

TURNBULL

PETER HEITZ TURNBULL WINEMAKER

As Turnbull's winemaker since 2007, Peter Heitz has helped to write an extraordinary new chapter in the winery's history, creating acclaimed terroir-driven wines that embody the diversity and distinctiveness of Turnbull's four renowned estate vineyards. A fourteenth generation winegrower, Peter was born with farming and winemaking in his DNA. Though his family's winegrowing roots in California go all the way back to the late 1800s, when his great-grandparents planted a vineyard in Napa Valley, the Heitzes also trace their winegrowing lineage back an additional ten generations in Alsace, France, prior to emigrating to the United States. Peter spent childhood weekends working in his family's vineyard, where he learned about farming grapes and making wine through years of hands-on experience. Building on this experience, and the deep respect for the land it instilled in him, Peter has quietly earned a reputation for his farming acumen and intuitive approach to winemaking—qualities that have established Turnbull's wines as among the finest in Napa Valley.

After graduating from UC Santa Cruz with a degree in biology, Peter returned to Napa Valley where he joined the team at Beringer as a temporary cellar hand in 1995. This position soon evolved into a full-time role in the Beringer lab, where Peter quickly distinguished himself as a rising talent. Mentored by Beringer Winemaster Ed Sbragia and Winemaker Laurie Hook, he was rapidly promoted to enologist, assistant winemaker, and ultimately associate winemaker, where he focused on Beringer's luxury portfolio. "Laurie and Ed had two very different perspectives and styles—and I learned a great deal from both," says Peter. "Laurie taught me to be very organized, structural and linear in my approach, and to be very detail-oriented. Ed taught me to be creative, instinctive and to trust my senses. He also instilled a passion for making wines with a profound sense of place."

In 2007, Peter was named the third winemaker in Turnbull's history. He immediately saw the vast potential of Turnbull's four estate vineyards to produce singular wines of uncommon excellence. To coax the full potential from these renowned sites, Peter—who views himself as a farmer first—began guiding replantings at the vineyards, while also introducing more labor-intensive techniques, like cane pruning, to enhance quality. Working alongside Turnbull's gifted vineyard team led by Vineyard Manager Juan Toscano, he embraced new practices to create ideal vine balance, and proper dappled-sun exposure for every cluster. "It is essentially unheard of for a small winery like ours to have four estate vineyards on some of the most coveted land in Napa Valley," says Peter. "The quality and the diversity of our sites is remarkable. The practices we adopted showcase both."

To honor this diversity, and to preserve even the most delicate and ethereal characteristics from each vineyard, Peter applies a very restrained winemaking approach, being careful not to over extract, or do too many punch-overs. He also works in very small lots, doing as many as 90 fermentations each vintage to create a mosaic of flavors for blending, while tailoring his barrel choices to accentuate the nuance and complexity of each lot. "I approach each wine as a narrative, telling the story of a specific time and place," adds Peter. "The goal is to create elegant, enduring and structured wines that are rooted in our estate vineyards, while striking that perfect balance between interesting and delicious."