

THE WINEMAKER FILES //

Dana Epperson

Migration Winery California

As a third-generation Sonoma native, I grew up immersed in the vineyards, people and traditions that make this region so unique. The connection between the land and the wines it produces has always inspired me, shaping my approach to winemaking and my love for terroir-driven expression.

In 2024, I marked my 20th harvest in Northern California, a milestone that makes me proud of the journey I've taken and the lessons I've learned. Along the way, I've had the privilege of working alongside incredible mentors, seeing first-hand how each vintage has its own personality, and continuing to grow as a winemaker. Sonoma has always been home, and it's the place that continues to inspire me to craft wines that reflect both the land and the passion I put into every bottle.

We named our winery Migration to speak to the ideas of movement and exploration – and it's a name we have lived up to. We started our exploration of the great Burgundian varieties in the Anderson Valley in 2001, when we made our inaugural Migration Pinot Noir, but we really solidified our identity in 2008 when we made our debut Russian River Valley Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. From there,

we added single-vineyard wines from some of California's greatest cool-climate winegrowing sites to the Migration line-up, and in 2014 we acquired our 90-acre Running Creek Vineyard in the Russian River Valley to provide an incredible source of estate fruit. We acquired the adjacent 47-acre El Veredicto Estate Vineyard, which was formerly part of the historic Stanly Ranch, two years later.

We have always been dedicated to cool-climate grapes, most notably Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and we have developed a style that we believe best expresses the qualities we love in cool-climate wines, specifically lush fruit, bright acidity and impeccably balanced oak. We prize vibrancy and finesse, and the ability of our wines to express the charm and character of where they were grown.

We work with fruit from all along the California coastline, where cooler temperatures, wind, steep hillsides, coastal soils and cool, foggy mornings create a unique growing environment. The soils, in particular, have the biggest impact on the character of the wine. Sandy or rocky soils can drain too quickly and sometimes need extra irrigation, while the heavier clay soils retain water and can make the vines too vigorous, leading to less concentration.

Women definitely have equal opportunities in the California winemaking scene. In fact, we have an equal balance of men and women in head winemaker roles within the Duckhorn Portfolio, and I'm seeing that more across the industry as well. It's also great to see so many women graduating from viticulture and oenology programmes and getting into the industry.



Dana heads up the winemaking team at Decoy as well as Migration, a cool-climate producer working mainly with Sonoma Coast fruit within the Duckhorn Portfolio, specialising in Burgundian varieties.

Wines imported by Top Selection

My degree is in food science, so I have a very strong scientific and technical background. I also love the artistry of blending. Together, I think the two strike a nice balance. A love of blending can also at times be a weakness. You can literally blend forever in search of perfection. You have to trust your palate, trust the vineyards, trust the wine, and know when to stop blending.

I recognise that wine is subjective. I love having my peers taste the Migration wines and give me their feedback, and I'm open and receptive to all of their commentary. I don't believe that you can make wine in a bubble; everyone's palate brings something valuable to the table.

Migration Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

A blend of our Estate Running Creek Vineyard along with fruit from the Green Valley region. A touch of French oak, with about 30% new barrels, enhances the fruit while adding depth and elegance. The wine balances bright acidity with a supple texture, creating a beautifully refined and harmonious finish.



Migration Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

We harvest at optimal phenological ripeness, ensuring refined tannins and a beautifully supple texture. The result is a Pinot Noir with a silky, full-bodied finish, complemented by 35% new French oak, which imparts subtle richness, depth and a delicate touch of sweetness on the palate.



Decoy Limited Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Ridgeline Vineyard, with its rugged terrain, yields concentrated, powerful Cabernet, while Brownell Vineyard produces a more opulent expression. Together, they form the foundation of our blend, which has layers of complexity, warm spice and a touch of sweetness. Beautifully balanced and nuanced.

