

# Three generations of women have run winery

By ALIYA HALL  
For the Capital Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Happy people make happy wines, and happy wines are what consumers are looking for, Silvan Ridge Head Winemaker Juan Pablo Valot said.

Born and raised in Argentina as a fifth-generation winemaker, Valot has been working at Silvan Ridge Winery since 2003.

Silvan Ridge is known for the Chambers name, a family of civic and business leaders in the area, and was purchased from founder Doyle Hinman by Carolyn Chambers in 1993. Since then the winery has been passed down through three generations of female leadership.

“It’s not common because three women in a line in a row, and Oregon wine is still pretty new,” Valot said. “It’s been great.”

After the death of Elizabeth Chambers in 2018, her eldest daughter, Julia Stiltner, and her husband, Andrew Stiltner, have taken over management.

“It’s the same family, same idea, but there are more improvements,” Valot said. “It shows it’s a newer generation with a new focus, and I love it.”

Valot received his five-year degree in agricultural sciences with a focus in enology and viticulture in Argentina before moving to Oregon, where he was excited about the potential. One of the things that drew him to Silvan Ridge was that they were making varieties beyond Pinot noir and Pinot gris.

“It’s a better place in Oregon for me as a winemaker,” he explained. “I learned a lot about Pinot noir, but I still had skills for a lot of the bigger reds.”

The winery has 5 acres of grapes, so 98% of their grapes comes from a little over 20 different growers throughout the state. Even though it can be more complicated because more people are involved, Valot said it gives them more options when it comes to the winemaking.

“That gives you more complexity

within the variety,” he explained. “It’s not something many other places can achieve because they have their own vineyards.”

Although Valot can’t pick a favorite wine — he said they are like his children — he said he had more fun with blends because he is creating something new. His focus is always on making a wine the consumer will like, and one that can go with or without food.

“My approach is the wine won’t decide how (it) wants you to do it; you decide how to have it,” he said.

One of their most famous wines is Elizabeth’s Red, which is a blend named after Elizabeth Chambers.

“The idea was to make the best wine we could make with our grapes and use her name. It was cool to do something after her,” he said. “Normally we don’t make it every year, only if the quality is there and it’s outstanding, because she was special — it has to be special. If it has her name it has to be important.”



Aliya Hall/For the Capital Press

**Head winemaker Juan Pablo Valot has been working at Silvan Ridge since 2003. Originally from Argentina, he is a fifth-generation winemaker.**

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