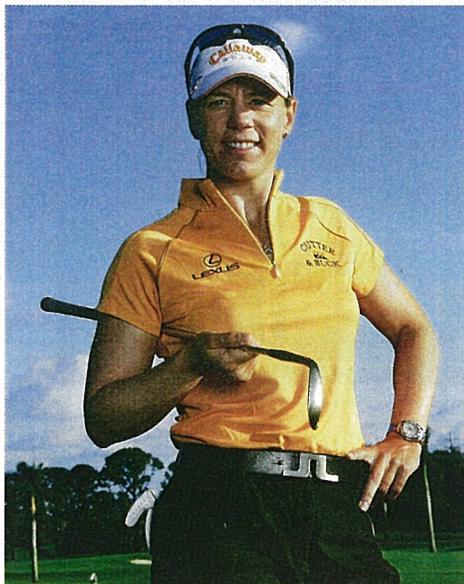


Annika Sorenstam

Annika Sorenstam, 38, shocked the golf world when she announced her retirement from competitive play last year. Highlights from the Sweden-born golfer's 15-year career include 72 LPGA tour wins, shooting a round of 59 in competition and being the first woman since 1945 to play in a men's PGA tour event. But just because she's left the tour doesn't mean she's slowing down. Sorenstam recently got married, opened her own golf academy in central Florida, and partnered with California's historic Wente Vineyards on a self-titled wine. Sorenstam spoke with *Wine Spectator* assistant editor Jennifer Fiedler.



Wine Spectator: How did you get into drinking wine?

Annika Sorenstam: I've never been a drinker really—being a professional athlete, it wasn't really part of something I did. But then I started to acquire a taste for wine. The stories that go with each bottle—I just think it's so neat that [it] isn't just a drink. Everything has a story, a connection. I love it now. I read about it, I study it.

WS: You spent time in a professional kitchen. What was that like?

AS: Yes, I worked in a kitchen a few years ago, in my off-season, at the Lake Nona County Club [in Orlando, Fla.]. I worked eight hours a day for six weeks. It was hard! I wanted to try everything. I worked with the pastry chef. I did salads. I learned how to roll sushi. I did sauté. I worked with a new chef every day to learn everything.

WS: Do you do your own wine pairings at home?

AS: I try! I'm a beginner when it comes to pairing wine and food. I'm hoping that it will come with experience. If we have friends over, we'll just open a bottle that I like.

WS: What do you usually serve?

AS: I'd go with a good value for a weekday, like Rombauer, [which] is unbelievable for the price, or Beringer. And then I'd probably splurge [for the weekend]. L'Ecole No. 41 is something I like. Kathryn Hall has some nice ones, and Duckhorn.

WS: How did your new wine project come about?

AS: We were up in California, Livermore Valley, where we connected with the Wente family. They have a golf course on the property. We talked about a partnership and it was a perfect fit. [Our] wine is 75 percent Syrah and 25 percent Cab. It's fun to be part of a project and feel not just that it's got my name, but that it's got my approval and my work behind it.

WS: Do you collect wine?

AS: I probably have 750 bottles. Over 50 percent are from California and I have quite a few from Chile and Argentina. I like Malbecs quite a bit. I'll go on the Internet and see what people say, kind of check out the ratings. I've always been a numbers person so the ratings are fun for me.

WS: What's the best bottle you've ever been given?

AS: We just received a Heitz Martha's Vineyard. That was a wedding gift. I'm almost afraid to open it, but I guess that's how you enjoy it. For now, I've put it in a special place.

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