

## **Richmond Wine Society 2024 Joe Formica Award Winner – Gabriele Rausse**



**Mention the name Gabriele Rausse, and people think of Barboursville Vineyards and Rausse's involvement in the creation of perhaps the best-known winery in Virginia. Others remember the vital role he played through the formative years of the state wine industry when he helped new wineries and new winemakers find their way in an often- confusing attempt to grow grapes in a region long-predicted to be unsuitable for such a venture.**

**Because of his leadership and successful efforts and direction, Rausse is often called the Father of Virginia Wine."**

**He also now can be called the winner of the Richmond Wine Society's 2024 Joe Formica Award, given annually to a person (or entity) who has made significant contributions to the wine industry, with an emphasis on Virginia.**

**The award is named after Joe Formica, a founding father of the RWS and a lifetime major force within the organization and in state and international wine circles.**

**The RWS Board of Directors selected Rausse from among nominations sent in by RWS members. He will be honored Nov. 2 at a wine dinner at Richmond Country Club, and Gabriele Rausse Winery wines will be served. Details for the event will be announced later.**

**Barboursville Vineyards' Luca Paschina (2021), Michael Shaps (2022) of Michael Shaps Wineworks and viticulturalist Lucie Morton (2023) were the previous winners.**

**Rausse was born and raised in Vicenza, Italy, where his family had two small farms, each with its own vineyards. He went to the University of Milano, then after graduation he ventured into the wine world by going to work at Tenuta Santa Margherita, a winery in Portogruaro.**

**He then served a 15-month stint in the service and followed that by going to Australia for a job. But a visa glitch cut the trip short, and he returned to Italy.**

**About that time, 1976, childhood friend Gianni Zonin persuaded Gabriele to join him in Virginia, where Zonin wanted to start a winery. He eventually purchased what would become Barboursville Vineyards.**

**Rausse laid the foundation, and the vines, for what would become perhaps the best known and one of the most successful wine ventures in Virginia.**

## **Richmond Wine Society 2024 Joe Formica Award Winner – Gabriele Rausse**

He decided to leave Barboursville in 1981 with the purpose of consulting and helping other wineries get started, especially Simeon, where he grafted vines that were used to replicate Thomas Jefferson's beloved vineyard. (Simeon is now Jefferson Vineyards).

In addition to Barboursville and Simeon, among the many wineries that were positively influenced by Rausse were Blenheim, Afton and Kluge (now Trump).

At Barboursville and Jefferson Vineyards, Gabriele operated a nursery, propagating vines for his own use, but also for sale. Through the years he successfully grafted, propagated and sold more than a million vines, an indicator that he touched many more vineyards than even he remembers.

Rausse eventually started working at Monticello in 1995 as the Director of Gardens and Grounds. During his 28 years at Monticello, he oversaw the vegetable gardens, orchards and woodlands, as well as the vineyards that include some of the varieties planted by Jefferson in 1807.

Itching to get back to his roots – grape growing and wine making – in 1997, he started his own winery, Gabriele Rausse Winery, located just south of Charlottesville.

This year, the winery produced 19 different wines under the Gabriele Rausse label.

At 79, Gabriele has pulled back some from the day-to-day operation in favor of his sons, Tim and Peter, running the operation. Still, his influence reigns supreme throughout Gabriele Rausse Winery, and the state wine industry.

As for the "Father of Virginia wine" title, possibly coined by Edible Blue Ridge in a 2013 article, Gabriele has a different idea.

"To me, Thomas Jefferson is the true father of Virginia wine," Rausse, told Atlas Obscura, an American media and travel company.

"I always toast to him. I say, 'Mr. Jefferson, if it was not for you, I would be living in Australia!'"

**Note: Gabriele Rausse Winery is located at 3247 Carters Mountain Rd, Charlottesville, VA 22902 and is open Thursday, Friday, Sunday and Monday.**