



Farming Napa Valley for the Next Generation

*By Ryan MacDonnell, Napa Valley Grapegrowers Board of Directors and
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As I awoke one early May morning, I couldn't help but be overwhelmed by the beauty of the Valley. It was one of those magical Napa Valley days where even those who have lived here for many years can't help but be stopped in their tracks by the beauty of it. Crystal clear from previous rains, a slight briskness in the air as the breeze wafts by, everything in eyesight brilliantly verdant and the vines and all other plants, flowers and trees overflowing with new growth and fresh buds. The view seemed in Technicolor.

When one is struck with such a site, it reminds us again how closely linked we are here in this valley to the earth and the vineyards – our livelihood. And it strikes us that we are incredibly fortunate – through communal will and perseverance – to have collectively decided to preserve this land and commit it permanently to agriculture. The creation of the Napa Valley Agricultural Preserve in 1968 was monumental in the modern history of our valley and today protects more than 36,000 acres in our community. Furthermore, the notion of our surroundings being dedicated to agriculture has become embedded in the fiber of our community and gives us a unique bond to each other - whether economically, socially, scenically or recreationally.

And it is on days like this that we also remember we should not take this special status for granted. The Napa Valley Grapegrowers organization works day in and day out to ensure this remains a luxury on which we can all depend. Whether supporting our farmers through education on critical issues like the emergence of the European Grapevine Moth or staying abreast of political developments like redistricting that could affect our livelihood, the NVG is always focused on its mission to preserve and promote Napa Valley's world-class vineyards. Whether engaged in studies such as the wage and benefit survey or hang time reports that provide timely answers to pressing industry questions or providing resources to farm workers who work so tirelessly in the vineyard, the NVG is providing a foundation that supports all of us so that we can do our jobs better. Whether acting in its role as the authority on sustainability issues in the vineyard or providing vital services like the frost alert or the Napa Winegrape Market, the NVG is working to help us improve our wine grape quality and thus advance the heritage and reputation of the Napa Valley appellation. Ultimately, of course, the NVG is working to ensure that we can all reap the rewards of living in a community where our passion supports us and not only fills our bellies but also feeds our souls.

And I, for one, am so grateful to the Napa Valley Grapegrowers for doing so. At Round Pond Estate, my family's business in Rutherford, we are both an enterprise sustained by the grapes we grow and wine and olive oil we sell, as well as a family lucky enough to raise children in this community. This dual perspective lends itself to long term thinking and makes it easy to do what is best for the land. Every day, as stewards of this land, we recommit ourselves to its future, whether making decisions to restore the Napa River, use a new biodynamic preparation in the garden, or retool the vineyards using more sustainable technology. And I know we are one of many. As we are all collectively inspired to do the right thing for this pristine land, together we will continue to preserve the farm based community in which we live.

Both as a grower whose livelihood comes from the grapes and as a mother whose children are being raised on the very same land, I am thankful for this. That we – and our families – are able to live in an agriculture-based community and benefit from living among such green and sustainable beauty; for that I was particularly thankful that May morning.