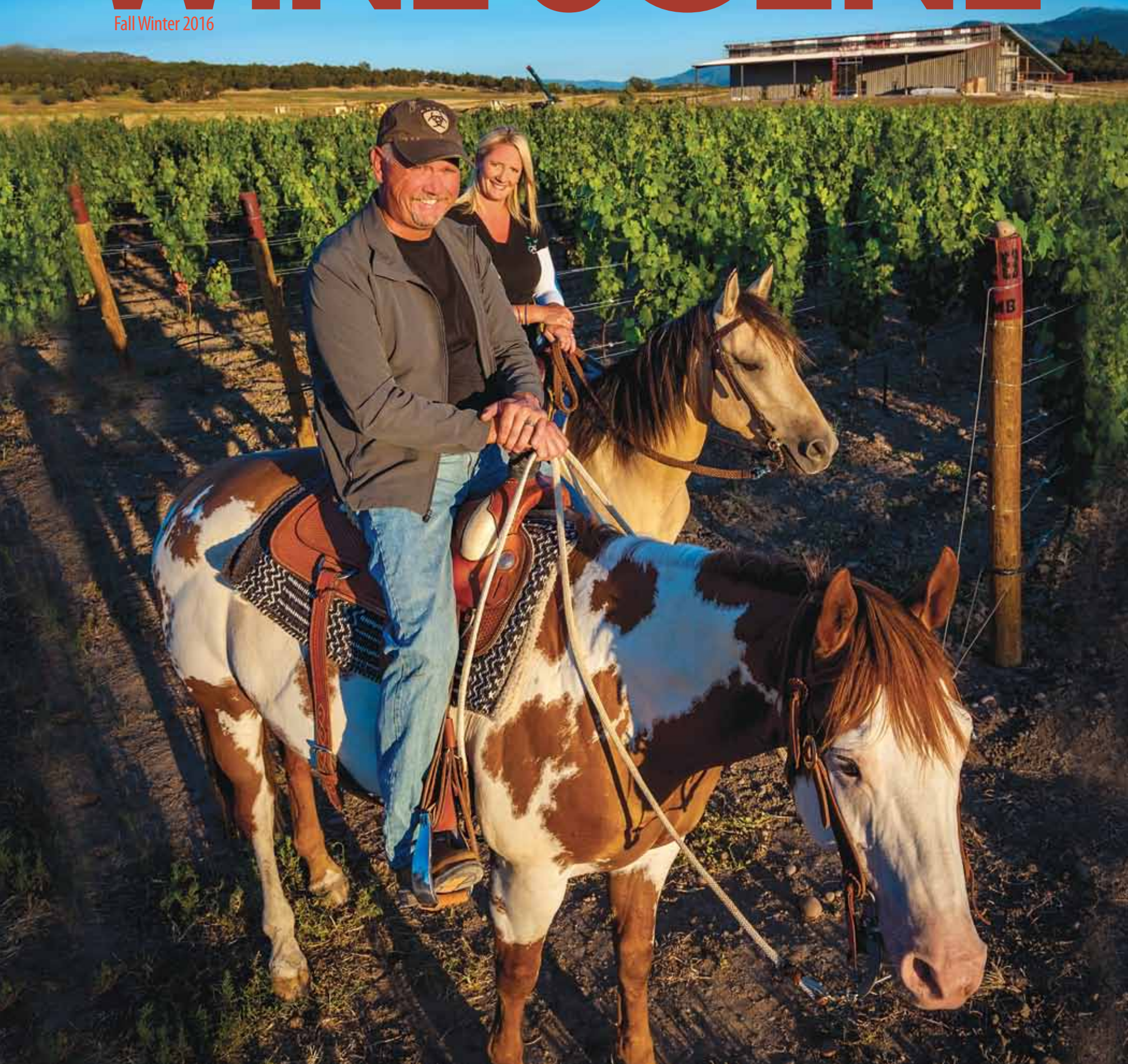


SOUTHERN OREGON

LIVING BETWEEN THE VINES

WINE SCENE

Fall Winter 2016



2Hawk / Soaring to New Heights

by CHRIS COOK

Photos by DAVID GIBB

It's 8pm and the late afternoon winds have died down. Ross and Jen Allen ride the perimeter of their east Medford vineyard on horseback. And while that sounds quite romantic—as does owning a vineyard—the Allens are all business. They are laser-focused on developing 2Hawk into a world-class winery.

The fact is, just hours ago, Ross was in the middle of the vines on his vineyard-model John Deere tractor, checking the progress he and his vineyard workers have made in preparation of harvest. "I'm really happy with how the vines look this year. It's because of the constant attention we've been giving them—every day—and all by hand."

This, their third harvest since purchasing 2Hawk, will be especially meaningful. This harvest's bounty will be 100 percent processed in their brand new, state-of-the-art winery, built onsite.

But let's back up. The truth is that the Allens weren't in the market for a vineyard or winery when they were house hunting in the area. But they fell in love with the Tuscan-style home nestled back in the vineyard.

"We looked at the big picture and the opportunity," Jen said. "We knew the Southern Oregon wine scene was up-and-coming. And we saw potential for expansion and improvement."

They are well positioned to make this happen. As they evaluated their talents and experience, it seemed like it could work. A third generation farmer, Ross grew up in the Central Valley of California. On his family's west Fresno County farm, Ross grew sugar beets, garlic, cotton and more. Today, Ross is still involved in the Central Valley with his successful 1,400-acre almond and pistachio farm in Coalinga. With this background, Ross is embracing the challenges a vineyard brings and is wielding his unique knowledge and innovative farming techniques at the Rogue Valley vineyard.

"Ross's success comes from a combination of experience, constant research and natural intuition," says Jen. "No one in southern Oregon is using the techniques and tools that Ross is using—especially related to irrigation and vineyard management. We are much attuned to our environment, taking a natural approach to farming. Our pest and vermin control is natural—using resident barn owls, ladybugs, jackrabbits and our namesake red-tailed hawks. In the spring, you can see Ross getting off his tractor to move the killdeer bird nests out of harm's way—underneath a vine trellis instead of in the vineyard row—as they nest in the rocky soil and eat vineyard bugs."

A native of Humboldt County, Calif., Jen's background is strong in customer service and business operations. To enhance her team, Jen hired Holly Andreson, with 18 years' experience at Rombauer Vineyards, as retail and business development manager.

"We view this operation as a three-legged stool," Ross says. "It takes expertise in farming, hospitality and winemaking to succeed. Jen and I have the first two covered, and that's why we hired Kiley Evans as our winemaker. He makes up the third leg of the stool and puts us on a strong foundation."

Evans is UC Davis-educated with a 6-year history at Abacela Winery, along with winemaking experience at Agate Ridge Vineyard, Ledger David Cellars and several other area wineries. He was happy to return to the Rogue Valley after 3 ½ years making wine in North Carolina.

"It's a dream job," Evans says. "Ross has given me carte blanche in designing a new winery—I'm like a kid in a candy store! There will be things you won't see anywhere related to safety, production and labs. It's coming together quickly."

2Hawk is bringing crushing and winemaking operations, previously handled by Pallet Wine Co., in-house this fall. S&B James Construction Management Co. is the design/build contractor for the 14,000-square-foot winery off Campbell Road, south of the 2Hawk tasting room on North Phoenix Road. "This will give us greater quality control and personal input where we can really fine-tune the style of wine," said Ross.

With 23.5 acres currently planted, there is room onsite to expand to 30 total acres of vines. The first block, containing tempranillo and viognier, was planted earlier this decade. The second block is tempranillo but only every other row was planted, which the Allens filled in 2014 with more tempranillo. Existing, poor-quality

chardonnay vines were removed and replanted with Wente and Robert Young clones. Pinot noir, malbec, grenache, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, sauvignon blanc, muscat, and additional chardonnay were planted in 2015. The new plantings will allow the 2016 vintage to be 100 percent estate grown.

2Hawk produced slightly more than 1,000 cases last year. The new winery will be capable of producing 10,000 cases, or about what can be grown on the property.

The multi-million dollar winery will be powered by a first-in-the-valley solar array, and will have dedicated presses and processing lines for luxury-quality white and red wines featuring the most innovative de-stemming technology available.

It will feature a state-of-the-art laboratory and will rely on sustainable, low impact methods for energy conservation, including a gravity-flow crush pad and small batch fermentations to minimize temperature control needs.

"The initial 50-kilowatt solar panels will produce 100 percent of the energy needed in the winery," Evans said. "As production expands, it will probably supply about 70 percent of the energy needed."

As the vineyard and winery take shape in the way Ross and Jen envision, perhaps the horseback rides at dusk can take on more of a romantic feel. But for now, there's work to be done, and Ross and Jen are up for it. In a T-shirt sporting the letters E-I-E-I-O, Ross says, "I don't come to work wearing loafers and slacks—never have, and I love it that way."



l-r: Kiley Evans, Holly Andreson, and owners, Jen and Ross Allen

