opened sales to the general public and are currently offering their full slate of 2016 and 2017 vintages. To purchase, contact them via email at HeartWoodCellars@gmail.com or call 928.274.8126. For more information, visit www.HeartWoodCellars.com.

<https://www.uptownphoenix.com/?fbclid=IwAR2q2IU-qg0AVWRbz1C8WEctAWn1xakxLUAYM9wWIPsMsWr-q3qoReza3AQ#/drink/>