

Death is a Cabernet, Ol' Chum



It was an evening of wine and cheese at the Melee Vineyards in the Nippy Valley, celebrating the winery's tenth anniversary. Owner Malcolm Melee took great pride in pouring his world-famous Melee Cabernet, the wine that tickles the palates of wine connoisseurs around the globe. Over the past decade, his small operation has built a record of supplying a quality product, even though Melee's surly personality has produced more adversaries than advocates.

The celebration was open to the public and the assemblage included both his supporters and detractors, some of whom openly expressed their opinions about his business practices. Melee simply laughed off all negative words, even dismissing the notion that someone was determined to end his reign as cabernet king.

As the gathering broke up about midnight, Melee bade "farewell" to everyone and said he would stay around to turn out the lights. But this morning, it became deadly obvious that someone had planned lights out for Malcolm Melee, for his body was found at the bottom of the staircase that leads to the oak casks in the wine cellar. Someone had put the cork on Melee and taken action that would squeeze the winery's reputation.

The Suspects . . .

Pierre LaPaine

Winemaster. His proven process for making the perfect cabernet was under scrutiny by the penny-pinching Malcolm.

Renee Melee

Malcolm's only child. She returned to the Valley last year to help her father run the winery. Everyone knew that Malcolm and Renee didn't see vine to vine.

Stan Milton

Owner of the Milt-Mart Stores. The land on which the winery is located would be a perfect spot for his next mega-sized discount establishment.

Nina Grigio

Writer for *Wine Line* magazine. Her discriminating palate can make or break a new vintage.

Carter Cabot

Owner of Cabot Vineyards. He suspected that Malcolm was using unfair tactics to capture the lion's share of the cabernet marketplace.

Sue Veneer

Gift shop manager. She sells bottles of Melee Cabernet and assorted trinkets to winery visitors.

Ben Breakfast

Innkeeper. His B&B, the Nippy Victorian House, is the most popular inn in the Valley. And, a bottle of cabernet is a welcoming gift for all guests.

Leelah Eagle

Attorney at law. She hates to lose and lately, for some unknown reason, she's been spending a lot of time researching information about the winery.