



*earth's
fruit
comes
full
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Interview (April 2010): Curt Lawrence Dunham, Winemaker

Why did you get in the winemaking business?

We have been wine collecting for over 15 years. We have a wine cellar in our home in Fountain Hills and much of the wine was purchased on site while visiting with the winemaker. So in addition to enjoying a great bottle we also get a story and a memory! A great vacation from our viewpoint has always been visiting wine regions around the world and meeting people who are passionate about their land, grapes and how they turn a raw material into something fabulous in a bottle. It's all about the experience and challenges and opportunities that each season brings. We hope to create that same kind of experience when people visit Lawrence Dunham Vineyards or drink a bottle of our wine.



Why do you think Southeastern Arizona is the "right" place for quality grapes?

We have found a really special place in the foothills of the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona and we are working hard to ensure that we tread lightly on this environment. The Chiricahua Mountains are part of the "sky islands" in southern Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico. They rise to 10,000 feet elevation like islands from the surrounding grassland "sea." This special area represents four ecosystems: Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madre Mountains, Sonoran and Chiricahuan Deserts. These all come together in our incredible spot. The area has four seasons, and micro-climatic characteristics due to the mountain influences. There are also rich soils with a large amount of Rhyolite, an igneous volcanic rock, that we believe is going to add some very interesting and unique characteristics to our wines. The area also attracts abundant wildlife that includes black bear, mountain lions, Arizona white-tail deer, coati-mundies, snakes, lizards, and a world-renowned variety of birds. We think the area's newest inhabitants will be world-class wine grapes!

What is your philosophy for winemaking?

Our wines will be an expression of the grapes that were grown that year. We want to stay true to the varieties. A Petite Sirah should taste like one. Many wines while delicious to drink are over blended to the point where the varietal characteristics are masked - or lost. We want to maintain the integrity of the varietal so that the special characteristics of this place can shine through and be compared to wines made of the same varietal from throughout the wine world.

What can we expect from a Lawrence Dunham Vineyards' wine?

Not having even bottled our first wines yet, I'm not quite sure! What you can count on is a wine that will be minimally processed with a strong emphasis toward building fruit-forward flavors. We would also like to build in some longevity to our wines so they can be enjoyed in a vertical setting. This will allow the characteristics of each year to be explored with wines made by grapes grown in the same place and produced by the same hand. Some of the most enjoyable wine experiences I have had are vertical tastings where we drink wines from the same place and winemaker for three consecutive years. The looks on people's faces when they realize the impact Mother Nature has each year are priceless!