

# CUVAISON

ESTATE WINES



## Steve Rogstad Winemaker

The role geography plays in determining a wine's character was brought home to Steve Rogstad years ago during a six-month internship in Beaujolais. A graduate student in UC Davis' viticulture and enology program, Steve was tasked with testing a non-commercial yeast strain on experimental lots of wine from fifty different wineries across the appellation.

"Working with just one varietal and tasting fifty different wines from one region, I really started to understand the concept of terroir," says Steve, who runs the vineyards and winemaking for Napa Valley's Cuvaison and Brandlin, both of Cuvaison Estate Wines. "It made an impression that lasts to this day." The experience also taught Steve how to isolate and work with small wine lots, a practice that is at the core of his winemaking philosophy at both wineries.

Steve, who grew up the youngest of six children from a North Dakota farm family, became interested in wine during an earlier stay in France in the mid-1980's. Living above a wine shop in Paris, he was intrigued by the culture of wine, and began attending shows such as the Foire de Paris and Salon d'Agriculture to taste and learn as much as he could. Armed with an English degree from The University of Washington, he opted to return to the States and take the necessary courses required to study Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis.

After Davis and his Beaujolais internship, Steve embarked on a career in winemaking that has included positions at La Crema, Saintsbury, Rombauer – where he worked with custom crush clients Viader, Dominus, Duckhorn and Spottswoode -- Spring Mountain Vineyard and Clos Pegase. He credits each winery, and the mentors he engaged, with showing him different ways of looking at winemaking and viticulture. "I've been lucky to work with some of the best -- Dick Ward, David Graves, Tony Soter, Craig Williams, Rex Geitner, Ted Lemon, Byron Kosuge, Craig MacLean. They've all had an influence."

Steve joined Cuvaison in 2002, enticed by the winery's estate vineyard in Carneros and by the opportunity to build a winery from the ground up. He oversaw the construction of the new winery, ensuring it was "purpose built" to optimally handle the fruit from Cuvaison's estate vineyard.

"It's a big advantage having a custom-built winery for the estate," says Steve. "Each vineyard block has a home in a vessel specifically meant for that wine; we have the luxury of moving our wines when we want to vs. when we have to. The end result is higher quality across the board."

Steve's role managing the certified sustainable vineyards at both Cuvaison and Brandlin also gives him unusual control over the quality of the fruit. "It's great for me as a winemaker. The ability to be both proactive and reactive in the vineyard and winery -- to make those hundreds of decisions from vine to bottle -- is an intellectual challenge and crucial for reaching my goal: to ensure that our wines express the potential of our estate vineyards in the most authentic way possible year after year."