

The Wine Entrepreneurs

By Laura Palotie

Forget stomping grapes. Many entrepreneurs have transformed their passion for wine into successful businesses. From corkscrew makers to label designers, a look at some of the most creative wine companies out there.



In the late 1990s, when Italian-born Sergio Esposito was shaping his concept for a shop of exclusively Italian wines, he caught the interest -- and financing -- of star restaurateurs Mario Batali and Joseph Bastianich. His Manhattan-based shop and wine portfolio management service has since become a trusted name in what Esposito initially saw as an unprepared market.

"I don't think anyone in their right mind would have thought I would have been successful when I opened, because there just wasn't a market for what I was doing," Esposito says. "The American consumer has become much more savvy, and wine has obviously entered pop culture, and the culture of the collector, in the U.S."

Over 15,000 clients nationwide currently take advantage of the company's portfolio management service. Much of Esposito's reputation is built upon his stamp of approval: he travels to Italy frequently and personally tastes each wine that he buys for the store's collection.