

## Meet the Colombiana Rocking California Wine Country

By Pamela C. Pajuelo - April 2, 2014

It's likely that the average 16-year-old girl growing up in 1990s Colombia stashed clothes, shoes, and a secret diary in her closet. Not so for Bibiana Gonzalez Rave, whose closet harbored a glass jar filled with a bubbling brew of sugar, grape juice, and yeast.

Now a French-trained winemaker and owner of Rave Vines & Wines consulting, Rave chatted with TLK during a break between vineyard assessments.

### **Tell us more about the winemaking experiment.**

One of my schoolteachers said he made wine, so I asked him how he did it. I went to the supermarket and bought table grapes, sugar and the yeast people use for making bread. I put the grapes in a blender and strained the juice into a large glass jar. I added sugar—without measuring it—and two packets of yeast. It probably sat in my closet for four months. It was so horrible!

### **You said you knew you wanted to make wine from the time you were 14. How does a young girl growing up in a country that doesn't produce wines get interested in making it?**

It was out of the blue. I somehow knew that I was connected to it. This may sound crazy, but as a gift my husband gave me a DNA test. Being from Colombia I always wished I had 100 percent native Indian blood. When we got the test results, we were surprised. [My DNA] was 100 percent from the heart of France. I don't know how [accurate] those tests are, but maybe that's why I always knew I wanted to make wine.

### **Now you're a consulting winemaker for Pahlmeyer in Sonoma and you're also launching your own wines.**

I was the winemaker for Pahlmeyer's 2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, which will be released this year. It's an exciting project. Right about the time Jayson Pahlmeyer asked me to work with him, I started making my own wine, Cattleya, named for Colombia's national flower. Cattleya is a very important project for me because I'm adding the passion my country puts into everything we do. I feel so many emotions tasting it. Shared Notes is the wine my husband and I make together. I love it because it's a different varietal—Sauvignon Blanc.

### **Do you have a favorite wine?**

I have benchmarks in the varietals I love. One of my favorite Burgundies is from Christophe Roumier. If we're talking about Bordeaux blends, I had the privilege of working at Chateau Haut Brion. Once you've had those wines you're kind of screwed because the benchmark is so high! For Syrah, I love Domaine Michel and Stephane Ogier.

### **What can you tell us about pairing wine with Latin American food?**

It depends on the country and the level of acidity and spiciness of the food. The higher the spice, the more you want to go with refreshing wines. A rosé goes great with spicy food. Some Rieslings go well with Mexican dishes. The sugar level in Riesling can minimize the heat sensation.

There is so much Latin American food that's meat-oriented, so with Argentine and Chilean dishes, red wines are good. Pinot Noir can pair with almost any food. And there's nothing better than Sauvignon Blanc with ceviche!

