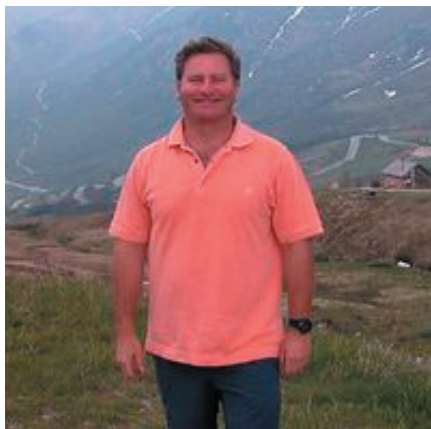


## THE THRILL OF VICTORY



Right now Brian Larky is on a plane, probably somewhere over the Atlantic, headed home from Tuscany, where part of his business is based.

When he gets back to his digs in Napa, he's going to have a box full of e-mails and plenty of calls from his hundreds of new best friends.

Larky is the importer of **Casanova di Neri, and its 2001 Brunello di Montalcino** is our Wine of the Year. Except he doesn't know about it yet. Boy is he in for a surprise.

His company, Dalla Terra, specializes in importing unique, high-end Italian wines, and in the past 15 years or so, he has built up a nice portfolio of wines.

Before starting Dalla Terra, Larky aspired to be a winemaker. He studied enology and viticulture at U.C. Davis and worked at Far Niente and Domaine Chandon in Napa, before heading to Italy to work at Ca'del Bosco. So he knows a lot about wine and is very involved in key winemaking, marketing and distribution matters with his clients.

But that's just one of his passions. He's a free spirit in the truest sense. He has kayaked and rafted down most of North America's major rivers, as well as many in Europe and Asia. He's been a white-water guide on the African Rainbow Equatorial Expedition which, according to him, was the first known crossing of equatorial Africa by boat through the waterways between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

He has sailed the seven seas, including many transoceanic voyages and yacht races. He is a private, commercial and instrument-rated pilot, with his own plane; a scuba dive master and abalone diver (which is where I met him a few years ago); catches (and releases) lots of fish and shreds deep powder from Cortina, Italy, to Taos, New Mexico. He's hiked from Nepal to Tibet and loves to capture those moments on his digital camera.

So, in the scheme of things, I'm not sure where having Casanova di Neri picked as WOTY ranks in his life adventures.

But I'll bet it's right up there near the top. I'd also bet that he'll have plenty of new best friends waiting to celebrate with him.

