

MORROWS



DEREK ROHLFFS
Winemaker

Sometimes, a single conversation can be the impetus for a major life change. For Morrows winemaker Derek Rohlffs, a retrospective tasting with a Napa Valley legend was that defining moment—the moment when Derek resolved to one day craft wine deeply connected to its terroir.

Of Cherokee descent, Derek has felt a powerful connection to nature since childhood and is most at ease outdoors, close to the land. Following that love of science and nature, Derek earned his degree in Environmental Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

But after graduation, he chose to enter the family business in the gaming industry. While traversing the country building his marketing acumen, he began to develop a growing interest in wine.

In 1999, an encounter with Bob and Noni Travers of the famed Mayacamas Vineyards in Napa Valley, sparked an epiphany in Derek. While tasting through Bob's '70s and '80s era Chardonnay and Cabernet and talking the soil and geology behind the wines, he realized the inextricable link between two of his passions: land and wine. Derek had found his calling.

He began quietly taking courses in the renowned University of California, Davis winemaking program, and in 2005 made his first garage wine, a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. In 2007, Derek founded Bravium, focused on crafting cool climate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

"Winemaking is often likened to painting, where the artist layer colors on the canvas, but my approach is more like sculpting, in that you take away, rather than add, until you're left with a pure expression of place, time and varietal, with terroir as the ultimate framework."

It was a bottle of Santa Lucia Highlands Syrah, however, that ultimately drew him to the region along the Central Coast. "It had those cool climate characteristics I love: white pepper and briny olives, an intriguing, savory umami character, and its acidity / minerality / salinity was on full display. With Santa Lucia Highlands' fog and strong, cold winds coming off Monterey Bay and hillside vineyards with shallow soils, I figured that it could yield similarly thrilling results with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir."

In 2019, he became the founding winemaker for Morrows, charged with crafting single-vineyard Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the Santa Lucia Highlands. "There is no better story of place and time than a single-vineyard wine. Working with one vineyard is an opportunity to capture that fascinating interplay between land, climate, and varietal. In the Santa Lucia Highlands vineyards I source from, the grapes ripen gradually but fully and with deeply concentrated flavors, so I take a minimalist approach in the cellar to allow that terroir to shine through in each of the wines.

"My goal is that Morrows wines are a study in purity and precision: wines that are rich and silky, yet retain a natural vibrancy and vitality."