

# E. & J. GALLO'S WOMEN BEHIND THE WINE CAMPAIGN CELEBRATES AND EMPOWERS WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY

story by Michelle Ball / photos by Jeremy Ball

**I**n the past decade, there's been an evident shift in the historically male-dominated wine industry as more women take on leading roles. Yet we still have a long way to go; the push toward gender equality is an ongoing effort, and many female power players are working hard to advocate for one another and to promote the next generation of women in wine.

To further these endeavors, the 12 recipients of the 2019 SommCon Young Leaders Scholarship—presented by *The Tasting Panel* and sister publication *The SOMM Journal* in coordination with SommCon San Diego—joined female leads from E. & J. Gallo's Wine Dialogues platform last November for an unforgettable evening at Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse. The evening began with introductions and toasts as attendees sipped on flutes of J Vineyards & Winery Cuvée 20 Brut NV, a zesty Russian River Valley sparkler made by winemaker Nicole Hitchcock with refined bubbles and crisp green-apple notes; a roundtable-style setup was intended to promote discussion as each of the guests revealed personal truths that led to their seat at the table.

"All of you as scholarship winners are pioneers, because you're paving the way for someone else," said Brenae Royal, Vineyard Manager for E. & J. Gallo's Monte Rosso Vineyard, who took note that 11 of the 12 recipients were women. As one of the faces behind Wine Dialogues' Women Behind the Wine campaign, Royal said, "I'm so proud to be a part of this campaign, which allows us to give back and to inspire others." Launched last spring, it aims to celebrate female leaders at E. & J. Gallo while supporting aspiring professionals through scholarships; it has



As the recipient of a Fuel Your Dreams grant from Women Behind the Wine in partnership with Women of the Vine & Spirits, Meghan Vergara expressed her thoughts on the evening: "I think the strongest power of all this is our ability to connect and to talk in a real fashion about what we face and how to overcome it together."

"I think it's important as women to support each other and to also support the younger generations coming up."

—Natalie Henderson, Principal, Corporate Public Relations, E. & J. Gallo