

## **Dashe Cellars**

### **Michael Dashe—Co-founder and Winemaker**

At the age of fifteen, Michael Dashe discovered his passion for the science of fermentation when he reconditioned an old refrigerator to begin making his own handcrafted beer. From selecting his own hops and malts, to studying the art of brewing, Michael loved the process. By 1978, as an undergraduate studying biology, with an emphasis on plant physiology, at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Michael's fascination with fermentation had guided him to begin making his own small batch wines.

While pursuing his undergraduate degree, Michael worked part-time in the cellar at Roudon-Smith winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Surrounded by people sharing similar interests to his own, it was during this time that he first considered a career as a winemaker. In 1985, Michael began studying for his masters in enology from the University of California at Davis. The following year he worked as an intern for Napa's respected Schramsberg Wine Cellars. In 1987, Michael completed his degree and took an intern position in the cellars of Far Niente.

Eager to expand his knowledge of various viticultural regions and winemaking techniques, in 1989, Michael traveled to the Cloudy Bay winery in New Zealand where he learned from acclaimed winemaker Kevin Judd. Next, his studies led him to Bordeaux where he worked in the vineyards and laboratory of Chateau Lafite-Rothschild. As the assistant to technical director, Gilbert Rokvam, Michael studied Rothschild's traditional methods for developing wine intensity, complexity, and tannin management during fermentation.

Michael returned to the United States in 1990, and was quickly offered the position of assistant winemaker at Ridge Vineyards, where he worked with renowned winemaker Paul Draper. Sharing Draper's vineyard-focused approach, Michael began refining his own gentle, minimalist style of winemaking. Instead of being overly manipulative with the fruit, as a master blender, Draper taught Michael to subtly craft wines layer-by-layer, developing the texture and character of each through careful trials. In 1995, in addition to his role as assistant winemaker, Michael was placed in charge of Ridge's Lytton Springs winery in the Dry Creek Valley. The following year, in partnership with his winemaker wife Anne, Michael began crafting his own wines under the Dashe Cellars label.

In 1998, Michael departed Ridge to pursue Dashe Cellars fulltime. Committed to using traditional winemaking techniques such as small lot fermentation, indigenous yeasts and little or no filtration, Michael strives to create wines that reflect the personality of great vineyard sites. "It's not about making commercial wines or competition winners," says Michael. "It's about making wines that we believe in, wines that are complex and interesting. I get my reward when I watch someone taste one of my wines, and for a moment I see that look of total satisfaction—that look that says that what I've made has transcended being a wine, and become an experience."