



# Cork & Fork at Work

A FRENCH FAMILY WITH FIVE CENTURIES OF HISTORY IN CHAMPAGNE  
CATERS TO WASHINGTON, D.C.'S DISCRIMINATING PALATES

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**Cork & Fork CEO Antoinette Landragin with her father, founder Dominique Landragin.**



**Cork & Fork's Logan Circle storefront.**

**With a legacy in the wine business dating back to the 16th century,** the guidance of an experienced flying winemaker, and the savvy of a CEO tapped into market trends, Cork & Fork has earned its reputation as one of Washington, D.C.'s top retail wine outlets.

Dominique Landragin and his wife, Anna, opened their shop in northern Virginia in 2005 before settling into their current space in the District's thriving Logan Circle neighborhood. But the pedigree of the Landragin family goes back 500 years to Champagne, and Dominique's grandfather and father both worked in Champagne houses. With bubbly flowing in his veins, Dominique studied in the region as well as in Burgundy and went on to become first a sought-after sparkling-winemaking consultant in France and Australia, then the president of Prince Michel Vineyard and Winery in Virginia, a role he held until 1993.

In 2017, the couple passed the torch of ownership to their daughter, company CEO Antoinette Landragin, whose training through the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and Wine Scholar Guild and experience as a wine buyer serve her well in promoting the business' mission. The focus of their 1,200 offerings is on estate-grown and -vinified wines crafted by small producers that practice natural, polyculture, sustainable, and Biodynamic farming and minimal-intervention winemaking, explains Antoinette, who describes the selection as "quality-driven, elegant, balanced, and food-friendly." The team also considers suppliers' policies concerning fair wages, diversity and local hires, employee benefits such as educational opportunities, and contributions to the community.

When it comes to what her customers are buying, Antoinette has recently seen rosé losing ground to natural and orange wines; an increased interest in bottles coming out of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and, to a lesser extent, Mexico and Uruguay; and an uptick in sales of bubbly, including Crémants and sparklers from England and South Africa. "Producers are trending away from overripe fruit and leaning more to balanced alcohol, zero sugar, [and] less oak," she points out. "Terroir is center stage, and there is emphasis on amphora wines and [other examples of] experimentation." Price is also a factor, of course; luckily, the Landragin family's experience in running not only the flagship store but two (since-closed) satellite locations during the Great Recession prepared them for the economic fallout of local lockdowns. Tweaking inventory to account for a decline in average sale price per bottle, they saw an increase in sales of wines under \$20 from 5% to 25% between April and October.

Until the pandemic, Cork & Fork held popular weekly in-store master classes led by wine educators, winemakers, importers, distributors, and certified staff; they have since transitioned to online classes held five times monthly, which are booked through April 2021. In October, they introduced a new format that included the delivery of three-course meals made by Michelin-starred local restaurants to attendees before the tasting. "Our patrons are well traveled and understand the importance of food and wine pairings," says Antoinette.

In short, even during a pandemic, Antoinette believes the rewards of owning Cork & Fork still outweigh the challenges. "The most important priority for us is always to maintain good relationships with each and every single person we meet," she says. "[We have] the great opportunity to contribute culturally to the Washington, D.C., Logan Circle corridor and beyond by providing a large selection of quality wine, ongoing wine education, wine advice, and food-pairing assistance." [📖](#)