

Chateau Ste Michelle

Bob Bertheau

HEAD WINEMAKER, CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE



A passion to find the perfect balance between science and artistic expression is what attracted Bob Bertheau to a career in winemaking and led him on a journey from Idaho and California to Washington state.

After making wine in Sonoma County, California for 16 years, Bob Bertheau returned to his Northwest roots when he joined Chateau Ste. Michelle in June 2003 as its winemaker of white wines. He was quickly promoted to head winemaker in 2004, overseeing the winery's diverse wine portfolio including Columbia Valley, Single Vineyard, Ethos Reserve, Artist Series and Limited Release club wines.

"We're so fortunate to have such unique growing conditions in Eastern Washington — low rainfall, extra sunshine during the growing season, cooler days at the end of harvest for longer hang time, and a pioneer spirit among the local growers and winemakers," says Bob. "These elements help us grow world-class fruit and make wines of character, complexity and quality."

Bob has spent the past decade working with some of the best vineyards in Washington state, including the winery's Cold Creek and Canoe Ridge Estate vineyards, and investing in cellar equipment designed to enhance wine quality.

"I have learned how to bring out the varietal character and regional expression in Washington reds which have amazing depth and concentration due to our climate, soil and diurnal temperature fluctuations," explains Bob. "Gentle handling, careful extraction techniques and proper cellar aging all play a key role in harnessing the power of Washington red fruit. On the white side, we have found great new places to grow Riesling and other white varieties for our cooler, more "mineral" fruit-driven style that we strive for in our white wines."

Prior to joining Chateau Ste. Michelle, Bob made his mark at Hambrecht Vineyards and Wineries with their Belvedere and Bradford Mountain labels. In his formative years out of UC Davis, he gained valuable mentoring from such renowned winemakers as Bob Sessions at Hanzell Vineyards and David Ramey at Chalk Hill. Wanting to gain an even broader experience with a wide variety of grapes and viticulture areas, Bob also worked at Gallo of Sonoma for five years, helping to bring a smaller winery mentality to the larger facility.

The move to Chateau Ste. Michelle in 2003 was not only a chance for Bob to make wine for Washington's founding winery, it was also a chance to return home. Bob was born in Seattle and went to school in nearby Idaho. He has a degree in chemistry from Boise State University and an MS in food science and enology from the University of California at Davis.

"I feel fortunate to be where I am today. How many other winemakers can make the depth, breadth and quality of wines that I am a part of at Chateau Ste. Michelle! I've enjoyed watching our vineyards mature over the last decade and working with talented, passionate growers and winemakers. And I'm just as excited about Washington's future as we get better at learning what grapes belong where, expanding our AVA's and continuing to grow as a world-class wine region."

Founded in 1934, Chateau Ste. Michelle pioneered vinifera grape growing in Washington state and has been producing classic European varietal wines under the Ste. Michelle label since 1967. The winery combines an ongoing dedication to research with a commitment to classic winemaking traditions.