

WINEMAKER Q&A

Ryan Taylor, 28
Mt. Vernon Winery, Auburn



RGBS: How long have you been making wine?

Taylor: I planted six of our 32 acres when I was 18. Then I went to college and discovered it was more profitable to make wine than to sell grapes. We made a keg of wine the first year; 30 gallons the second, and a full barrel the year after that.

RGBS: Is there an old guard/new guard tension in the wine industry?

Taylor: Back in the day, wines had more tannin and acidity. The fruit was in the background. I like more fruit, per-

sonally, but everyone has different tastes, which is why we offer 13 different wines in our tasting room.

RGBS: How do you attempt to dispel some of the stereotypes associated with your position?

Taylor: I work in the tasting room when I'm in town. In most California wineries, you don't find a winemaker behind the bar.

RGBS: How does the wine you produce differ from someone who's been mak-

ing wine for 10 or 20 years longer?

Taylor: There are a lot of different ways to do the same thing. When you put your own spin on something, you create a style.

RGBS: What does a young generation taster look for in a bottle of wine compared to an older wine taster?

Taylor: I want to make wine that is more approachable; something that young people, like myself, like to drink. A lot of the Boudreaux wines coming out of France are made from unripened fruit with complexity in the barrel and tannins that are very old world. The preference for younger people, I think, is more fruit-forward as opposed to something that needs to be laid down for 20 years. Nowadays a lot of people like to drink wine instead of collect it.

RGBS: What would you say to your peers who think they don't like wine, or have yet to try it?

Taylor: Try my port. One of the first wines I made was a Zinfandel Port in 1999 and it was absolutely amazing.

RGBS: What makes an excellent bottle of wine?

Taylor: I like a balanced wine that comes together – great fruit, oak, tannin and acidity. I'm artistic when it comes to smelling, tasting, and dialing wine down. And I'm passionate about making awesome wines.

RGBS: Where do you see the Sierra Foothill wine industry headed?

Taylor: This is a serious wine-growing region. It's kind of like the next Napa Valley. Every year that goes by, there are more wineries that pop up, and in turn, there will be more visitors, tourists and wine drinkers.