



Owen Smith, Director of Winemaking

While attending college in Boston, Owen Smith was bitten by the wine bug and soon transferred to Fresno State University to pursue a degree in Enology. After graduating, Owen set off around the world on a winemaking odyssey that included working at Leelanau Wine Cellars in upstate Michigan, and a project in Gap, Pennsylvania, where he transformed an 18th century bank barn into the modern Twin Book Winery. Always seeking new viticultural experiences that would stretch his skills, Owen took a position as winemaker for the then start-up Horton Vineyards in Gordonsville, Virginia – a pioneer in Rhône varietals on the East Coast – for a number of years, followed by three years for the Yarden and Gamla wine brands made at the Golan Heights Winery in Israel.



After returning to the U.S. in late 1999, Owen joined RH Phillips Winery as their red wine winemaker, developing wines for the Toasted Head program. When RH Phillips was acquired by Constellation Brands in 2006, he was promoted to Senior Winemaker for the Toasted Head label. During his tenure he strengthened their red wine production program by leveraging grower relations and marketing efforts to secure exceptional grapes from growers throughout California.

In his role as the Director of Winemaking for Weibel Family Vineyards & Winery, Owen works with the 500-acre H&W Estate Vineyards, which are owned by Fred Weibel and his cousin and partner Gary Habluetzal. “I have been buying grapes from Mendocino for many years, and have a great appreciation for the vineyards in Redwood, Potter, and McDowell Valley regions,” notes Owen about the Weibel’s vineyards.

Besides wine, Owen’s interests include travel, history, and exploring urban areas by bicycle. At last count he has made wine from over 60 different grape varieties.

“I believe in using appropriate technology to bring out the best each vineyard and fruit variety has to offer,” Owen says, “then blending different components together to create balanced, expressive wines.”

Owen will oversee all production of still and sparkling wines at the Weibel Family Vineyards & Winery in Hopland, Mendocino County, and at their bottling facility in Lodi.