



Blaine Brazil

J. Rickards Vineyards & Winery

Alexander Valley

WHEN BLAINE BRAZIL was growing up in Ferndale in Humboldt County, most of his family and friends were dairy ranchers. So it makes sense that he went to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to pursue a bachelor's degree in dairy science.

But it didn't take long before his career path changed course.

"I knew nothing about wine, hadn't even tasted it before," Brazil recalled. "Then some friends who had a small old-vine Zinfandel vineyard let me taste some of their wine. It was my first experience of what good wine tastes like."

He was hooked.

"Soon after, I got a job at their friends' winery (Tolosa in San Luis Obispo) doing cellar work, and I thought, 'I can do this!'"

After graduation, he landed a job at B.R. Cohn

Winery as assistant winemaker, where he honed his skills. He joined J. Rickards in Cloverdale as winemaker in 2011. This year, two of his wines made the Sonoma magazine Top 100: The 2015 Croft Vineyard Alexander Valley Sauvignon Blanc and the 2013 Brown Barn Vineyard Alexander Valley Petite Sirah.

"I look to make wines that are fruit-forward and balanced, with texture and weight on the palate," he said of his winemaking style. "Our vineyards are mostly hillside, with little soil depth. The vines struggle but the fruit is exceptional."

The winery's flagship is Old Vine Zinfandel. Coincidence?

"Zinfandel is still my favorite," he said.

— Julie Fadda Powers

