

Francis Ford Coppola and the Inglenook Estate

The story of Hollywood director Francis Ford Coppola's stewardship of the Inglenook Estate has as much intrigue as the plots of his movies. Forty-two years on, it looks like the trajectory of the estate is toward a warm-and-fuzzy sort of happy ending. It feels appropriate for an estate named after the Scottish expression for "cozy corner".

Coppola never expected this kind of saga turned fairytale. After all, Coppola and his wife, Eleanor, were only looking for a country cottage. It was 1972, and the couple wanted a get-away from San Francisco. If their home-away-from-home had a few vines, maybe they would make wine like Coppola's grandfather did in his basement. Their realtor insisted they take a rare peek inside the historic Niebaum home, up for sale for two years, even if just out of curiosity.

Luckily the Coppolas had plenty of funds from Francis' first two The Godfather movies, because they fell smitten. Unfortunately, a housing and golf course developer outbid them. Enter, stage left, the newly formed Land Trust of Napa County. It struck down the plans for fear of the land becoming a commuter village. The developer offered the property to the Coppolas, and they at last snapped up the house and the "back property" of the original Niebaum estate in 1975.

The Coppolas instinctively knew their mission: to return the Inglenook estate into the world-class wine producer it was under the reigns of founder Gustave Niebaum then John Daniel, Sr. Driving up to the chateau today, you'd never guess all of the toil, passion and expense that went into revitalizing this historic property.

The obsession with quality had been a focal point at Inglenook from the start. As John Daniel, Jr. wrote to his sister in March of 1942, "A reputation for quality is very difficult to build up, and once lost sometimes takes generations in the wine business to reclaim." The Coppolas would have to reclaim much more than just the house and the "back property" to fully restore Inglenook.

This is because Daniel, Sr. sold the front portion of the property and the chateau to the cooperative

United Vintners in 1964. The cooperative ran quality into the ground while associating the Inglenook name with jug wine. Fortunately, the company decided to sell the vineyards and the chateau in 1995. Coppola acquired them. The wines continued to be produced under the Niebaum-Coppola label, a nod to the Bordelais tradition of combining prior and current owners' names. It wasn't until 2011 that Coppola acquired the rights to the Inglenook name and its iconic chateau image.

Thanks to many turns of fate and the on-going devotion of the Coppolas, the Inglenook Estate sits fully reunited (and even expanded) in Rutherford, California in the heart of Napa Valley. Jancis Robinson and Hugh Johnson wrote in The World Atlas of Wine,

"Rutherford is the Pauillac of California." And indeed, the wine quality has been raised to be fitting of such a distinguished comparison, thanks especially to the presence of Philippe Bascaules – winemaker of Chateau Margaux for 21 years – for the last six years.

Coppola chose the name "Rubicon", as the name of his first commercialized wine. It is a reference to Caesar's famous crossing of the Rubicon, a point of no return. This is an incredibly apt name for Coppola's Inglenook project. So is another Caesar attribution, "Veni, vidi, vici."



荷里活導演法蘭西斯·福特·哥普拉及他的 Inglenook Estate 的故事，就像他的電影一樣峰迴路轉。四十二年來，酒莊的軌跡看起來正邁向溫暖而快樂的結局。Inglenook Estate 這名字在蘇格蘭語中是「舒適的角落」的意思。

哥普拉從來沒有想過這種傳奇變成童話。畢竟，他和他的妻子伊莉諾原本只想尋找一間鄉村小屋。1972 年這對夫婦想要離開舊金山。即使他們的家園外有些葡萄藤，他們或許只會像其祖父一樣在地下室釀造一些葡萄酒。但他們的房地產經紀人堅持讓他們看看已放售兩年 Niebaum 的家。

幸運的是哥普拉夫婦從兩部教父電影中獲得足夠的資金；不幸的是住房和高爾夫球場已超出了他們的預算。新成立的納帕縣土地信託，改變了土地原本發展成的命運。開發商向哥普拉出售物業，最終他們在 1975 年購入了 Niebaum 莊園及物業。

哥普拉斯本能地清楚他們的使命：帶領 Inglenook 重回世界級葡萄酒生產商的行列，就像昔日創始人 Gustave Niebaum 及其繼承者 John Daniel 時的光輝歲月。今天如果你有幸參觀他們的城堡，你不會猜想到風光背後的辛勞、激情和付出。

Inglenook 的焦點一直在於酒質。正如 John Daniel 1942 年 3 月寫給他妹妹的信中提到：「聲譽的建立十分艱難，而一旦失去了，可能花幾代人的努力才能重回軌道。」哥普拉必須做更多，才能夠完全恢復 Inglenook 昔日的繁榮。

這是因為 Daniel, Sr 於 1964 年將財產和酒莊賣給了 United Vintners 合作社。合作社並不重視品質，甚至將 Inglenook 的名字與平價葡萄酒連結起來。幸運的是，1995 年合作社決定出售葡萄園及酒莊。哥普拉收購了它們，其所生產的葡萄酒續以 Niebaum-Coppola 為標籤——將以往和現有業主名稱相結合的做法，是 Bordelais 的傳統。直到 2011 年，哥普拉才獲得了 Inglenook 的名稱及其標誌性酒莊形象的權利。

憑藉哥普拉持續的熱忱加上一連串的緣份，Inglenook 莊園在納帕谷心臟地帶 Rutherford 重新累積實力，甚至擴展起來。Jancis Robinson 及 Hugh Johnson 曾在《世界葡萄酒圖集》中寫道：「Rutherford 是加州的 Pauillac。」這一區葡萄酒質量名副其實，特別是 Philippe Bascaules 的 6 年來的積極參與——他曾在 Margaux 莊園工作達 21 年之久。

哥普拉選擇了「Rubicon」這名稱作為他第一個商業葡萄酒的名稱。這是取名於著名的凱撒渡過 Rubicon 河的戰役，取其「破釜沈舟」之意；與他另一款酒的名字「Veni, vidi, vici」一樣，都充分表達了酒莊背後的故事。

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