

Rachel Shelton-O'Brien Associate Winemaker



Rachel Shelton-O'Brien's path to becoming Associate Winemaker at Rodney Strong Vineyards has been particularly circuitous. A native of Marietta, Georgia, and a graduate of Sacramento State with a degree in, of all things, Government, it was a trip to Amador County and the Napa Valley that initially inspired Rachel to pursue wine as her passion. The very next harvest she landed an internship at Trincherro Family Estates and moved to California. Trincherro had the sense to keep her employed for the next two and a half years. It was apparent even then that the Government degree had been overthrown.

In April of 2017 Rachel was hired to work in the lab at Rodney Strong Vineyards where she very quickly became indispensable. Winemaker Olivia Wright describes Rachel as a "first-class go-getter." In March of 2026 she was promoted to Associate Winemaker, joining the illustrious ranks of Rodney Strong Vineyards' much-admired winemaking team. Rachel puts it this way, "I have been at Rodney Strong for nine years and within that time I continue to see a company that is growing and striving to make technological advances, while not skimping on quality. Being able to continue to grow with this company and contribute to its success means the world to me."

Befitting a talented winemaker, Rachel is also very much a foodie. In her spare time, she and her husband love to check out the newest wine country restaurants, as well as creating their own craft cocktails at home. Blending is in her bones. And it comes as no surprise that she also loves hiking with her husband and their three dogs (none of which, surprisingly, is a Lab) and Pilates. Calories don't just burn themselves.

Rachel says that her end goal is to be able to have a say from vineyard to bottle. She's earned that say every step of her circuitous way.

