

Michael Costley

Michael Costley was raised in the small southwest Missouri town of Monett – population 8,922. After high school he headed 200 miles north to study Plant Science at the University of Missouri in Columbia. “While at school I began working in the vineyards for the third largest winery in Missouri. I loved it from day one. After graduation in 2008 I worked a harvest in Southern Oregon at Del Rio and got my first cellar experience. In early 2009 I spent some time in South Australia at Cape Jaffa Wines. This was my introduction to Biodynamic winemaking – and surfing.”

After a harvest at Chalk Hill Winery in Sonoma, Michael worked at Zilzie in Australia and Wither Hills in New Zealand. “In 2010, I returned to the states to get a degree in Enology from Fresno State. Project work at Stagecoach and Cuvaion, both in the Napa Valley, led to me being hired as the viticulturist for Starmont in January of 2013.”

Michael’s travels and work experiences have influenced his attitudes on viticulture and life. “I believe that to flourish, you need balance. You also need to be in tune with your surroundings. I spend most of my time in the vineyards monitoring the vines, making sure they are happy and healthy. We use both intuitive and intensive farming methods for our estate and contracted vineyards. We work closely with nature to get the most flavor and character from our grapes. I also work closely with the winemaking team to make sure that our fruit is complementary with their vision. I like to think of myself as a ‘winegrower’ rather than a viticulturist.”

As for the day-to-day aspects of winegrowing Michael says, “Deciding when to pick is perhaps the most important decision we will make all year. If we bring the grapes in at the right time there will be no need to make any adjustments to the juice. We will have the perfect marriage of flavor, acid, sugar and nutrients.”

Michael’s hobbies include surfing, food, wine and music. He lives in the town of Napa.