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A Globetrotting Winemaker's Sonoma Roots Grow Deeper

Native Colombian Bibiana González Rave wound her way through France, South Africa and California before making Sonoma home

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Bibiana González Rave is, to my knowledge, the first California winemaker born and raised in Colombia. In California, she enjoyed her initial winemaking successes with Lynmar Pinot Noir, and as a result she has become something of a national celebrity in her homeland.

The 36-year-old native of Medellín made front-page news in her country in 2011 after a dozen 2009 Lynmar Pinot Noirs earned outstanding ratings. Lynmar owner Lynn Fritz credited Rave with fine-tuning the vineyards and winery in Sonoma and getting the most of out their best blocks of grapes. The 2010 Lynmar Pinots were nearly as successful.

Since leaving Lynmar in 2011, Rave has been a whirlwind of activity. She started her own vineyard and winery-consulting business, Rave Vines & Wines, produced a handful of wines under her own label, Cattleya, married Jeff Pisoni of the Pisoni Vineyard family, formed a winery with him called Shared Notes, secured new grape sources for her wines and signed on as winemaker for Jayson Pahlmeyer's Sonoma Coast Pinot and Chardonnay project. It's named after Wayfarer Ranch, which Pahlmeyer owns, located in a remote part of the Fort Ross-Seaview appellation. Rave is overseeing both the vineyard and winemaking.

It's been a hectic pace for the energetic Rave, who first considered making wine as a 14-year-old, and later attempted to make some in a 5-gallon glass jar in her bedroom closet. That experiment failed, yet she was determined to pursue winemaking. After studying chemical engineering and business in Colombia she moved to France, where she obtained a degree in viticulture and a Diplôme National d'Œnologie from the University of Bordeaux while working five harvests.

While in France she worked in Côte-Rôtie (Domaine Michelle & Stéphane Ogier and Domaine Clusel-Roch), Alsace (Domaine du Scheidecker), Burgundy (Domaine Du Devevey), Cognac (Lycée Agricole de L'Oisellerie) and Bordeaux (Château Haut-Brion, Château La Mission Haut-Brion and Château La Dominique).

In 2004, she moved to Sonoma, yet she was still on the go. She worked harvests in South Africa at Saronsberg Cellars as well as in California and France, working six harvests in three years at one point. In California she worked at La Crema, Peay Vineyards, Au Bon Climat and Qupé before Lynmar, where she was winemaker from 2009 through 2011.

Now that Rave's Sonoma roots are growing deeper with three new labels, Cattleya, Wayfarer and Shared Notes, her globetrotting days—which she described as “exhausting and challenging”—might be behind her, but she's amassed enough global winery experience to last a lifetime.



Rachel Balunsat

Bibiana González Rave has traveled the world in search of winemaking experiences, from Colombia to France to South Africa to Sonoma.