

**Joe Wolosz**  
**Vintner and Founder, Gentleman Farmer**

A native Californian, Joe Wolosz's story began as a young, five-year-old traveling with his parents on the California Central Coast, where his parents acquired two motels: El Patio Motel and They Wayside Motel. This early introduction to food, wine, and hospitality fueled his passion for the lifestyle, leading him to a college degree in travel, food, and wine with cooking school soon to follow.

In 1995, Joe became active in hotel real estate brokerage, assuming the role of a hotelier in 1998 with the purchase of the Halcyon Hotel near Union Square in San Francisco. He then founded his own firm in 2003, The Passport Group, through which he has facilitated hundreds of hotel transactions. His hospitality involvement has continued through today as owner and operating partner of The Redwood Riverwalk, a boutique motel in Humboldt County among California's massive redwoods.

In the spring of 1999, Joe met his future life partner, Jeff Durham. Both holding bachelor's degrees in Hotel & Restaurant Management and a wealth of experience working in food, wine, and travel, their fateful connection fueled the start of a fruitful life together. They began their winemaking journey in the fall of 1999 in a garage in St. Helena with a half-ton of fruit from a small vineyard off Zinfandel Lane and the guidance of a local winemaker.

With the 2005 vintage, Joe and Jeff founded, producing Napa Valley wines, while keeping the winery in a culinary context. His certification as a Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) with the Society of Wine Educators is complemented by certificates with distinction from the London based Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET) in Levels 3 and 4 (formerly Intermediate and Advanced). Currently, he allocates his study time to complete the Diploma program, the highest certification from the WSET.

Joe's winemaking mission has been deeply inspired by personal loss. In short succession, he experienced a series of family deaths starting with his brother in 1999, followed by his sister, and mother, just before his father went into assisted living. Winemaking became a therapeutic outlet. As a longtime home cook, Joe fell in love with wine because of its tactile creative process and rewarding results. Furthermore, wine provided the means to forge meaningful and lasting relationships with likeminded people who appreciate culture and artisanship.

Joe abides by the motto he came up with in college with the encouragement of his professor: "Life is a vacation." He feels fortunate to wake up each morning doing his

life's best work in food, wine, hotels, and travel, which he considers his life's compass and foundation. Joe's life is enriched by frequent travel and opportunities to practice his fluency in English, Spanish, and French.