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Undiluted PERFECTION

HOW MERUS
WINEMAKER MICHAEL
BEAULAC HELPED TURN
A CULT "GARAGE WINE"
INTO A 100-POINT
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

PHOTO: ALEXANDER RUBIN

Sixteen years after Bill Foley acquired Merus, a historic winery on the east side of Napa Valley, his patience has paid off with the help of winemaker Michael Beaulac (pictured at The Restaurant at Farmhouse Inn in Forestville, CA), who divulges his professional secrets in our cover story.

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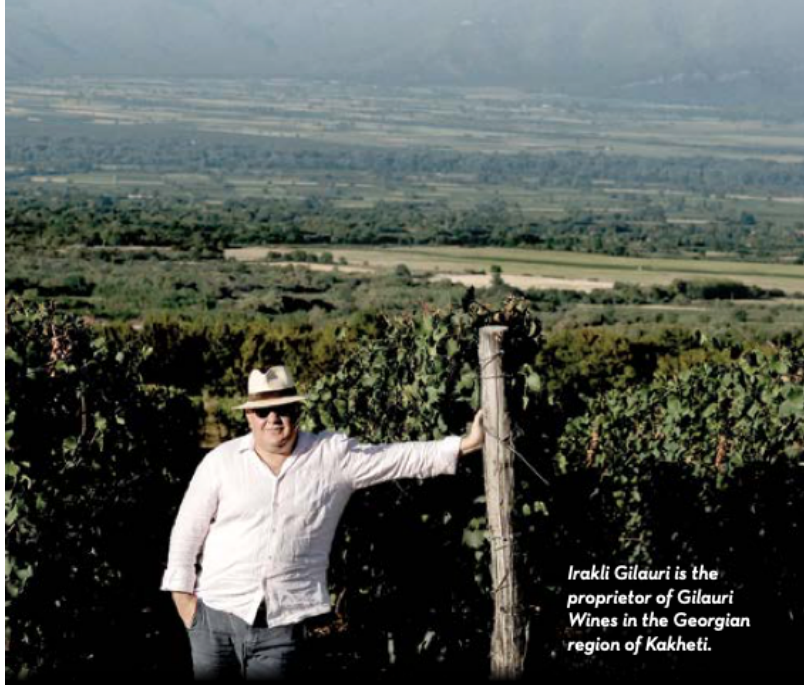
Awakening Brilliance From Ancient Terroir: Gilauri Wines

by Meridith May

CAN GEORGIA MAKE a luxury wine? Irakli Gilauri proved it can. The former CEO of the Bank of Georgia traveled the world, tasting great wines and becoming an avid collector of marquee bottles from Burgundy, Bordeaux, Barolo, and Napa Valley before deciding to create a winery of his own. Prior to that, Georgia had not produced a single world-renowned wine despite being near the birthplace of *Vitis vinifera* in the South Caucasus, a biodiverse hot spot that served as a refuge from the greatest impacts of the ice age.

To produce his wines, Gilauri sources fruit from his own vineyards in Kakheti, Georgia's main winegrowing region; armed with diverse soils, elevations, and cultivars, it has a viticultural history going back roughly 8,000 years. Its main variety is Saperavi, which translates as "dye," relating to the fleshy grape's inky dark-purple hue.

Gilauri studied winemaking at the University of California, Davis, where he learned the technical fundamentals. He relies on both Georgian and Argentine viticulturists and winemakers as well as Bordeaux-based consultants like Eric Moro and Mikaël Laizet, viticulture engineer and enologist, respectively, at Rolland and Associates. Gilauri's wines will release in the U.S. this fall; for contact information, visit gilauri.com. **51**



Irakli Gilauri is the proprietor of Gilauri Wines in the Georgian region of Kakheti.

Gilauri 2025 Chardonnay, Gombori Mountain Vineyard, Kakheti, Georgia (\$125)

This truly exotic expression hails from a 2,500-foot-high vineyard planted on chalk and limestone. Its perfume is a fascinating mélange of gardenia, white tea, pineapple, and lime blossom, while the chalky palate is clean and pure, with notes of linen, kiwi, cinnamon, anise, and vanilla-drenched pineapple. **98**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GILAUURI WINES

Gilauri 2024 Resistance Saperavi, Kakheti, Georgia (\$190)

This wine was sourced from two vineyard sites, specifically the Duruji River Vineyard at the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains and the Papari Hills Vineyard on the right bank of the Alazani River on the Gombori mountain bench. Its name is meant to represent past political struggles endured by Georgia. Following vivid aromas of balsamic, black coffee, and blackberry, slate minerality maintains freshness and imparts a mouthfeel with chalky, sensuous tension. Cassis, sweet soil, hoisin sauce, and violets offer a Bordeaux quality and style: Smell it, taste it, breathe it in. **98**