

JOSÉ FERRER—Founder of Gloria Ferrer

José Ferrer, in his late-eighties, is the President of Honor of the Freixenet Group and the Founder of Gloria Ferrer Caves & Vineyards in Sonoma's Carneros. The crest of the Ferrer family embellishes the gold ring he wears on his left hand. It's the first hint of the importance of family to José—its legacy and the continuity of a company created, developed and maintained as a family business.

Founding Gloria Ferrer Caves & Vineyards in 1982 allowed José to fulfill his father's longtime dream of expanding the family's tradition of exceptional sparkling winemaking to the New World and his own dream of making sparkling wines in Sonoma, California. Having successfully achieved this goal, his wisdom now guides his sons and other members of the family in their leadership roles in taking their company, into the next millennium. Today, the fifth generation of Ferrers are now involved in the Gloria Ferrer winery and Freixenet Group is among the top ten wine companies in the world and the world's largest producer of *méthode champenoise* sparkling wines, with 17 wineries in four continents.

Brilliant, charismatic, intuitive, with boundless energy and unshakeable conviction, at first glance José Ferrer seems like an affectionate grandfather. In conversations his business savvy and strong connection to the land becomes evident, a grape grower who can judge meteorological conditions and their consequences to his vines by briefly checking the sky. Indeed, he has lived his life firmly rooted in the land that gave birth to his ancestors – on his father's side, owners of a 12th-century farming estate devoted to grape cultivation, and on his mother's side, winemakers who were the first wine exporters to the former Spanish colonies in the Americas

From his father, Pedro Ferrer, he inherited the ambition to be number one, a bold business drive and a talent for promoting his wines. From his mother, Dolores Sala Ferrer, he inherited vast wine knowledge, which he expanded still further through personal studies, and the mystique of the family business: "la casa," where business life and family life have always been, and will always be, one and the same.

José joined the family business at the age of 22 and rose to the position of General Manager of Freixenet ten years later. Among his accomplishments was the creation of Cordon Negro, the sparkling wine in the black bottle, which has become one of the highest selling bottles of *méthode champenoise* wine and most iconic packages. In 1978, he was appointed Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Freixenet Group. During those years, his sons and the sons of his sisters were also joining the business as they grew to adulthood.

In 1956 he married Gloria Noguer, a fellow wine enthusiast who has always accompanied him on his travels and assisted him in his tireless endeavors to broaden the markets for his products. They first visited Sonoma in the 1970s, often coming during their vacations. Jose & Gloria loved the town, the people, the pace and the exciting food and wines of the area. But it was in 1982, when José and Gloria selected the western hills of Carneros, that they recognized the ideal climate for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay—and thus the perfect terroir for brilliant sparkling wines. Convinced, they purchased 250 acres from three cattle ranchers. José named the future winery after his wife and by 1984 the first Gloria

GLORIA FERRER

Ferrer sparkling wines were produced while the winery construction began. The now iconic Sonoma Carneros winery with its blend of Catalan and Mission architectural style opened in 1986 in a special inauguration event including Spanish opera singer Plácido Domingo and the Honorable Mr. Jordi Pujol, President of the Catalan Government. It was the first sparkling wine house built in Carneros.

José Ferrer's intent has always been to make world class sparkling wine following the *méthode champenoise*. He wanted the best Chardonnay and Pinot Noir he could find for the Gloria Ferrer estate and with his fervent support, the winemaking team spearheaded the first clonal research trial at Gloria Ferrer in partnership with U.C. Davis in 1987. It was the most definitive Pinot Noir clonal study done outside France. A second clonal trial was planted in 1992, comprised of 12 clones of Chardonnay and six clones of Pinot Noir from Champagne, France. The clones had never been planted in the U.S. and the team was intent on studying their performance in California's cool-climate Carneros. The Chardonnay trials were the first evaluation of Chardonnay clones for sparkling wine in the United States and the first viticultural performance data of a newly introduced group of clones imported from Champagne, France. The Pinot Noir trials produced the first performance report of the sparkling wine clones of French origin in California. The studies were unprecedented and changed the way wines were made in the region.

Having learned extensively about the estates soils and clones that yielded the best results there for sparkling and still wines, the winery introduced its first still bottlings in 1993. Also that year, the first cases of Gloria Ferrer wines were exported to Canada; then eventually to 25 countries in Asia, Europe and America.

Since the founding of Gloria Ferrer Caves and Vineyards, two of Jose and Gloria's sons have served as President at the winery. In 1999, José was named President of Honor, leaving the top executive posts of the Freixenet Group, including Gloria Ferrer, to his sons, Pedro and José Maria, and nephews, while the company continues to grow and maintain its policy of active involvement in the world's key winemaking regions. However, Ferrer's retirement does not mean inactivity. He still travels on behalf of the Group and continues to be the guiding force in its decisions, contributing valuable advice and counsel.

José Ferrer has been distinguished for his success by the King of Spain with the Golden Medal of Honor in Business, and praised by many of his peers, the owners of Spain's greatest companies. In part, as a result of his leadership and legacy, Gloria Ferrer Caves & Vineyards has been named "one of the world's most pivotal wineries" in the *Food & Wine Magazine Wine Guide* and gone on to secure more than 400 gold medals and 30 outstanding 90+ ratings in just the last five years. Most recently, the winery was named a "Top 100 Winery of the Year" by *Wine & Spirits* magazine.

In his personal life, he is a great promoter of the arts and culture, providing financial support through foundations dedicated to music and literature. He is also an adventurer, an ardent outdoorsman and horseback rider. At family events he is always surrounded by numerous family members and is appreciated by those who know him for his wicked sense of humor.