



Featured California Winegrower: John Duarte Hughson Region

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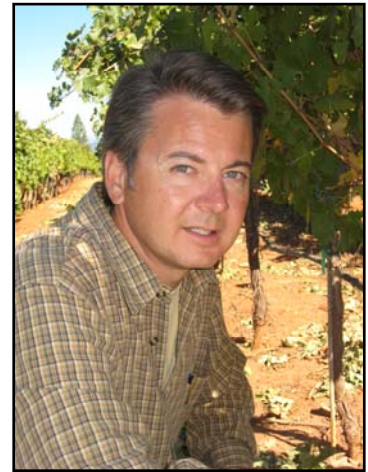
For John Duarte, growing an environmentally sustainable vineyard begins long before the vines are even planted. As a nursery operator (along with his parents and brother), Duarte does his part by promoting a pest-free inventory to curtail the need for chemical applications.

"I think one of the biggest contributions nurseries can make to sustainability is delivering pest-free stock," says Duarte. "We've seen with the vine mealybug infestations how that insect alone has really hurt the sustainability of California winegrowing." He has practices in place at the nursery—trapping, insecticidal treatments, hot-water dipping—to ensure the delivery of pest-free stock to customers.

Duarte admits he is drawn to the very aspect that makes farming such a trying profession. "I love the uncertainty. I love that you're having to make choices without complete knowledge of exactly what the outcome is going to be," he explains. "We're not in a controlled environment; we're out there in nature and we have to weigh all our decisions against a lot of uncertainty, and that adds a whole level of excitement to what we do."

His employees, he says, are the reason customers keep coming back. "We get an incredible amount of dedication from our people," says Duarte. "I think that shows with customers interact with us, when they get their product and their consistently high quality. It's because all of the hands on those products care about what they're doing."

But it's Duarte's father who imparted the wisdom that carries him through each day. "My dad has always said you don't have employees, you have people that work for you. You don't have customers, you have people that buy from you," says Duarte. "We have to remember that these are people relying upon us, not just employees or customers."



Favorite wine and food pairing: Grenache and cheese
What you might be surprised to know: "I'm a big fan of The Simpson's."
Off-time recreation: Snow skiing
Hobby: Home winemaking—what else?