

Jay, Nora, Andrew, and
Carolyn Fitzgerald at
their home in Santa
Barbara, California.

The Grapes of Math

*A Barrington couple moves to
the West Coast to raise their
family and a new boutique
wine company*



Each Trippers & Askers wine bottle tells a story beyond its contents with a name derived from poems and literature. The accompanying labels are from Andrew Fitzgerald's travel photos. The wax seal, or capsule, matches the wine label.

LET'S SAY you are a young Midwestern couple who decides to move to Santa Barbara, after a few Chicago polar vortexes too many, to raise your family and put down some roots. What are the odds that you will also create and produce a new brand of wine?

Ninety percent of all American wine is produced in California. About one-third of those wineries are family-owned. The state has a population of 38.9 million and 2,843 registered wineries. Those are unlikely odds, yet for Carolyn and Andrew Fitzgerald, both Barrington High School and Northwestern University graduates, this is the exciting new chapter in their lives.

A Future Partnership

In Santa Barbara, Carolyn says they found a very welcoming community and an outdoor paradise—where a mountain hike and dip in the ocean could be on the same day. The former marketing and advertising executive puts her skills to work with the family business, nonprofit development roles, and supporting her children's schools, in addition to being mom to Jay and Nora. "We make sure, though, to return to Barrington to see family and keep our Midwestern values strong," Carolyn said.

Andrew, who holds a bachelor's degree from Northwestern, also completed his JD and MBA degrees there. He still works full time for an investment banking firm. His curiosity fuels a passion for literature and art. "He is a beautiful artist with many paintings in our home," Carolyn said. "He loves photography and was always taking photos in high school and when traveling. Now, some of his fascinating photos become our wine labels."



Trippers & Askers founding partners Andrew Fitzgerald and Hayden Felice.



Carolyn Fitzgerald at a Sta. Rita Hills vineyard in Santa Barbara County.

Andrew Fitzgerald and Hayden Felice, the founders of *Trippers & Askers*, met through their wives, Carolyn and Lucy (Firestone) who became friends through their children's schools. Hayden hails from the East Coast and holds a degree in English Literature from Amherst College. His career includes having worked in the restaurant world out East, with an expertise in management and wine, then ending up in Los Angeles a few years ago. The pandemic caused him to rethink his future as his work hours were late, and then his restaurant closed for the time. He also had young children. "We connected through our kids, and a mutual love of wine and music," Carolyn said of the two couples.

Hayden, who is friends with a local vintner in downtown Santa Barbara, Dave Potter of Potek Winery, learned that he had some extra production capacity. Thinking about buying some grapes to make wine, he approached Andrew with the idea of working together. "Hayden and I bonded over enjoying the same style of wine," Andrew said. "We both prefer lower alcohol, leaner, lighter, and more delicate wines—so we talked about making our own brand of wine."

Poetic License

The collaboration between friends invoked a playful approach to the entire project of naming the business, choosing the business model, and landing on an artful approach to presentation. The two future vintners read poetry for a full year before listing hundreds of possible names for the business, using phrases from poems and literature.



The ideal time to gather grapes is at night. The team begins to sort the grapes.

"They found 'Trippers & Askers,' which is a phrase from a Walt Whitman poem, and tested it with friends," Carolyn said. "About half the people liked it, and the other half, not so much." With that, she said, they might be on to something memorable. The name is appropriate as *Trippers* encapsulates the journey that would unfold for Andrew and Hayden. *Askers* denotes a person who is seeking answers and opinions about truth and culture. "Hayden and I started out without ever having made wine, so it's a new journey with an incredibly steep learning curve, and we have to ask a lot of questions," Andrew said.


Lean, Light, and Lovely

Trippers & Askers' business model is ideal for a start-up. The team does not need to own land or shares in one of the 4,600 vineyards in the state. Rather, they contract to buy rows of a desired produce each season, which runs from late August into October.

Andrew and Hayden might get a call at 3 a.m. to head to Sta. Rita Hills where they put on headlamps and get to work sorting the grapes for quality. "The grapes we purchase are all organic," Andrew says. Each vineyard includes several different microclimates and terroir from which they blend their cuvées. Their wines are lower in alcohol and showcase a lighter, more European style. Andrew notes that their wines hold up well on their own, and with food pairings.

Trippers & Askers doesn't maintain a tasting room yet, but rather markets through generous sponsorships with nonprofit organizations, where guests become familiar with their offerings. An upcoming welcome party for the parents of their son's school, Laguna Blanca, will feature a 100-person plated dinner at their home. They create community at home and for their wine enthusiasts.

The Elements of Making Wine

"Wine making is art, science, history, geology, and marketing—and so much manual labor," Carolyn said. "It's a product made by hand." For these Barrington wine makers, it all adds up to a great start. 



Andrew Fitzgerald and Hayden Felice hand sort for the highest quality grapes.



Carolyn and Andrew hosted a wine tasting for Quintessential Barrington at their home.

Wine Club and Custom Labels

Trippers & Askers offers three wine clubs: Trippers Club, Askers Club, and Linguists Club. Members choose 4, 2, or 1 customizable case per year, respectively.

Custom labels for weddings and other special events are available with advance notice.

To learn more, visit trippersandaskers.com, or email info@trippersandaskers.com.



Anywhere from 2 to 6 tons of grapes are picked at harvest time.

Trippers & Askers

COMPENDIUM

Nº 8

LENIENT THERAPIST

2022 Rosé of Pinot Noir

The 2022 Rosé is all Block 6 Pinot Noir [Clone 115 on SO4 rootstock], which was picked August 26th. These are the same grapes from which we produce our Donnachadh Vineyard Pinot Noir; however, we harvested the grapes for Rosé about 1.5-2 weeks sooner, when the brix and pH were lower and result in a lighter and brighter wine ideal for all those "Rosé All Day" parties, which have become quite the *bon ton* amongst genteel society.

Upon delivery to the winery, the grapes went directly to press and the juice was moved to 5-year-old, neutral T5 French barriques made from Tronçais oak and air dried for 5 years. The lees were gently stirred a few times during primary fermentation, and the wine was sulfured shortly after primary fermentation in order to inhibit full malolactic fermentation. It spent 5.5 months in the neutral oak to round out the mouthfeel.

The resulting wine is a lightweight, savory, and mineral Rosé with a delicate cherry fruit character and a hint of pinot spice on the dry finish. It can be drunk on its own, in or out of the pool, for refreshment, but is also suitable for the table, especially sushi.

Organic Pinot Noir Grapes	Corkscrew directly through wax
Donnachadh Vineyard	Serving Temp: 52°F
Sta. Rita Hills AVA	Pair with sushi, the pool, charcuterie
Santa Barbara County	11.3% abv

Each wine has a Compendium with an Anthology listing all current Trippers & Askers vintages on the back.