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## The Winemaker Tom Rinaldi

### Director of Winemaking

With more than three decades of Napa Valley winemaking experience, Tom Rinaldi is proud to be the first winemaker to craft a single-vineyard expression of our Hewitt Vineyard Estate. “It’s an exceptional piece of land,” says Rinaldi. “The first time I set foot on it, the hair on the back of my neck stood up.”

Rinaldi considers it a privilege to draw from more than 100 years of observation and experience that have accumulated since vines were first planted at this historic site. “We know a lot about this vineyard’s drainage, nutrient levels, understructure—a lot about how the vines grow and take on their unique flavor,” he says. And we’re learning more every day. Rinaldi works with long-time vineyard management partners at Madrigal Farms to experiment with new methods that bring out the terroir’s finest expression.

Rinaldi has made wine at some of the valley’s most important wineries, apprenticing at Freemark Abbey, Rutherford Hill and Round Hill before joining Dan and Margaret Duckhorn to help found Duckhorn Vineyards in 1978. There, for two decades, he established himself as one of Napa Valley’s premier fashioners of elegantly classic Cabernet Sauvignons and Merlots.

“I enjoyed my time at Duckhorn and was sad to leave,” says Rinaldi, “but I had gotten to the point where I was an administrator and not a wine-maker. I wasn’t being creative any longer. That’s what this opportunity brought back into play. The real selling point of this job was the chance to

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work with the fruit from Hewitt Vineyard, which I knew to be at the very top of the heap, and the chance to have total artistic control over the wine I would make from Hewitt. When you taste the wine, you can see why I am as happy as I am.”

Rinaldi says that Cabernet Sauvignon is both the most challenging and the most rewarding of wines. “The winemaker is the maestro with Cabernet,” he explains. “I have such an opportunity to mold the wine, to produce something from the heart. With Pinot Noir, there’s no chance to blend. But with Cabernet you get to add something here, take away something there. Look, I’ve been given a blank canvas, the greatest paint box in the world to work with and the artistic freedom to put my experience to good use. What could be more fun?”

Rinaldi manages to have fun doing other things once in a while, however. For example, he enjoys meeting every month or so to taste wine with other longtime Napa Valley winemakers. They discuss vineyards, wine-making methods, industry trends and what they like and don’t like about the wines they taste. In his spare time, he cycles and flies gliders.