

Former Yankees' star - turned musician & wine enthusiast - Bernie Williams builds relationship with Millbrook Winery

By Morgan E. Maier

It began with a mystery motorcyclist zipping through the Hudson Valley's back roads. As Millbrook Winery owner David Bova discovered the identity of the wine enthusiast in front of him, a harmony based in community and identity was soon to follow.

A handful of summers removed from that encounter, Bernie Williams has proven to a master of swings and strings. From a performing arts school in Puerto Rico to baseball in the Bronx, he has brought his tune to the Millbrook Winery for the last three summers. Williams, along with his Band of Friends, will perform a set on Millbrook's Winery's grounds on June 28, a night of programming to benefit the Dutchess Community College (DCC) music program.

For those who care to know his favorite Yankees head coach, Williams will share, but his concerts are best spent to enjoy a glass of well-made vino and spend an evening with the sounds of jazz.

Featuring an ensemble band of DCC students as the opening act, this event offers an opportunity to engage with Williams as sounds of jazz fill the open air. Grab a bite, grab a chair, and bring a friend to enjoy an evening which, according to Williams, often stretches until dark.

In partnership with the Dutchess Community College Foundation, \$10 from each ticket sale will be placed back into the music program. Limited quantities of VIP tickets, including a bottle of "Bernie's Blend," open wine bar and meet and greet with Williams, are on sale. Lawn tickets will be reserved - for best experience, bring your own chairs!

Williams' guitar pairs quite well with a glass of full-bodied, locally made wine. Bernie's Blend, created by Williams and Millbrook winemaker Ian Bearup, has been an artistic endeavor since that destined meeting in 2021. This evening will also debut three batches blended by Williams himself: a 2022 vintage blending Cabernet



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-Courtesy photo

Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet France; the Chardonnay created in 2023; and Pinot Noir varietals from 2021.

"When it comes to the blending of the flavors and the aromatics, that's when the art really comes in. So we were able to connect on that level, and then kind of take it from there," said Bearup.

A partnership that began with Bearup's eagerness to see Williams' artistic side has evolved over the years. As palettes change, percentages and flavor profiles follow suit. Like music, a minor adjust-

ment to elevate a blend of notes.

Like Williams' music, the beauty of winemaking is in the details - the minor adjustments to elevate a blend of notes.

Time with Bernie and his guitar is a moment shared with longtime friends. Whether one met Williams through his debut album "The Journey Within" (2003), or #51 was your grandfather's favorite ballplayer in the '90s, the music begets memories.

His on-field talents and adoration-inducing personality are matched evenly

with his on-stage appeal and personable. Deeply ingrained in his being since childhood, music was an escape from the bright lights of baseball. Outside of passion, opportunities for improvement offers Williams a different perspective on his music.

"It takes a lot of the work to make it good, and that's one of the things that I find fascinating. Baseball, I kind of know my limitations. Music, on the other hand, I don't know how good I'll get," said Williams. He is ever-growing in his musical journey, constantly practicing, always listening to music. All types of music, too, because Williams is more than just a jazz person.

DCC music students Jevaughn Brown and Pedro Velez de Assis joined Williams for a short set at Hyde Park's Inn at Bellefield, to preview the June 28 festivities. The trio blended their individual notes through the setlist curated by Brown, which included the Bill Withers/"Just the Two of Us" and Williams' original composition "Desvellado."

As Williams calls on his childhood swirling with music, a deep sense of identity is felt with the trio's every chord.

"We are three men of color, all from different countries, that have found a community here and are doing our best to uplift it," said Velez de Assis.

Once the audience joined the chorus of the finale, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," the most seasoned baseball veterans could have shed a tear. The music fills a room, a silence at a table, yet each note makes both seem smaller.

"Music as a whole, it's very powerful. It's the healing power of music: to get you out of a bad mood, to pump you up working out, to inspire you when you feel down," Williams said.

Summer afternoons at Millbrook spent with Williams often stretch to the nighttime, an opportunity to dance, enjoy some food and good wine, and feel inspired under the stars.

Obituaries

Michelle A. Walker



Michelle A. Walker, 62, of Hopewell Junction, passed surrounded by family on May 22, 2025 in her home after a brief but courageous battle with cancer.

Michelle was born on May 29, 1962 in Manchester, UK to Scottish parents-June & George Walker. She first landed in Minnesota and at age 7, her family settled in NY. She graduated from Arlington High School in the Class of 1980. Michelle moved to Boston alongside her best friend, Heidi Schlipmann and began her career in the car business. She returned to NY in the late 80's and was blessed with her lifelong dream of motherhood in the year 2000. Michelle was later inspired to show her daughter that anything was possible and graduated from DCC in 2014 with a degree in Paralegal studies.

Michelle loved to explore- Skiing in Switzerland, finding love for cuisine in

France, she even got to visit her parents' hometown of Glasgow. She traveled to many cities from California to Florida, but her happiest times were oceanside with her family. She spent most of her summers in Cape May, NJ, but her discovery of LBI led to carrying on summer traditions there. Her fondest and most heartfelt memories were in Beach Haven with her daughter, Fiona Walker.

Michelle loved sandy toes, animals of all kinds, Rock & Roll, a good drink to complement a better meal, and was always one to make you realize that life is worth living. Her fierce personality meant all those beside her were heavily protected. Her integrity and selflessness allowed her to experience the deepest bonds with those she loved. She was a truly fearless mother and individual. Her perseverance, determination & strength was apparent through her cancer journey. Up until her last moment she was more concerned for those around her than herself.

Michelle survived by her daughter, Fiona Walker & her fiancé Peter Pasqualini Jr.; her parents, June Walker (Murray) & George Walker; Her sister, Adele Walker; Her brother, Iain Walker; and her nephews, Austin & Zaine Walker.

Michelle's last party commenced on her 63rd birthday- May 29, 2025 at McHoul Funeral Home, Inc., 895 Route 82, Hopewell Junction.

Our deepest thanks for your love of Michelle and for your presence in paying her respects. Love always, the Walker Family.

Sylvia Jean Hutchings



Sylvia Jean Hutchings passed away on May 21, 2025 at Vassar Brothers Medical Center at age 80.

She was born on October 14, 1944 in Cortland, NY to the late Leroy and Frieda (Cook) Hopkins. On August 14, 1962, Sylvia married her husband Clyde E. Hutchings. He predeceased her in 2004.

Sylvia loved to sing worship songs, talk with her friends and family over the phone, and to share her passion of cuisine. She always showed those around her the love of God and would share her beliefs with everyone. She loved being surrounded by the color purple and butterflies.

Sylvia is survived by her sons: Clyde E. Hutchings Jr. and his husband Paul of Trinity, FL and Kenneth L. Hutchings and his wife Victoria

Hutchings of Poughquag, NY; her grandchildren: Sonya M. Hutchings, Sasha J. Hutchings, Shinea H. Hutchings, and Saun H. Hutchings, all of Poughquag, NY; her great grandson Zayne A. Hutchings; her sisters: Linda Fellows of Arizona, and Patty Brookins of Cortland, NY; her sister-in-law Frankie Hutchings of Alabama; and her two nephews Robert Hutchings of Florida and Walter Hutchings of Alabama.

In addition to her husband Clyde, Sylvia was predeceased by her two sisters: Cindy Hopkins and Jacklyn Henry.

Sylvia's life was a testament to love, resilience, and the power of family. She will be deeply missed but fondly remembered by all whose lives she touched.

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