

WHAT WE'RE DRINKING

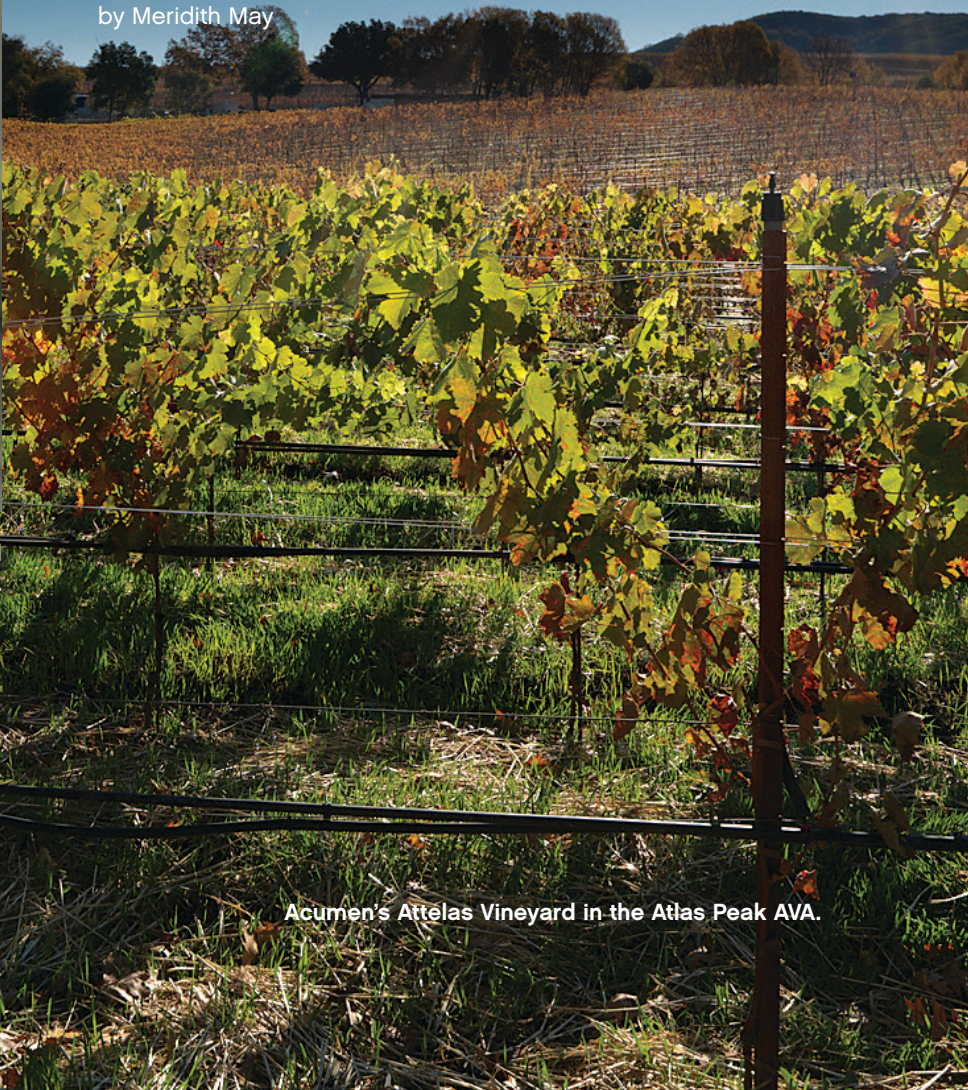
Peak of Perfection



Henrik Poulsen, Executive Manager and Director of Winemaking for Acumen.

ACUMEN'S HENRIK POULSEN
IS "PALATE-ON" WHEN IT COMES
TO CRAFTING HIS ESTATE WINES

by Meredith May



Acumen's Attelas Vineyard in the Atlas Peak AVA.



In an art gallery in downtown Napa, Acumen releases can be tasted with small bites tailored to each wine as part of the Acumen Summit Experience.

On the mountain slopes of the coveted area known as Atlas Peak, Napa Valley's high-elevation AVA, winemaker Henrik Poulsen is crafting estate wines for the Acumen label. With 116 organically farmed acres of vines spread across two remote, rocky-soiled vineyards—Edcora and Attelas—this small but resonant winery is destined for world-class status.

Poulsen, who worked alongside the late Denis Malbec to establish the wine's style, has a handle on the terroir above and beyond its mountainous location, where elevations reach more than 1,200 feet above sea level. With a relatively cool climate and volcanic soils, the ripening potential remains great; the wines' complex nature is apparent and their character defines excellence.

We recently sat down to taste with Poulsen and Acumen Sales Director Gordon Waggoner at the winery's downtown Napa tasting room, housed in a dramatically appointed art gallery. "I am not a winemaker by the numbers," insisted the Danish-born Poulsen. "One can look at lab reports, but still you must ask, did that winemaking team really taste the fruit first? I am not necessarily hands-off, but I am definitely palate-on."

Acumen's expressions of its mountain terroir include the small-production **PEAK** wines, produced from the best vineyard blocks and destined for long-term aging. For a broader appeal, Acumen's **Mountainside** wines offer a higher production and, with the exception of the Sauvignon Blanc, are also 100 percent estate-driven.

"Both our **PEAK** and **Mountainside** wines are rooted in the character of the growing season and the complexity of the Atlas Peak estate, but they show their roots in different ways and exhibit varying expressions of the Bordeaux varieties we grow," Poulsen explains. "Our goal is to share the wines from this remarkable mountain with the world and for Acumen to become the standard-bearer for Atlas Peak."

Acumen **Mountainside** wines are fairly priced and work for upscale by-the-glass programs. For more information, visit acumenwine.com. ■■

Acumen 2017 Mountainside Sauvignon Blanc (\$30) spends eight months in barrel (one-third stainless steel and two-thirds French oak). It's an ethereal beauty that exudes aromas of vetiver and white grapefruit. The clean palate showcases precise acidity and tropical fruit. **92**

Acumen 2014 Mountainside Red (\$45) displays a set of tannins that work with, not against, the intensity of mountain fruit. It's elegant with acidity so bright it lights up the glass. Luxardo cherries and chocolate are just some of the flavor notes present in this complex blend. **93**

Acumen 2014 Mountainside Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60) is aged in 100% French oak for 18 months. Poulsen notes this as one of the best vintages of the decade in Napa Valley. "This wine demonstrates the terroir of the estate," he says. The aromas are meaty: Filet mignon comes to mind, but there are also floral threads with hints of dried violets. As the tannins paint the tongue, acidity divides it, adding finesse to flavors of dark chocolate, espresso beans, and inky black fruit. "We coax the estate for what it has to offer," Poulsen adds. **94**

