

Brad Pitt sues Angelina Jolie over sale of the winery where they got married

By Christie D’Zurilla
Los Angeles Times February 18, 2022



*Angelina Jolie has been sued by her ex Brad Pitt after selling her stake in their jointly owned winery without getting his approval first.
(Associated Press)*

Call it the War of the Rosés: [Brad Pitt](#) is suing ex-wife [Angelina Jolie](#) over what he says was the unauthorized sale of her stake in Chateau Miraval, the French wine estate that he says is now successful because of his “sweat equity” and his solo financial investments.

A civil case filed Thursday in Los Angeles says Jolie used legal means to skirt their understood contractual terms and sold to an “aggressive third-party competitor” — a conglomerate owned by Russian vodka billionaire [Yuri Shefler](#) — that Pitt says is trying to take over his Miraval rosé business.

Pitt is seeking a jury trial with a goal of undoing Jolie’s sale to Shefler’s subsidiary company Tenute del Mondo.

Despite discussions in recent years around a full or partial buyout by Pitt of Jolie's shares in the company that owns and runs Chateau Miraval, the "Maleficent" actor allegedly pulled out of talks with her ex last year and then completed a sale of her shares without getting his approval, breaking an understanding between them.

The couple, who met on the set of the 2005 movie "Mr. and Mrs. Smith," acquired the estate years before getting married there in 2014. Though the two became legally single in 2019, their contentious [celebrity divorce](#) proceedings are still ongoing.

Pitt says in his lawsuit that he was incorrectly led to believe, before they purchased the property from an American wine hobbyist, that it was self-sustaining. Upon learning it was not, Pitt embarked on a journey to bring the winery up to snuff and make it profitable.

During the transformation, the lawsuit says, it was Pitt who invested his money and effort without resistance from Jolie. Husband and wife had a 60-40 split, respectively, when they bought the place. The company they had formed to own and run Chateau Miraval partnered in 2013 in a 50-50 joint venture with winemaker Marc Perrin's company to turn Miraval's business around.

By 2013, the document says, in the midst of preliminary renovations, Jolie had stopped contributing altogether. Though Pitt's financial investment rose to about 70% of the total, he allowed a 50-50 split in shares of the controlling company.

In September 2016, Jolie filed for divorce.

Still, Pitt's winery plan had succeeded, with the chateau's namesake Miraval rosé growing from the 6,000-bottle vintage that sold out immediately in 2013 to a line of rosé wines — including sparkling and lower-cost offerings — that brought in more than \$50 million in revenue in 2021.

The former couple had discussed a full or partial buyout by Pitt in 2017 and again in 2019. Then in January 2021, the lawsuit says, Jolie explained "she could no longer maintain any ownership position in an alcohol-based business given her personal objections." The two resumed their sale negotiations, continuing into mid-2021.

Then things took a turn, according to the lawsuit. Jolie's representatives cut off talks. Pitt found out in October that Jolie had completed a sale to Tenute del Mondo, a subsidiary of Stoli Group, which is owned by Shefler.

Around that time, Jolie asked the court to lift certain prohibitions on selling properties in the context of the divorce.

“When Angelina asked to be free from the restrictions in the divorce case against selling property pending a resolution of all property issues, Brad consented in September 2021, except as to the winery, making it clear that he did not consent to any sale of the home or wine business,” said Christopher C. Melcher, a [celebrity divorce attorney](#) in Woodland Hills who reviewed the new case but has not worked on the Pitt-Jolie divorce. “If true, Angelina was on notice in September that Brad had not consented to the sale.”

The lawsuit says Jolie “hid the discussions and declined to disclose the terms of her contemplated deal to Pitt at all. Pitt still does not know what those terms are.”

Since the deal went down, Pitt’s company and Shefler’s have been unable to agree on the management and strategic direction of the company that runs Chateau Miraval, the suit says, and Pitt also complains that he can no longer enjoy his private residence, as it is co-owned by strangers.

“Brad claims Angelina agreed that they would never sell their separate interests in the home and winemaking business without the other’s consent, but she broke that promise by selling her share without Brad’s consent,” said Christopher Melcher, who is ranked as a [best family law attorney](#) in California and is a partner at [top family law firm](#) Walzer Melcher LLP. “The lawsuit was just filed, so Angelina has not provided her side of the story.”

Still, he said Friday, “It was highly risky for the purchaser to pay anything for Angelina’s interest without Brad’s consent, as their pending divorce troubles are well known.”

In addition to the undoing of the sale, Pitt is seeking restitution, unspecified compensatory and punitive damages, and the imposition of a trust over Jolie’s shares in the company that has run Chateau Miraval.