

A PRIEST WALKS INTO A BAR

WELCOME TO KATIE BUNDSCHU'S NEW WINE-TASTING ROOM AND RETAIL SHOP, ABBOT'S PASSAGE SUPPLY CO.



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1. A Girl and Her Dog: Katie Bundschu poses with her dog, Bacchus (named for the Roman god of wine). **2. A Tasting Room Like No Other:** The Sonoma Plaza tasting room for Abbot's Passage Supply Co. also functions as a jewelry, clothing, and outdoor boutique. **3. Sipping Up and Away:** The wine-tasting loft at Abbot's Passage Supply Co. offers an intimate sampling experience away from the hubbub found downstairs and outside.

ACCORDING TO LOCAL LEGEND, there was once a priest who lived up on Mont La Salle in Napa. Every week, he trekked all the way down the mountain on foot to his favorite watering hole in Sonoma.

Or was it the Boyes Hot Springs?

It depends on who's telling the story, says Katie Bundschu. As a sixth-generation member of the family behind California's oldest, continuously family-owned winery, Gundlach Bundschu, she can't count the number of times she heard this tale growing up. Something about it stuck with her, ultimately inspiring the name of her wine brand, Abbot's Passage.

"It's all about my yearning to discover and adventure. The abbot is a metaphor for that," says Bundschu. "This was his journey, his discovery; he hiked down this wooded path, and you can only imagine what he came across or what he thought about."

Bundschu and the abbot are kindred spirits. Unlike her two older brothers, she initially had no interest in joining the family business, wanting to forge her own path. She left Sonoma to attend school and pursued a career in college athletics, until she felt the pull of home and rejoined her siblings; she is now the vice president of sales and marketing for the Bundschu Company.

She's been firmly rooted back in Sonoma since 2012, but her desire to make her own way in the world has never subsided. Abbot's Passage is Bundschu's latest adventure. The wines are mostly unconventional, small-lot field blends, such as Sightline (a blend of Chenin Blanc and Verdejo) and The Crossing, which is made from Petit Verdot and Malbec. Welcoming unpredictability and vintage variation, she chooses to co-ferment her wines and seeks out vineyard sites with unique stories behind them, like Heringer Estates Vineyards in Clarksburg. The sixth-generation farmers that own and operate the property remind her of her own family.

The final piece is Abbot's Passage Supply Co., a multipurpose tasting room right off Sonoma Plaza that opened last December. Fittingly, it's not too easy to find; you have to venture through the maze of Sonoma Court Shops to get to it. In addition to wine tastings, it has a retail component—visitors can shop for artisanal apparel, jewelry, decor, and outdoor necessities for future adventures. The shop also hosts monthly maker workshops on topics ranging from lock picking to oyster shucking.

"I wanted something that was a total 180 from what a traditional tasting room on the Sonoma Plaza looks like, something that was a different approach and really makes you think," says Bundschu.

Abbot's Passage Supply Co. is open daily 12–6 p.m. abbotspassage.com. —**Jess Lander**