



Featured California Winegrower: Rodney Schatz Lodi

"If you're not different, you don't stand out and nobody's interested."

Rodney Schatz isn't looking to play the game like anyone else. That's not good enough. Whether it comes to making wine, growing grapes or raising a family, it's his way. Creatively. Uniquely.

Not surprisingly, it's been a year of firsts for the CAWG chairman. First Schatz Family wine release. First wine competition. First big award. The voluptuous Peltier Station 2005 Petite Sirah is California State Fair's "Best of Lodi" red wine. While most people start a wine label with about 500 cases, Rodney jumped in. Head first. He's working a plan to sell 5,000 cases of the Petite Sirah.

"It's a crazy, stupid start."

Truth is it was a really good tank - and Petite Sirah is hot. They'll make even more next year.

Making wine and running a custom crush business is an extension of Rodney's farming operation. When the market tightened, the third generation farmer chose to vertically integrate. He has his eye on sustainability. In the vineyards he maintains the philosophy that less is more. He chooses the most benign practices. Then figures out how to make them even less invasive.

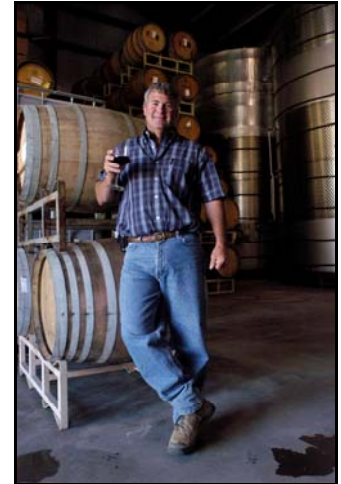
"I have my way of doing it."

Rodney farms because he loves it. He's the son of a grape grower (Dad still works the land, too). He grew up with it. He knows it. Each Sunday morning he takes a few hours to himself to drive every acre of the farm. No cell phone calls. No traffic. No paperwork. It's his favorite time of the week.

When he needs to get away, travel is made easy in his Cessna 182 four-passenger plane. A five-hour drive turns into a one-hour flight. It's perfect for abalone diving along the Mendocino Coast, hunting, fishing. Even work.

Back on the ground Rodney follows his two teenagers in their sports careers, shares great food with his wife. Is a Creedence Clearwater Revival fan. And indulges in Barbera. He won't admit they're his passions. (Individualist.)

"I tell people I know a lot about nothing and a little about everything."



Education: Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo (pomology)
Looks Forward To: Harvest
Not Afraid to Admit: He drinks Budweiser
Wine and Food Pairing: Barbera with Italian cuisine
Wants for Christmas: A "loaded" iPod