

An American dream realized in Paso Robles: DAOU Vineyards & Winery

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There are few stories that embody the American dream as much as that of the Daou brothers, Georges and Daniel, owners of DAOU Vineyard & Winery in Paso Robles. In Paso's breathtaking Adelaida District, 10 minutes from downtown, DAOU's dining terrace, European-inspired furnishings and impeccable grounds have expansive mountaintop views overlooking what is easily California's most gorgeous vineyard.

People of passion

As young children, Lebanese-born brothers Georges and Daniel left during Lebanon's traumatic civil war and grew up with their family in France. Later attending University of California, San Diego, Georges studied mathematics and Daniel became an engineer. One business success after another followed. The Daou brothers ultimately sold a public

company they created that provided software services to the healthcare industry; it catapulted them to another financial realm, granting them an entirely new level of prosperity and associated freedom.





From left, Georges Daou, Fred Dame and Daniel Daou are DAOU Vineyard & Winery's passionate leaders. (Julie L. Kessler/Special to S.F. Examiner)

More business successes ensued. Was there anything the Daou brothers could touch that wouldn't turn to gold? In 2007, they bought what is now known as DAOU Mountain in Paso. Since then, DAOU has produced exceptional wines winning the highest accolades from major critics and has created a magical tasting environment that pays homage to the terroir the brothers so clearly love.

In addition to great wines, an utterly enchanting setting and delicious food, what sets DAOU apart is quite simply, the brothers' passion: passion for their families, their employees, their friends, the community, the terroir they cultivate and of course, the fantastic wines they produce.

Last August, master sommelier Frederick L. Dame, one of the world's most revered sommeliers, joined DAOU as its global wine ambassador. His expertise, dedication and devotion to great wines is propelling DAOU to even greater heights. Without doubt, this marriage of DAOU and Dame is an oenophile's wedded bliss.

On any given day, visitors to the DAOU Vineyard can enjoy wine tastings, culinary pleasures with divine pairings, retrospective experiences that include a private ATV ride amid the vineyards, or attend a special event DAOU hosts, including the after-hours Sunset Series on DAOU Mountain with live music and featured wines, or wine-paired dinners at top restaurants nationwide.

DAOU's Annual Gala

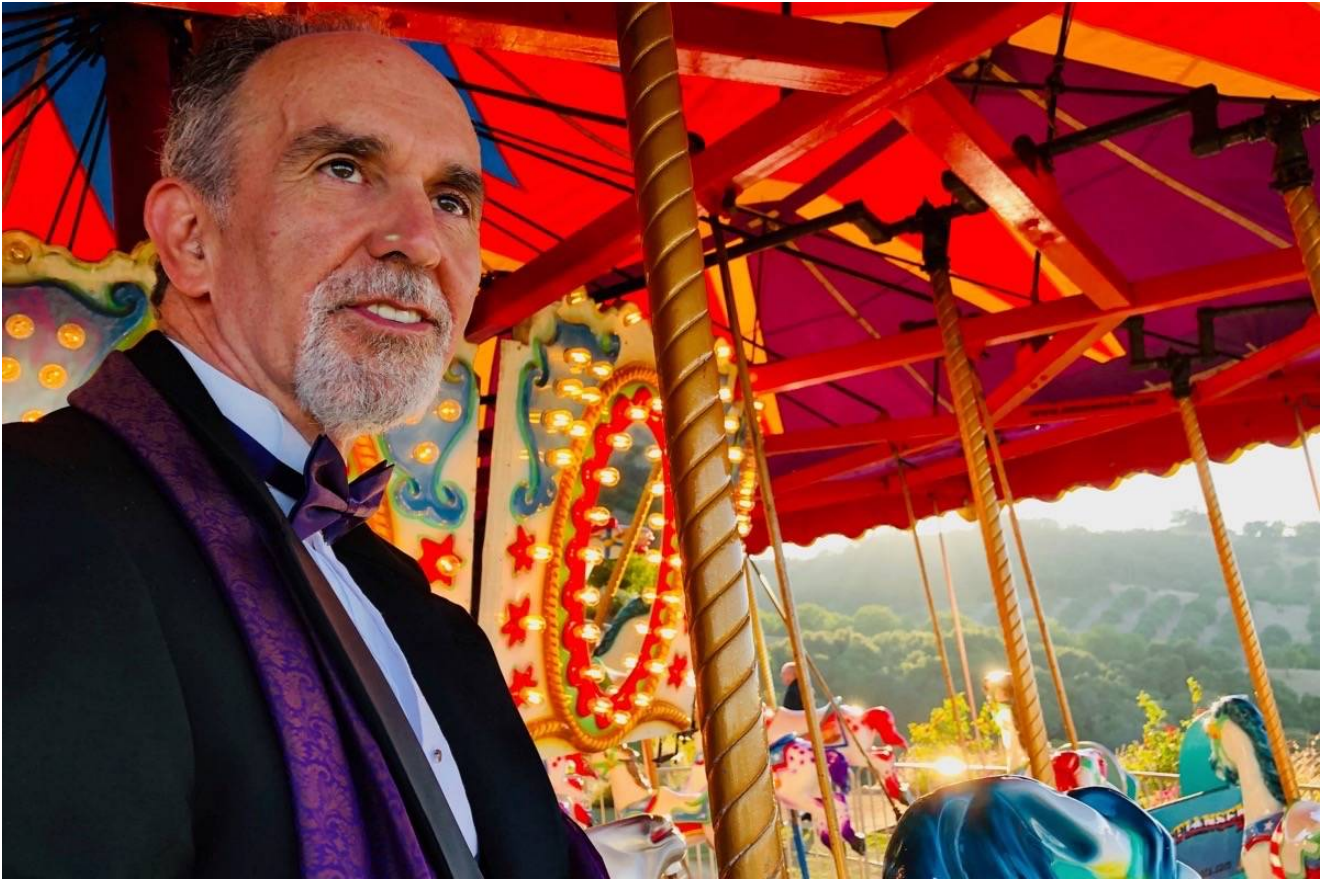
In addition to other notable events hosted in Paso and elsewhere by the brothers, for the past six years DAOU has hosted a themed annual gala at the vineyard. This year's theme was "Moulin Rouge" following the concept of the famed Parisian cabaret. And what a gala it was, with 330 costumed guests and 300 staff.



Dancers perform at the 2019 DAOU Annual Gala themed "Moulin Rouge." (Julie L. Kessler/Special to S.F. Examiner)

Talented musicians and highly skilled professional dancers provided all manner of a French cabaret entertainment. Incredible add-ons included a candy colored merry-go-round, contortionists, and for those in need of channeling their inner toddler, a dreamy adult-sized bouncer.

It was a certainly a night to remember, all of which was planned, created and executed by the DAOU team led by wunderkind event planner Christina Rivera-Glenn.



A guest reclaims his youth on the carousel before the gala begins. (Julie L. Kessler/Special to S.F. Examiner)

Talented estate chef Cody Thomasson oversaw the continuous supply of delectable hors d'oeuvres and the elegant dinner that commenced with seared ahi salad followed by divinely tender braised short ribs.

As sweets are my life's blood, I was successfully attaining nirvana as an entire jazz club-like room was set up for desserts, or rather, artistically displayed, almost-too-pretty-to-eat tables covered with anything a high-octane sugar addict could need, imagine or desire, from gourmet candy apples to towers of multicolored macaroons and everything in between. This, of course, provided the requisite additional fuel for the wild night ahead of dancing under the stars at this special place.

The jewel of ecological elements

In a corresponding great American dream story, André Tchelistcheff was the son of the Russian Supreme Court chief justice before the Russian Revolution. He fled to France, then arrived in the U.S. in 1938. Pioneering modern viticulture, he became known as the "dean of American winemaking" and the "winemaker's winemaker." He once heralded the Adelaida District — of which DAOU Mountain is a part — calling it the "jewel of ecological elements."

Not surprising, then, that the DAOU brothers became enamored by the unparalleled

growing conditions of Paso's Adelaida. Just 14 miles from the Pacific Ocean and 2,200 feet above sea level, DAOU Mountain is a microclimatic marvel, its soil more closely matching that found in Bordeaux — clay with limestone subsoil — than what is found in California. Stretching 212 acres, with 120 under vine, DAOU is planted predominantly with cabernet sauvignon and Bordeaux varietals.



Proprietor Daniel Daou samples barrel pours. (Julie L. Kessler/Special to S.F. Examiner)

In discussing wine, contemplating oenological nuances or altering viticulture technology, winemakers who knew André often asked, “What would André have done?” If André were still alive, I am absolutely certain he would have come to DAOU Mountain and been thrilled at what the DAOU brothers have created and the impressive, award-winning wines they have been so successful at producing.

Mesmerized by the views while sitting with a glass or bottle of one of DAOU Estate or Reserve wines, especially the 2016 Estate Soul of a Lion — 76 percent cabernet sauvignon, 13 percent cabernet franc and 11 percent petit verdot, given 98 points by Jeb Dunnuck and 94-96 by Wine Advocate — it becomes clear that something special and unique has been created on DAOU Mountain.

The DAOU brothers’ distinctly evident passion, talent, business acumen and heartfelt vision are matched with the magic of DAOU Mountain. This is a great and truly inspiring American story and one in which those dreams have been realized, perhaps beyond measure.

If you go

It is best to make a reservation to visit DAOU Vineyards & Winery. Call (805) 226-5460 or visit <https://www.daouvineyards.com>.



DAOU wine tasters enjoy the views and the wines. (Julie L. Kessler/Special to S.F. Examiner)

Stay at the 20-acre Allegretto Vineyard Resort. Even though it has 177 spacious, well-appointed rooms, its layout and Italianate design, fire-pit freckled courtyard and cabana-clustered pool and Jacuzzi feel less like a hotel and more of a country retreat to a wonderful uncle's Tuscan villa.

Black-and-white photos that line one hallway reflect the owner's family contribution to California development, and a vast, museum-worthy collection of art is on display, including some spectacular and rare East and South Asian pieces. A small gym, spa, chapel and tasting room complete the vineyard-lined property, while delicious meals are served inside or out on the lovely terrace at Cielo. Call (805) 369-2500 or visit <https://www.allegrettovineyardresort.com>.

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