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Review of the Industry • Hot Small Brands

Rob Davis, winemaker, Jordan Vineyard & Winery, Alexander Valley, California



MATT ARMENDARIZ

NAME & TITLE: Rob Davis, winemaker

WINERY NAME AND LOCATION: Jordan Vineyard & Winery, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County

Inspired by the masterful wine, food and hospitality of France, Tom and Sally Jordan followed their hearts from Colorado to California's burgeoning wine country in 1972. They planted their first vineyard in Alexander Valley with a vision for creating a singular Cabernet Sauvignon that could rival the wines of Bordeaux's first-growth chateaux that fueled the Jordans' dream to become vintners. The desire to craft a Cabernet Sauvignon with bright fruit flavors and soft tannins made them mavericks. The immediate success of Jordan's inaugural 1976 vintage made the Jordan house style of winemaking a California benchmark.

Four decades later, Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay remain renowned for their elegance and ability to age gracefully, as well as their affinity for food and remarkable consistency vintage after vintage. Today, Tom and Sally's son, John, continues to preserve the timeless traditions of old-world winemaking and gracious hospitality that inspired his parents while constantly encouraging the constant evolution and elevation of Jordan wines.

ANNUAL CASE PRODUCTION: 98,000 cases

PLANTED ACRES: 200 acres of Bordeaux varieties

“ In crafting our wine at Jordan, my time is equally divided between the vineyard and the winery. Working fastidiously to produce a great product, it is easy to become isolated from the rest of the winery business. There were 300 wineries in California in 1976. Now there are more than 3,000. **Wine Business Monthly helps me stay current in a fast moving business:** the reviews on new technology are particularly useful. I also appreciate the balanced focus on winery and vineyard.

The article on basket presses brought me back to the early days at Jordan when our entire production availed the use of a basket press—total hands on. I loved it.

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CAREER BACKGROUND: Upon graduating from UC Davis in 1976, I interned at Jordan Winery—their first harvest as well as mine. Serendipity prevailed as the Jordan family took me in as their own to make a great Cabernet. My schooling of wine continued under the mentorship of the great André Tchelistcheff—a man filled with passion, creativity, learning and love of life. His international experience in wine was astonishing. My 18 years working with André were without a doubt the most memorable in my career. Traveling through France, experiencing the gustatory differences of terroir, meeting other legendary vintners provided a humbling vision of a craft that continues to grow. What I learned during those years plays into our winemaking every day at Jordan. Thirty-six vintages later, the vision of producing a world-class wine has not wavered—the Jordan family's pursuit actually has become more fervent, which makes my job even more exciting. I learn something new every day. André always said winemaking should be that way. Winemaking should not be a selfish pursuit; it is best shared with a team that embraces similar passions. The youthful winemaking team that we now employ shares those same passions—the laughter and zeal are contagious.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE? Providing for the Jordans a wine consistent in style and flavor each year given the variation each vintage offers. To attempt such a goal is to acknowledge the infinite power of Mother Nature: to be intimate with it, to be humbled by it, to revel in its diversity and understand that winemaking is not about purity but about successfully achieving an approximation of truths.

VARIETALS THAT YOUR WINERY IS KNOWN FOR: Russian River Valley Chardonnay, Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon