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REMI COHEN UNCORKS A WILD FIRST YEAR AT DOMAINE CARNEROS

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Remi Cohen, UC Davis educated winemaker and viticulturist, had been at Cliff Lede Vineyards in Napa for nearly 10 years, most recently as COO, when she got a lifechanging phone call earlier this year. It was a recruiter saying that Eileen Crane, the storied doyenne of Domaine Carneros for the past 33 years, was retiring at the end of the summer. Would Cohen be interested in the job?

“Honestly, I was surprised at first. But then I was totally thrilled!” says Cohen. “I love Champagne, and I’d always admired Eileen and what she had done at Domaine Carneros. We started talking in early March, and then the pandemic hit. I thought it best to take a pause, given all the disruption, but we kept talking. Then Eileen said she would stay on in a consulting role, which was great.”

Walking up the impressive steps to the balcony at Domaine Carneros, overlooking the vineyards that nearly surround the structure, one gets the feeling of grandeur, of pomp and circumstance. The wine list is impressive, not just for the many sparklings, but for the still wine selection as well. “Our winemaking program at Domaine Carneros is 80 percent sparkling and 20 percent still wine,” says Cohen. “This has been the balance for a while and is likely to remain. Our estate vineyards and our facilities were developed for this split. While our chateau may seem quite grand, our production levels are actually fairly limited, and we’re one of the smaller of the storied sparkling wine houses in California, in terms of production.”

Looking back on the year, with all the craziness and uncertainty, Cohen says, it’s been worth it. First pivoting to curbside pick-up, then figuring out how to conduct tastings safely (first outdoors, then in, then outside again). Then came the cooler weather and the need for tents and heaters. It’s been a logistical challenge, she says, and one that proved incredibly expensive—but they couldn’t afford not to do it. Through it all, guests and staff have remained positive. And there’s always a glass of amazing sparkling at the end of each day.



DOMAINE CARNEROS.
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