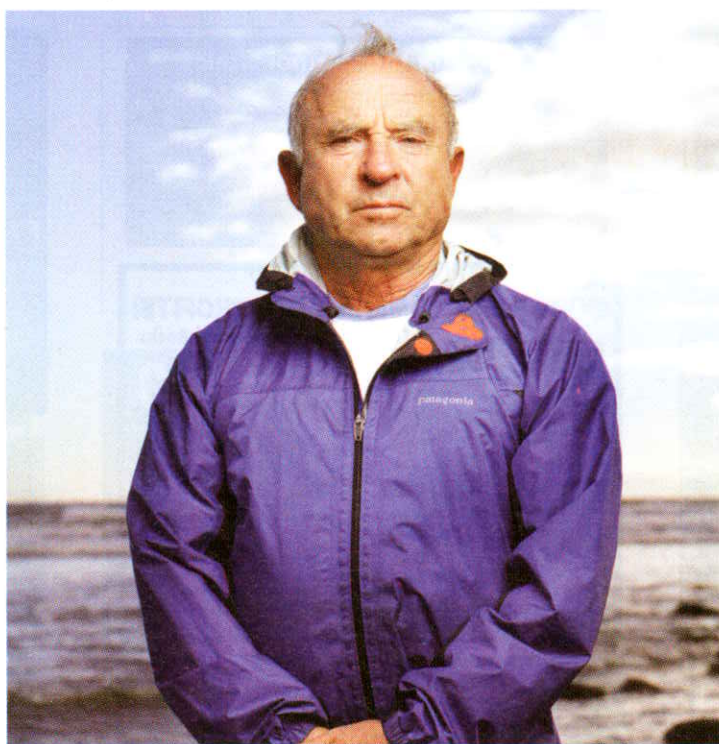


Yvon Chouinard

Yvon Chouinard, 70, is a world-class mountain climber, passionate surfer and committed environmentalist. He is also the founder of the \$275 million outdoor clothing and equipment company Patagonia. Since its inception in 1965 as Chouinard Equipment, Patagonia has championed the environmental movement and spurred other businesses to support environmental causes. In recent years, the company pioneered the production of fleece fiber from recycled soda bottles, and has set the goal that everything it makes will be recyclable by 2020. One of Chouinard's personal passions is wine, and his tastes have evolved over the years, along with his business philosophy. Now he's lending his support to a new effort by the Napa Valley Vintners aimed at greening the wine industry. Chouinard was interviewed by freelance writer Lynn Alley.



Wine Spectator: How did you first become interested in wine?

Yvon Chouinard: I was about 16 years old and living in Burbank, Calif. We were dirt poor, and there was an old Italian woman named Mamma Brusso who had a small vineyard in the Valley and who made her own wine. We'd take that gallon jug of wine, crawl under the fence at the local drive-in movie, sit in the grass and drink it.

WS: And how has your taste in wine evolved?

YC: My assistant now, Mike Dunne, was manager of a wine store, and he really knows his wine. We've been discovering wines together and slowly educating our palates. I travel a lot and so I've been getting exposed to lots of different wines—and now I know what I like and don't like. I try to eat locally, but I drink globally.

WS: And what do you like?

YC: What I really like is that funky, earthy flavor that you get from some Pinots and Burgundies. A lot of the great Bordeaux have that. But I've been able to find it in some \$30 to \$40 Spanish and Rhône wines. I love the Italian whites like Verdicchio and Vermentino, and I hate big, fat California whites. But the best Chardonnay I ever had was a Ridge Monte Bello. A friend brought 40 bottles on horseback into the Wind River Range in Wyoming. One of the

best reds I ever had was the Ridge Monte Bello Cabernet '86.

WS: You spoke at the Napa Valley Vintners' unveiling of their Green Winery program. What did you think of the program?

YC: I was blown away by what they're doing. They've realized that the federal and state governments aren't going to do anything, and that local governments and grassroots movements and businesses are where the changes are going to come from. They want to change the whole valley, starting with wineries, then moving to retail stores and restaurants. I've been at this for 30 years and this is the best, most well-thought-out program I've ever seen.

WS: What do you see as the motivation for businesses to jump on the environmental bandwagon?

YC: It's like David Brower [executive director of the Sierra Club] says: "There is no business to be done on a dead planet."

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