



Family-Crafted

Our winery is deeply rooted in our family history, and just like our wines, the spirits at our new distillery will be family-crafted.



Philippe and Julie Coquard, Wollersheim Winery & Distillery's owners, hold a bottle of Coquard Brandy #2, which was released in 2014.

The tradition of family-crafted spirits actually **began long before** our family bought the winery property in the 1970s. Julie, whose parents started the winery in 1972 and who now co-owns the winery with her husband, **Winemaker Philippe**, says, “We’re continuing the circle of family distilling. We took the **Kehl family’s tradition** of making brandy here in the 1870s, and then ‘reawakened’ it with our Coquard family tradition.”

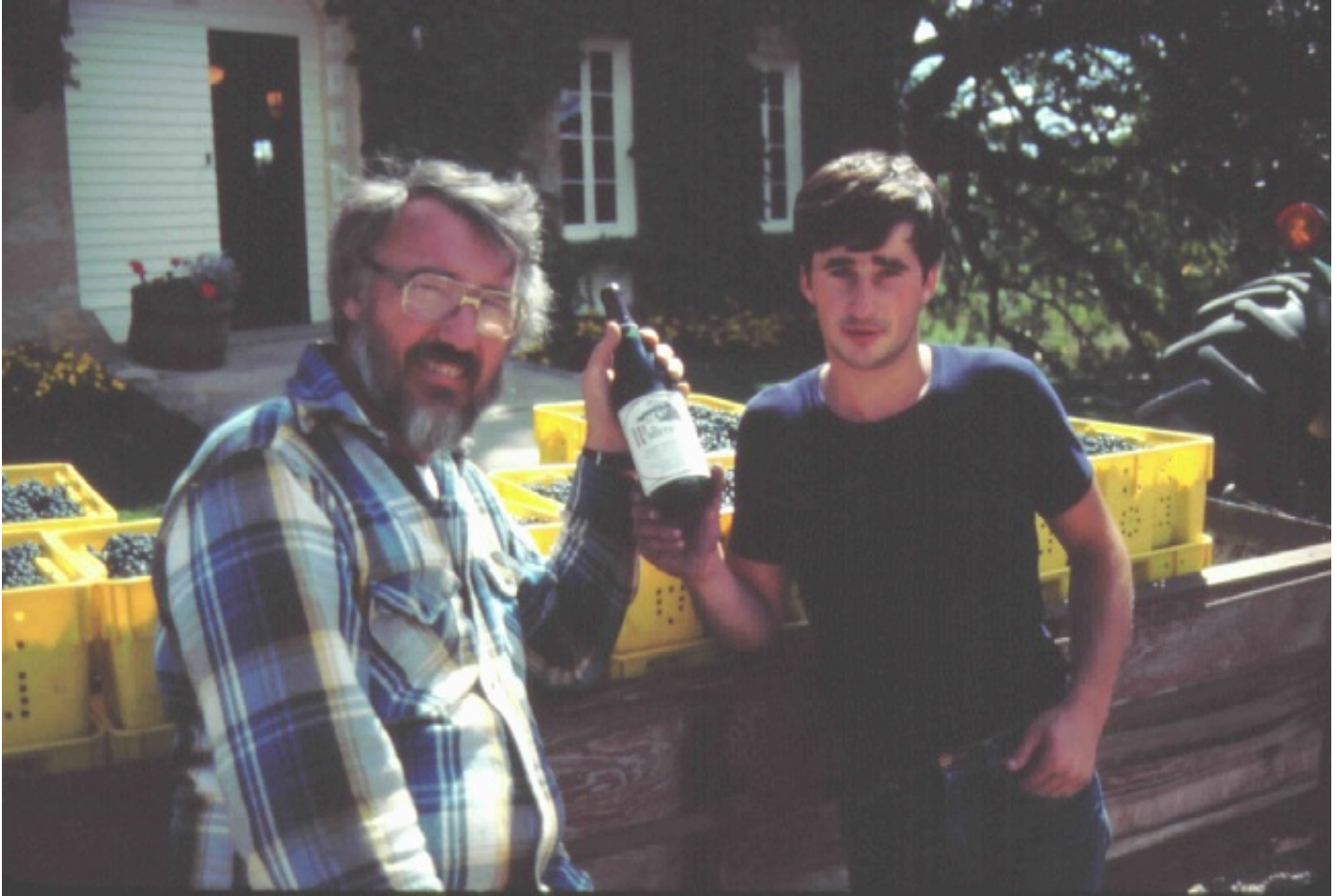


Philippe and Julie Coquard with Wollersheim Winery founders, JoAnn and Bob Wollersheim.

The **dream of distilling** started in our family some 26 years ago when Julie’s father—the winery’s founder, Bob Wollersheim—and Philippe shared an interest in making spirits. Philippe says, “Bob and I were talking down in the cellar and we said, ‘It would be so cool if we could make our own Cognac,’” an aged grape brandy

from France.

Until 2009, it was illegal for wineries to distill spirits in Wisconsin. But when state law changed six years ago, Philippe saw grape brandy as a natural first step into the world of spirits. Julie explains, “We started with **Coquard Brandy** then, and we will evolve into other spirits such as gin and whiskey, which will allow the next generation to leave its mark.”



Philippe and Bob at the winery in 1984, not long after Philippe arrived from France.

The tradition of making wine and spirits has, indeed, continued into another generation. Philippe and Julie’s daughter, Céline, studied wine science and now works at the winery as our enologist, focusing on quality control and lab testing. Céline’s husband, Tom, joined the family business last summer. With a background in brewing and distilling, he will lead **the distillery’s** eventual whiskey program, and will also help distill other spirits.



Julie and Philippe with their daughter, Céline.

Today, Philippe, says, “The family is deeply involved at the winery from marketing, product development and lab checks, to barrel-aging expertise and **grape-growing**.” This involvement will continue for the distillery because, Philippe says, “Distilling is fermentation. It requires knowledge like lab checks and understanding pumps, hoses and tanks, so all of us at large are involved in the distillery as well as the winery.”



Céline and Philippe filling Coquard Brandy barrels in the cellar.

Fermenting and distilling grains, however, is new to the family business, which is where Tom brings in both interest and expertise. He says he is proud to be “part of the legacy of what's going on and contribute to the history of the family and the business,” and is also “really excited about the fun new products we can make.” His knack for spirits came from his own family history. “Bourbon has always been my dad's drink of choice, so that's what I always wanted to drink when I grew up. It's how I got into spirits as an adult.”

Like Tom, Philippe also shared spirits with family. He says, “I enjoyed Cognac and grappa, a clear grape brandy, with my family at the end of the meal. In Europe, there's a deep tradition of different local and regional fruit brandies, sometimes from village to village with a different tradition.”



Philippe and Tom barrel-tasting brandy.

As the family business grows in the present, Philippe also looks to the future. “My true conviction at heart is to grow both businesses. If the wine side grows, we can grow with it. If the spirits grow, we can grow with them,” he says. The door is open to family, as well. Philippe says, “I am a winemaker by trade, by heart, by conviction, by tradition and by family heritage (13th generation). The family—kids, grandkids, and other family members—are invited and welcome to join the family business and work at **the distillery** as well as the winery.”

Julie agrees, saying, “It’s a wonderful feeling to be able to work with our daughter and son-in-law, as well as our sons, and share a common vision for the future legacy of the winery property.”



Future generations: Julie and Philippe's sons, Romain and Nicolas; daughter, Céline (holding Tom's and her son, August); and son-in-law, Tom.

To Philippe, brandy and other spirits symbolize this growth, and the continuation of the family heritage of wine-and-spirits-making. He says, “Brandy is the ultimate end product—you have the grapes, the wine, and the next step is the spirit. It's tradition, it's been done for hundreds of years, and it tastes really good. The beauty of brandy is that you can age it 25 or 50 years in the barrel, which, with wine, you can't. You can lengthen history with spirits.”