

# Women in Winemaking

as featured in Today's Chicago Woman

By MAUREEN JENKINS

## *Three girls in the grapes spill about their passion*

With master sommeliers like Chicago's own Alpana Singh and Andrea Robinson on the scene and female winemakers earning renown around the world, women surely have made their mark on 21st century viniculture.

Still, it was a big deal earlier this spring when Fine Wine Brokers in Lincoln Square hosted its second installment of Women Winemakers Wine Tasting. The shop poured 57 wines from more than 20 producers, with prices ranging from \$10 to \$74 a bottle – all made by female winemakers. Three of those – New Orleans native **Kat McDonald** of The Girls in the Vineyard, Australian-born Susan Doyle of MacMurray Ranch and Evanston native Kathy Joseph of Fiddlehead Cellars – flew in from California to share their wines with the shop's guests.

We asked them to share their thoughts on being women in the wonderful world of wine.



**Kat McDonald: The Girls in the Vineyard, Red Hills Lake County, California**

Known for Cabernet Sauvignon. Kat and husband Rob also grow grapes and make Shiraz in Rob's native Australia.

### **How "The Girls" name originated:**

"It's the way ships are called [by female names]. It just became the way we talked about the vines. My husband suggested the name; it ended up growing on me. We can't call [the wines] anything obvious like 'McDonald!'"

### **On being a woman winemaker:**

"Some of the best winemakers are women now. I have a different palate than a lot of men, but I think that's respected. In Napa, winemaking is collaborative and a community. They'll take all comers with a thirst for knowledge and who want to do the right thing. (Women winemakers are) still more of a rarity to the public than in the industry."

### **Winemaking philosophy:**

"You've got to grow the grapes as naturally as possible. Beyond organic, you're a steward of the land. At the end of the day, I want to make a food-friendly, approachable wine. If the wine isn't complementing the food, you might as well be drinking vodka. I want something that's going to make my eating experience better."

### **On making wine approachable for the novice:**

"Women are the best tasters; they tend to have more taste buds. Taste everything and anything you can. When women shop for wine, they don't care what the wine is rated. They buy what they like. Men often need that validation – women don't."

### **Fun fact:**

Buy The Girls directly from them and they'll send a check for \$2.50 a bottle or \$30 a case to your favorite non-profit, no questions asked. "It's a great way to connect to people."

More: [www.thegirlsinthevineyard.com](http://www.thegirlsinthevineyard.com)