

# PUNCH

VINEYARDS

By Insiders



For Insiders

## Miguel Caratachea, Director of Winemaking

The name Miguel Caratachea may not be familiar to wine connoisseurs, but he is possibly the most well-connected man in Napa Valley. He is the “unseen force” winemaker for several prestigious wineries and is highly regarded in Napa Valley for his own innovations learned through hands-on craftsmanship, resurrecting previously long-lost techniques, and creatively adapting current methodology. A local’s favorite, Miguel’s Punch was honored as the only winery selected by the Napa Valley Museum to open its vaunted Smithsonian Institute exhibit in September 2017.

As consultant to other wineries, Miguel has chalked up over fifty 90+ point scores in Wine Spectator (4 wines rated 94+) and Robert Parker’s Wine Advocate (10 rated 94+ points).

### *“Calling Napa Valley”*

In addition to being a trusted insider Napa Valley winemaker, Miguel hosts a weekly sports talk show on America’s first Spanish radio station, KBBF, based in Santa Rosa. Thus, Miguel is well known among those who are closest to Napa Valley’s best wines – the vineyard workers and cellar hands. They tune in to Miguel and regularly tip him off to growing conditions, the best grape sourcing, clever new winemaking techniques, and exceptional barrel lots that are quietly sold on the side from Napa Valley’s top producers.

### *A Fresh Approach to Winemaking in Napa Valley*

In Napa Valley, where so many winemakers of today were trained to make wine in the same way at the same esteemed institutions, Miguel learned his craft as Napa Valley’s pioneers did: from the ground up. Free of standards offered in formal academic training, Miguel relies on his own senses and thousands of hours of intense personal interaction with the grapes, tireless experiments and tastings. His talent is natural; he has developed an intuitive, proven mastery of his craft. With Punch, he is able to make wines in a style all his own.

Miguel & Punch partner Lee Nordlund believe that the grapes contain all the elements needed for a complete wine. Thus, his desire is to hone the all the natural attributes of the grapes – tannins, acidity, sweetness, etc. – to create entirely the profile of the wine -from aromas and flavors, to texture, mouthfeel and finish. Winemaking additions – oak, butteriness, alcohol, etc. – should not be noticed; let the grapes do the expressing.

### *Learning English (& Winemaking)*

The youngest of eleven children, Miguel is the son of a *bracero* (guest agricultural worker from Mexico). His career began at age fourteen, when was his brother Higinio, then assistant winemaker at Frogs Leap Winery, hired Miguel to work in the cellar on afternoons and weekends. Miguel was still learning English at the time, while attending St. Helena High School – the only boy in cooking class. Miguel fulfilled various vineyard and cellar roles at Stonegate Winery, then Edgewood Estate, where he quickly rose to cellar

master, then assistant winemaker. In 2003 Miguel began managing the cellar for Bill Hill and Silverado Wine Studio, making wines for many boutique wineries. By 2010, as his reputation among winemakers grew, he was able to begin consulting independently. Yet, as the behind-the-scenes winemaker for many highly acclaimed wines, Miguel's name never appeared on a label. Until Punch.

“What do I like most about the winemaking? The work. I like to work in the vineyards, crush, move barrels, try new things in the cellar. I love winemaking. That's my life,” says Miguel.

Miguel keeps current by participating in industry seminars presented by industry suppliers and UC Davis; but it is his Napa Valley connections and experiments that keep him most informed. He is married with a son.

### Lee Nordlund, Proprietor & General Manager

Lee's lucky break came in 1993 when he was hired by Beringer, his first job in the wine industry. Lee went on to become estate director of Robert Mondavi Winery, Byron, Franciscan, and Mount Veeder Winery. He has worked side-by-side with influential winemakers Ed Sbragia, Ken Brown, Genevieve Janssens, and Janet Myers. As consultant, he conceived and launched two national brands, Hangtime and Poppy. During these two decades Lee made many friends in the Napa Valley wine business. In 2009 he and colleagues in Napa Valley hatched Punch.

The ocean brought Punch founder Lee Nordlund to the wine business. As a young boy growing up near the beach in southern California, he could tell even before getting out of bed if the tide was high or low, what color the sea was, and if the fishing might be good - from the aromas and sounds of the waves. Thus, his desire in winemaking is always to express the natural attributes in the grapes.

Lee visits Ocean Beach in San Francisco to keep his sensory skills fresh and play old man's volleyball. He is a native Californian and graduate of Santa Clara University. He is married and lives in Napa, California.