



# 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 have always wanted 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.

In 1996, she purchased 24 acres of sloping hillside in the southern hills of Russian River Valley, intent on growing luscious Pinot Noir on this promising site. With her husband, Ken Coopersmith, as her helpmate, Merry planted 20 acres of vineyard at Meredith Estate in 1998 and harvested a small crop in 2000. “For the first 25 years of my career, I had no land of my own. I feel that raising Meredith from the ground up vastly improved my understanding of the dedicated effort required to make consistently great Pinot Noir. This varietal cannot be made, it has to be grown.”

Developing her own vineyard 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 on Laguna Ridge in the heart of RRV and planting it in 2001. The first Coopersmith Pinot Noir released was a 2004. The vineyard is also the site of the Merry Edwards Winery, completed in 2008 and further expanded in 2010.

In 2006, they further broadened their estate family of properties by signing a 30-year lease for a 7-acre property on Westside Road, in the northern Middle Reach area of the RRV. 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 captures more of the appellation’s distinct personalities and underscores Merry and Ken’s focus on winegrowing and dedication to crafting the highest level of quality.

Resolutely moving toward an estate model, more long-term leases were formulated. An additional 16-acre neighboring vineyard and land has been annexed into Meredith. Warren’s Hill was taken over in 2008 and subsequently replanted and renamed in 2010. Flax was adopted in 2009. In 2015 Merry and Ken planted 10 acres at their new home ranch in the Sebastopol Hills. This now brings the total of farmed acres of Pinot to 64. “Growing our own grapes gives us the control necessary to guarantee our customers a portfolio of single-vineyard Pinot Noirs that express, vintage after vintage, consistent personality and quality,” Merry says.



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She still purchases small quantities of fruit from two growers. Her longtime friend Bob Pellegrini has supplied his prized Olivet Lane grapes since 1997 -- (long dash) a property well recognized among collectors. In addition, Ted Klopp's vineyard on Laguna Ridge has become distinguished as Klopp Ranch under Merry's farming guidance and winemaking since 1999.

While devoted to Pinot, Merry has a favorite white wine – Sauvignon Blanc. Merry began making this irresistible variety in 2001 under a new white wine label. The production now includes grapes from Dutton-Jewell planted for Merry exclusively to Sauvignon Musque by the Dutton family. In addition, a long-term contract was signed with the Martinelli family for their Home Ranch fruit in 2010. Grapes are also sourced from Gianquinto and Marino vineyards in central Russian River Valley. She also supports future growers and vineyard owners by purchasing Sauvignon Blanc from Santa Rosa Junior College.

The current Sauvignon Blanc production combines grapes from young and old vines, and both Sauvignon Musque and Shenandoah clonal selections. With the estate model firmly in sight, change is coming. In 2015 Merry and Ken planted two new Sauvignon Blanc vineyards in central and southern Russian River Valley. The total of 24 acres will bring the winery close to 100% estate-grown production of this varietal by the year 2019.

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 her highly acclaimed wines using gentle, traditional, labor-intensive winemaking practices.

In the winery, all Pinot fermentation 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 a unique, 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!"



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The commitment to barrel ferment 100% of the Sauvignon Blanc continues. This allows for an intensive, twice-weekly *lees* stirring, body-building 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.

A small quantity of barrel fermented Chardonnay is produced from the celebrated, mature planting at Olivet Lane. Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc is produced when growing conditions permit. On occasion a late-disgorged, barrel fermented style of sparkling wine is produced, which requires seven years from grape to release. Merry celebrates her decades in wine growing with special bottlings, the most recent being her Merry's 40. Several Angel Wing Pinots have commemorated the loss of her son Warren. An August Cuvée was released in 2016, celebrating the birth of her first grandchild.