

From Real Estate to Rosé: Q & A with Charles S. Cohen

Marguerite Thomas- August 29, 2017



Here's a quiz for you: Let's pretend that you're tired of whatever occupation you are currently pursuing, and so, for your next career you would like to be: a) a lawyer; b) a successful real estate developer; c) an award-winning film producer; d) the owner of a historic movie theater in Greenwich Village, New York, or e) the owner of a French wine chateau. Most of us would probably be happy to answer to any one of these job descriptions, but Charles S. Cohen can claim them all.

After graduating from Tufts University, Cohen proceeded to earn a degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1977. Next, he went on to join his family's Manhattan-based company, Cohen Brothers Realty Corporation, a private commercial real estate development and management firm of which he is now president and CEO.

In 2008, a lifelong passion for movies led him to form Cohen Media Group, which promotes and distributes independent and art-house films throughout North America (the organization's most recently distributed film, Iranian director Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman*, received an Academy Award this year as Best Foreign Film).

In 2014 he purchased the historic Quad Cinema, one of New York's most beloved movie houses, which he renovated over a two year period (he also installed a wine bar adjacent to the theater). As the leading distributor of French language art-house films in America, Cohen has been honored twice by the French government, as a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and with l'Ordre Nationale du Mérite.

In 2016 Charles S. Cohen purchased the Château de Chausse, a Côte d'Azur winery nestled on the St. Tropez peninsula. A 135 acre property, with 38 acres of vines, including Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, Grenache, and Rolle (Vermentino), Château de Chausse's limited production is 70,000 bottles annually. The wines are imported by Sol Stars Inc.

This Q & A session was conducted over dinner with Charles S. Cohen this summer, and through follow-up emails.

From Real Estate to Rosé: Q & A with Charles S. Cohen

Marguerite Thomas- August 29, 2017

MT: Do you have an all-time favorite movie?

CC: There are so many movies that I have watched over and over. It really is hard to choose but I am partial to “The Last Metro” with Catherine Deneuve and the all-time classic, “The Earrings of Mme de.”

MT: In The Physiology of Taste, the great Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote: “The Creator when he obliges man to eat, invites him to do so by appetite, and rewards him by pleasure.” What food gives you the greatest pleasure?

CC: I enjoy many types of food. But, being health conscious, I tend towards Mediterranean-style foods, particularly the dishes from Provence.



MT: What was the first film you ever saw, and the first wine that impressed you?

CC: The first film I saw was Walt Disney’s Cinderella. And I believe that the first wine that impressed me was Dom Pérignon champagne.

MT: You own four very different homes (in Greenwich, CT, West Hollywood, Manhattan, and Palm Beach), and you apparently have been very “hands on” with the decoration of all of them. At Chateau de Chausse do you plan to make many changes in the chateau itself?

CC: I am planning extensive renovations at Chateau de Chausse and will be hands-on in all aspects of planning, decoration and design. We are considering creating a small theater on site to serve as a think-tank for the international film community but that is a long ways away from being a reality.

MT: Why did you want to invest in a winery in France rather than in, say, California or upstate New York?

CC: My wife, Clo, and I always loved the South of France and this was a dream come true for us.

MT: Your consulting enologist, Laurence Berlemont, has said: “In Provence, vines find themselves in the heart of a larger ecosystem. A vineyard is not synonymous with monoculture. An estate in Provence is often a delicate balance of vineyards, olive trees, and lavender, a very complex environment.” Is this sort of biodiversity important to you too?

CC: Yes, biodiversity is very important. There are so many wonderful elements found in Provence such as the olive trees, beehives, lavender and such.

From Real Estate to Rosé: Q & A with Charles S. Cohen

Marguerite Thomas- August 29, 2017

MT: What historical figure do you most admire?

CC: Napoleon. He was known for being shrewd, ambitious, a risk-taker and exceptional strategist.

MT: You are clearly interested in many different genres of film, from documentaries to musicals, comedy and drama—but you seem to have a special appetite for classic film noir. What wine would you pair with a good noir film such as Another Man's Poison, Dark Journey, Hangmen Also Die, or Sudden Fear?

CC: How about a great Pinot Noir with a great film noir?

MT: Who is Xavier Einstein?

CC: It is a nom de plume given to me in the 80's in connection with a movie trivia book I wrote.

MT: With a limited production of only 70,000 bottles annually, Chateau de Chausse divides its production among red (45%), white (15%), and rosé wine (40%). Do you plan to change any of this?

CC: We do not plan any changes in this regard at this time.

MT: Many of the films in which you have been involved feature strong and gifted leading men including Winston Churchill (Churchill: The Untold Story of D-Day), Julian Schnabel (Julian Schnabel: A Private Portrait), Orson Wells (Magician: The Astonishing Life of Orson Wells) and the great 18th century South American military and political leader Simon Bolivar (The Liberator/Libertador). Which of these men do you most identify with?

CC: Orson Welles, for sure. Orson Welles was such a tour de force of a talent. Writer, director, actor....

MT: Chateau de Chausse vineyards are planted to Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault, Grenache and Rolle (Vermentino). Do you plan to make any changes such as decreasing the amount or any of these, or adding any other varieties?

CC: No changes are planned as of now.

MT: Would you like to produce or direct a wine-themed film some day?

CC: Sure, why not? I'm always up for a new challenge!