

Kristen Lee Sergeant is a jazz musician, sommelier, and she has a wine label with Grammy-winning saxophonist Ted Nash. Kyla Marshall meets the artist at Compagnie des Vins Surnaturels in Manhattan for a musically enhanced wine experience

TASTING BORDEAUX WITH DUKE ELLINGTON



MAZE ROW
WINE MERCHANT

IN WINE, WE FIND LIFE

In wine we seek truth, craft and the passion of discovery. In life, we seek to build a community connected by a love for wine and wine culture. We are Maze Row Wine Merchant. We inspire a culture of fine wine discovery, a life that talks of people and their sense of place, of truth, craft and endeavor. An enriching journey, encompassing heritage, terroir, culture and philosophy. Through our curation of wines, stories and immersive experiences, we share the best of life with the adventurers, the bon vivants, the passionate connoisseurs.



PIEROPAN
VIGNAIOLI DAL 1880

Pieropan ranks among Italy's greatest producers of white wines, bottling definitive expressions of Soave Classico.





Photography ©Jordan Frey

Singer and sommelier Kristen Lee Sergeant fell into her dual career paths quite by accident. The Massachusetts native grew up wanting to be an actor, and studied musical theatre in college, with dreams of landing on Broadway. But after moving to New York, she found her attention captured by a totally different art form — jazz. To support herself, she got a job serving wine at a restaurant. But what started as just a gig evolved into its own pathway, as she learned, on the job and later through official certification, the language of wine.

Now, some 15 years later, Sergeant is established as both a jazz singer, with two critically acclaimed albums, with a third on the way, and a sommelier. Her latter turn includes creating a wine label, “Two Notes,” with partner and Grammy-winning saxophonist Ted Nash.

The ability to pair her two passions was too sweet an opportunity to pass up, and so in 2021, she launched “Jazz & Juice” — a blog and podcast where she explores the commonalities between a great bottle of wine and a jazz album.

“I like to start conceptually. For example, tension is a word that’s usually used with white wine that refers to acidity. But there’s an interesting idea there about how tension carries you through an experience of wine or music,” Sergeant says of pairing Eric Dolphy’s ballad “Something Sweet, Something Tender” with Immich Batterieberg’s “Escheberg” Riesling 2019.

To illustrate a wine’s structure, she made the connection between Duke Ellington and a Bordeaux. “I was able to really hone in on the mineralic quality of a Château Mancèdre Pessac Leognan Bordeaux 2015 with a highly structured, but still very much alive and exciting version of Ellington’s ‘Ad Lib on Nippon’ from Far East Suite,” she says. “Both pieces evoke a place without actually having the place in it. With Ellington, you don’t have any instruments from the Far East in the work but you hear the place. Same with the wine. There may not be the actual rocks in the wine, but you taste them.”

Other topics have included restraint, spontaneity and wildness — big ideas that Sergeant breaks down with insight and a masterful level of detail. “I get to be more granular than I could

in a restaurant. I’m having fun geeking out.”

But, she says exploring each artform required courage. “My brain was always so filled with all the things that I didn’t know. What if somebody asks me if this producer uses organic fertilizer?” She says, “Among people who are interested in jazz and wine, there is this concurrent sense of guilt that we don’t know more. I’m realizing that my curiosity is the gift.”

In her music career, that curiosity has included exploring songwriting, another thing she’d never planned to do. Her new album features eight original compositions.

Creating her own wine has allowed yet another opportunity to stretch her imagination. “Two Notes” has released three vintages so far, in 2014, 2015 and 2017, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc.

“Making wine, not just talking about it and selling it, is like stepping through the looking glasses in both worlds as a creator and an interpreter,” she says.

“Everything that I’ve experienced [in life] I’m using now, and I’m much more creative than I thought I was.”





With organic practices and principled winemaking, winemaker Barbara Widmer at Brancaia is crafting some of Tuscany's boldest wines.





hello@mazerow.com
1-888-222-3380
Facebook Instagram @mazerowwines