



ARISTA BIOGRAPHIES

AL AND JANIS MCWILLIAMS

Since their first visit to California's wine country, the McWilliams family of Texarkana, Texas, dreamed of a future in Sonoma County. In 1996, Al McWilliams, an orthodontist, took the first step in making their dream a reality. Joining his brother-in-law, John Copeland, the two purchased a family vineyard estate, Pine Mountain Vineyards, in Cloverdale. Then in 2004, Al and his wife, Janis Copeland McWilliams, acquired 36 acres of prime agricultural benchland on scenic Westside Road in Healdsburg. The Russian River Valley will be the home of Arista Winery and its estate Pinot Noir Vineyards, as well as a residence for the McWilliams family.



MARK AND JENNIFER MCWILLIAMS

Mark McWilliams, born and raised in Texarkana, Texas, is the son of Al and Janis McWilliams. He has been involved in Arista winery and vineyard operations in Sonoma County since 2000. After graduating from the University of Texas, Austin, with a degree in corporate communications, Mark took his first job out of college working for Kendall Jackson Wine Estates. What started as a temporary summer job developed into a passion as Mark enrolled in UC Davis wine and viticulture courses and tasting groups and annoyed his winemaker friends with endless questions.



During his time with Kendall Jackson, Mark held various positions encompassing vineyard operations, harvest logistics and cellar work. Following his time at Kendall-Jackson, Mark continued his passion for wine and pursuit of industry knowledge by working as a wine consultant for a wine and spirits distributor based in Dallas, Texas.

In the fall of 2003, Mark married Jennifer Habecker, a native of Dallas. Shortly thereafter, Mark and Jennifer returned to Healdsburg, California, to be fully involved with Arista. Mark manages the day-to-day operations at the winery. Mark and Jennifer live in Healdsburg with their sons Jake and Pierce, their daughters Macie and Maggie and their Maltese, Lucy.



BEN AND TATIANA MCWILLIAMS

After graduating from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2003 with a degree in business administration, Ben McWilliams volunteered for the Peace Corps and spent the next two years living and working in rural Honduras. The majority of his time was spent helping local coffee farmers implement sustainable coffee growing techniques as a means to add value to their products. During these two years Ben was able to hone his agricultural skills and see first-hand the power and importance of organic farming techniques which are employed in our estate vineyard.

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After spending additional time in South America, Ben and his wife Tatiana chose to return to Sonoma County to establish roots of their own. Ben is responsible for general business operations as well as managing the estate. Tatiana spent several years working at the winery, and continues to be an integral decision maker. She now works full time at Sotheby's International Realty in Healdsburg.

LUCY AND COCO

Without doubt, the most well-known of the Arista family is Lucy the Maltese and Coco the Lab. Lucy is often seen sunbathing on the front porch, and Coco is notorious for persuading unsuspecting picnickers to hand over the goods. They have been published in several winery dog books that are available for purchase in the tasting room. They will most likely be there to greet you the next time you stop by!

MATT COURTNEY, WINEMAKER

Fascinated by the seemingly infinite complexity of sensation afforded by a bottle of wine, Matt Courtney constantly strives to gain a more complete understanding of the processes involved in winemaking from the vineyard to the bottle. He is passionate about the details and nuances of the entire process, and prides himself in creating wines of both hedonistic enjoyment and intellectual contemplation.

Born in Meridian, Mississippi, Matt originally moved to the Bay Area at the age of 10. While studying for his philosophy degree at UC Berkeley, Matt simultaneously studied under a variety of fine dining gurus and wine experts: a focus that started at Alice Waters' Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, and would take him as far away as Bologna, Italy. While at UC Berkeley, he also met his future wife, Angela, on the ski team. After college, they moved Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where Matt worked at Restaurant Terroir with master sommelier Ken Fredrickson, and also began working toward becoming a master sommelier himself. After passing the certificate level exam, Matt left for France and Italy to begin serious study for the advanced level of the three-tiered Court of Master Sommeliers program. However, upon meeting and discussing wine with the many of the producers that he had come to respect the most, he realized that to attain the level of understanding to which he aspired, he had to make wine.

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It was then that Matt's passion for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir was established. He and his wife returned to California to continue their studies, she in nutritional biology and he in viticulture and oenology. While working on prerequisites to enter UC Davis, Matt cut his teeth in the cellar with winemaker Al Perry at Robert Biale Vineyards.

Matt graduated in 2005 right when wine industry icons Helen Turley and John Wetlaufer were looking for a new assistant winemaker for their personal label, Marcassin. Matt got the job, and over the next eight years, worked closely with Helen and John in both the vineyard and winery. Matt was able to see and experience first-hand the focus, approach and attention to detail necessary to grow and produce wine on the very highest level. During his tenure at Marcassin, Matt played a tremendous role in crafting some of the most highly sought after and acclaimed Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays in the new world. After spending eight years honing his craft, Matt knew the time was right for him to step out and take full control of the production process.

The perfect opportunity came in 2013 when Matt was offered the position of winemaker at Arista Winery in the Russian River Valley. Excited by the prospect of working with the winery's two premier estate vineyards as well as their select group of growers, Matt enthusiastically accepted the offer. He will also preside over the design and construction of the new estate winery from the ground up. Matt looks forward to the opportunity of helping a young brand with huge potential continue its rise to the highest levels of quality.

Matt resides in St. Helena with his wife Angela, daughters Anya and Sasha and their golden retriever Murphy.

ULISES VALDEZ

With more than 20 harvests behind him, Ulises has risen to the top of his profession. Widely considered to be one of the most knowledgeable and skilled vineyard managers in the wine country, Ulises has worked with some of the most important wineries in California including Paul Hobbs, Mark Aubert, Kent Rosenblum and Jeff Cohn. Robert Parker, Jr. said of Ulises that he is "one of the finest viticultural managers in northern California" and that "he is unquestionably at the top of his field." Ulises oversaw the planting and development of our estate and is responsible for the ongoing management of the property.



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