

GRAPE PERSPECTIVES . . .

A "FAMILY PERSPECTIVE": BY KATHRYN MUELLER OF CANELO HILLS VINEYARD AND WINERY

Many people come into our tasting room wanting to know our story, and with stars in their eyes they comment on how we are living our dream. They are right; it was my parents' dream and the family is living it. Six years ago Canelo Hills Vineyard and Winery was started from ten empty acres in Elgin's beautiful rolling grasslands. However, along with the romance and the fun are the long days of hard work, financial worries, and many, many frustrations in carrying out the daily tasks. In these six years we've had an abundance of the surprises, trials, and rewards that come from owning and operating a small family winery.

Canelo Hills is boutique-sized, and that allows us to do almost all the work ourselves, with personal attention paid to each step of the growing and winemaking processes. We have a comfortable division of labor: my mother Joan grows the grapes, my father Tim makes our wines, and I do the marketing and communications. We all take turns in the tasting room. Our dogs work as greeters. Sometimes friends and loyal customers volunteer their help with planting, harvest, and bottling.

There are a lot of really exciting days of successful harvests, getting great wines in the bottle, and busy sales, but oh, there are bad days too. There are hailstorms, electric outages, broken equipment, and unwanted animal visitors. We've spent hours trying to keep coyotes away from ripe fruit, and deer from munching on the tender shoots of the vines' first growth.

Working together helps to keep us sane. It might not work for all families, but we've always enjoyed each other's company and been a good team. Sometimes family events like birthday dinners get turned into business meetings, but then working hours are family time too. My architect brother and his graphic designer fiancée live far away in New York City, but they're a part of the family business doing design work from afar, and they are willing manual laborers or tasting room pourers every time they come to visit.

We've found that it's important to communicate and not get our signals crossed. Since my father still juggles his winery work with his full-time day job, and I travel for my other work as a professional musician, we all end of picking up each other's tasks sometimes. We're still tweaking that system, and a few communications have gone awry in the process, keeping us on our toes. We also have to be open

to each other's ideas, a particular challenge when you've got three strong and independent people in one family!

As in many small businesses, our work requires constant adaptation and innovation. We all enjoy the ever-changing work and the creative nature of our tasks. We're also proud of running a small local business and making wine from 100% Arizona-grown grapes. The rewards of being part of Arizona's burgeoning winemaking industry, and of selling something we've made with our own hands, are great.

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Photo courtesy of Canelo Hills Vineyard & Winery

Our views on working together in the winery are just one family's perspective. We interviewed a few other winery kids about what it's like being in a winery family in Southern Arizona's wine country. Eight year-old Parker Bostock of Dos Cabezas WineWorks says that what he likes is that "I can

help make wine." He doesn't like harvest though, saying "it's boring."

Caitlin and Claire Callaghan have spent their entire lives playing and working in the family business, Callaghan Vineyards. Twelve year-old Claire's first memory of being part of a winery family is when she was two years old and hampered her mother's ability to work in the tasting room because "I'd hug my mom's leg and ask when we were going to go home." Now she likes spending time in the winery meeting people and their pets. Older sister Caitlin, age 15, remembers that "when we were younger the winery was a great place to play" and thinks that playing in their fort of old pallets, she

and Claire got to use their imaginations more than most kids do. Now that she's older, she likes the physical work of the vineyard and winery, and thinks that although her parents are tired at the end of every day, "they appreciate things more." She does acknowledge that her life is different from her friends' because "there is always something to do [in the winery]. We can't go on vacations."

While scheduling vacations is nearly impossible, and running a family winery isn't exactly the working vacation it appears to visitors to be, we and the other winery families know that we have a unique lifestyle. We get to spend our days in Arizona's breathtakingly beautiful wine country, and work together to produce something special, and in the end we really are living our dream.