



Merry Edwards Winery

RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Winegrowing

The impetus for *Merry Edwards Winery* is Merry Edwards herself. One of the first women to become a California winemaker, Merry began her career in 1973. From the outset she eschewed the prevailing New World philosophy that winemakers should strongly imprint wines with their own personalities. Merry says, "I always want the vineyard's character and terroir to show first and foremost." This is why she longed to plant her own vineyards where she could capture flavors through site-specific viticulture and painstaking handwork.

In 1996, she purchased twenty-four acres of sloping hillside in the Russian River Valley, intent on growing luscious Pinot Noir on this promising site. With the help of her then new husband, Ken Coopersmith, Merry planted 20 acres of vineyard at Meredith Estate in 1998 and harvested a small crop in 2000. "Up to that point in my career, I never had any land of my own. I feel that raising Meredith from the ground up vastly improved my understanding of the dedicated farming effort required to make consistently great Pinot Noir. This varietal cannot be made, it has to be grown."

Broadening her palette of Pinot Noir while exploring the distinct personalities of the appellation's regions, Merry has developed secure, long-term commitments from prime growers in Russian River Valley. Ted Klopp farms his Pinot Noir at Klopp Ranch to Merry's specifications. Bob Pellegrini, whose Olivet Lane is well known among wine collectors, provides Merry with prized grapes. These two vineyards, along with the now-extinct Windsor Gardens, formed the early base for Merry's vineyard designate program.

Developing her own vineyard and working with the region's finest growers deepened Merry's respect for the impact of location coupled with precision farming. In 1999, Merry and Ken expanded the brand's estate program by purchasing 9.5 acres in the heart of Russian River Valley and planting it in 2001. The first Coopersmith Pinot Noir was vintage 2004. This vineyard is also the site of the Merry Edwards Winery, completed in 2008.

In 2006, Merry and Ken further expanded their estate family of properties by signing a 30-year lease for a 7-acre property on Westside Road in northern Russian River Valley. They planted the vineyard that same year, combining their two middle names for its designation, Georganne. The inaugural vintage of this wine was 2009. Their expanding portfolio of estate vineyards underscores Merry and Ken's focus on winegrowing and crafting the highest level of quality.

Resolutely moving toward an estate model, two additional vineyards were leased on a long-term basis: Sanchietti in 2008 and Flax in 2009. By 2010, Ken and Merry were farming 54 acres of Pinot Noir of their own. "Growing our own grapes gives us the control necessary to guarantee our



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customers a family of single vineyard wines that express, vintage after vintage, consistent personality and quality," says Merry.

While devoted to Pinot Noir, Merry has a favorite white wine – Sauvignon Blanc. Finding grapes from Dutton-Cohen Vineyard irresistible, Merry began making this varietal wine under her label in 2001. The production has grown to include grapes from a new Sauvignon Musqué vineyard, Dutton-Jewell, planted exclusively for Merry by the Dutton family. In addition, a long-term contract was signed in 2010 with the Martinelli family for their Home Ranch fruit. Kent Ritchie also provides Merry with Sauvignon Blanc from his mature planting in central Russian River Valley. By 2010, 42 percent of the production was made from vineyards that were 30-35 years old.

Whether planted to Pinot Noir or Sauvignon Blanc, all of Merry's grape sources are characterized by enduring commitment, respect for the land, family ownership and site-specific viticulture. With exceptional Russian River Valley grapes, Merry Edwards is able to produce acclaimed wines using gentle, traditional, labor-intensive winemaking practices.

In the winery, all fermenting tanks are open-top, but fully convertible to closed topped tanks for blending and storage. Each tank is heated and cooled at the flip of a switch so that proper cold soaking, warming prior to yeast inoculation and any desired extended maceration can be achieved.

Punch downs by hand have evolved to the use of a pneumatic stainless steel foot operated by a joy stick. This allows repeatable, consistent and thorough management of the fermenting Pinot Noir cap. All of the color, flavor and tannins so carefully vine grown can then be captured by full extraction.

Gentle handling is the watchword throughout the entire winemaking process. Merry says, "The wines are 75 percent made when the grapes arrive at the winery door. My job is just to not screw things up!"

The growing production of Sauvignon Blanc continues to be 100 percent barrel fermented. This allows for an intensive, twice-weekly *lies* stirring regime. Like her Pinot, this wine ages solely in French oak cooperage, 18 percent new. Bottling is delayed until April of the year following the vintage in order to allow full development of the wine's rich character.