

WINE ENTHUSIAST

Six New World Female Winemakers You Should Know

These enterprising winemakers offer advice for the next generation of female vintners.

BY LAUREN MOWERY



From left: Helen Masters, Luisa Ponzi and Vanya Cullen / Photos by Ata Rangi, Polara Studio and CWK Photography, and Frances Andrijich

In honor of Women's History Month, *Wine Enthusiast* spoke to six New World female winemakers. Each shared their unique career path and offered perspectives from [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#) to [South Africa](#) and the [United States](#). And each gives a nugget of advice for the next generation of winemakers.



Luisa Ponzi, Ponzi Vineyards, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Ponzi has been involved in the [Oregon](#) wine industry since age 2, when her parents planted their first vines. “I can imagine I was more of a hindrance than a help in those early days, but as I grew older, I became fascinated with winemaking and viticulture,” she says.

Though she considered medicine, a summer stint in a hospital changed her mind. In 1993, at age 26, Ponzi became winemaker of [the family brand](#).

Ponzi gained perspective on Old World methods as she attended school in Beaune, France, and interned with Christophe Roumier, of [Domaine Georges Roumier](#) in Burgundy, as well as Luca Currado, winemaker at [Vietti](#) in [Piedmont](#). She was exposed to more than just the stringent rules that shape European viticulture.

“I was accustomed to doing all jobs in the cellar,” she says. “[As a woman in France], I was strictly prohibited from some work [like punching down the surface cap during red-wine fermentation] and discouraged from manual labor.”

To Ponzi, circumstances for women have evolved, though slowly.

“Recently, my women-winemaker tasting group listed all the women in Oregon making wine,” she says. “It was pathetic. Only about 10 women [held the title of winemaker]. When we expanded it to women ‘making decisions’ in the cellar or vineyard, the picture looked slightly better.

“With almost 800 wineries in Oregon, it should be better than that.”

Ponzi believes that the strong numbers of women enrolled in wine studies programs, along with local mentoring efforts and an emphasis to empower women in sciences, will change those statistics soon.

Her advice for women who seek to be winemakers: “Stick with it, listen to your instincts, find like-minded women, take the long view and enjoy the ups and downs.”