Aron Weinkauf

Vineyard Manager & Winemaker

AS BOTH vineyard manager and winemaker, Aron Weinkauf carries on a rich tradition at Spottswoode of embracing an interconnected view of winemaking that has deep roots in environmentalism and the belief that wine is made in the vineyard. In his dual role, Aron leads and works alongside the winery's in-house vineyard team to achieve the full potential of the Spottswoode Estate Vineyard's 24 individual blocks. In addition to being the steward of Spottswoode's legendary vineyard, Aron ensures that each wine authentically reflects its vintage and vineyards, and that it is true to the elegant, energetic, and age-worthy style for which Spottswoode has been recognized since 1982.

Since his childhood growing up in Nevada on three and a half acres with a large organic vegetable garden, a small orchard, and horses, chickens, and pigs, a deep connection with the land has been an important part of Aron's life. Later, while earning a degree in Spanish from Berry College, Aron was introduced to the culture of wine while studying in Seville and Barcelona, Spain. In winemaking, Aron saw a way to combine his love of the land with his fascination with wine, and upon returning to the United States he moved to California and enrolled in the viticulture and enology program at Fresno State University. While still in school, Aron worked as assistant winemaker at the family-owned Ficklin Vineyards, America's oldest Port winery.

In 2006, Aron joined the Spottswoode team as assistant winemaker. At Spottswoode, Aron embraced his desire for a deeper understanding of viticulture. "I fell in love with the sheer enjoyment of working in the vineyard," he says. "Winegrowing is so dynamic – it requires both sensibility and sensitivity as you intuit and adjust to the ebbs and flows of Mother Nature." In 2009, in addition to his role as assistant winemaker, Aron was named Spottswoode's vineyard manager. Two years later, in recognition of his deep understanding of the vineyard, his gifted palate,

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and his artistry as a winemaker, Aron was named the fifth winemaker in the storied history of Spottswoode. "When you have the honor of working with one of the world's great vineyards, you realize you are part of an ongoing story," he adds. "I recognize decisions made decades ago that still profoundly shape the quality of our wines, and I am so grateful for many of those decisions. Everyone who has had the privilege of working with our vineyard has strived to leave it better than when they arrived, building on this amazing foundation."

As part of this ideal, Aron expanded on a quarter century of organic viticulture when he introduced biodynamic farming to the estate, culminating in the vineyard's Demeter Biodynamic Certification in 2020. In many ways, biodynamics echoes Aron's overall winemaking philosophy, which is thoughtful and vineyard-driven, while still being intimately hands-on and detail-oriented. "I've always believed in the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of biodiversity. While I believe in the power of modern science and technological innovation, I also believe it is incomplete without wisdom, shared tradition, and the older, more holistic observational sciences. This has led me in search of a philosophy that combines newer practices with older, wiser ways of farming. With any vineyard, a nourishing, holistic approach is good for the health, longevity, and resilience of the vines. With Spottswoode it is part of its excellence. And as we face the challenges of a more variable, changing climate, it is a necessity."

As a champion of the environment, Aron has helped to spearhead new initiatives with Spottswoode's acclaimed grower partners to encourage their transition to organic farming through technical support and financial incentives. He is active in the Napa Valley winegrowing community, often assisting the Napa Valley Grape Growers with the Organic Winegrowers Conference, and recently helping develop new regulations for the Napa Green Vineyard certification. He is a member of the Napa Valley Vineyard Technical Group (Vit Tech), and is actively involved with several biodynamic and organic grower groups. In addition to Aron's winegrowing and winemaking responsibilities at Spottswoode, engagement with these outside endeavors allows him to inspire others toward environmentally sensitive approaches.

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"Conventional farming is all that most winegrowers have known in the modern era. It's what is taught in schools, and in many cases, we have lost intergenerational farming knowledge," says Aron. "To protect Napa Valley and the environment upon which we all depend, it is incumbent upon growers to look beyond what they are used to doing if they want to create a farming system that is viable for the next 100 years. As awareness of the benefits of regenerative and organic farming grows, it is driving a sea change in our ways of thinking. We are limited only by our knowledge, will, and capacity to incorporate better environmental practices. I am hopeful because I feel like we, as a community, are moving in the right direction. By sharing and working together, we will continue to improve upon our grape growing and winemaking practices, and that is something for which I am proud to advocate."

On a personal level, Aron enjoys spending time with his wife, their two young children, and their dogs.

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