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## SOMMELIER RAJAT PARR DEBUTS WEB SERIES: BALANCING ACT WITH RAJAT PARR

*Featuring interviews with Burt Williams (Morning Dew Vineyard), Ted Lemon (Littorai),  
Chef Daniel Boulud (Restaurant Daniel), Veronique Drouhin (Domaine Drouhin),  
and other wine industry luminaries*

**Santa Barbara, CA** - Celebrated Sommelier **Rajat Parr** (*author, Secrets of the Sommeliers, Wine Director for Michael Mina Restaurants and RN74*) has announced the debut of his web series, **Balancing Act with Rajat Parr**. The series follows Parr as he interviews winemakers, chefs, sommeliers and other professionals and asks them each to illuminate for the audience their definition of balance. "When we light a candle...that first spark; that is what this series should be. These are not answers, these are questions I've had my entire life and hopefully these answers will lead to more questions for the next generation," says Parr. For me, before that word [balance] was lost for a period of time and when I talk to winemakers who've been around for twenty, thirty, forty years; that was always their mantra."

The premiere episode (available here: <http://sandhiwines.com/media>) features Pinot Noir sage, **Burt Williams**, co-founder of the iconic **Williams Selyem** brand. Charmingly candid and humble, Williams is interviewed in the living room of his Morning Dew Ranch house in the Anderson Valley, and provides for a new generation of winemakers and enthusiasts seasoned insights into the state of Pinot Noir today, why balance in Pinot Noir matters and why Pinot Noir belongs, ultimately, with food.

The series was co-created by wine industry visionary, **Charles Banks**. Banks and Parr first partnered in 2010, when Parr, Banks and winemaker, **Sashi Moorman**, created **Sandhi**, a winery focusing primarily on the most celebrated vineyards of the Sta. Rita Hills appellation of Santa Barbara. Finding themselves to be immediately compatible, Banks later approached Parr about launching a series together that would highlight one of Parr's most impassioned pursuits; the pursuit of balance in wine.

The series is produced by Eliza Coleman and Rajat Parr and directed by Andrew Schoneberger (Backyard Studio, Santa Barbara). Parr chose, and will continue to choose, each of the featured guests; many of whom are professionals whom he has admired throughout his career.

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**Rajat Parr:** Born in Calcutta, India, Rajat Parr's first love was food leading him to earn a bachelor's degree from the Welcome Group Graduate School of Hotel Administration and the Culinary Institute of America in New York. Parr credits his uncle in England for first introducing him to great wines, which inspired him to begin his career as an apprentice to one of the industry's most acclaimed master sommeliers, Larry Stone at Rubicon in San Francisco. While working closely with Stone, Raj gained extensive knowledge of great wines from around the world, and developed a particular affection for the wines of Burgundy. In 1999, Parr brought his expertise to Fifth Floor in San Francisco, which quickly received rave reviews and the Grand Award from Wine Spectator after only two years. In 2003, Parr was named Wine Director for the Mina Group, where he has developed and manages the wine programs at each restaurant: ARCADIA (San Jose); MICHAEL MINA Bellagio (formerly AQUA Bellagio), AMERICAN FISH, NOBHILL TAVERN, SEABLUE and STRIPSTEAK (Las Vegas); SEABLUE (Atlantic City); MICHAEL MINA and CLOCK BAR (San Francisco); STONEHILL TAVERN (Dana Point); BOURBON STEAK (Detroit, Scottsdale, Miami, and Washington, D.C.); WIT AND WISDOM (Baltimore) and SALTWATER (Detroit).

**Charles Banks:** After many years as an avid wine consumer and collector, Charles made his official entrance into the wine industry in 2000 by purchasing a former cattle ranch in Santa Barbara County wine country and planting vines on the property. Charles' vineyard and its wines became *Jonata*: a well-respected, high-end Central California wine brand. With Andy Erickson as a consultant and Matt Dees as winemaker, *Jonata* sprang onto the scene in 2005, with its first vintage earning scores of 95-97 points. By 2007, *Jonata* wines were receiving scores of 97-100 points.

In 2006, Charles and a partner bought *Screaming Eagle*, California's "cult Cabernet," known for its 100-point scores and years-long waiting list. As Managing Partner, Charles oversaw the replanting of the vineyard and the design and construction of a new winery alongside Andy Erickson. Simultaneously, Charles was also a Managing Partner at the Napa Valley Reserve. Between the spring of 2009 and the fall of 2010, Charles left his positions as Managing Partner at *Screaming Eagle*, *Jonata*, and *Napa Valley Reserve* to focus on new ventures. In addition to Sandhi Wines, these ventures include *Leviathan*, a Napa winery in partnership with Andy Erickson and Annie Favia; *Mulderbosch*, an historic South African winery; *Fable* (formerly Tulbagh Mountain Vineyards), a property in the Western Cape of South Africa, and a new wine brand that will source juice internationally called *Cultivate*, which launched in the summer of 2011. Charles is also Senior Executive Editor of *Fine Wine Magazines*, which has a global readership of over 2,000,000.