

CHENOWETH WINES

Media Contact:
Holly Hansen, Tyffani Sedgwick
Holly Hansen Public Relations
(707) 526-6677
Email: Tyffani@HollyHansenPR.com

CHENOWETH WINES & VINEYARDS BACKGROUND



It's often said that great wines are made in the vineyard, but for Charlie and Amy Chenoweth, that's less a saying than an actual fact. For Charlie, the legendary grape grower, and Amy, the family winemaker, the fruit is everything.

There are two ways to understand the fanatical care that goes into the Chenoweth's fruit. The easy way is to open a bottle bearing the Chenoweth label and simply taste it. Fresh fruit flavors balanced by pronounced acidity, exquisitely softened by sixteen months in French barrels, just one-third of which is new, so that the oaky notes are so subtle as to be all but imperceptible—"nothing to stand between the fruit and the palate," says Amy.

The harder way is to climb into a 4X4 and trundle up the rugged dirt road through the redwood groves to their beautiful and meticulously farmed hilltop vineyards overlooking the lush Russian River Valley in western Sonoma County. For the farmer known by his many admirers as the "Redwood Rancher," such attention to detail is not the least bit surprising; this is a man who literally counts the leaves on the canopy and has a proprietary recipe to custom-blend the seeds for the cover crop that grows between the rows of vines. Yes, the cover crop.

The Chenoweths have been growing fruit of one kind or another on their sprawling ranch for more than 150 years. Rising some 750 feet above the Russian River Valley floor, the land has supported generations of the Chenoweth family, sometimes with cherry trees, sometimes with apples and briefly, before Prohibition, with grapes. Redwoods from the farm helped rebuild the city of Santa Rosa, clearly visible in the middle distance from their hilltop Treehouse Vineyard, after it was largely leveled in the 1906 earthquake. Charlie's grandfather found the rolling high ground suitable for cherries. His father uprooted them to grow the region's signature Gravenstein apples. But it was Charlie's inspired idea in 2000 to clear the land and plant it to Pinot Noir grapes.



The first vineyard they personally installed is the appropriately named Home Ranch, also called Chenoweth Ranch, because this is where Charlie and Amy make their home. Siblings, aunts, sons, and assorted others occupy various homes scattered about the property, each well beyond shouting distance of any other. Until recently, the grapes produced here went exclusively to the famed Patz & Hall winery for its highly prized, vineyard-designated Pinot Noir. Today, Patz and Hall is still the primary purchaser of these prized grapes, but Amy also gets to choose her share.

In 2006 the family planted its second vineyard, Treehouse, named for the lone redwood that stands sentry at the highest point on the property. (Were it not for a pesky county building inspector, there would still be an awesome hideaway tucked into those ancient branches.) Encompassing about 13 acres of vividly red, iron-rich soil, the Treehouse



vineyard yields a Pinot Noir unlike any other: deep, dark, intense flavors and ripping acidity. After Amy fills her bins with handpicked clusters, the rest is mostly promised to Kosta Browne. (Charlie is eyeing a rocky corner of Treehouse for a few rows of Riesling or Chardonnay or maybe, if Amy has her say, something completely different like a Chenin Blanc)

In 2009, the Chenoweths planted their Bootlegger's Hill vineyard across rolling terrain that epitomizes the Green Valley sub-appellation, where deep nighttime fog keeps temperatures cool. Here is where the grower experiments with different clones, a virtual candy store of rootstocks and pruning methods, finding the optimal combination to produce wines of extraordinary nuance and complexity.

In addition to their own acreage, Charlie farms a handful of other properties as part of the family’s successful vineyard management business, an occupation that has earned him a stellar reputation and Amy a winemaking education courtesy of Wine Country’s most respected winemakers. (In addition to “paying attention” to these oenological masters, Amy supplemented her knowledge with courses at UC Davis.) When the Chenoweth’s bottled their first vintage in 2010, Amy focused on “grower-designate” wines. It’s an acknowledgement that there’s as much artistry in growing grapes as there is in making wine, perhaps even more. Currently Amy has branched out to include vineyard designates for Home Ranch, Bootleggers Hill and Treehouse Vineyards. She’s also added a Rosé and a Chardonnay to the line up.

When the 2018 vintage eventually finds its way to barrel and bottle, total production of Chenoweth wines will amount to somewhere around 600 cases—lucky for the handful of wine-lovers who get to experience it and a pity for all the rest. Sadly for them, Amy is unlikely to increase production very much, if at all, since every bottle of Chenoweth wine is handmade, and she only has two hands.



###