



DANA EPPERSON

Decoy Winemaker and VP of Winemaking, Sonoma/Mendocino

A third generation Sonoman, Dana Epperson is the gifted winemaker who guides Decoy's winemaking. She works collaboratively with the vineyard and winemaking teams to ensure the wines reflect the Decoy signature style, and its unwavering commitment to quality.

Dana was raised in the heart of Sonoma County wine country. In her youth, she discovered winemaking from a family friend, noted winemaker Sarah Quider. This friendship inspired Dana to study food science and take extensive courses in wine analysis and viticulture at Cal Poly. While earning her degree, an internship at Ferrari-Carano solidified Dana's desire to become a winemaker, and after university, she joined Ferrari-Carano fulltime, where she spent a year and a half gaining invaluable hands-on vineyard experience.

In 2007, Dana became the enologist for Edna Valley Vineyard in San Luis Obispo, and two years later, she became the enologist and took over grower relations for Napa Valley's Artesa Vineyards & Winery, where she oversaw almost 25 different properties. At Artesa, Dana was mentored by Artesa's winemaker, and former Duckhorn Vineyards winemaker, Mark Beringer. "Mark taught me to have a light touch as a winemaker and to create classic, balanced wines," says Dana. "In a way, I studied the Duckhorn style before I ever joined The Duckhorn Portfolio team." Following Artesa, Dana was the winemaker and managed grower relations for Napa Valley's Jamieson Ranch Vineyard, which also includes the Reata, Whiplash and Light Horse brands.



Fruit for the Decoy program comes from a mix of Estate vineyards and top grower vineyards. "It starts with our Sonoma County focus," says Dana. "Whether it's Pinot and Chardonnay from Carneros, Zinfandel from Dry Creek Valley or Bordeaux varieties from our own Ridgeline and Brownell vineyards in Alexander Valley, Sonoma County offers a range of world-class grapes."

To benefit from the diversity of Decoy's great fruit sources, Dana and her team do as many as 150 individual fermentations each vintage with many lots as small as 5 tons. From there, hands on practices like open-top punch downs and lees stirring are applied. "There is an incredible amount of care that goes into these wines," says Dana. "If you want to achieve small-lot quality in your wines, you have to apply the same small-lot attention to detail, including hand-sorting, the use of the finest coopers and French oak, and a commitment to artful blending. From the wealth of viticultural and winemaking talent we can draw from to our world-class cooperage program and more, Decoy benefits greatly from the remarkable resources of The Duckhorn Portfolio."