



SWANSON
VINEYARDS

ROBIN AKHURST WINEMAKER

Robin Akhurst's road to Napa took him around the globe, through eight consecutive and exhausting harvests, picking up an impressive list of mentors along the way. He joined the Swanson Vineyards family in 2015, its thirtieth year, to lead a super power winemaking team poised to propel Swanson through its next thirty.

A native of Scotland, Robin graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a degree in environmental sciences. What started as a casual interest in wine soon became a passion and following graduation, he took a job as a sommelier in one of Edinburgh's most forward thinking wine-focused restaurants. Fate then took him to London to work for one of the city's leading independent wine merchants, gaining additional on-the-floor experience selecting, selling and sampling wines from all over the world.

With a desire to get closer to the agricultural aspects of winegrowing, he moved to New Zealand and received a graduate degree in viticulture and enology from Lincoln University in Christchurch. He worked two harvests in Marlborough before continuing his international winemaking road trip, working at Burgundy's famed Domaine Leflaive and in Australia's Barossa Valley with Two Hands Winery.

A fortunate suggestion from Michael Twelftree of Two Hands led Robin to accept a harvest position in Napa valley with Thomas Rivers Brown in 2009, working with the team at Outpost Wines on Howell Mountain. Under Thomas's guidance, he learned to create iconic wines including Schrader Cellars, Maybach and Rivers Marie. Following harvest, Robin took a position to direct the production team at Envy Wines, a winery and custom-crush project established by partners Nils Venge and Mark Carter. For four years, Robin crafted the Envy wines and worked alongside Mike Smith as assistant winemaker for the highly lauded Carter Cellars wines.

Swanson's reputation provided sufficient appeal for him to make a move to join the team, stepping in to take the lead winemaking role as Chris Phelps transitioned to a consultant role after twelve years at the winery.

"Working closely with the team and the family's Oakville estate vineyards is very exciting. The winery has a long-standing reputation for classical Bordeaux-styled wines with great finesse, character and elegance. It's a privilege to work here," he says.

As lead winemaker, Robin is directly responsible for winemaking and winery operations, working closely with Assistant Winemaker Tony Herrera, Winemaker Emeritus Chris Phelps and Estate Director Pam Bond along with her vineyard team.

Although free time is something Robin's not too familiar with, when he gets a chance, he enjoys spending time with his wife Aneeta, playing guitar, cycling and soaking in all of the cultural offerings provided by Bay Area living.