

DESERT WIND



Director of Winemaking Greg Fries

Greg grew up working on his family's farm in California's Central Valley, farming row crops such as cotton and tomatoes. When his family moved to Oregon in 1982, his family switched to farming hazelnuts and planted a small vineyard in 1985.

In 1990, Greg enrolled at UC Davis and began studying agri-business, but his interest quickly shifted to vineyard management and grape growing. He soon changed his major to fermentation science with an emphasis in enology. During his summer breaks, he returned home to Dundee, Oregon, and put his knowledge to use on the family vineyard.

In 1992, his family decided it was time to open a winery of their own. They purchased a plot of land alongside the then-rural Hwy 99W in Dundee. In 1993, Duck Pond Cellars opened its doors to the public. Wanting to expand beyond Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, the family also began planting the 480-acre Desert Wind Vineyard, located on Washington's Wahluke Slope.

When Greg graduated from UC Davis in 1994, he spent that summer and fall working under Duck Pond Cellars' winemaker at the time. In 1995, he worked the first-ever harvest at Desert Wind Vineyard and took over responsibility as head winemaker at Duck Pond Cellars.

In 1997, the Fries family decided it was time to start thinking about producing another brand of wine using the premium fruit from the Desert Wind Vineyard. With Greg as head winemaker, the initial releases of Desert Wind wines (1997 Ruah, 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon, 1999 Merlot and 2000 Semillon) were released to the public in September 2001.

In 2004, the crush pad at Desert Wind was completed and Greg was able to bring fruit from the nearby vineyards to Prosser instead of trucking the fruit to the family's Oregon facility for processing. As the wines continued to grow in popularity, the family decided it was time to open a tasting room and event facility in Prosser. In February 2007, Desert Wind Winery opened its doors. During construction, Greg oversaw all aspects of the project, at times acting as general contractor and general laborer. From the stucco on the walls of the winery to the wine in the bottle, nearly every aspect of Desert Wind bears Greg's touch.

In July 2010, Greg handed over head winemaking duties to then-assistant winemaker Mark Chargin. Greg continues to be very involved in the business, overseeing winemaking and cellar activities and managing the vineyard operations with his father, Doug Fries.

Greg considers the completion of Desert Wind the highlight of his career. He also prefers the term vintner to winemaker, as he feels it more accurately describes his position.

"I enjoy the business of wine as a whole," he explains. "I make sure I am involved in every aspect of the operation—from the planting and management of the vineyards to the operation of the buildings."

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