

OPTIMA

Mike Duffy- Owner - Winemaker

For Mike, owning a winery was the culmination of a labor of love and a dream fulfilled. It was apparent at an early age that he was destined to pursue a career in the wine business. His father was an avid home winemaker and Mike was fascinated by the process and would often help his dad. For Mike, this became his calling, a life-long ambition that began in the family garage. There, Mike would take any fruit he could get his hands on and craft it into wine. He once raided the neighbor's bushes to produce a rose petal champagne. While just a sophomore in high school, Mike declared his intentions to major in enology at UC Davis, the Princeton of winemaking.



In 1980, during his last year at Davis Mike landed an opportunity to intern at Trefethen Winery in the Napa Valley, where he worked during an annual crush. He was soon offered a job as their Assistant Winemaker, and so moved by his enthusiasm, he decided to accelerate his education to finish his last year in two quarters.

In 1983, Mike moved to Sonoma County to continue his pursuit of one day owning a winery. After several offers, he accepted the winemaker position at Balverne a start-up winery in Sonoma County, which specialized in white wines. In 1998, Mike wanted to get his hands on Alexander Valley fruit, so he gladly took the position of head winemaker at Field Stone. There he worked alongside Andre' Tchelistcheff, America's most influential post-Prohibition winemaker. He stayed at Field Stone for nine years while crafting a Cabernet Sauvignon for his newly launched Optima label. By 1997, Optima received high praise and had become self-supporting growing from 400 cases to 4,000, enabling Mike to devote all his attention to his life-long dream.

This year will mark Mike's 35th year making wine. His approach is simple, making wine that combines art and practicality. He loves the honesty and hard work of agriculture and to him, winemaking is the ultimate fusion of agriculture and art.