

Olivia Wright Winemaker



“My desire is to make wines that are elegant and timeless,” states Olivia Wright. This is a lofty goal, but one for which Olivia is perfectly suited. Spending a few summers in Bordeaux as a child put her on the right path, if not the Right Bank, but it was attending UC Davis that launched her on her winemaking career for good. A 2009 freshman year visit to Spain and a tour of the Frank Gehry designed Marques de Riscal winery in Rioja led to her personal wine “Ah ha!” moment—a taste of Riscal’s famed Baron de Chirel bottling. Elegant and

timeless. Watchwords for any aspiring winemaker.

Olivia’s winemaking path led her to working harvests at Mumm Napa and Isabel Estate in New Zealand, but it was in the Central Coast, at Dierberg & Star Lane Vineyards, “where I really learned and fell in love with winemaking and winegrowing.” Winemaker Tyler Thomas, Olivia noticed, “showed up every day to the winery genuinely SO excited to ferment stuff.” To anyone who knows Olivia, it’s apparent she shares Thomas’ excitement at fermenting stuff—usually grapes, but let’s not tie her hands. At Rodney Strong Vineyards, as Winemaker, previously Assistant Winemaker, as well as Winemaker for the Knotty Vines brand, she now works alongside Director of Winemaking Justin Seidenfeld who “has definitely taken me under his wing and made sure I have opportunities to learn, grow, and have my voice heard.” With her talent and love of winemaking, one day it will be Olivia taking young winemakers under her wing.

Olivia once flew to Russia just for dinner. Not a winemaker dinner, but dinner with cosmonauts in Star City, just outside of Moscow. “I received the invitation as a phone call from the space station,” she says without gravity. “I’m not sure at the time I realized how totally bonkers that was.” When she’s not taking calls from space, Olivia has a passion for hiking, playing piano, show jumping, and a bit of kickboxing. But it’s wine that rules her passions, and her excitement to ferment stuff. “Half the fun of being in the wine industry,” she notes, “is that there is always something more to learn.” And the best part of being a winemaker? “Hands down,” Olivia says, “it’s getting to share the wines with family and friends.” And maybe cosmonauts.