

RED • CAR

WEST SONOMA COAST

► ABOUT THE WINEMAKER: TANNER SCHEER

Winemaking was an unexpected career choice for Tanner Scheer, but turned out to be a surprising fit. In 2008, Tanner was looking for a means of getting to California to be closer to his brother and sister-in-law, who happened to be longtime friends of Ampelos Cellars owners Peter and Rebecca Work. After a quick telephone interview, Tanner had a job lined up as a cellar rat and a place to stay: an RV parked on the Ampelos property. Quitting his job in Colorado, Tanner hit the road, arriving in Lompoc, CA at 18 years of age with all he had—two bags and a backpack—to work his first harvest.

Tanner had never tasted a single wine at that point. “The first wine I had was 2001 Melville Pinot,” he says. “I remember thinking that this is the craziest thing ever, that all this action can be packed in one glass.” He fell in love with the work, too, having grown up in southwest Colorado on large horse and cattle ranches alongside his father, a hardworking career cowboy. “It fit my work ethic and the way I was raised. I felt like I was willing to work harder than anybody. I’d start an hour earlier and stay hours later than anybody else.”

The hard work and extra hours paid off. Tanner spent six years at Ampelos Cellars, learning on the job and eventually working his way up to Assistant Winemaker in 2011. Leaving in 2013, he joined mutual friends for harvest at Dragonette Winery in Buellton, CA before accepting a position at Liquid Farm. But Chardonnay was calling him. “Chardonnay is one of my favorite varietals and I was looking for a place that could produce Chardonnay of true character, not manipulated in any way. That boils down to soil and climate.” Tanner interviewed with Red Car in June 2015 and joined the team two weeks later.

At Red Car, Tanner adheres to simple but strict principles. “I believe in minimalism,” he explains. “Don’t manipulate the fruit in the winery. It’s up to the vineyards, the climate, the soil and the farming practices we choose to employ. What’s important for me at a fundamental level is to represent each varietal in its truest form. That’s a foundation of any of our wines.”

The Red Car team is a close-knit family and Tanner especially values the camaraderie and teamwork. “We are all connected to these vineyard sites and these wines. We’ve all bought into what we are doing here, so it becomes a symbiotic relationship. The wines represent us and we represent the wines,” he says. “We rely and count on one another to come through with the parts that are on each of our plates so we can come together with a common purpose and shared vision of where we are going.”

Tanner credits his father with instilling in him how important it is to love what you do. “I’ve never seen another human who just jumped out of bed every day—2:30 in the morning even! That love and passion he has for cowboying, for me it metamorphosed to the wine industry. That type of energy, that approach to life and work. I also learned from him the importance of loyalty, respect and being accountable.”

Tanner Scheer lives in Petaluma, CA with his dog, Button. Describing himself as “an avid, avid lifelong fisherman,” if Tanner isn’t working, he’s fly fishing or catching bass from his kayak. Favorite spots include Lake Sonoma, Lake Chabot, and New Melones Lake near Angel’s Camp.

VINEYARDS *on the* EDGE OF THE PACIFIC

REDCARWINE.COM