Hakol

The Voice of Congregation B'nai Jacob

Congregation B'nai Jacob of Phoenixville, PA

Cheshvan-Kislev 5784

November 2023

Our mission is to provide a place rooted in Jewish tradition where all people feel welcome, supported and enriched. We strive to foster connections to our past, to our future and to the divine in an intimate, accepting community.

Service Times

Service Times will be contained in the weekly announcements

Candle Lighting

November 3	5:39pm
End DST	
November 10	4:32pm
November 17	4:26pm
November 24	4:22pm

Events	
Dine and Donate- Nov 7	See p. 10
Community Shabbat– Nov 10	See p. 11
Wine Tasting– Nov 11	See p. 12
Adult Education– Nov 12	See p. 13
CBJU Gun Violence- Nov 17	See p. 15
Food Distribution– Nov 18	See p. 14
Interfaith Thanksgiving Service – Nov 22	See p. 15
Blood Drive- December 3	See p. 7
Chanukah Celebrations– Dec 10	See p. 16
Movie Night– Dec 15	See p. 17





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Something Shabbat Every Friday

3rd	Birthday/Anniversary Shabbat with Ice Cream Sundae Oneg– 7:30pm
10th	Community Shabbat– Potluck Dinner with Family Friendly Service—6:30pm
17th	CBJU Speaker Shabbat– 7:30pm
24th	Thanksgiving Weekend– 7:30pm

RABBI'S MESSAGE



Dear Chaveirim/Friends:

In my spare time, I like to plan film festivals. It's fun to do, even if I'm usually the only one in attendance (since most of my movie-watching is done while exercising). After unintentionally watching a movie recently about a family sitting *shiva*

(*This is Where I Leave You*, 2014), then another soon after about a young girl preparing to become a *bat mitzvah* (more about that below), I began constructing an entire Jewish life cycle in movies.

To make life easier, I filtered out movies that showed only a single scene or sub-plot, as opposed to the life cycle moment being the primary story (which meant letting go of such priceless moments as the bar mitzvah scene in Keeping the Faith, or the running sub-plot about bar mitzvah in A Serious Man). And for the sake of sanity, I leave making a similar list out of tv shows to someone else (let's see, the bris in South Park, Charlotte York's wedding to Harry Goldenblatt in Sex and the City, the bar mitzvah in Seinfeld, several episodes of The Simpsons...).

Of course, the most interesting movies depict the most powerful life cycle moments, when individuals, families and communities come together (or are torn apart). Not surprisingly, then, the most intense Jewish lifecycle movies tend to be about a family coming together to sit *shiva*, as tradition compels people who otherwise might not stay in the same room to be trapped with each other for seven days. Aside from the abovementioned *This is Where I Leave You*, there's *My Mexican Shiva*, and for the not faint-at-heart, *Shiva Baby*.

The most difficult *shiva* movie to find was part of a remarkable trilogy by the sibling Israelis Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz. The first followed the unhappy marriage of Viviane Amsalem, *To Take a Wife*. The second is called *Shiva* (in English, sometimes titled *7 Days*, *Seven Days* or *The Seven Days*).

After years of trying to track down Shiva, I had high hopes that the vast resources of the

Cambridge-area universities or the awesome public library there would end my search. And was overjoyed to get an email letting me know that *Shiva* was indeed ready to pick up. When I got to the library, though, I was told that the DVD couldn't be removed from the building. That it could only be watched in a nearby secure room. When I asked why, the answer came back: because this was apparently the only copy in the entire world!

It turned out that it wasn't the *Shiva* that I was looking for, but rather a recording of a performance from Israel, that someone at the university had had some connection to, and so this single copy wound up here. Intrigued, and since it was only an hour long, I got buzzed-into the secure room, where the hushed silence was palpable, and everyone else inside looked deeply serious about whatever they were doing. I put on headphones and watched a haunting (literally, since there was a ghost in it) Israeli drama about a family coming together after the death of a young mother.

With each failure to find the movie, I honed down the search even more precisely, and finally, finally found the correct version of *Shiva*. And then watched as, for seven days. a large family of Moroccan descent came together after a brother died. Being forced to live together again in such close quarters reveals many tensions and conflicts between family members, while the Gulf War rages in the background.

(By the way, the final film in the Elkabetz's trilogy provides one of the few opportunities to see yet another life cycle moment – divorce – depicted in film. It's called *Gett: The Trial of Viviane Amsalem.*)

Weddings of course provide some of the richest fodder for movies, and there are some fascinating entries out there for this unofficial film festival. Consider the Israeli film *The Wedding Plan*, in which an Orthodox woman gets dumped by her fiancé shortly before their wedding, and instead of cancelling, she decides to keep the venue and date and to instead quickly find a different husband.

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RABBI'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

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Or *Fill the Void* (also Israeli), in which a woman delays her engagement when her sister tragically dies in childbirth, and then is encouraged by the community to consider marriage to her widowed brother-in-law.

Overall, the life cycle moment that movie makers seem to have the most fun with is *b'nai mitzvah*. For example, *Keeping Up With the Steins* skewers the ridiculous lengths people go to in order to have ridiculously elaborate parties. Complete with fistfights and even a cameo by Neil Diamond, perhaps best of all is that child actor Ben Sabara was actually studying to become a *bar mitzvah* during production.

The latest *b'nai mitzvah* entry to my unofficial Jewish life cycle film festival is this year's *You Are* So *Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah*. A vehicle for the entire family of Adam Sandler, it features not only him but his two daughters (playing sisters). He is once again (fictionally) married to Idina Menzel (as he was in the amazing *Uncut Gems*), while his real-life wife plays the mother of his daughter's best friend.

The movie is funny, moving, and manages to both mock *b'nai mitzvah* excess while also honoring the deeper meaning of what that life cycle moment means. It also respectfully presents some of the challenges of being a preteen girl in middle school (who's being told that she's on the brink of becoming an adult). It also has some cringe-worthy depictions of a rabbi and a cantor. Conveniently, it's streaming on Netflix.

So let's convene the "CBJ Jewish Life Cycle Movie Discussion Night!" You're invited to watch the movie in advance (either through your own Netflix subscription, or you can set up a movie-watching night with a friend who has one). And then join us for Friday night *Kabbalat Shabbat* services on December 15 (at 7:30 PM), when we will talk about the movie. Please join us even if you don't get the chance to see the movie beforehand.

By the way, if you happen to have your own top submission(s) for the on-going Jewish Life Cycle Film Festival, please shoot me an email with your suggestions. Would love to hear what you've liked (and also, just as much, what you've hated!).

As Roger Ebert z"l and Gene Siskel would say at the end of their review show, "We'll see you at the movies!"

L'Shalom, Rabbi Jeff Sultar

FROM THE RABBI

I Look Forward to Talking with You!

I look forward to meeting with you to talk about, well, just about anything that might be on your mind.

While you can always leave this to chance by just dropping by CBJ, it's best to call or e-mail to set a time for us to meet. While it's wonderful when people just stop by, sometimes people are frustrated that I'm not available when they do so. The problem is that much of the time I'm at CBJ is already

scheduled with meetings; also, I frequently have meetings and Pastoral requirements that take me out of the building; and finally, I usually spend one day a week (typically Thursday) working at home.

For these reasons, never hesitate during "normal" hours to call my cell phone, and please also call the cell number at *any* time for a life-cycle emergency or for any other truly pressing matter. I typically check e-mail at least a few times during the day, but please also know that I have a "dumb" phone and do *not* gete-mails instantly when away from the computer. I get texts just fine.

While I always prefer talking in person, one of emails' best features is that it's good for finding mutually-good times to meet.

So be in touch, and let's figure out a good time to talk!

L'Shalom, Rabbi Jeff Sultar

> E-mail: rabbi@congbj.org Cell Phone: (732) 606-5381

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is my honor to welcome a special guest contributor for this month's President's Message – Larry Liss, CBJ Treasurer with his personal Yom Kippur message and thoughts about CBJ. L'Shalom, Mark

Shalom. I want to wish all those who are here and those who are streaming the service a happy new year and a meaningful fast on this Yom Kippur holiday.

This is my 59th Yom Kippur at B'nai Jacob. My family moved here in August of 1965. My father had just finished his residency in Philadelphia and came here with his wife and five children to begin his practice as an obstetrician and gynecologist. On the very day we moved in we were visited and welcomed to Phoenixville by Estelle Solomon. I wish you all could have known her because she was force of nature. I didn't think much of it at the time because I was just 7 years old. However, that small gesture by Estelle was the essence of the welcoming nature of our congregation.

As an aside, I became a Bar Mitzvah here in 1970. You are all invited on November 4th as I attempt to do my haftarah. I'm sure I was better when I was thirteen but at least you can count on some Jewish soul food after services.

As you can imagine, I've listened to a lot of high holiday appeal speeches. Perhaps this one will be a little different but, you can be the judge of that.

I guess I should begin as they do in the newspapers and on TV when they run an opinion piece. The views and opinions expressed in this speech are mine and mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of management.

Okay, let me get the facts and figures out of the way:

1-Our dues last year covered only 49% of CBJ's operating costs. The high holiday appeal and your donations for honors & aliyahs made up another 24%. 15% was comprised of religious school tuition,

fundraising events, and other general donations. The other 12% was made up of a special appeal we needed to do this spring in order to make our budget and have a little operating cash to start the fiscal year. Thank you to everybody who contributed.

- 2-Only 53% or 61 of our members contributed to this appeal last year. 47% or 54 of our members did not.
- 3-Last year, the pledge amounts for those who gave ranged from \$54 to \$7,500.
- 4-The average pledge amount was \$901.

Our philosophy has always been to keep our dues at a level that can be afforded by most and to hope that those who can afford it step up and make additional donations. It's not the best business model but, somehow we are still here after 110 years.

When I was writing this, I thought to myself, "I don't like telling people what to do." I guess that's because I don't like being told what to do. I also don't like asking for help so it is a bit uncomfortable for me to come before you to plead for money. So, I'm not going to do that. I decided to keep this talk personal to me. You can listen and decide for yourself if I've moved the needle a little bit.

I love this place. I've had a lot of experiences here. I have a lot of history here.

- 1-I attended religious school and junior congregation. Among others, I was taught by Ruth Actor and Estelle Solomon.
- 2-I've made lifelong friends here, some of whom are sitting here today.
- 3-I've attended countless bar and bat mitzvah celebrations here including the ones for my three brothers and my sister. I became a bar mitzvah here. My sons Zachary and Kyle did too.
- 4-I attended USY conventions here.
- 5-My brother Jon was married here.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

Continued form Page 4

6-My mother's and father's funerals were here. My parents are buried at our cemetery and I want to be buried there someday as well.

7-I've also done a few other things here that I won't go into detail about. I'm looking at you Jerry Neumann.

I love this place. I want this place to survive. I believe it is important that CBJ survives.

I'm now in my second year as your treasurer. We have a great board filled with people who devote significant amounts of time, energy, and personal resources with the goal of fulfilling the mission of CBJ. As I mentioned before, we faced a minifinancial crisis last year where it became apparent that we were going to run out of cash before the end of the fiscal year. I suggested at the Executive Committee meeting in January that the only way we could finish the fiscal year with cash in the bank was to make a special appeal for donations. I also said that we could not ask others for money if we were not willing to step up ourselves. Well, no one hesitated and we had 100% participation from the executive committee, which made up about 1/3 of the total amount raised. Heartfelt thanks go out to the executive committee for showing leadership and to all the others in the congregation who contributed to bridge the gap. I don't want this to happen again this year. That's why this appeal is so important.

In my career, I was a CPA and tax advisor for over 30 years. I would field a whole range of questions from clients seeking my opinion. When answering, I'd always give the usual caveats saying this isn't a formal opinion but just my thoughts on your questions. Many times, the question was significant enough that the client would ask for the advice to be in writing. For me, when I have to put something in writing it really makes me think about the issue in much more detail. Writing this speech has made me really think about why this place is important to me and why I want to support this organization.

I receive numerous solicitations for financial help from many organizations. When deciding whether to contribute, I ask myself if the organization is worthy of my support and how my donation will help others. I have concluded that CBJ is such an organization and is worthy of my support. I'll give you some reasons why.

- 1-I had kids in the religious school but don't anymore. The amount charged by CBJ does not cover the full cost of tuition. My donation helps make it possible for children to get a Jewish education and have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
- 2-The yahrzeits for my parents are coming up soon. Like many others, I want to say Kaddish. My donations allow CBJ to provide the opportunity for our community to come together in our gathering place and do that.
- 3-I would say that I am a sporadic attendee at services but there is a core of our congregants who, pardon the pun, religiously attend. My donations allow our community to offer these services to continue for all those who want to attend.
- 4-Life events happen all the time. A birth, a death, a bar or bat mitzvah, a baby naming, a wedding, etc. My donations help make it possible for families undergoing these important events to be supported by our congregation.
- 5-It can be lonely out there. It is paradoxical technological that while all the advancements we have seen in our lifetimes such as the internet, social media, 24 hour cable TV are billed as things that open up the world to me, they often have the opposite effect of isolating me from others. I believe we need places where community can come together in a physical place and feel welcomed and supported so they can learn, socialize, and strengthen relationships. My donations help make this possible.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

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- 6-I believe that it is vitally important that CBJ continue to be part of the Phoenixville and Chester County communities. In fact, it would be a tragedy if the day came that we are no longer here. Not just for us who belong here but for the community at large. My donations help sustain and strengthen our greater community.
- 7-Finally, my donations help us to pursue our mission which is to provide a place, rooted in Jewish tradition, where all people feel welcome, supported and enriched. We strive to foster connections to our past, to our future and to the divine in an intimate, accepting community. What can be better than that?

In my appeal letter to the congregation earlier this month, I asked those who did not give last year to consider giving this year and for those who did give last year to consider increasing their donation by 10%. Upon reflection, I do not think this is enough to sustain us. Therefore, Wendy and I have decided to double the amount we gave last year to the high holiday appeal. I hope you will consider doing the same.

Once again, I want to wish everybody a happy, healthy, and prosperous new year and the same for our beloved CBJ.

Larry Liss, Treasurer



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

It's October 15th and finally we can say that school has started! We welcomed 23 students including three new families to our community. Students and teachers spent the morning getting to know each other and starting routines and activities including Havdalah, tefillah, and JRA. Meanwhile the parents heard details about school and synagogue programming from education committee chair, Jennifer Ford-Bey, Mark and Lori Snow, representing the board and sisterhood respectively, and Rabbi Sultar.

An exciting announcement is that the Parent/child classes for preschool age children will be resuming this year. Under the leadership of Bekah Starr, there will be three programs planned coinciding with religious school programming, The first program is for Hanukkah on December 10. More details to come!







SISTERHOOD



Women of Congregation B'nai Jacob: **all** are welcome to join Sisterhood. Be part of the backbone of CBJ!

Leagrams – Our biggest fundraiser is back for the New Year. This is a great way to remember your CBJ women friends' birthdays and anniversaries. Be sure to see your recent mailing for more information.

November 5 – Catherine Aucella, Executive Director of the NSA, will speak to us in November.

December 3 and 9 – Sisterhood Gift Shop sale dates, and I've had my eye on that VW Bus menorah for years! Could this be the year I treat myself to it? Splurge – for your friends or for yourself!

We're Pondering some Possibilities:

Bowling for Yentas

Philadelphia Jewish walking or trolley tour One or two more Re-gifting Bingo nights

It's going to be a great year for CBJ Sisterhood, and all of us look forward to seeing all of you!

SISTERHOOD CALENDAR 2023–2024

2023

October 4, 7pm Sukkah Nosh and Re-gifting Bingo

November 5, 3pm Sisterhood Speaker

December 3 and 9 Holiday Gift Shop Sale 9am – 1pm

2024

March 17 Tour of Jaffa (Yafo, as it is now called) March 19 Social Event

April 5 Sisterhood Shabbat, led by Jodi Rosenfeld June (TBD) Karen Real Torah Fund Luncheon

THANKS

CBJ thanks the CBJ Sisterhood for providing the wine for Kiddush.

HOUSE AND GROUNDS

Help wanted...House and Grounds

The House and Grounds committee (of 1) is looking for volunteers to help from time to time.

Duties include setting up tables and chairs for High Holidays and other events, setting up and taking down the Sukkah and Hanukah Menorah, changing light bulbs and batteries in fire and burglar alarm systems and small handyman tasks.

There is also some outside clean up and maintenance, as well as needing help from time to time opening and closing the building for contractors.

Timing is generally very flexible.

If you can help, please contact Chuck Epstein at CLEpstein@gmail.com or 610-212-7744 (leave a message). Thank you!

Chuck Epstein

BLOOD DRIVE

WE NEED YOU! Please sign up for CBJ's 16th annual Red Cross Blood Drive. It will be held **Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023–8:30am-1:30pm.**

Sign up online at <u>RedCrossBlood.org</u> or contact Diane Liss at <u>dianeliss@comcast.net</u> or 610-935-8646.

Thank you for your life saving donations.

—Diane Liss

B'NAI JACOB CEMETERY

The Board of Directors of B'nai Jacob Cemetery Association has approved changes in fees that will take effect on 1 January 2024. The Perpetual Care Fee for CBJ members will be \$1,800, a 20% increase. Similar increases to other fees, which do not apply to CBJ members, will also go into effect. Fees have been held unchanged for the past 2-1/2 years and are now being adjusted to reflect the increase in costs that the Cemetery is experiencing.

All persons wishing to have B'nai Jacob Cemetery be their final resting place must reserve a burial lot in advance of need. CBJ members can reserve a burial lot without advance payment of fees. By pre-paying prior to need, however, CBJ members can ensure that the Cemetery's Perpetual Care Fee is "locked-in" for them or their estate and not subject to the current increase or future increases. Payments can be spaced-out over time to help ease financial burden.

B'nai Jacob Cemetery Association is a non-profit public charity that owns and manages the Cemetery. There are no paid employees. The Cemetery is a traditional Jewish cemetery that adheres to the rulings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly of Conservative Judaism. Deceased persons of the Jewish faith and those deceased persons who were not Jewish, but were part of a Jewish family, can be buried in the Cemetery.

If you are considering making a reservation for a burial lot, would like to now pre-pay a fee for a reservation that you have already made or just wish to find out more about the Cemetery, please contact Valerie in the CBJ office. You will be put in touch with a representative of the Cemetery who will be able to provide information and assistance.

Steve Skopp President, B'nai Jacob Cemetery Association

Support CBJ with our New Easy to Use CBJ RaiseRight Scrip Program

SCRIP PROGRAM

Support the new CBJ RaiseRight (formerly Shopwithscrip) by purchasing gift cards to your favorite stores and restaurants!

You purchase cards at face value and CBJ receives 2-20% on every purchase. Enjoy the convenience of having access to over 750 top brands from the comfort of your home or the ease of your phone!

ACME, Giant, Amazon, Target, Walmart, Home Depot, GrubHub and many more! Birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduations, donate to people in need...

I Instructions are below but you may always contact Lisa Anton, Scrip Coordinator, at lanton109@yahoo.com help you through the process.

Easy Enrollment on either your computer or phone:

- 1. Go to www.raiseright.com
- 2. Click "Join a Program" (desktop) or "Register" (cell)
- 3. Enter enrollment code: 97999E3432453
- 4. Follow the prompts to create your account and start shopping!
- 5. Your cart will show your total cost and CBJ's profit.
- 6. Pay directly from your bank account (with a \$.15 ACH fee) or use a credit card.

For any questions or if you would like to pay with a check, please contact Lisa Anton, Scrip Coordinator, at lanton109@yahoo.com

MEET OUR MEMBERS

As an initiative of Team Engage, we will be sharing interviews with CBJ members to promote engagement within the congregation.

Meet Paul Richman and Naomi Muhlberg who interviewed themselves on behalf of Team Engage. We are delighted to welcome them to our congregation!

What is your role at CBJ (member, board, trustee, other?)

<u>Paul:</u> I am a member that serves on a committee to bring young families to CBJ. Naomi: I am a new member.

Where were you born? Where did you grow up? How long have you lived in this area?

<u>Paul:</u> I was born in Abington Hospital, but grew up in the Northeast section of Philadelphia. Like my grandfather, father and brother, we all graduated from Northeast High School, in the School District of Philadelphia. As children, my brother and I went to Hebrew School and were Bar Mitzvahed at Oxford Circle Jewish Community Circle B'nai Israel. It was a great neighborhood to grow up in. We lived in the Northeast until I was a Junior at Shippensburg University. I got my bachelor's degree in secondary education from Ship, and went on to get a master's in elementary education from Holy Family University. I have taken numerous classes from a wide variety of local universities in obtaining my +60 master's credits.

<u>Naomi:</u> I was born and raised in Cherry Hill, NJ. I lived there until I was 18 and then moved around the country for school and work until I returned to the area in 2014.

How long have you been a member of CBJ?

Paul and Naomi: Since December 2022

What brought you to CBJ?

<u>Paul and Naomi:</u> We wanted to find an egalitarian conservative synagogue that we could raise a family with. We wanted to find a place we can call "home." We want our daughter to join the religious school and become a bat mitzvah at CBJ.

What is your favorite Jewish "soul food?"

Paul: Brisket and kasha

Naomi: Knishes

What do you like to do when you are not at CBJ?

<u>Paul:</u> I love to go for long runs on the Chester Valley Trail. I also play in a pick-up basketball game every Sunday morning. I enjoy spending time with my wife, daughter, family and friends.

Naomi: I love to cook and garden, travel and spend time with friends and family.

Do you have any other things you want people to know about you?

<u>Paul:</u> I am a veteran teacher in the Philadelphia School District, teaching 2nd grade in the West Oak Lane neighborhood of the city. I teach a course of best practices to new teachers in the district, and I am the union rep for teachers in my building.

Naomi: I am a Food Scientist, specializing in dairy flavors.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

Livestream All Services

We are excited to announce CBJ Livestream! Just follow these steps:

- 1. Go to <u>www.congbj.org</u> from your PC, Laptop, Tablet or Phone
- Scroll down and click the button under Services – WATCH LIVESTREAM
- 3. Complete the very brief form and click SUBMIT
- You will be taken to the CBJ Livestream page (BOXCAST) for the service

Welcome to our New CBJ Members!

Myra and Paul Segal from Collegeville

Karl and Lauren Mellander and children, Micah and Jude from Pottstown

Jesse Krasno from Pottsville



CBJ COVID POLICY

UPDATED

Covid vaccination and up-to-date booster status is strongly encouraged for all who are eligible.

NOTE: Covid vaccination is no longer required.

Masking is encouraged, especially for those who are unvaccinated or otherwise high risk. CBJ is a mask friendly community, and everyone who chooses to should feel comfortable masking.

NOTE: Masking is not required.

If you have an illness (e.g., fever, cough, flu-like symptoms, sore throat, etc.), then please stay home.

Food and drink are allowed (as per pre-Covid CBJ policy).

Live streaming will continue.

COMMUNITY SHABBAT IS COMING!



Friday, November 10th 6:30 pm

Community Shabbat:

Please Join us for at 6:30 pm for Pot Luck Dinner Followed by a 7:30 pm Family-friendly Service



IN OUR COMMUNITY

CBJ Wine Tasting Fundraiser

Date: Saturday Evening, November 11th at 7:00 pm

Location: Dr. Joel and Judy Eisner's lovely home on Creek Rd.

(just minutes from CBJ)

Cost: \$60 per person - This event is open to adult members, friends, and families.

Registration: Call the CBJ office at 610-933-5550 or go to the CBJ website to

register/pay by Credit Card – www.congbj.org

Please join us for a fun evening of wine tasting. The tasting will be led by Moore Brothers Wine Company. We will be tasting 5 wines, including one or two that might elevate your Thanksgiving and/or New Year's festivities.

Our evening will begin at 7:00 pm and will include a Kosher style cold buffet dinner. Come and enjoy an evening of fun, wine tasting and education, good food, and socialization.



About Moore Brothers Wine Company

Moore Brothers Wine Company is unique. In 1996, Greg Moore, Sommelier and General Manager of the renowned Le Bec-Fin, and his brother David, a prominent wine retailer, created a wine store that reimagined the retail wine experience.

They represent the work of winegrowers committed to sustainable farming, small



production, and the traditions of their respective regions. Many of the producers they represent are considered among the finest in the world. Through personal relationships with these small wineries, the wines come directly from the cellars under perfect temperature controlled systems.