

King's Raven Winery: Wine in Old World style

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

OREGON CITY — People are sometimes surprised to hear that high-quality wine is being produced in, of all places, Oregon City, but with its climate, good soil and rolling hills, Darin Ingram says it's a natural.

King's Raven Vineyard, established in 1999, is owned by Sheri and David Ingram; their son, Darin Ingram, and his wife, Taneha; and their daughter, Kim, and her husband, David Walton.

Darin is the winemaker and vineyard manager on the property his family has owned since 1941.

While pursuing a degree in business at Clackamas Community College, Darin was paying attention to the growth of Oregon's wine industry. He started doing all his class projects on

vineyards, penciling out a 30-year business plan for what he saw as the farm's new venture.

At the same time, Ingram became fascinated with digital video production and ended up becoming a freelance video producer and web developer. This took him around the world and supported him while the family built the vineyard.

Just before his first trip to France, Ingram planted their first vines, an acre of Pommard, a clone from a small French village of the same name. He visited Pommard.

"There's just one little fountain in the middle of town, a 10-room inn with a bar and a little grocery store selling their wine and cheese," he said.

The bartender steered Ingram to a local winemaker, who told him the secret to good wine was sim-



Brenna Wiegand/For the Capital Press

Darin Ingram with two of his favorite things — a 1946 Chevy 2-ton dump truck and a bottle of his Leon Millot wine.

ple: "Two years in the barrel, one year in the bottle."

"In retrospect, it really does come down to a simple formula like that because the emphasis must be on growing grapes," Ingram

said, "and this is a good time for farming in the Pacific Northwest."

"I have the benefit of growing grapes for over 22 years now and half that time it rained nine months of the

year, but since 2012 we've been in a drought," he said.

Ingram cited a study where core samples taken from the bottom of a lake in Washington state revealed a climate record of the Pacific Northwest going back 6,000 years.

In short, the study indicates that the famously rain-soaked Pacific Northwest could be in for longer dry seasons and is unlikely to see a period as wet as the 20th century any time soon.

Ingram said their north-facing vineyards are positioned well for the hotter, drier period ahead, mitigating the over-exposure experienced by their south-facing counterparts.

Perhaps nothing proves King's Raven dedication to Old World techniques more than foot-crushing all their red grapes. This has yielded many award-winning vin-

tages, but if they do have a bad batch there are Old World remedies.

"It still has an alcohol content and can be distilled into brandy, which can also be used to make port, madeira or sherry," Ingram said.

In fact, King's Raven started a port program in 2014 using Maréchal Foch grapes, and has produced a new vintage every year since.

"Our commitment from that first vintage is to age each one for at least 10 years," Ingram said. "Our first release will coincide with our 25th anniversary."

The 35-acre property includes 15 acres of grapes — 10 varieties on that include four heirlooms — including Ingram's favorite, Leon Millot, from which he has created King's Raven's premier wine.




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