



ARISTA

Russian River Valley

OVERVIEW

Arista Winery was founded by Al and Janis McWilliams in 2002 with a mission to craft artisanal, site-driven Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Russian River Valley. From the beginning, the McWilliams have firmly believed that the finest examples of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are produced in small lots. This belief has led to an emphasis on quality over quantity and a determination to discover and develop unique vineyard sites that reflect the distinct characteristics of the Russian River Valley. We are committed to sustainable farming practices. We work closely with local growers who share our dedication to sustainability in their vineyards. We do not attempt to manipulate our vineyard sites but instead strive to preserve each vineyard's natural qualities.



PHILOSOPHY

The core principle of the winemaking approach at Arista is the capture and expression of the character and potential of the vineyard. We work with a very carefully chosen handful of grand-cru level Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards and are uncompromising in our efforts to maximize the potential of the wines which we craft from these special sites. To us, this means working every day in the vineyards to ensure that we start with the highest-quality grapes, and then working meticulously in the cellar to capture every bit of quality and nuance in the bottle.



We also strongly believe that our exclusive use of native fermentations allows us to express the character of the vineyard and the vintage in the most pure and transparent manner. Every Arista Pinot Noir and Chardonnay is fermented using only the unique mix of naturally occurring yeast populations that reside in each of our vineyards and arrive at the winery on the grapes on the day of harvest. The resulting fermentations are gentle, gradual, cool and quite slow, but result in wines that have incredible complexity, unique personalities and are exquisitely expressive of their sites.



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ESTATE VINEYARDS

On our 36-acre parcel we have 10 acres planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The rest of the land is dedicated to winery and production space, our home site, and our estate farm and gardens. Of the 10 planted acres, we have nine acres of Pinot Noir and one acre of Chardonnay. The estate is broken further into distinct vineyard blocks determined by soil type and slope aspect.

Each block is farmed independently and is planted to specific rootstocks in order to optimize vine health and ensure vine balance and even ripening. Additionally, each block is planted to various heritage selections of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay personally selected by the McWilliams family from some of the most historic vineyards within the Russian River Valley. Our belief is that using plant material that has existed within the Russian River Valley for multiple generations versus buying mass propagated and generic plant material from nurseries ensures genetic diversity and health within our vineyards.

TWO BIRDS VINEYARD

The Two Birds Vineyard is one of four estate vineyards, named after proprietors Al and Janis McWilliams, whose nickname for one another is “bird,” and whose home sits on the hill overlooking this vineyard. Planted in 2006, the three-acre vineyard is planted to three heritage selections of Pinot Noir. The soil in the Two Birds Vineyard is a mixture of loam and clay loam called Zamora clay loam — soil that is perfectly suited for Pinot Noir. The Two Birds Vineyard consistently produces a wine of great depth and intensity commonly associated only with wines grown in the Middle Reach of the Russian River Valley.

HARPER’S REST VINEYARD

The Harper’s Rest Vineyard is the coolest microclimate on our estate and lies at the entrance to our estate. This portion of land was once part of an ancient riverbed. Over the millennia, the shifting course of the Russian River deposited alluvial material that created soils that can best be described as gravelly loam (Arbuckle Gravelly Loam). These extremely well-drained soils have a relatively shallow layer of top soils (14 to 20 inches) followed by layers of river pebbles and weathered stone. The vines’ root systems plunge deep beneath the earth in search of water and nutrients. The strain to find water serves as a natural means to the keep vine vigor in check. Resulting yields tend to be less than two tons per acre, which often result in wines with more structure and finesse.

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ARISTA

ESTATE VINEYARDS

HARPER'S REST VINEYARD (cont.)

The vineyard is named to honor Ruben Harper, a pioneer farmer who settled in the Russian River Valley in the mid-1800s and homesteaded what is now the Arista estate. Ruben is buried under a California Bay Laurel in the middle of this two-acre vineyard. His headstone and the original rock wall surrounding his gravesite still stand and can be seen on the estate.

SEVEN STORIES VINEYARD

The Seven Stories Vineyard is a mass selection block and was planted as a tribute to or anthology of seven of the earliest and most historic Russian River Valley Pinot Noir vineyards. The budwood from these seven vineyards was chosen, combined, and then inter-planted in a random fashion to replicate the genetic diversity found in many great Old World vineyards. The vineyard sits atop Sobrante silt loam, which is a very well-drained soil, formed from weathered igneous and metamorphic rocks.

BEE TREE VINEYARD

Much like the Seven Stories Vineyard, the Bee Tree Vineyard is a mass selection vineyard planted to several heritage selections of Pinot Noir. The soils in Bee Tree are similar to those of Two Birds and are defined by Zamora clay loam. This site is very cool and is often one of the last blocks picked on our estate. The wines from the Bee Tree Vineyard tend to have deep color and perfumed aromatics.

The name of the vineyard is a reference to the ancient oak tree that sits in the middle of the vineyard. Since we've owned the property there has been a native colony of honeybees that have made the tree their home. Fortunately, they are very friendly bees, but our vineyard workers always keep a watchful eye as they work this block!

CHARDONNAY BLOCK

Probably the rarest wine we make is from our one-acre Chardonnay vineyard located on the southern edge of our estate. The budwood for this estate was a bootlegged selection of Chardonnay from the Montrachet Vineyard. The soils on this site are Sobrante loam and are well drained, making them ideal as they serve to naturally slow vigor and help the vine to achieve a state of balance. Yields are extremely low, making production minuscule. If you ever have the chance to taste this wine, it does not disappoint!



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OUR GROWERS

Besides our estate vineyards, we also source grapes from several small, responsibly farmed vineyards throughout the Russian River Valley and the Sonoma Coast. In addition to our Sonoma County sites, we source grapes from Mendocino County’s two most prestigious Pinot Noir appellations: Anderson Valley and Mendocino Ridge. Our commitment is to sustainable farming practices, and we’ve carefully chosen grower partners who pursue these same principles. We do not attempt to manipulate our vineyard sites but instead strive to preserve each vineyard’s natural qualities.

FERRINGTON VINEYARD

The Ferrington Vineyard, one of California’s most acclaimed Pinot Noir Vineyards, sells to eight wineries and is tucked away just off Highway 128 in Booneville, a small town in the heart of the Anderson Valley. Twenty-five acres are planted to multiple clones of Pinot Noir. We have selected blocks that include the Swiss Clone 2A, also known as Wadenswil, as well as Dijon Clones 667 and 777. The vineyard has a gentle south-facing slope and decomposed sandstone and clay soils with three to four feet of topsoil. This vineyard was originally planted in the late 1960s, although some of the 25 acres of Pinot Noir vines were planted in 1998 and some even more recently.

The Ferrington Vineyard also serves as the source of our highly acclaimed dry Gewurztraminer. We source from two blocks in the vineyard which are planted to separate clones of Gewurztraminer. The combination of clones allows us to produce an intensely aromatic wine that is layered with fruit and spice, all classic characteristics of one of the world’s most interesting grapes.

RITCHIE VINEYARD

Kent Ritchie proudly oversees his legendary namesake vineyard located in the heart of the Russian River Valley at the intersection of Trenton Road and Eastside Road. This Chardonnay vineyard was planted in the early 1970s to a handful of heritage selections and clones. Now, 40 years later, these thick, gnarled vines produce some of the most highly sought after wines from a choice selection of California’s most respected Chardonnay producers. Our block has a gentle, southwest exposure and sits atop a shallow mixture of Goldridge soil, volcanic pumice and small river pebbles. The confluence of ideal soils, exposure and climate produces the perfect conditions to grow world-class Chardonnay. Due to vine age, clonal selection and soil type, the yields are naturally low which helps to further concentrate flavor and define this unique vineyard’s voice.

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ARISTA

OUR GROWERS

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TOBONI VINEYARD

Joe and Mary Toboni and their family own a 15-acre Pinot Noir vineyard near the intersection of Olivet Lane and River Road in the heart of the Russian River Valley. Fourth-generation San Franciscans, the Toboni family has ties to Sonoma County going back to the 1920s.

The beautiful sloped vineyard matches great soils (loamy clay with some mineral and gravel composites) with proper rootstock (101-14), and French clones of Dijon 115, 667, 777 and Pommard 5. These four clones of Pinot Noir were planted to individual blocks based on soil composition to maximize the warm days and cool nights we experience in the Russian River Valley. Trellising is a vertical system with narrow row spacing of 6 by 5 or 6 feet between rows and 5 feet between each vine. This spacing makes farming a little tricky and labor-intensive, but it is based on modern farming techniques for Pinot Noir where tighter spacing and more pruning has proven to produce grapes with the complex flavors and intensity that are sought by winemakers.

The vineyard's microclimate allows for a nice mix of classic Pommard clone and the newer Dijon clones which tend to favor the cooler climate of the Russian River Valley. The wines produced from this vineyard tend to show dark, rich fruit flavors balanced by wonderful structure and bright acidity.

The Toboni family has taken on the daunting task of nurturing this vineyard in ways that would ultimately honor this wonderful appellation as a world-class region. "We are proud to farm this incredible land and to support Arista's goal of producing the ultimate Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley," says Joe Toboni.

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BIOGRAPHIES

AL AND JANIS MCWILLIAMS

Since their first visit to California's wine country, the McWilliams family of Texarkana, Texas, dreamed of a future in Sonoma County. In 1996, Al McWilliams, an orthodontist, took the first step in making their dream a reality.

Joining his brother-in-law, John Copeland, the two purchased a family vineyard estate, Pine Mountain Vineyards, in Cloverdale. Then in 2004, Al and his wife, Janis Copeland McWilliams, acquired 36 acres of prime agricultural benchland on scenic Westside Road in Healdsburg. The Russian River Valley will be the home of Arista Winery and its estate Pinot Noir Vineyards, as well as a residence for the McWilliams family.



MARK AND JENNIFER MCWILLIAMS

Mark McWilliams, born and raised in Texarkana, Texas, is the son of Al and Janis McWilliams. He has been involved in Arista winery and vineyard operations in Sonoma County since 2000. After graduating from the University of Texas, Austin, with a degree in corporate communications, Mark took his first job out of college working for Kendall Jackson Wine Estates. What started as a temporary summer job developed into a passion as Mark enrolled in UC Davis wine and viticulture courses and tasting groups and annoyed his winemaker friends with endless questions.



During his time with Kendall Jackson, Mark held various positions encompassing vineyard operations, harvest logistics and cellar work. Following his time at Kendall-Jackson, Mark continued his passion for wine and pursuit of industry knowledge by working as a wine consultant for a wine and spirits distributor based in Dallas, Texas.

In the fall of 2003, Mark married Jennifer Habecker, a native of Dallas. Shortly thereafter, Mark and Jennifer returned to Healdsburg, California, to be fully involved with Arista. Mark manages the day-to-day operations at the winery. Mark and Jennifer live in Healdsburg with their sons Jake and Pierce, their daughters Macie and Maggie and their Maltese, Lucy.



BEN AND TATIANA MCWILLIAMS

After graduating from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2003 with a degree in business administration, Ben volunteered for the Peace Corps and spent the next two years living and working in rural Honduras. The majority of his time was spent helping local coffee farmers implement sustainable coffee growing techniques as a
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BIOGRAPHIES

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means to add value to their products. During these two years Ben was able to hone his agricultural skills and see first-hand the power and importance of organic farming techniques which are employed in our estate vineyard.



After spending additional time in South America, Ben and his wife Tatiana chose to return to Sonoma County to establish roots of their own. Ben is responsible for general business operations as well as managing the estate. Tatiana spent several years working at the winery, and continues to be an integral decision maker. She now works full time at Sotheby's International Realty in Healdsburg.

LUCY & COCO

Without doubt the most well-known of the Arista family are Lucy the Maltese and Coco the Lab. Lucy is often seen sunbathing on the front porch, and Coco is notorious for persuading unsuspecting picnickers to hand over the goods. They have been published in several winery dog books that are available for purchase in the tasting room. They will most likely be there to greet you the next time you stop by!



MATT COURTNEY, WINEMAKER

Fascinated by the seemingly infinite complexity of sensations afforded by a bottle of wine, Matt Courtney constantly strives to gain a more complete understanding of the processes involved in winemaking from the vineyard to the bottle. He is passionate about the details and nuances of the entire process and prides himself in creating wines of both hedonistic enjoyment and intellectual contemplation.



Born in Meridian, Mississippi, Matt originally moved to the Bay Area at the age of 10. While studying for his philosophy degree at UC Berkeley, Matt simultaneously studied under a variety of fine dining gurus and wine experts: a focus that started at Alice Waters' Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, and would take him as far away as Bologna, Italy. While at UC Berkeley, Matt also met his future wife on the ski team. After college, they moved to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where Matt worked at Restaurant Terroir with Master Sommelier Ken Fredrickson and also began working toward becoming a Master Sommelier himself. After passing the certificate level exam, Matt left for France and Italy to begin serious study for the advanced level of the three-tiered Court of Master Sommeliers program. However, upon meeting and discussing wine with many of the producers that he had come to respect the most, Matt realized that to attain the level of understanding to which he aspired, he had to make wine.

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ARISTA

BIOGRAPHIES

MATT COURTNEY, WINEMAKER (cont.)

It was then that Matt's passion for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir was established. He and his wife returned to California to continue their studies, she in nutritional biology and he in viticulture and enology. While working on prerequisites to enter UC Davis, Matt cut his teeth in the cellar with winemaker Al Perry at Robert Biale Vineyards.

Matt graduated in 2005, right when wine industry icons Helen Turley and John Wetlaufer were looking for a new assistant winemaker for their personal label, Marcassin. Matt got the job and over the next eight years worked closely with Helen and John in both the vineyard and winery. Matt was able to see and experience first-hand the focus, approach and attention to detail necessary to grow and produce wine on the very highest level. During his tenure at Marcassin, Matt played a tremendous role in crafting some of the most highly sought after and acclaimed Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays in the New World. After spending eight years honing his craft, Matt knew the time was right for him to step out and take full control of the production process.

The perfect opportunity came in 2013 when Matt was offered the position of winemaker at Arista Winery in the Russian River Valley. Excited by the prospect of working with the winery's two premier estate vineyards as well as their select group of growers, Matt enthusiastically accepted the offer. He will also preside over the design and construction of the new estate winery from the ground up. Matt looks forward to the opportunity of helping a young brand with huge potential continue its rise to the highest levels of quality.

Matt resides in St. Helena with his wife Angela, daughters Anya and Sasha and their golden retriever Murphy.

ULISES VALDEZ

With more than 20 harvests behind him, Ulises has risen to the top of his profession. Widely considered to be one of the most knowledgeable and skilled vineyard managers in the wine country, Ulises has worked with some of the most important wineries in California, including Paul Hobbs, Mark Aubert, Kent Rosenblum and Jeff Cohn. Robert Parker, Jr. said of Ulises that he is "one of the finest viticultural managers in northern California" and that "he is unquestionably at the top of his field." Ulises oversaw the planting and development of our estate and is responsible for the ongoing management of the property.

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