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## GEHRICKE WINE — A TRIBUTE TO SONOMA COUNTY

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The Sebastiani family has been called the First Family of Sonoma wine. So it's fitting that August Sebastiani, a fourth generation member of one of California's oldest wine families, would release Gehricke, a line of premium wine in homage to Sonoma County wine.

Why did Sebastiani saddle a high-end wine with an onerous name like Gehricke? "What I loved about the name is that it's a mouthful, difficult to pronounce and read. Gehricke is an old family town [in Sonoma County] from the 1800s to 1900s," says Sebastiani, who spent time exploring the local countryside as a young boy. "There was also a street, Gehricke Road, named after them. They were just a family that owned a piece of dirt, and no one knows what happened to them. I was intrigued by the name—a gritty Sonoma County back road name." For Sebastiani, Gehricke wine is a tribute to one such road.

## 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORPORATION

And it's precisely that gritty, country feel that Sebastiani hopes to convey with the Gehricke brand. "As developed and polished as the Napa wine business and wine tasting experience is, Sonoma is kind of gnarly," he says with a laugh. "Here, you get your computer out and take a dusty road to a winery, and you're rewarded exponentially in that experience." Chances are, he adds, you'll meet the picker, whose fingers are still stained purple from working in the vineyard, as well as the winemaker. "People love and appreciate the authenticity. That rolls all the way to the brand DNA."

Though the Sebastiani family built their business on affordable wines, Sebastiani was looking for a new challenge. "My family has a hard reputation for making everyday wine. As a kid, we were married to that industry, and it was good for our family, but it's different work. We wanted to make a premium wine," says Sebastiani, president of 3 Badge Beverage Corporation, based in Sonoma. "Gehricke is our grape-to-bottle program. It's involved, costly and a premium offering in our portfolio." The first vintage, which produced about 10,000 cases of wine, was released in 2013.

According to Sebastiani, the Gehricke line is made to pair with food, and includes Chardonnay, Petite Sirah, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon. Winemaker Alex Beloz describes the 2016 Zinfandel as spicy and full-bodied. "It's full-bodied and rich on the palate, so it can stand up to a lot of the heartier fare," he says. "I'm thinking Mediterranean herbs and spices and Middle Eastern cuisine. Lamb kabobs are perfection."

As for marketing the Gehricke line, Sebastiani isn't concerned with its challenging name. It's intended for mom-and-pop stores, he says, where the proprietors will tell their customers not to worry about the name. And in the spirit of Sonoma County wines and its back-road experience, the Gehricke label has a muted, reserved label with production notes written on the side by Sebastiani.

As for the future, Sebastiani plans to continue his focus on premium wines at 3 Badge Beverage Corporation. "We are meticulous in our journey of crafting small-lot wines made with minimal intervention, so that you can enjoy the truest representation of each appellation and how its terroir impacts specific varietals."

### GEHRICKE