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PRESS  MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2026



giornata

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By Camille DeVaul

Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance has named Brian and Stephy Terrizzi of Giornata Wines and Etto Pasta as the 2025 Wine Industry Persons of the Year winners. In everything they do, the Terrizzis remain deeply rooted in Italian traditions and philosophies. After recently celebrating 20 years of Giornata Wines and continuing to grow their pasta empire, they have closed the circle of everything needed to complete the Italian family table.

“Brian and Stephy personify the spirit of collaboration that defines Paso Robles Wine Country,” said Joel Peterson, executive director of the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance. “They back give selflessly to the Paso Robles community while elevating the region through their exceptional winemaking and commitment to authentic Italian cuisine. We look forward to honoring them and celebrating their well-deserved recognition at our Annual Gala in January.”

Growing up, wine was the furthest thing from Stephanie’s world. Instead, she grew up in Illinois surrounded by farmland, learning how to rope cattle, milk cows, and nurture a garden. After high school, Stephanie earned her degree in biochemistry with plans to attend medical school. But something inside her knew that wasn’t the right path. After speaking with a mentor who asked her a question she’d never considered — what she hated most in the world — Stephanie realized her answer was simple: ‘Chicago snow and freezing cold weather.’ That moment set her on a new path forward.

She was first introduced to California wine in 1996 while working at her first job at a wine bar in Illinois. That introduction piqued her curiosity into the industry and led her to head out to the California Wine Country in 1998 with nothing but her car and job.

In Santa Rosa, she honed her skills working in fine dining and exploring local wines, studying under industry leaders like Dan Kosta of Kosta Browne. Her curiosity evolved into hands-on viticulture when she enrolled in classes at Santa Rosa Community College and later pursued a master’s in viticulture at Fresno State. There, she embraced sustainable farming, learning regenerative practices that would shape her career.

While at Fresno State in 2004, Stephanie repeatedly introduced herself to incoming student Brian Terrizzi, not realizing he was the same person each time because

he looked completely different on every encounter. Their relationship shifted when they later worked together on an Enology Society assignment and became study partners. During one study session, Brian cooked her an Italian dinner and opened a bottle of wine, revealing their shared love of Italian culture and sparking a connection that quickly deepened. By January 2005, they were engaged and planning their first trip to Italy — hoping to stay there and never return.

“We are truly honored to be recognized as the Paso Wine Industry Person of the Year,” Stephanie said. “It is a gift to wake up each day in this vibrant community and make our ambitions a reality. We have a dedicated and resilient team beside us, and we can accomplish almost anything together. We love what we do.”

Brian grew up in a predominantly German neighborhood in Cincinnati but was deeply connected to his Italian heritage through his grandparents, who had emigrated from Sicily. Through their family stories of the homeland, a deep love and appreciation for Italian culture was embedded in Brian. He spent many weekends with them, learning Italian culture and cuisine, especially from his grandmother, a talented cook who taught him traditional recipes and techniques while also exploring French cooking. Her handwritten cookbooks remain a cherished influence.

Brian’s love of Italian wines and gastronomy was further shaped by his stepfather, who maintained a cellar of around 8,000 bottles and a library of wine history. Brian explored the collection, tasting vintages from Burgundy, Bordeaux, Italy, and Australia, developing his palate and gravitating toward Italian varietals. His mother encouraged his culinary curiosity, sending him to a week-long class at the Culinary Institute in Napa, where he honed professional skills and deepened his knowledge of regional Italian foods.

After college and starting a career in finance in Cincinnati, Brian seized an opportunity to transfer to the San Francisco Bay Area, placing him near California wine country. On weekends, he explored Napa, Sonoma, and Anderson Valley, developing industry contacts, most importantly with Jeff Cohen, winemaker at Rosenblum Cellars. After a chance encounter at a party, Jeff invited Brian to work the harvest, prompting him to resign from finance and fully commit to winemaking. Brian’s first day



Photos by Derek Luff/PRM



racking barrels and tasting wine confirmed his passion and set him on a new career path.

A few months later, Brian traveled alone to Florence to study Italian language, wine, and cuisine, visiting over twenty Tuscan wineries and absorbing the practices of local viticulturists. An internship with Paolo De Marchi allowed him to work in a disciplined Italian winemaking environment, refining his palate and deepening his understanding of balance, complexity, and table wines. He realized that Italian wines are meant to complement meals, with regional varietals developed in harmony with local cuisine. These experiences inspired Brian to focus on producing wines in California that reflected Italian traditions, ultimately leading him to pursue a formal education in enology at Fresno State.

"We were welcomed into this community when we arrived 20 years ago by so many people and quickly grew to love it here," Brian said. "This award is very gratifying and gives us even more incentive to keep building something unique in our community. It's a dream to have a small family business that gets so much support and we treasure everyone who has helped us to be successful. We strive to do a little better every day and believe that the best is yet to come."

2005 was a landmark year for Brian and Stephanie. They married, learned Stephanie was pregnant with twins, and committed to starting their own winery, naming it *Giornata*. The couple traveled across California to choose the perfect location and began researching Italian grape varieties and clones. That year, they harvested Nebbiolo grapes in Paso Robles, and Brian crafted his first barrel in a backyard shed in Fresno. On November 17, their twin daughters were born, and both celebrated their Fresno State graduations — Stephanie in viticulture in June and Brian in enology in December.

In 2006, the couple moved to San Luis Obispo County to focus on their wine ventures, officially founding both *Giornata* and *Broadside* wineries. *Giornata*, meaning

"a day's work," became their small, family-run winery dedicated to producing classic Italian varietals — including Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Aglianico, and Barbera — using traditional Italian winemaking methods adapted to California. Stephanie focused on vineyard management, emphasizing precise harvests, organic, and sustainable practices, and low-intervention winemaking, while Brian refined the Italian-style production techniques he had studied firsthand in Italy.

Brian also co-founded *Broadside Winery*, producing Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, and Merlot, which allowed them to fund *Giornata* and gain critical business experience. *Broadside* quickly gained acclaim, appearing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *New York Times*. This experience reinforced Brian's passion for small-batch, Italian-inspired wines and eventually turn his focus to *Giornata*. Over the years, *Giornata* wines have received national and international recognition, including multiple invitations to pour Nebbiolo in Italy and praise from prominent wine critics.

The Terrizis' love for Italian culture inspired them to create *Etto Pastificio* in 2019, a fresh pasta and Italian market in Tin City. The market features their handmade pasta, organic ingredients, sauces, breads, cheeses, and charcuterie, with *Giornata* wines available for pairing. *Etto* also serves the local community, providing pasta to schools and restaurants throughout San Luis Obispo County. They completed construction of their pasta factory a couple of years ago to keep up with demand and recently started offering public tours. They even opened a restaurant a few years ago called *Etto Pasta Bar*, right next to the market, that features local ingredients and an Italian sensibility in the kitchen.

Through *Giornata* and *Etto*, Brian and Stephanie have created the ideal Italian dinner table. One that includes authentic, wholesome food, and a bottle of wine that Nonna would approve. 🍷