



STEVEN CANTER—WINEMAKER



Winemaker Steven Canter has worn many hats over the years, including stints as a professional chef, wilderness canoe guide and even heavy metal lead guitarist. But since he first took a job in a wine shop in his native Boston, wine has been a driving passion for him. “Learning about wine in a market like Boston was great in that there was a lot more interest in ‘old-world’ wines”.

This fascination with traditional, natural wine growing led Steven away from the modern academic path when he decided to pursue winemaking. “When I moved to California, I was struck by how many winemakers I met seemingly had no knowledge or even interest in what the rest of the winemaking world had been up to for the past eight thousand years”. Steven decided that working under winemakers that made great wine, rather than “some guy in a lab coat” was a more appealing route.

Over the next decade, he worked harvests in South Africa, Australia’s Barossa Valley, Italy’s Montalcino and Alto-adige regions, Oregon, and six different California Appellations. “I saw many different approaches in both the vineyard and cellar. But what became very clear was that healthy plants in living soils make the best tasting fruit. Once you have good grapes, winemaking is simply acting as the guide or shepherd to a natural process. I try to work with, rather than fight, the grape’s desire to become wine. Wild yeast, naturally occurring bacteria and minimal handling are the basic tools I employ to that end.”

After meeting his wife Victoria on Nantucket Island, the couple settled in Sonoma County, where Steven worked as head winemaker for Davis Bynum and Baker Lane, before playing a major role in the reinvention of Quivira Vineyards. “Career wise, things could not have been better, but Victoria and I were looking to live more of a homesteading lifestyle that was at conflict with the encroaching suburbia of Sonoma”. When the opportunity to work with the Merlo Family came up in the spring of 2012, we knew we had found home.”



Surrounded by the Trinity Alps and wilderness, Hyampom Valley is home to just 250 people and almost an hour to the next town. Wild salmon return to spawn just yards from the vineyard and, in the morning, it is not uncommon to see the tracks of mountain lions on the crush pad. “I feel incredibly lucky to grow and make wine in such a pristine environment, and am able to raise my family here”