

Wine Spectator

PEOPLE

Sarah Jessica Parker's Wine Premiere



The actor, producer and fashion designer goes all-in on a new role: winemaker

Invivo co-founders Tim Lightbourne (left) and Rob Cameron with Sarah Jessica Parker. (Courtesy of Invivo X/Sarah Jessica Parker)

By Lexi Williams

On a spring afternoon in New York, Sarah Jessica Parker is seated at a table at Casa Apicii, a svelte Italian spot in Greenwich Village. But she isn't here for a leisurely lunch; she's here to work. The actor-producer-designer recently partnered with New Zealand wine company Invivo to expand her business interests into the world of wine, and today she's getting her first real taste of the job, selecting blend samples that will comprise the first of her new line of wines: the Invivo Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough X, Sarah Jessica Parker 2019, to be released Sept. 18.

Parker is accompanied by her new business partners, Tim Lightbourne and Rob Cameron, Invivo's co-founders. The duo traveled across the globe, wine samples packed in their checked baggage, to give Parker a crash course in winemaking.

Now a shareholder in Invivo, Parker has signed on to work with the company long-term. The Sauvignon Blanc, which is a Marlborough blend, with some components lightly oaked for texture, is currently planned to hit shelves in 18 states and eight additional countries, and further expansion is imminent; it will be priced at around \$20.

In spring 2020, Invivo X, Sarah Jessica Parker will get a second bottling, a rosé from the south of France. (The X-comma formulation of the name is meant to evoke the sign-off of a letter.)

"It's so fortunate, such a lucky thing, to be able to learn from people who are really good at what they do and are willing to share information," Parker says. "People that are good at what they do often feel very proprietary about it, especially for an interloper like me."

If her humility sounds surprising, it's because Parker's iconic role as Carrie in HBO's *Sex and the City* made her a household name in the late 1990s, and she has been in the spotlight ever since, starring in and producing films and TV shows. (In her current HBO show, *Divorce*, she does both.) Not unlike Carrie, she is also heavily involved in the fashion world, most notably with her namesake shoe brand, SJP.

After meeting the star through a mutual connection in 2018, Lightbourne and Cameron convinced Parker to parlay her singular taste into wine. She wasn't the first celebrity they had successfully wooed. In 2014, they signed on BBC talk-show host Graham Norton to create his namesake collection of wines, which has since amassed a large following in the United Kingdom, with roughly 3.5 million bottles sold. In Parker, they saw an opportunity for similar success in the U.S. and beyond. Parker, for her part, insisted on going all-in on her personal involvement.

"I love learning. I'm curious. I'm excited to have professional opportunities. But I also think that I have to be deserving of them. And I've never done anything where I've just put my name on it and walked away," she says. "If I'm not going to drink it and believe in it, if I'm not going to wear my own shoes, then who am I to ask anyone to drink it or wear my shoes or anything else?"

Though fashionable footwear may be part of Parker's public persona—and yes, she still enjoys a *Cosmopolitan* from time to time, as Carrie famously did—wine has long occupied a starring role in her personal life. It's a passion she shares with her husband, actor Matthew Broderick.

"We're those people that you see in restaurants, when we are introduced to a new wine, taking photographs of the label," she says. "Sometimes the sommelier will even [take off] the label and we'll take it home and try to find it."

Though she currently has Sauvignon Blanc on her mind, it's not her first or only wine love. "It depends on what we're eating and what mood we're in and the season," she says. Long partial to Chardonnay, she "always thought of [Sauvignon Blanc] as a 'littler' wine. It felt less round and I always thought that I preferred a bigger wine. But I've come to love Sauvignon Blanc."

Parker attributes her particular interest in New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc to her frequent stays in Donegal, Ireland, where her family has a vacation home. Though not exactly wine country, the region has inspired many nights of cooking and wine pairing for Parker and Broderick, and they often reach for what's readily available at the local grocery shops. "There is a great and growing New Zealand collection there," she says. "[It] continues to just grow and grow."

She also enjoys her wine stateside, though she prefers to open bottles rather than accumulate wine in her New York apartment. "We have a little, teeny, not-to-be-spoken-of collection," she explains, adding that most of her home bottles are gifts she and Broderick are hesitant to open.

Still, the pair have no such compunction most of the time, especially when traveling. "We always try to order local wines when we go to restaurants. We always ask, you know, what are they just throwing in a jug? What's the table wine that they like to drink?" she says. "I think it allows you to know more about wine. It doesn't make me necessarily any better ... but I certainly have great memories."

The rustic, unpretentious culture of bistro drinking so appealed to Parker that she brought it home with her: "I started drinking wine more in Europe, where wine often comes to the table in a little carafe, with little, short glasses. There was something that took the intimidation out of it for me; it felt more familiar, more intimate, more like being at home. So that's the way we drink wine in our house. I save little jars, like jam jars, and we drink wine out of them. Any jar that's, like, three to four inches tall—perfect. It's sustainable; it's also affordable!"

Parker may wave off wine pretensions, but she is impressing Lightbourne and Cameron with her tasting and blending instincts at Casa Apicii.

"We just kept trying new things, getting closer and closer [to the end product]," Cameron says of the process. "And the cool thing was that Sarah Jessica was detecting down to two percent of what was wrong with the blend."

Parker demurs. "You know, Rob is so good at sharing information and explaining," she says. "If it was just left up to me in my bathroom, it would be a mess, because I wouldn't understand, like, 'Oh, this is the brand-new vine and this is why it's tasting like this and behaving like this, and this is a much older vineyard, and this is why these grapes are going to do this.'" But now she does; she considers diligence important in her ventures.

"I want [wine people] to know that I'm not being casual about this, I'm not being silly," she says. "I'm not dismissing an industry that's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years old. I'm not like, 'Oh, I'll just dabble in that.' There's a huge amount to learn and I'm just trying to completely absorb all I can and immerse myself."

Even the small details matter: To pick the exact shade of teal for the X on the wine label, she drew inspiration from her showroom of shoes, selecting a color based on a shoe in her line that has performed particularly well.

Her creative approach comes out, too, at the blending session. After blending, as she prepares to record promotional videos for the wine, she encourages a makeup artist to try a sip of her new creation. "It's not the final-final," she cautions her; the wine must still be filtered, stabilized and bottled, of course. "Picture it like a newborn baby."

"I love the way she describes wine," Cameron says. "It's so natural to her. You can see her experience in the arts come through in the way she speaks about wine."

As she has done in the fields of entertainment and fashion, Parker is making moves to position herself for success in the wine world. Her name recognition, sharp business acumen and homegrown passion for wine make for a compelling blend.

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