

WOMEN IN WINEMAKING

March program



JORDAN VINEYARDS AND ESTATE

Maggie Kruse - winemaker



After graduating from UC-Davis in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in viticulture and enology, Maggie worked for J Vineyards & Winery in the Russian River Valley, before transitioning to the laboratory at Jordan. She worked closely with long-time Winemaker Rob Davis on wine quality improvement programs initiated by John Jordan, fine-tuning barrel sourcing, cork selections and the bottling process while Davis focused on locating even better vineyards for grapes. After being promoted to assistant winemaker in 2009, she began overseeing all aspects of barrel ordering, cork quality control and bottling, as well as managing the cellar work.

As winemaker at Jordan, Maggie oversees all aspects of managing the day-to-day operations in the cellars, including quality control experiments, fermentation monitoring, tank and lot organizing, selecting and inspecting barrels, blending, batonnage, selecting corks and bottles, bottling and labeling. She works closely with Dana Grande and Brent Young on guiding the grapes from the vineyard to the winery. Maggie's dedication to quality has taken her to Portugal several times to learn about cork-making and to the forests of France to study barrel-crafting.

Niki Williams - Winemaker



Winemaker Niki Williams brings more than a decade of experience from some of Napa Valley's most well-known wine estates including: Mount Veeder Winery, The Prisoner Wine Company, Franciscan Estate, Merryvale Family of Wines, and Chateau St. Jean. During these tenures, Williams gained extensive winemaking experience with a wide range of red and white varieties and explored the latest cellar and vineyard technologies to elevate fruit and wine to their highest quality. Her philosophy and practice of crafting balanced, elegant blends that are approachable when young, yet capable of aging gracefully make her a perfect complement to and continuation of Cakebread Cellar's 50-year standard and history of winemaking.

CAKEBREAD
CELLARS

J. LOHR VINEYARDS & WINE

Kristen Barnhisel - Winemaker



Kristen was raised in Santa Rosa by a microbiologist mother, who worked for Simi Winery, and a father who was a home winemaker. Though she grew up immersed in the wine industry, even working harvests as a summer job, it wasn't until she traveled to Italy while earning her B.A. in Italian literature that she was inspired to become a winemaker. Encouraged by legendary California winemaker and family friend Zelma Long, Kristen became one of the first women, and the first American, to work harvest for Ruffino in Italy. Kristen went on to earn a master's degree in enology from UC Davis, while also working a number of coveted internships, including Warwick Wine Estate in South Africa, Opus One, and Long Vineyard, where she gained invaluable knowledge working alongside her mentor, Zelma Long.

Today, utilizing her extensive experience with cool-climate white wine varieties, Kristen works alongside President/COO Jeff Meier and Director of Winemaking Steve Peck to guide J. Lohr's white wine program.

ST. FRANCIS VINEYARDS & WINERY

Katie Madigan- Winemaker



As a St. Francis Winemaker, Katie continues St. Francis' long tradition of creating high-quality wines from Sonoma County grapes. She oversees production of St. Francis Winery's top-selling Zinfandels, Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays as well as many of our other popular white wines. In 2015, Katie was awarded "Best Woman Winemaker" by the International Women's Wine Competition. She also won Zinfandel Producer of the Year in 2014 and 2015 at the California Zinfandel Championship.

Katie's relentless pursuit to make wines that reflect the beauty and uniqueness in each vintage is what got her to where she is today. Her vision has always been to "produce self-expressing, balanced wines from a region known most for its diverse terroir."

PENNER-ASH WINERY

Kate Ayres - Winemaker

Growing up on the north coast of Oregon, Kate's younger years were spent fishing, crabbing, and gathering mushrooms. Her interest in science and love of animals led her to the University of California, Davis where she majored in viticulture and enology. Between the years of 2009 and 2011, Kate worked harvests in New Zealand, Portugal, and Australia, with a brief stint at home in Oregon at Bethel Heights.

In 2011, Kate took on the role of Associate Winemaker at Hess Collection Winery, where she remained until 2016 when the Pinot Noir of the Pacific Northwest called her back north. At Penner-Ash Wine Cellars Kate quickly rose to her current role of Winemaker in the spring of 2018.



J VINEYARDS & WINERY

Nicole Hitchcock- Winemaker



Nicole attended the University of California at Davis, where she earned a degree in Viticulture and Enology and a minor in the Italian language. This combination enabled her to work at an agriturismo in Todi, Umbria for a summer. After graduation, Nicole worked a harvest in Napa Valley, then transitioned to sales, working with both retail and restaurant customers. Nicole returned to the hands-on side of wine in 2004 when she traveled to Western Australia for a harvest internship. Back in the U.S., Nicole took a role as a winemaker, crafting wines grown throughout Northern California. In 2015, Nicole also earned an MBA from the Wine Business Institute at Sonoma State University, gaining an academic perspective on the business of the wine industry as well as how it will evolve in the future.

Today, Nicole is the head winemaker at J Vineyards & Winery, where she oversees all aspects of winemaking. Nicole's passion for winemaking continues to grow as she crafts world-class sparkling and varietal wines from cool-climate fruit grown in the renowned Russian River Valley and Sonoma County.

Kristy Melton - Winemaker



Kristy's winemaking résumé, which includes Saintsbury, Clos du Val, and her own consulting service, is impressive. Equally impressive are her three years as Bordeaux Winemaker for Jackson Family Wines, which saw her overseeing the Cabernet and Merlot-centric programs for a number of JFW properties at the same time. In this position, Kristy found her way into Ted Edwards' universe and shared winemaking space with him.

Kristy was honored to be named among Wine Enthusiast Magazine's "Top 40 under 40 Tastemakers" as well as Drinks Business' "Top 30 under 40 Winemakers to Watch." This recognition of her talents, along with her formidable winemaking skills, has set the stage for a promising future at Freemark Abbey.

FREEMARK
ABBEEY
WINERY

DOMAINE CHANDON

Pauline Lhote - Winemaker

Lhote was born near the Champagne region of France and set her sights on winemaking at an early age. After earning her degree and master's in sparkling wine production in Reims, she worked at Nicolas Feuillatte and Moët & Chandon before accepting the internship opportunity in 2006 that would change her career. As director, she not only oversees winemaking operations, but spearheads new product development, is helping introduce new packaging for the brand this year and is overseeing a renovation of the tasting room.



Megan Gunderson-Winemaker



Vice President of Winemaking, Megan Gunderson began her career in the Napa Valley in 2001 when she moved from Colorado to California and worked as an intern at Robert Mondavi Winery. Early on, she discovered a passion for wine and viticulture and went on to become a Laboratory Manager for St. Supery Vineyards in Rutherford, then Dominus Estates in Oakville. At Dominus, she was able to refine her winemaking skills under the mentorship of Christian Moueix and Jean-Claude Barrouet, learning to hone her winemaking craft with unique methods.

In 2005, she joined HALL Wines as Enologist and quickly rose through the ranks with increasingly central roles within the winemaking operation. In 2018, Megan was promoted to Vice President of Winemaking, leading the wine program for the three, family-owned luxury brands, HALL, WALT and BACA Wines. Her multiple degrees in Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics have given her a unique and unmatched perspective into the scientific aspects of winemaking.

HALL &
WALT
WINERY

CADE WINERY

Danielle Cyrot- Winemaker

While at Davis, she worked harvests at Schramsberg and Artesa in Napa Valley, learning the trade from the soil up. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Viticulture and Enology, Danielle worked abroad at wineries in Alsace, France, and South Australia. After honing her skills overseas, Danielle returned to Napa Valley and joined Stags' Leap Winery as their Enologist.



In August 2012, Danielle joined CADE Estate Winery and has become one of the most innovative, sustainability-minded winemakers in Napa Valley. Her work has helped dismantle the status quo, reframing screw caps as an acceptable closure for high-end wines and defining the next generation of luxury wine packaging.

Jill Russel - Winemaker



Most university students aren't sure what they want to do with their degree, but for our Winemaker Jill Russell, wine was always part of the plan. She racked up some major miles in her training: a semester spent learning about wine in Adelaide, Australia, was followed by another quarter at Tolosa Winery back on the Central Coast. She joined Paul Lato at his boutique Santa Barbara winery, diving into Sta. Rita Hills, our beautiful Santa Maria Valley, and stoking her enduring love of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Knowing she was right where she wanted to be, the chance to join Cambria as Winemaker was a no-brainer and, she still maintains, the opportunity of a lifetime.

She loves working with the vineyards throughout our estate and getting to know them on a block-by-block basis, digging into the clones, soils, and microclimates. Her passion and unique energy are in every bottle.

CAMBRIA
WINERY

ARROWOOD WINERY

Kristen Shideler - Winemaker

It didn't take long for Kristina Shideler to discover the allure of wine and the integral role it plays in cultures around the world. After traveling throughout Western Europe she developed a love of wine, particularly for Barolo and Bordeaux blends. Following harvest stints in New Zealand, Kristina enrolled at the University of California Davis Viticulture and Enology Masters of Science program in 2009, specializing in viticulture coursework. Kristina's next adventure took her to the steep vineyards of Neipoort Vinhos in Portugal's Douro Valley. She became fascinated by the unique complexities of mountain vineyards and studied how the dramatic interplay between climate and elevation as well as varying soil types are critical to making high quality wine. Kristina's subsequent experiences at Bodega Caelum in Mendoza, Argentina as well as Verite and Stonestreet in Sonoma County, California, cemented her desire to produce artisan Bordeaux wines



Brooke Shenk - Winemaker



As a St. Supéry winemaker, Brooke Shenk commits to the production of quality, diverse wines. Brooke is passionate about the estate-grown, produced, and bottled aspects of our wine and the complexity of each decision, starting in the vineyard going all the way through bottling. She focuses on organizing and coordinating cellar activities that fit the standard of the high-quality wines which St. Supéry produces. After interning in Sonoma for one harvest, Brooke has since held roles in lab and production, including working as a winery lab manager in New Zealand for two years.

Brooke enjoys spending time in Lake Tahoe, where she grew up, and traveling to new places with her husband – she has visited 6 of the seven continents, including Antarctica!

ST. SUPÉRY
ESTATES &
WINERY

Zidanelia Arcidiacono- Winemaker

Zidanelia – her friends often call her Z – began her career working in the lab at Bodega Cruz de Piedra while attending university in Mendoza. After receiving her bachelor's degree in winemaking, she traveled to the south of France to the Cave cooperative Les Vignerons du Pays d'Enserune, working in the cellar for a harvest. Upon returning to Mendoza, however, she realized she wanted to keep traveling and her next destination should be California. Returning to Sonoma-Cutrer in 2015, Zidanelia is happy to be back where her California adventure first began. Her experience working on reserve wines made her the perfect fit for the role of crafting Sonoma-Cutrer's outstanding Pinot Noirs. Zidanelia says that she loves nurturing the wines throughout the process and, even more, seeing others enjoy the results of her work.



SONOMA-
CUTRER
WINERY

CELEBRATE WOMEN IN WINEMAKING ALL YEAR LONG!

