



JORIAN HILL

WINE SPECTATOR

20th Century Fox's Gary Newman TV executive wrote the script for his dream vineyard

"As chairman of 20th Century Fox Television, Gary Newman oversees some of the most buzzworthy TV shows on the air, including *The Simpsons*, *24*, *Glee*, *Modern Family* and *How I Met Your Mother*. But on the weekends, Newman and his wife of 30 years, Jeanne, an entertainment attorney, retreat to the Santa Ynez Valley, where they produce Rhône-style wines for their family label, Jorian Hill (named for their three children—Jordan, Reed and Hillary). The Los Angeles-born executive, who has been at Fox since 1990, recently spoke with *Wine Spectator* about how he wound up in wine country, master of a menagerie that includes four sheep, two goats and 20 chickens.

Wine Spectator: When did you first start learning about wine?

Gary Newman: I used to go to a wine store in West Hollywood called Du Vin Wine & Spirits. The fellow who owns it would always tell me that you don't need to buy expensive wine to taste something interesting. We'd spend \$8 to \$12 a bottle. And slowly I began to understand what I liked—mostly big, full-bodied red wines.

WS: So how did the Newmans end up owning a winery?

GN: In 2005, we were up in Santa Ynez after *Sideways* was released. We loved the way the land looked in the movie and thought about buying real estate there. Almost every weekend, my wife, our youngest and I would drive up, see three properties, have lunch, drive back. We must've looked at 30, 40 places but couldn't find anything we liked. Finally, we heard about a place on the west side of the valley. We went and drove through this beautiful entry, turned past this terraced hill laden with grapes. We were sold immediately.

WS: Did you ever intend to produce wine?

GN: Well, the owners said it was a turnkey operation, but nothing could've been further from the truth. We hired a consultant and began to learn the wine business. One of the first things we did was get rid of the Sangiovese and put in Grenache. We've since grafted more Viognier and added some Mourvèdre. But it took years to feel as if we'd wrapped our arms around the business.

WS: Has your experience in the TV industry come in handy in the wine business?

GN: I've learned that everything starts with hiring the right people, then trusting them, being available for them when they need your help, but not forcing yourself on them, because you want people to experience the excitement of making their own choices. I'm pretty good at that at Fox. So we ended up with two fantastic winemakers, Mark Horvath and [Kenneth] Joey Gummere, who have their own wine, Kenneth Crawford. And Jeff Newton oversees the farming.

WS: How much time do you spend in Santa Ynez now?

GN: Two, three weekends a month. We'll picnic, drink wine, play bocce ball, take naps. It's about simple pleasures. When friends visit, they slow down. Even when our 24-year-old twins come with their friends—who are used to texting and Tweeting—they collect eggs from the chicken coop and pick strawberries in the organic garden.

WS: When you're not drinking your own Jorian Hill wine, what wines do you prefer?

GN: We're very loyal to our Central Coast area. We love what Greg Brewer does at Brewer-Clifton, Melville and Diatom. We enjoy Jonata, Rusack, Stolpman and Larner wines, our neighbors in Ballard Canyon. We also drink Cabernets from Napa—Colgin, Araujo, Shafer. And we like both oaked and unoaked Chardonnays—Kistler, Peter Michael, DuMol.

WS: Where do you store all this wine?

GN: Before our property was a vineyard, it was an ostrich farm, and there were three small basement rooms that served as the birds' birthing area. We built a beautiful wine cellar [there], with Spanish tile floors, that holds about 3,000 bottles. What I've discovered is that there aren't enough days in life to drink wines you don't really enjoy. So we've improved the quality of what we drink—even if it's the two of us having a salad for dinner."

-Mark Morrison
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