

## JENNIFER AYRE

### *Jazzed About Wines*

Jennifer Ayre has many titles: She is **Founder and President of Savvy Cellar Wines** ([www.savvycellar.com](http://www.savvycellar.com)). She is a Certified Specialist of Wine and a Certified Sommelier as designated by the Master Court of Sommeliers. She is also Savvy Cellar's CBW, or Chief Bottle Washer. And finally, she is a jazz singer. These many titles hint at a personality that is entrepreneurial, academic, passionate, humorous and soulful...the ideal blend for running a business that combines the mysteries of wine drinking with the practical concerns of good scores, high quality and solid bargains.

A California native, Ayre grew up in Walnut Creek and attended San Francisco State University. Upon graduation, she became a high school music teacher. After eight years she parlayed the patience and creativity honed at this job and switched industries, first, working financial services, and then in marketing for a technology firm. In 2003 opportunity came in the form of a lay-off and Ayre decided to take some time and approach her next professional step from the points of view of business and passion.

She had always found wines intriguing, so decided to learn more. Beginning with wine classes offered by the Northwest Wine Academy in Seattle and the International Sommelier Guild that focused on wine technology, history, wine making, and wines of Europe, she then continued her education to some of the more challenging levels of the profession. Today, only three years later, as a relative newcomer to the wine business Ayre holds the above-mentioned distinctions of Certified Sommelier and Certified Specialist of Wine.

The more Ayre studied, the more she learned how vast the industry was in terms of advances in winemaking, grape growing, and in the development of formerly obscure wine regions. The wine possibilities seemed endless. A year into her studies, she began scouting out locations for a business venture that would allow her to apply her budding knowledge of wine and her proven skills as marketer, teacher and entertainer. Redwood City, on the peninsula south of San Francisco, held an appeal as a burgeoning, sophisticated community, and Ayre saw an opportunity to infuse some fun into the area by way of a great wine bar. She took the best aspects of a wine bar, namely tasting and education, and added them to the kind of wine shop she would like to visit, offering selections at the intersection of high quality and good pricing, and thus Savvy Cellar Wines opened in December of 2005.

Ayre marshaled an eclectic assortment of wines that spans a breadth of varietals and regions. She then edited this down to about 200 of labels to make selection easy. The Savvy Cellars concept is to sell wines rated at 90 points or higher by the leading wine publications, yet priced at \$40 or lower. The wine bar aspect allows customers to sample many wines by the glass prior to purchase. With a nod to her roots as a teacher, Ayre places great importance on Savvy Cellars' educational component. She offers regular wine classes, creatively organized tasting flights, and currently has three additional Certified Sommeliers on staff to ensure that expert advice and teaching are abundant.

Several evenings a month, Ayre returns to her love of music, performing jazz standards by the grand piano and proving that sometimes the best match for a great wine is simply some intoxicating music.

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