

# L.A. Lepiane

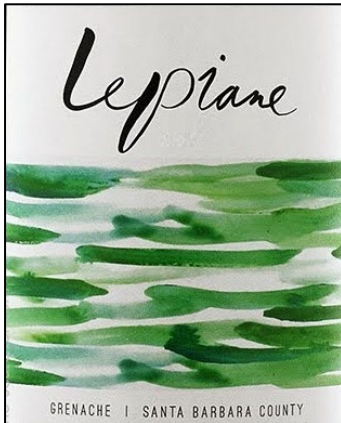
## Santa Barbara

(California sales only)



*Her Nebbiolo is an example of compelling perfumed perfection.*

--Clare Tooley, MW, Decanter Magazine, April 2022



In 1917 Luigi A. Lepiane (*Le-pi-annie*) migrated from Calabria, the toe of Italy, and ended up settling east of Monterey Bay. There he opened a grocery store and butcher shop. In 1935, following the repeal of Prohibition, he added a winery to the mix to make wine under the label of L.A. Lepiane. Unfortunately, he only got a couple of vintages under his belt before his health took a bad turn and the winery closed.

Fast-forward three generations: his granddaughter, Alison Thomson, attends UC Santa Barbara, where she majors in plant science with a minor in Italian, and studies a year abroad in Siena. This opened her eyes to food and wine. Post college, when horticulture doesn't do it for her, she enrolls at UC Davis for...viticulture (rather than the more typical path of enology, but the degree required courses in winemaking).

While at Davis, she worked a harvest at the Ettore Germano domain in Barolo. It was a transformative experience, giving her a deep appreciation for Italian varietals. After Davis, she took a job with Manfred Krankl at Sine Qua Non, and then actively sought a position with Steve Clifton at the Palmina winery. He was one of the rare breed in California who specialized in making Italian varietals. After three years as his assistant winemaker, she took a job with Chad Melville at Samsara. It was Chad who gave her the confidence to make her own wine and to let the grapes speak rather than the winemaker, without yeast or acid or other additions and without heavy extractions.

So it's come to be that three generations later, the L.A. Lepiane label has been resurrected. Alison's first release was a 2013 Nebbiolo, more than four years after being made (after all, a proper Nebbiolo requires extensive aging!). Darrell Corti, who knows as much about wine and its history in California as anyone, wrote in his 2017 holiday newsletter:

*The Lepiane Nebbiolo 2013 is to my mind the most expressive and best varietally typical nebbiolo wine I have tasted in California. It has the proper deep red, not black color; a fragrant aroma, of berries and tar, typical of nebbiolo with the violet character called “goudron” so seldom found in this varietal. There is the austere character typical of nebbiolo that is even now beginning to soften and show its harmonious side. L.A. Lepiane was the name of Alison’s great grandfather, also a California winemaker. This wine is a wonderful remembrance. If this 2013 wine is an example, Alison Thomson will go far in winemaking in California.*

These days Alison bottles a little over 300 cases of wine under her great-grandfather’s name. They include a Barbera and two Nebbiolos, along with a blended wine and a Grenache. Her day job is co-winemaker and director of operations at Two Wolves, where she works with Alecia Moore (a.k.a., the pop star Pink). She’s an avid surfer and is raising two kids.

About the label design, *Lepiane* translates as *the plain*. It’s a small metaphoric step to have the translation refer to the ocean as well—another horizontal surface and one quite close in proximity to Alison’s home. These interpretations inform her label.

About Alison’s terroirs, she’s sourcing from the coolest AVA in California, and it is that because of a pair of coastal ranges that are perpendicular rather than parallel with the coast, making for especially pronounced diurnal shifts. Check out this map courtesy of Wakawaka Wine Reviews (<https://wakawakawinereviews.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/SB-Wine-Country.jpg>) to learn more.