



## GDS Special: Ian Cauble

### *Transcript*

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Familiar with Ian Cauble, besides being one of my best friends, an amazing tennis player back at Sonoma State, he won multiple awards for a sommelier. (...) Best young sommelier in the world. You won it in Athens in 2011. There were 17 countries there. You also won best sommelier in America in 2011 as well. In that famous documentary, "SOM,"

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you along three of your buddies starred in it. And man, I just would love to get in your mind a little bit and talk about wine today and also learn not just the wine part, but the business part, because you're a business owner, you're an entrepreneur, and you've had successes and different milestones you've hit. And I'd love to dive into that, man. I'm ready, yeah. Do you want to just kick us off with what made you get into wine? Because I know in college you were always kind of a foodie and you'd cook good meals. I mean, I think the first time in my life I ate halibut was with you. You went to a safe way and you bought some and you grilled it up for your roommates. But you're always into that. Yeah, you know, it all started kind of-- I was making money on the side, doing teaching tennis and things in college and then other entrepreneurial activities. And I was just always really into going to the market after tennis. I mean, we would train for what, three, four hours a day, and you'd be hungry. And there's nothing better than shopping for great ingredients and going home and cooking for your friends. So I was watching Food Network a lot, and I just remember watching Bobby Flay, watching all these people, and I would come home and I'd have some, you know, unexpected test subjects like my tennis friends, and I would just cook whatever, and they'd be like, "That was great. "Dude, jambalaya, ribeye's, (...) bacon-wrapped fillet "with baked potatoes." And just simple stuff and started

learning about that. And then when I turned 21, I could buy wine, and I started buying, you know, \$10 bottles of Bogle, Petite, Syrah, (...) other somewhat, you know, entry-level things that I just found to be delicious. And then a lot of friends of mine worked in, you know, catering and things in different Napa events, and so I get a chance to taste these \$50 to \$100 bottles of Napa Cabernets, and I was like, "God, this is just delicious." And I realized that some of my favorite moments of life were just involved in food and wine and being around people and talking and-- And the experience of it, yeah. Music, just, you know, I think all the things that all of us want to do, (...) you know, if you have money and you're not working, you know, going to a restaurant, traveling, you know, eating and drinking, it's kind of the best parts of life. I know at Sonoma State, I'm going off memory, because, you know, we've known each other for 20 years, and you're one of those friends that we don't see each other as much as I think we'd both like to see each other, but when we see each other, it's like old times. 26 years, actually. It's been a while.

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That we've known each other. (...) But didn't you get an international business or was it a wine-- I studied international business with a minor in Spanish, but I did like a basically wine business combination degree. I did a lot of like marketing and wine business classes and international classes. So the Wine Business Institute kind of claims me as being a wine business institute graduate, but it was kind of a-- I was a melting pot of different focuses, which was good for me because, you know, studying international business forced you to do a minor in a language. If I understand correctly. (...) But yeah, the minor in Spanish was good because I've used that a lot traveling the world. I had that international business with the emphasis in management. So I think we're on the same-- Very similar, yeah.

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But what-- talk to us about the journey from the beginning when you first started. You talked about doing it for fun, but when did it start to get serious for you? Geez, I'll start from like after college, I went to Portugal, and I got a job for \$2.00 an hour working at the oldest port house in Portugal.

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That was interesting, and, you know, Spanish doesn't go very far in Portugal because the languages written are kind of similar. Portuguese, you know, from Brazil versus Portuguese from Portugal in the valleys, like-- Completely different. It sounds like somebody speaking Russian to you, literally. It does not sound like this really romantic, like Brazilian version. It's a very hard and fast-- so I was, you know, people were yelling at you what to do and what not to do in Portuguese, and I would respond back in Spanish because they could understand Spanish, but then they'd yell back, and I didn't know anything. So, you know, I spent three months there.

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Yeah, 15 hours a day, two euros an hour, which was like three bucks an hour at that time, which was pretty good money. I'm just kidding.

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And then I took off to Madrid, played tennis with these, you know, clay-core kids, and taught tennis kind of perfected my Spanish a little bit because even if you study in America until you actually go live in a Spanish-speaking community for a long time, you don't really, you know, round it out. And then I took off to North Africa, spent a few months there, and then ended up in Austria where I went broke, and I spent all my money skiing, really, really good powder one season, and then I got a job--(...) long story short, I ended up in Monaco, got a job in London, saved up some money, moved to India, and then I got back really, truly broke this time, and no money, and I borrowed 100 bucks from my dad to get a suit and walked into the wine merchant of Beverly Hills and got a job making money-- I remember that. Barely, barely making my bills. And then I just started going to work every day and, you know, learned how to properly open a bottle of wine for guests and learned about what a sommelier was and started, you know, tasting wines that were thousands of dollars a bottle. And I was, you know, making probably \$3,000 a month, so, like, I was opening up wines that were more than a month of my salary. And you would smell them and taste them, and it would be, like, truly moving, like the amazing experience that some of these wines, you know, gave you, like, great Bordeaux, great Burgundy, northern Rhone-Syrah.(...) All these wines are some of the greatest experiences, like, on your senses. And so every time I would taste these wines, I wanted to go home and, you know, study how they were made, where they came from, what made them so special.(...) And when people came to the wine shop, they would ask me questions I didn't know. They would be like, "What's the difference between this village in Burgundy, say, Pommard versus Vosne-Romanée versus Gevrey-Chambertin?" Because there's, like, dozens of villages all made from Pinot Noir that have different soils, different exposures. And within each village, there's hundreds of different vineyards and maybe 20 different producers, and all of them taste different. And so how do you know, and how can you explain that to people? It's like being somebody who works in the Louvre or something like that, and somebody says, "Hey, tell me about this painting by Rembrandt." And you don't know. You know, it doesn't make you feel very good. You'd, like, rather be able to-- Yeah, you want to be the expert. You want to be the expert. And so that was kind of like-- that was my kind of-- at the end of the day, I just wanted to know the answers and help people enjoy wine. And so, I started studying books and learned about the Court of Master Sommeliers and started just training and moved to Vegas after my first few wine jobs in Orange County, moved to Vegas because the highest concentration of Master Sommeliers in the world lived there. And if, you know, if you want to-- Trying to grab shoulders and learn from them-- If you want to learn to levitate, you know, you go hang out with Yoda, right? So, you know, if you want to become a Jedi, you better hang out with one or else it's not going to happen. So, I befriended a bunch of top Sommeliers in Vegas and, you know, they all try to help, you know, so they would help you what to study. And I started tasting wines back to the early 1800s, late 1800s, all these crazy wines that are on the Vegas wine list that people with gambling budgets, they can buy whatever they want because the casino just comps it. So,

people would come in and spend \$20,000, \$30,000 on a five-top. (...) And here was Ian, like, 26 years old, helping them pick out their wine. And guess what? I got to taste a little bit of everything. So, they might be doing, you know, a 10-course tasting menu and pick out 10 bottles. You got to make sure it's legit, right? Yeah, I would just make sure it was okay to drink, you know. So as being a Sommelier, you pour yourself like a half ounce and you taste it and you catalog, you know, eventually, you know, tasting 10,000 wines. You catalog each producer, each vineyard, what years they're made, and you start to remember what they taste like. And that's really when you become a great Sommelier, is when you can go to a wine list that's this thick and you've--you can--you might not have tasted the 1963, but you've tasted the 61 and the 59 and you can kind of make a guess, okay, 63 wasn't as good of a vintage, and you know these kind of talking points. So, you can, you know, walk people through and try to make a good bet with their money because if you have \$50 to spend on a bottle of wine or \$1,500, you can still have a great experience. You just, you know, you have to--it's all relevant-- it's all relative, sorry. So, you know, you're going from Beverly Hills to Vegas and then let's fast forward and then I remember in 2011,

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I believe it was 2011, you came over to my house because you were studying for the Master Sommelier here and it was here locally at the Four Seasons, I think, in Nर्वin. So, you stay at the house, and you didn't know yet if you were going to pass, right, because you're studying. I remember in our kitchen counter, we had like 40 bottles of pretty high-end wine that you and another buddy of ours deal in where you guys are tasting, spitting it out. I remember my son Lucas, who was probably four at the time, he's got his milk bottle, he's tasting, spitting it out, trying to be like you guys. That's crazy. That was 2012, so I'll walk you through it. So I was in Vegas, left Vegas, went to the Ritz Carlton Half Moon Bay. I was the wine director there. And then in 2009, I took the advanced exam. The advanced exam is about-- I'll just go through the introductory exam, pretty easy to pass. I could train you to pass it in three or four months. It's three parts, right? It's four parts. So, the introductory is pretty much-- it's pretty straightforward. You could study for three or four months, and you can go in there, and it's a written exam. And then that's about a 60% to 80% pass rate, depending on the test, sometimes as low as 50%, depending on the difficulty of the test. And then you have the certified exam. The certified exam was historically 50% to 60%. It's as low as 20% to 30%. And at that point, you do a blind taste, and you do a written exam. And you do a service exam; you have to open up champagne. And then from there, the people that pass the certified, you can go to the advanced exam. The advanced exam is very, very hard. And that's, I believe, around 15% to 20% of those people that pass certified pass the advanced. And then once you pass the advanced, you can get invited to the master exam. And the master exam is somewhere around 3% to 8% pass rate of these people that have passed it. Of the elite ones already. Yeah. And so there's not many people who have passed the advanced in the world. I think there's less than 2,000, maybe 3,000 people in the world who passed the advanced. Of those people, they're invited to go to the master exam.

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But in 2009, 2008, I took the advanced exam. I failed, was super crushed. And I just, like, with a vengeance, you know, went nuts, and I studied everything. And I came back, and I got the Red Scholar. So the Red Scholars, you know, the top score, they gave you a \$5,000 check, which I probably had \$300 in my bank account. So, all of a sudden, my net worth just went crazy. Should have called you to invest that back then, or better off. It vetted 2000, yes, 2009. I took that. About four months later, Fred Dame called me. He was the head of the court, and he was like, "Hey, we'd like to invite you to the master exam in three weeks," because a few people dropped out. And I was like, "No, I don't want to go to the master exam. I need, like, two years to study." And he was like, "If you don't come, I'll never forgive you." I was like, "I'll see you in three weeks." So I showed up. Where was that at? That was at the Meadowood and Napa Valley. Okay.

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So I showed up really expecting nothing. It was kind of like being invited to the Super Bowl to play against the best team. And if you scored a couple touchdowns, great. So I passed one out of the three parts. There's tasting and then service and then the knowledge portion. Which one did you pass? So I passed the service, which is one of the more nerve-wracking, because you have to carry a tray, and you're just shaking, because there's all these master sommeliers in the room, and you literally-- They're judging you the whole time. Yeah, and they ask you questions that are extremely hard about old vintages of this and that. So I went in with nothing to lose. Nothing to lose. And I almost passed all three parts. I was like, "You have to get--" They told me, like, it was very close on tasting and very close on theory. And I knew I was close on theory, because I didn't miss too many questions, but you have to get 75%. And so, good news is, I went in, and I did really well on two parts, and I passed one. So, 2011, that's when the movie released-- got some documentary. You guys all see it.

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And you'll see-- Which I enjoyed that movie, by the way. It was fun, not just because I got a couple of my friends in it, but I love seeing jobs or industries that are super, super tough, and just seeing people-- Like, you could see you guys. Like, you're just beating yourself in, working your tail off to learn all these things, right? You know, I was-- Yeah, yeah. And yeah, the craziest part is, you know, right before, in 2010, I was on a hike, and I got bit by a tick, so I didn't realize that I was sick with Lyme disease the whole time. So, like, you'll see me, like, kind of, like, not at my best, but I was, like, trying to pass the heart exam in the world with one of, like, the more difficult things Lyme disease to deal with in life, but that's a whole side note. Which you're good now, though, right? Yeah, feeling good now. So, yeah, but that was, like, if you see the movie, and, like, I don't look like I'm doing my best, I was having a challenging time in numerous ways. So, 2011, they start filming. They're in your face, and they're, you know-- Obviously, they edit the movie down to be very stressful. It wasn't as stressful as that. It just a couple-- The way they edited was very good. Jason Wise is a very talented--

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Producer. Yeah, producer-director. And then, so, 2011, two of my best friends passed that I was training with, and I was taking my tasting exam, and right before the end of the test, instead of calling one Brunello and Barolo, I called Barolo and Brunello, and they don't tell you the answers, but, you know, it turned out the people that passed called those Brunello-Barolo. I switched it. I had it correct. So, in your mind, it was correct, and you switched it? No, it was-- I had, like, technically five out of six correct. Okay. And I was retasting five and six, because I'd given two Italian wines supposedly for the first time in the history, and so, right before the timer went, I was like, "No, number five is Barolo, number six is Brunello," or whatever it was. I switched them, and I, like, changed my answers right at the end of the test. But it was a blessing in disguise, because I failed. I was completely devastated, and that's, like, the middle of the movie. You know, spoiler alert, is I failed the test, and my two buddies, they got through, and so it was kind of hard. But then I had a year to study tasting, so we became a really good blind taster. You know, sometimes I'm good, sometimes I'm not, but most of the time I can recognize the wines, and, you know, don't practice too much anymore, because I don't, you know, there's no, you know, there's no real test coming up. I just have to kind of, I just have to, you know, if you're at the bar and somebody gives you a glass of wine, hopefully you get it right, because everyone likes to do that.

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But, yeah, so I finally ended up passing the test in 2012. Again, like, 2011, right after I failed the test, I went and did really well at those competitions in Athens and won top Psalms, so that was really cool for my confidence. And then I studied and studied and trained, and I went and passed and stayed with you. That was 2012.(...) I think it was your birthday, too. Just tell them my wife made you a cake.(...) I remember, yeah, I was so stressed out. I don't really remember too much during that time, honestly. It was kind of like, I don't know, it was like being at war somehow. Like, it was just like PTSD, I was so in my mind, and it was, there was so much pressure, because I had already seen the movie Psalm,

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and the end of the movie was like Ian takes the test in four months, and that was like the first version, and I was like, Jesus, the end of this movie is potentially my failure.(...) And I was like,(...) and the test is like, no, but it's like,(...) my odds of passing are probably 10 to 20%, but I was, I think, I gave myself probably 60% past, you know, because most times I would, most times, you know, you're training, and I was passing most tests. If people give me six wines, I would mostly, most of the time pass, but, you know, when it's first and 10, and there's three seconds left in the game, sometimes your arm will stiffen up, you know, and you just throw the bottle in the, the football on the ground, like, what did I do? It's hard to perform when everything's on the line. So luckily, I pulled it off and passed the test, and then I got a job for Crude Champagne, and I was the national ambassador for Crude Champagne, one of the best champagnes in the world, and then, you know, the rest is history. I know in a little bit we're

going to do a blind tasting, and I got some questions I want to ask you, but before I do that, what's something that you, maybe you wish you would have known, right, as you're becoming a master sommelier, that if you could have told yourself something, or would you, is there something that you would have said maybe to make it, I don't know, if easier is the right word, or you wish you would have known, or you just know because you like to struggle? No, I would just, I would have told myself that it's going to be as hard as you think it is. You know, there's no shortcut in life. No, you want to do something-- No, you want to come save it. Well, you know, there's been 275 people that have passed the test since 1970, right, so it's like, you know, if you want to be an astronaut, you know, more likelihood to get in space than pass that test, right, so I think there's been over 500 people in space. But not to say that I think anybody could become a master sommelier, but you have to, you have to really want it, and you have to truly-- Sacrifice. You have to love and adore wine, first of all, and then you just have to be ready to study, and it's like the hard-- You have to memorize every square inch of the world of wine, and you have to love every moment of it, and you'll get sick of it and be over it, and then you have to come back, and you know, the hard part is, I think, dealing with defeat

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and dealing with, you know, working your hardest and not being good enough, that's, you know, that's always tough to swallow.

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But yeah, I have friends who have taken the test for 10 years, 12 years, and never passed, and it's hard in the ego, you know, every time you don't pass something, especially when you work really hard, but anybody I know who really dedicated themselves has become a master sommelier that I know, like really, truly, and never stopped. There's not a person that I know who really put 100% of their life in that didn't pass. The only people I know who didn't pass are the people who stopped and gave up, because it's, frankly, it's really challenging on the ego. There's no question.

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So let's ask some questions that I'm sure you've been asked a billion times, but there's a lot of people like me that maybe enjoy wine, but I'm not, you know, I know one-tenth of 1% of what you know, and I just know what I like and what I don't like. But talk to us a little bit about when somebody says, "Oh, this wine has good legs or tears." What does that mean? Okay, so legs and tears don't matter. They look good, you know, it's like, oh, slow-moving tears. Look at the legs on that, like that wine. It really means how much alcohol or sugar is in the wine. So if you, you know, I'll talk about it when we blind-taste these wines, but if you swirl a glass of wine, and it's a big, rich, dense napa cabernet, and it's \$400 at the steakhouse, those wines are typically close to about 15% alcohol, sometimes even more, and you'll swirl the glass, and the legs come down very slow.

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Imagine if you had, or so they come down because of alcohol, right, very slow, or because of sugar. So, if you have a very sweet wine that can be low in alcohol, it'll come down slowly. Just like if you have a port. Yeah, port is high in alcohol, 20% and high in sugar. Port has 110 grams per liter of sugar. Most red wine has close to zero. Some of the, some of it will have three or four grams per liter (...) because Americans like sugar, and if you leave a little sugar in the red wine, sometimes the critics will go to a little higher score.

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But most wines are dry, meaning less than one gram per liter.

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At the end of the day, the only reason the legs come down slow is high alcohol or high sugar, (...) and it doesn't really mean anything about quality unless you like high alcohol wines. If you see the legs, come down slow, there's a chance that you'll like it, you know? When you're with people who think they're wine experts, and is there like something that you say when you roll your eyes, when they, they're tasting a wine, and it's like an overused phrase, or you're like, this guy doesn't know what he's talking about. No, it's more like when they take their glass of wine and look up towards the sky with it, like to see the color, you know that. Because they're not tilting it? You know, a wine pro is going to tilt it away from themselves, looking down on it, right? So, if you go like this, that's a dead giveaway, so I shouldn't do that. But if you do that at home, like, don't worry about it. (...) It's all good. But you'll be judging them if you see them. No, I will judge them, for sure. I'm just kidding.

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And is there anything, has there been a time when somebody's tasting a wine, and they're like explaining it, and they're being so dramatic, and then you taste it, and you're like, like, this guy's palates insane. It's nowhere near like that. (...) You know, not really. (...) I think most people I'm tasting with are less inclined. They're more sophisticated than regular folks. No, they're nervous to say too much, you know, like-- So they don't expose themselves. They can't be wrong, because they don't-- Yeah, I mean, but there's not really that situation. But, you know, most people who are talking a lot really know what they're talking about. But, you know, I don't know, unless you find somebody like the guy from Sideways or something, you know, like that character. But mostly everybody's not that far off. I think it's always funny when somebody will pick up a glass of red wine and be like, oh, I smell whatever, something like apple, which is never really in red wine. It can be on occasion. (...) But yeah, it's just throwing out some weird descriptors that, like, and what do you think? Does that-- and I like you have to politely say, like, oh, I'm not smelling that as well. Yeah. What about--(...) have you ever been shocked when you tasted a wine by what it actually was? I mean, besides the example you gave the Barilla. Totally. Yeah, a lot of times. Sometimes Pinot Noir and Burgundy from a warm vintage that's

extracted a lot can be, you know, on occasion purple. But Pinot Noir typically is a thin-skinned grape that has more of a ruby color. So, on occasion, you might taste a very hot vintage in Burgundy that is dark purple. I was at a blind tasting in front of 60 people, and I was, like, with a few Masters of Wines, and we all tasted this wine, and all of us were calling Syrah because it's purple, and the wine came out as Pinot. And it was, like-- but it wasn't a classic expression of Pinot Noir. It's like somebody gave you a plate of food, and they're like, okay, what restaurant is it from? And you're-- and it has a bunch of soy sauce in it, so you call it from Asia. And they're like, oh, that's the local Mexican restaurant. You'd be like, that's not really typical, right? Yeah. And it's the same thing. If you're giving somebody a blind tasting, it has to be a typical expression of place. (...) And typicity is really important. Like, for a wine to be accepted to be put into a Master's Soul May exam, it has to be chosen by the Master's Soul Mays, and it has to be blind tasted by numerous masters and gotten correct before they put it into-- If you're not trying to trick somebody, basically. Yeah, and you want something to be, you know, a classic expression. You know what I mean? Like, if I play you a Beatles song, you know, it's from a genre, right? Or something from the 80s. Like, if you were like, what genre is this from? Coldplay. Right, 100%. And you could kind of like say what style it is. But I think, you know, if I played some Romanian garage punk band for you that you've never heard, you would have no idea what that was. Is there a funny, tasty note that you've used? I know one that sometimes people will give you a hard time for is the-- your fresh cut garden hose. Or the tennis balls. Or, yeah, the fresh old can of tennis balls. Yeah, I learned those from other people. You know, they're not my descriptors. I mean, there's a lot of funny descriptors in the world. Like, some people would be like, oh, it smells like my grandma's closet. Or it smells like the garage I grew up in. That's not good, though. No, but sometimes-- If you told me it smelled like your grandma's closet, I don't think I would want to drink it. Yeah, no, it's just a little bit of a musty smell. Or like some people say it smells like an old book. Right, so if you smell a wine that's like-- say it's the 1952 Bordeaux. Some of these wines have very old smells, like going into an old library. It smells like dried plum. It smells like leather and tobacco and cedar. And so, there's these smells that you really can't describe unless you have this memory, right? And you have a memory, like, you know, every time you open a can of tennis balls, you probably open it and do you smell it? Sure, of course. Of course, because you're a freak tennis player. Yeah, everybody does. But like, it's just a weird thing to do. But you have these kind of mere captians or aromatic compounds that come off of wine, especially Riesling from Clare Valley in South Australia, or sometimes Riesling that's made in Tank in Germany and Austria, (...) and bottled under screw cap. You pour them and it's off gassing. There's something called reduction. It's like the wine's starving for oxygen. And there's like these chemical reactions happening. And you put your nose in the glass, and it can smell a little bit like-- (...) like you ever bought a new mattress, and you open up in your house, and you got that kind of plasticky smells. Or if you get like a fresh hose and you pull it out-- I've never done that. Yeah, so like a new hose and plastic and you open it up. This fresh plastic smell, a fresh tennis ball can-- like a lot of these smells, they're just-- They're unique. They're unique to these aromatic compounds that are reminiscent of these memories in your life, right? So at the end of the day, this-- how I came up with the tennis ball thing, the week before that scene, I was at the French Laundry, a three-star Michelin restaurant, one of the best restaurants in the world. And I was blind-tasting six wines with the guys, right?

There's like four guys on the Somme team. I go through it and I did really well. One of the wines was a dry wine from--

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it was actually from Clare Valley, Australia, and I thought it was from Germany, from the Rheingau. And they're like, "Ian, smell the glass again. Don't you smell this fresh tennis ball character, aren't you a tennis player?" I'm like, "Yeah." I'm like, "You're right. Totally does." And then so like-- So like French Laundry guys are the ones who coined it. But I go to the Rn74 the next week and I'm blind tasting with cameras in our face for the first time, and I picked up wine too, and I was like, "This is it." And so I like made a conscious decision to say it. Fresh Canada's balls. Well, I knew-- I knew if that was seen, it would be like-- Yeah, play into the camera. Whatever. But I wasn't-- I wasn't technically--

(...)

I would have said that at the test, too. I wasn't necessarily playing for the camera, but I knew saying it. And if this was seen by the world, people would be like, "Fresh Canada tennis balls." And it turned out to be one of the more famous or infamous-- whatever, however you look at it-- descriptions. Well, I think even a garden hose is probably a little bit more even. Yeah, the garden hose. That was my friend Willie in Vegas. He would always tell me that Claire Valera is reasoning, reminded him of a fresh-cut hose. Like if you ever like redoing a hose or something, you need to smell that kind of cut rubber. And that was his descriptor, so I just-- I'm just a product of my environment. And everybody is, you know what I mean? If you're-- No, I get it. No matter who you are, you're learning from your environment, absorbing-- We do the same thing with investing, right? I mean, I always tell my kids, "Smart people learn from others. Average people learn from themselves." Making mistakes. And dumb people never learn. So absolutely, I applaud learning from others. It's a shortcut. Model other people's-- If somebody else is making a bet on a good stock in there, say historically-- If it makes sense. Really good. Like Pelosi, you know? Follows what she's doing.

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Are you from California?

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What about-- When people talk about wine, they talk about maybe it being balanced. I mean, is wine tasting, do you think it's more like a science or is it psychological?

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Wine tasting in general, I think there's a science to it, right? Yeah, you have to learn. You have to have a good sense of smell to start. And you have to analyze color. Color will tell you a lot

about the wine. If it's darker yellow, has more exposure to oxygen. If it's greener, it comes from a cool climate. Probably from stainless steel. So, you're thinking about all these things, how fast the tears go down. There's almost like a scientific process to it. But there's also something that you can't define with a scientific measurement. Like you couldn't put a stick or measure that this is from Burgundy, or this is from Australia or this is from Germany, right? I don't know if organoleptic would be the right way, but you have to really use your senses and your taste memory to do it. So, I think it's a combination. There's definitely a deduction, like a very proper way of deducing a wine. Just like if you said, "Okay, this guy's 6'8", blonde hair has a sharp jaw, what country he's from?" You're probably a Russian guy. I don't know. Scandinavian. Or something like that. You would generally know something like that. I think blind tasting is describing almost the personality of a wine,

(...)

is given on different characteristics. How much oak it has, what type of oak, the types of fruit, if the fruits are just freshly picked, or if they smell like they've been sitting in the sun for five days in a cup in Vegas, right? Like they're raisins. They smell like raisins. But if you just got a fresh strawberry from the farmer's market that's beautiful and red and you squeeze it and you smell that fresh strawberry versus strawberry fruit roll-up versus dried strawberry versus a strawberry jolly rancher, right, versus strawberry cake, these are all different smells, right? And they all can be found in different wines. And I think that's the unique thing about wine is there's thousands of different smells. Combos. But yeah, only 100 or so, probably aromas really matter. But it's an interesting profession. But yeah, there's a lot to learn. I'm still learning. What do you think about in terms of-- When I think wine, I think in terms of the grape. I think in terms of the producer maybe and in the soil. (...) That's the extent of how I think about it because I don't know much. But what do you think about it when you think of those? (...) I'm usually thinking about the region at first. So, I think some of the best regions to drink in the world are Burgundy. Grapes are Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The Rhone, typically, red grapes are Grenache and Syrah. I love Germany. There's classic for Riesling. I love Austria for Gruner-Weliner.

(...)

Oregon, Pinot Noir, again, if I didn't say that. Napa Valley for Cabernet.

(...)

Australia makes great Pinot Noir from Victoria. (...) I would say Chile is great for Carménère. Argentina for Malbec. (...) But I think of the place. The place for me is the most important. That's the terroir. And so if you look at a specific place, there's a geological history. Burgundy existed underneath a shallow ocean for 180 million years. What happens on the bottom of the ocean? You have sea life. It lives. It dies. It compresses. And every year, you have a little bit more clams and oysters and lobsters and crabs that are all compressing, creating limestone. Over 180 million years, those compressed, you can buy it and put it in the floor of your house as a limestone flooring. But sometimes people plant vineyards that tap into it. And those limestone

soils, because of this geological history, express really unique characters. That's why Burgundy is so special is this geological history. Same thing happened in Italy. All this area used to be underneath the shallow ocean. Tectonic plates came together pushing up the Apennine Mountains. And you have these mountains that these beautiful areas kind of come across.

(...)

But I think that's the most interesting thing about wine. It's the place and the geological history. Yeah. Is, you know, here we are 100 plus million years later, enjoying these wines that were first, a lot of them were planted by the Romans a few thousand years ago. And so we're living in a time where there's, you know, we can really taste anything in the world here in America. We have access. I could go down to the street and pretty much find 100 or 200 great wines from 200 great Appalachians in the world, including Eastern Europe, including all the Appalachians of South America, North America, Canada. Sure. And I know some are hard to get. I know after we do the wine tasting here, the blind tasting we're going to do, you're going to talk a little bit about what you've been up to on the new business. And I know that's been awesome because as somebody who knows very little about wine, but enjoys it, I love getting information on these specific wines out. Virtually nobody else in the world has them but you. So yeah, we'll talk about the Kabbalists. I launched a couple of months ago, but maybe after we blind taste. But at the end of the day, you know, we send an email and we talk about the people, the place, the history and make it interesting. So, if you're spending \$50 in a bottle of wine or 20 or 200, (...) I think it's one thing to just drink a wine and it's one thing to understand it and learn about it and appreciate it. And I think that's the difference of even going to the Louvre. If you saw the Mona Lisa and you didn't know the history of it, you know, you'd be like, oh, that's just a painting. But knowing the history of the artist and, you know, when you understand more behind it, it means more to drink something special. (...) And, you know, but, you know, (...) it's different. Like, you know, you can drive a Ferrari and it's amazing. You can't really know about it. But wine is one of those things that it's amazing, but it's even better. And it's more, I think, for people who are visual, you know, people who are just intelligent, like people who would care about history.

(...)

Some type of people who are just like, OK, it's a glass of wine, just like you're taking a bite up tasting a bite of bread or something. They don't really care that much. But I think the more you live, the more interested you are to understand why and who and the stories behind it. You know, last night at dinner, actually, if you don't mind sharing, you were telling me during dinner about this place. You pronounced it. I came in repeated, but it was somewhere in Greece that the grapes, right, because it's so windy or tell me it's on a cliff that that it somehow has like a bird's nest around it. Do you want to share that story? I thought that was pretty cool. I've never heard of that. So, there's an island called Santorini. If you haven't been highly recommended save however much money you have to go to Santorini one day and get a hotel on the cliff, drink a Circe Cose, the grape.

(...)

It's a volcano that used to be a very tall volcano that exploded. (...) And it was the eruption was about 100 times or more size of Mount St. Helens, which is one of the biggest explosions ever. The actual wave cost caused the extinction of the Phoenician people living along the coast of where modern day, you know, where Israel is all the way down to Egypt. It wiped out anybody living a few miles from the sea because it's a thousand-foot type tidal wave, basically. What's left is this huge kind of crater that they have a Circe Cose planet. So, there's these grapes that are planted in black volcanic rock, right? And the actual vines are kind of circular trained in a method called Stefana. So, the grapes can grow inside and protect from the wind. And so, these grapes, (...) all the water they get is basically from the mist at night. And so, the grapes collect the mist, and it drops a little bit onto the soil. But the soil has zero water in it because it's a volcano. You know, if you go down anywhere, you know, pretty much in America, you find groundwater eventually, but not in volcanoes because volcanoes came from magma underneath and there's no water there. So, it's a very unique wine. And the grape is called a Circe Cose. (...) One producer to look for is called Sigalas. And that can be found a lot in America. It's around \$50 retail. And it's amazing with like roast lamb, feta cheese, you know, cucumber, pita, what's the Ziki and yogurt sauce.

(...)

It's hungry. Greek food is some of the best in the world. I mean, that makes me think about what you're talking about. If you know the history of it, I will imagine it kind of makes that wine even more enjoyable. You know, the sacrifice. Well, there's no question. I mean, if you, I just give, if somebody just gives you a glass of wine at the bar and whatever you're having a, you know, a little piece of halibut with capers or something, and you would just drink this wine. But if I showed you photos of where it is and it's on these cliffs and these old baskets and these, these old men like harvesting them in the middle of the day and it just brings more, I don't know, it brings more romance to it. It just brings more interesting to life. I mean, life, you know, you just want to, how is, how is the life? Exactly. How does it, how does life become more interesting? And I think wine is a very complex subject and it's pretty thought provoking. And it's pretty thought provoking for me. And I think I would be not bored if I wasn't in wine, but it's definitely more exciting for me to look forward to traveling to these areas and meeting these families and, you know, like I kind of want to go to like Eastern Europe next and go to like Bulgaria and Romania and Georgia and all these areas down there. I was in Bosnia-Herzegovina last year with the family in Croatia. That was pretty cool. So, you know, yeah, popping into Bosnia for a wine tasting. I never thought I'd do that.

(...)

But yeah, I want to go down to Bolivia and Argentina next as well. It's like New Zealand. I mean, there's a lot of places that, you know, you want to check these boxes. And a part of going there is meeting these families and these people who are dedicating their life to growing the grapevine. And you get to taste their life's work. Yeah. And they're usually cooking something

great. And they're usually really nice people. So, you get to travel the world and experience it through.

(...)

Their eyes. Yeah. And just, you know. With motivation to learn and taste wine. And you drink a couple glasses with some new people. You become friends pretty quickly. Absolutely. Yeah. (...) Awesome. Well, we're going to take a break here. We're going to bring out the four wines. We're going to compare two and two. And I'm curious-- There's a lot on the line today. See you dissect. I know. We can revoke any of those titles you have. I may become a new-- Are you going to still-- You're going to send back the money. I have invested with GDS.(...) No, we won't

tasting, although we're not gonna force you to put the blindfold on.

(...)

I know you said that's not a thing anymore, right? No, it never was a thing though. Was it? No, blind tasting is basically, you just don't know what the wine is. I know, I'm kidding. Yeah, yeah. All right, so we have two wines, which I'm not going to tell you anything about them, unless you force me. I don't want you to do your game here, or not game, that's not the right word. Your expertise and educate me and all the viewers. We got two wines that are comparable and then the following two wines. So, I'm going to copy your lead. I think you said put it up in the sky, right? Or no, I'm kidding. Yeah, you don't want to do that. So, you're going to tilt it away from yourself and you're basically looking at the color. So, this is like, put your thumb behind it. You can kind of see this is see-through, kind of moderately clear. It's kind of a very dark ruby moving to slight pink. On the rim showing you, the wine is somewhat in its youth probably two to four years of age. And then you can look at the tiers. I won't go through all of the wines like this, but.

(...)

Is this where I'll see the legs that you're talking about? Yeah, so if you swirl the glass, if you kind of hold it up,

(...)

you can kind of see the last tiers are moving somewhat slowly. (...) But it all depends on the glass and the temperature of the wine. So, it's not necessarily like always the best tool to tell you what the wine is.

(...)

Nick, I can smell the wine. Smells a little bit grapey, smells young. Doesn't smell super complex.

(...)

You know about old world and new world at this point? I mean, it smells very clean. It smells like has a lot of young fruit to it. It could be old world with like stainless steel. It could be new world. It's not really jumping out as being very, very high quality, very expensive, smells like moderate quality.

(...)

Let's go and smell it, I'm going to go ahead and taste it.

(...)

Very juicy, a lot of fruit, a little bit of minerality.

(...)

Depending on where this came from, could be a very ripe Bordeaux or it could be a really ripe with not much oak. Kind of finishes almost like a moderate quality Bordeaux. It's a little bit earthy. It could also be from California

(...)

without not going into too much detail. But-- Do you think this is meant to be enjoyed young?  
(...) Yeah, I think this one is meant to be enjoyed young. Yeah, it doesn't come across. Like if it is Bordeaux, could be like, doesn't think, I don't think it's a classified growth. I think it's probably something more like a Bordeaux Superior or something like that. Okay. But yeah, it just has this cherry,

(...)

slight raspberry, fruity kind of characteristic. So, I think, I don't know if it would be super classic for Bordeaux or it could just be a moderate quality Napa Valley wine.

(...)

Not a serious cake. No, but it's nothing bad with it.

(...)

I'm going to tell you what it is or do we do both of them? Yeah, let's try the next one too.

(...)

And then obviously one is higher, I don't need to be telling you this, but one is significantly higher cost, even though that doesn't necessarily mean quality, as you've told me.

(...)

This wine is significantly denser.

(...)

Feels more expensive, a lot more color. A little bit of raisinated fruit, feel like it's almost a slight kind of sun baked characteristic to it. Like that plum, like that ripe plum, slightly dried, little bit of dried blackberry.

(...)

More oak smells like some expensive oak, so it smells like somebody bought some thousand-dollar French barrels.

(...)

So, you think it's the wine making that's really making it?

(...)

As opposed to like the vineyard or both?

(...)

Probably the vineyard as well.

(...)

High quality, I mean they both remind me of Bordeaux grape varieties.

(...)

This reminds me of a less expensive, I'm guessing,

(...)

20ish dollar Bordeaux. (...) And this reminds me something that's probably more like a hundred-dollar napa cab maybe, could be somewhere between 75 and 200.

(...)

But yeah, lower acid, this doesn't have much acidity, this wine is probably higher scoring, which I'm not personally a huge fan of high scoring napa cabernet, I feel like they're lacking acidity.

(...)

And a little bit too much oak sometimes it's like,

(...)

having a cocktail that doesn't have enough citrus in it or something like that. I usually like a little bit more acidity. But yeah, the wines are both very good. This wine definitely, wine two has a more higher end appeal, it reminds me of like sitting in a steakhouse drinking some expensive napa cabernet.

(...)

Well, the first one is, you're right on in terms of cost. The first one is significantly cheaper. (...) I think we got it for under 10 bucks slightly. Makes sense.

(...)

Nobles vine, 337 cabernet, seven yard, I've never heard of that. And it's California or?

(...)

Yes, yes, it is. So, this is just cheap California. So yeah, (...) it came across like it could be a cheap Bordeaux or cheap California. And it's hard to tell at a certain point, because they're just young and fruity wines. So, there's like a wine like this wouldn't necessarily make the master exam, but it made sense. I wasn't so sure if it was like a low dye cabernet, sure. (...) But a lot of these wines can, in Bordeaux these days, it's really hot in Bordeaux now. It's not like the same climate it used to be. So, you can get a wine that's eight to 12, \$15 from America. And it's a Bordeaux Superior, and they're very fruity like this. And they're made in stainless steel by an Australian winemaker, because and they like make the wine making really clean. And it can taste a lot like a California wine, but yeah, wine like this, it's tough. It does taste like inexpensive, (...) good serviceable cabernet.

Awesome, let's bring the bottles out. So, the second bottle or glass of wine we tried, Ian, was a Miesi Napa Reserve Cab, so when you hear from 2023.

(...)

Cool, so number one and number two. So inexpensive California, expensive California, cool.

(...)

Great, yeah, it makes sense. 2022 was like 114 degrees in the valley floor and that's why it has that sun baked character I was just talking about(...) and it reminded me a lot of 2022, which is an anomaly in vintages because it was literally like Las Vegas in the valley floor. The grapes were resonated. So, if you smell wine too again, you'll see this very sun baked, almost raisin, like prune almost quality. And that's just what 2022 is like.

(...)

I think that's pretty good. (...) Awesome. Most people would say that.

(...)

You ready to do the next number three and four and compare them? Yeah. So, three and four, (...) much, much lighter.

(...)

I will say this is one of my favorite grapes.

(...)

Has a color very reminiscent of, you know, (...) more grape varieties like Sangiovese or Nebbiolo, Pinot Noir, Tempranillo. These are very more thin skin varieties.

(...)

Yeah, this is a little bit more delicate rose petal.

(...)

That's kind of a muted nose.

(...)

Not really showing too much, but.

(...)

Very quiet rose petal, wild herbs, mountainous kind of.

(...)

How do you tell the difference in between like a simple and elegant like runnies? You know, it's just very quiet, not really showing so much. Like if I, you know, like I could talk about this and I could point out like 12 seconds. Like this wine, you smell it, I have like three things to say, so it's not very complex.

(...)

Guessing not very expensive, but it's probably good wine. Let's go ahead and taste it.

(...)

Very good on the palate, showing a lot more coming out.

(...)

These tart kinds of red fruits, a little bit of red currant,

(...)

cranberry,(...) tart strawberry, like under ripe, like those green kind of strawberries that like, when you get a box of strawberries, you have the ripe ones and you have the ones that are more green, kind of that kind of strawberry stem, if you would imagine that. Sure, sure.

(...)

A little flower stem, that little green kind of thread through, there's high acid, yeah.

(...)

High tannin, so it's very gripping. So, if you chew it with me,

(...)

You have to eat something with this, right?

(...)

High tannin, high acid, very gripping. This is likely either Sangiovese from Tuscany, but it's more gripping and higher acid than that, like Nebbiolo from Piedmont, likely a lesser expensive, like Nebbiolo da Alba or something like that,(...) there's different appellations, you have Longa Nebbiolo, Longa Nebbiolo da Alba, you have Barolo, you have Barbaresco, and then you have other appellations that are more north of there like Alto Piedmont.(...) But this reminds me of like a basic young Nebbiolo coming from Piedmont,

(...)

most likely Langhe Nebbiolo and Nebbiolo d'Alba most likely on the label.

(...)

Young Vintage, probably 23, I'm guessing.

(...)

You nailed it. (...) Not Vintage, we'll bring it out in a second, I'm not sure on a Vintage, but it's Parducci Monferrado, DC, it's a Nebbiolo. Yeah, Nebbiolo, it's probably Nebbiolo d'Alba, so it's Monferrado is a hill right next to Barolo, right next to Barbaresco, and it's Nebbiolo, there's Barbera del Monferrato, but it's right there, it's in Piedmont, Nebbiolo, so it's good probably, I don't know, I'm guessing 20-ish dollars a bottle? Yeah, yeah, right on that range. Wine four.

(...)

Wine four.

(...)

Same color, (...) has a lot of light ruby crimson, kind of like garnet red core, moving to an orange meniscus.

(...)

Classic.

(...)

Has a Nebbiolo nose, but I feel like this producer uses a little bit of oak, which is not typical for Nebbiolo, (...) but some people in Barolo and Barbaresco use new French oak. I'm not so big of a fan with putting makeup on a beautiful one. Does it need it? Yeah, Nebbiolo in general, and neutral girl. New girl. Yeah, but a lot of people like new oak, so it is what it is. Let's go ahead and taste it.

(...)

It's good, really good wine, higher end, (...) likely Barolo, bigger, richer, denser. (...) Probably has some age to it, I'm guessing 19 through 21. Has some color, has some color that degradation, so could even be 18 or 17, but I would probably guess

(...)

18 Barolo would be a good guess, or 19 Barolo. I don't really see it being much older than that, although it could be.

(...)

You know, it kind of doesn't have as much fruit. I'll go 18 Barolo, (...) Nebbiolo, I call it. It's a Barolo, so let's bring them out.

(...)

It seems like it's built to age, right?

(...)

Yeah, I think it's probably getting close to a good time to drink it, though. I think you can have this over the next five to seven years.

So, we got three and four. So, this is Nebbiolo, so this is, yeah, Nebbiolo 2022. Yeah, young, perfect.

(...)

And it's, yeah, it's technically Monferrato, Nebbiolo, so it's great, right in that wheelhouse. And then we have 2020, (...) John Franco Alessandra from Montferrat to Alba, yeah, Barolo 2020.

(...)

And yeah, solid. Pretty good one. Yeah, definitely needs food.

(...)

It's good, though. Well, thanks for doing the blind tasting with us. Before we wrap up, I would love to hear on a couple fronts. One is you have the, (...) I know you have the Cobb list, which you'll dive in, but before you do that, you're also kind of making your own wine, right? Yeah, yeah, I have a label called Method, so it's a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley. It's a black label, it's beautiful. Has roots and gold on the front.

(...)

Got some pretty great reviews from a lot of top people. The 2023 just got released. And then we have a white label, California. That's a Napa Valley-appellated wine. It's called the Black Label Method. And then we have a white label, California-appilated method that retails for about \$15. And that's just got wine of the year from Wine Enthusiasts. So, under \$20 value of the year,

which is pretty cool. And you can find that, that's more like \$15 retail. And it's really, really high quality for the price. I know California can get it in Costco sometimes, right? You can find it all around the country in Costco, depending, you can find it online. You can find it also; the black label's available on my website. On your website. Which website is that? The Cobb list. So, the Cobb list we launched two months ago. We have an online store, that black label that I'm talking about. It's one of the great values of the wine world. And it's \$29 on my website. Normally retails for about 35.

(...)

But yeah, the Cobb list we launched two months ago. And it's basically, you sign up for free at [thecobblist.com](http://thecobblist.com). So, my last name is Cauble C-A-U-B-L-E. And it's I-S-T at the end. It's not Cobb-list, it's Caubleist. And yeah, we have about 100 wines in the store. All that are great values, 25 to about \$100 a bottle. And they're all small production, mostly organically farmed. And every wine you buy comes with a recipe. And we talk about the people, the place, the history, why I love it, the soils, how it's made, and food and wine pairings. So, every day if you sign up, you'll get a new email. And about 10 a.m. Pacific. (...) And yeah, it's usually wines that'll, you know, you might get a 2014 Barolo. You might get a 2023 Assir Tico from Santorini, like the bird's nest we talked about.

(...)

But it's all really good price equality. So, we always say that, you know, we kiss the frogs, so you don't have to. Like, and we find wines that, you know, are better than their price points. So, you don't have to go to a wine store and guess, you know. We tell you what horse to bet on in middle win 99% of the time. What's cool too is like we talked about earlier, it's not just the wine, but I like seeing the little email from you explaining what they are. And then I read that before I drink and it just reminds me of all the effort(...) from these businesses and this part of the world that went into that wine. That's the most interesting part. Like of course, drinking this delicious wine is one thing, but understanding why it tastes the way it does, I think it's very important. And I think it brings light to just the experience. You know, just like if you're at a steak house and they come explain like, oh, this cow, you know, was free range out of Spain and it's only coming in in small amounts, and you taste it. You're like, it just adds to the experience, I think. And, you know, anything you can do to kind of elevate the experience in life is worth it.

(...) so Ian, if somebody wants to get in touch with the caubleist to learn more about you and what's going on in your world in terms of those wines, where should they go? So yeah, you can go to the [caubleist.com](http://caubleist.com) right at the top of the page, it says sign up. You put your email in and the next morning you'll start to get contact from us. And yeah, hopefully, you know, you'll enjoy the wines that we sell. And wrapped up, last question I have for you. If somebody's taken away one thing from this conversation we've had today about wine, what do you hope that is?

You know that you should care what you drink. You should care what you put in your body and how it was grown. Ideally, you're drinking wines that are farmed without chemical influences and organically farmed, and you have to trust where you're buying your wine. I think that's the

(Upbeat Music)

(...)

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