



Kevin Warren, Winemaker

“We Grow Wine.”

“My philosophy is that 80 percent of wine quality comes from the grapes,” says Winemaker Kevin Warren, who passionately pursues his craft with talent and humility. “Jim Young makes every effort to grow the highest quality grapes, and the rest is up to me.”

For Warren, who began making the wines of Robert Young Estate Winery with the 2001 vintage, a gentle approach is essential in premium winemaking. “My style is to handle the wine as little as possible,” he notes. Grapes are lightly pressed, which results in lower yields, but higher quality, more flavorful juice from each ton of fruit.

Winemaking at the Robert Young estate is focused on the creation of three wines: Robert Young Estate Winery Chardonnay; Robert Young Estate Winery Scion, a red, Bordeaux-style wine; and Robert Young Estate Winery Merlot. The winery’s chardonnay is crafted in a Burgundy style. “We age the chardonnay in barrels for 14 months and use malolactic fermentation for complexity,” explains Warren. “We also stir the lees to develop complexity while preserving the fruit.”

Warren’s approach with red wines involves picking the fruit when it is ripe, then cold soaking the fruit upon arrival at the winery for several days. This allows for a longer maceration in the earlier stages of winemaking, rather than later, when the wine is higher in alcohol. The benefit of this method is more fruit and intensity in the middle body of the wine.

One of Warren’s first responsibilities at Robert Young was to outfit the newly constructed winery with the tools and equipment necessary to craft wines of exceptional quality. He chose barrels made from both French and American oak; an Italian Diemme AR50 press; a flexible conveyor that could handle both grapes coming into the winery

and red pomace; ample refrigeration; and a glycol warmer to heat and cool the tanks and tank room to the ideal temperature.

Designing a winemaking facility from scratch is just one of the benefits of working for a small, estate winery. Experimentation is another. Warren experiments with small lots and routinely separates blocks for analysis. But perhaps the most important benefit is the close relationship he enjoys with Vineyard Manager Jim Young. "I work with Jim all the time, and on a daily basis during harvest," he notes. "If, for example, I go out and weigh the clusters in the weeks before harvest, and I feel the pounds per vine is higher than it should be, Jim sends a crew out to drop more fruit – and we already drop *a lot* of fruit."

At the Robert Young estate, vineyards are tended on a vine-by-vine basis, and each vine is encouraged to produce fruit in balance. "Our winemaking begins in the vineyards and is sustained by the Young family's commitment to growing balanced vines," says Warren. "It is this dedication that allows us to make fine, handcrafted wines that are rich with fruit flavors and solidly structured."