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macphail Family Wines

James MacPhail

Biography

James MacPhail grew up just north of San Francisco in Marin County where, since the 1880s, members of his father's family have been pillars of the local business community. James' mother was raised on a dairy farm in western Sonoma County; she remained tied to her Tomales Bay community, regularly engaging James in the lives of the region's farming families. A passion for business and a love for the land are at the center of MacPhail family life.

"My first job was running letters through the stamp machine when I was five years old," recalls James. From an early age he was immersed in the family business (appliances, building materials and natural gas), working in all aspects of the operation, learning that quality and service are the cornerstones of success.

James' childhood experiences included a month of travel each summer to uncommon destinations and trips throughout the world - sailing the Black Sea or visiting Warsaw. During these adventures, James developed an awareness of the power of place in people's lives.

Creative, artistic experiences filled James' early years. His parents collected the works of 19th and early 20th century California artists. He remembers spending Saturday mornings at Butterfield & Butterfield, the San Francisco auction house. "Though I certainly wasn't able to appreciate it at the time, these weekend forays brought lasting values of beauty and quality into my life."

Well-rounded and self disciplined, James became an accomplished

classical pianist and bagpiper, as well as a dedicated sportsman. He excelled at competitive swimming and water polo, and today is a nationally ranked Masters swimmer. When he successfully swam the Golden Gate in 1983, he was the youngest person to have completed the crossing.

James attended the University of Redlands in the 1980s. With a lively interest in both business and hospitality, he later enrolled in the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and earned dual B.S. degrees (1994) in Business and Hotel Administration. When James had the opportunity to join the management team at the Ritz Carlton, he realized that being a hotel executive required leaving his family and home. He chose his family and redirected his career.

Remembering that his father encouraged him to blaze his own trail at all times, James designed his own work/study program to pursue what fascinated him most: wine. In the mid 1990s, James began working with wineries and growers in Sonoma County, focusing on the craft of wine-making and Pinot Noir in particular. He developed a fascination with Pinot Noir grown in the cooler regions: Sonoma Coast and Anderson Valley in Mendocino County.

In 2002, James launched his own brand: MacPhail Family Wines. The wine business satisfies James' interest in the land, his penchant for the artistic and his pledge to service. He selects and works with growers who share his commitment to sustainable farming and understand the significance of terroir-based, singular quality wine. "My dream has been to make something from the earth that I can share with others," he says.

After making wine for six vintages in rented space, James took a

step few small producers take — he built his own winery — in his back yard. Reflecting James' respect for the environment, the understated building takes advantage of natural light and night-cooling fans. The winery recycles all wastewater in a constructed wetlands. James makes wine – naturally, in small batches, by hand. He is a believer in traditional, old world techniques and minimal intervention.

Grower/winemaker James MacPhail is also the sales and marketing director. His business model is based on maintaining personal relationships with the individuals who purchase his wine as well as the restaurants and wine shops that sell his MacPhail Pinot Noir. “I take very seriously the honor of being a part of people’s tables.”

With a group of dedicated growers under contract, a winery just steps from his kitchen and delicious wines in the cellar, James has made Healdsburg home for both business and family. In this small community, wine brings people together every day, enhancing both food and friendship. “This home matches my vision,” says James. “It is located in a winegrowing region with a long history of agriculture and small family farming.”

When James is not absorbed in making and selling wine, he leads an active life. He travels often, visiting France, Japan and other international and domestic destinations each year. He remains involved in sports, pursues music and art and enjoys cooking. A devoted father, James is raising two young daughters - Haley and Madison - to experience life to its fullest, including winemaking and frequent adventures in their own Radio Flyer wagons.

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