

Lasseter family is drawn to Sonoma winery

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Pixar couple's wines reflect love of French culture

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Pixar founder [John Lasseter](#) is fond of saying that winemaking is Nancy [Lasseter's](#) movie. He also likes to joke that he does his day job to fund his wife's day job. But it's clear that Lasseter Family Winery is close to both of their hearts.

The Lasseters started making wine years ago — using Tommy Smothers' neighboring winery at first — and by 2002 had purchased 95 acres in Glen Ellen, a prime Sonoma County wine region. The winery stayed largely under the radar until last November, when the Lasseters opened a tasting room to the public by appointment.

Nancy Lasseter started her career at Apple, but now her focus is on grapes, working on the branding and marketing for the winery. Both Nancy and John work closely with winemaker Julia Iantasca to select the right mix of grapes for each of their four wines, which are all French-style blends with monikers that reflect the couple's love of Gallic culture. "We bounce ideas off each other, and he gives input on the design of the labels," said Nancy Lasseter.

While they were thrilled when "Up" was selected to open the 2009 Cannes Film Festival, Nancy was almost as excited to have an excuse to visit [Bandol](#), the region that produces the crisp roses with which Cannes festgoers often fall in love. They brought back 29 bottles from France and sampled them all to find just the right blend for their own dry, light Enjoue rose.

At last month's Oscar-week Lasseter Family Winery dinner at Patina, some animation buffs traveled miles for the chance to try all four varieties and listen to the Lasseters talk about their passion for winemaking. While the winery formerly provided some Pixar-themed bottles to auction for charity, now that Pixar is part of Disney, the Lasseters tend to downplay the Pixar connection. No cartoon characters appear on labels, and Nancy hopes the tasting room lures serious wine drinkers, not looky-loos. But there's one inescapable reminder of the connection: The Marie E. narrow-gauge railway once owned by John Lasseter's mentor Ollie Johnston, one of Walt Disney's legendary Nine Old Men, winds through the vineyard and is commemorated on the label of the Chemin de Fer Rhone blend.

The Lasseters are about as un-Hollywood as it's possible to get, spending almost all their time on the ranch and socializing with winemakers and artists. "It's a diverse community as opposed to an industry town," said Nancy Lasseter. "It really humbles you and keeps us in tune with nature and the seasons."

Lasseter wines are made from grapes grown organically on the estate from varieties including Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Grenache. A limited amount will soon be released of a fifth wine, L'Ame du Sage, made from 100-year-old Zinfandel vines.

Lasseter wines are served at Patina restaurants including the flagship Disney Hall location, at [producer](#) Gale Anne Hurd's Vertical Wine Bar and can be purchased at Studio City's Flask Fine Wines.