

Melrose Vineyards: 'Tenacious' owner makes dream a reality

By **CRAIG REED**
For the Capital Press

ROSEBURG, Ore. — A flood that wiped out 10 acres of wine grape grafts that had been planted during previous months did not deter Wayne Parker.

"I'm tenacious," said Parker, remembering his first year in Oregon in 1996. "Everybody thought I was going to quit and go home. But here I am."

Parker and his wife, Deedy, had sold their vineyard and catering business in Fresno, Calif., and moved north for a change of pace and a little less heat. They consulted with Cal Henry and his son, Scott Henry, the owners of Henry Estate Winery, and then began transitioning the pasture land they had purchased in the Melrose area west of Roseburg into a vineyard.

"Scott Henry wanted to build the wine industry in Oregon and I was in the development mode," Wayne Parker said of establishing Melrose Vineyards.

But a South Umpqua River 100-year flood during the 1996-97 winter washed out 5 acres of bank and 10 acres of new plantings. The Parkers didn't quit on their dream and goal, but instead spent three months cleaning up debris that was hung up on the young vineyard's trellis system. With the help of federal funds, the bank of the river was rebuilt and solidified and the ground was planted again with grafted canes.

The vineyard totaled 80 acres of Pinot noir and Pinot gris grapes. The first crop was harvested in 1999.

A year later an adjoining 50 acres was purchased and planted to Pinot noir.

The business continued to expand with a 100-year-old barn on the property being renovated into a wine-tasting room and nearby parcels of 100 acres and 30 acres being



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Cody Parker works on the chemistry aspect of wine in the lab at Melrose Vineyards. Parker has been the lead winemaker at the family business near Roseburg, Ore., since 2009.

purchased and planted. The Parkers' son, Cody, moved back to the family business in 2009 after studying to be a winemaker in California. He turned Melrose Vineyard grapes into wines at neighboring wineries until Melrose completed the construction of its winery in 2013. An event venue was part of that project.

"Deedy said if we built it, they would come," Wayne Parker said of the event venue that now draws several special gatherings a month. "It was part of the business plan, but I also like to cook for those events."

Deedy Parker died in 2011 after a long battle against cancer so wasn't able to see the success of the event venue that she proposed and was constructed two years later.

"My parents were visionary," Cody Parker said. "They were not afraid of change, to uproot their lives and to take on a new opportunity. They persevered and found success."

Cody said both he and his father are passionate about the vineyard and growing the grapes, but then "his passion is to cook and mine is to be a flavor maker, a winemaker."

"I'd say I'm maxxed out for my age," said Wayne Parker, now 69. "I love this industry. We were small and then all of a sudden we got big. It's a great big job now, but I figure I got the biggest playground in Douglas County."

Wayne Parker has remarried and his wife Kerry helps run the business.

Cody Parker has purchased 50 acres and planted it to grapes. He's also developed and manages 50 acres of vineyard for other owners.

"I want Melrose Vineyards to become a legacy estate, to maintain and build on its success and to promote Umpqua Valley's wine quality and potential tourism," Cody Parker said of the future he sees for the family business.



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

Wayne Parker describes himself as a consumer of wine who loves to cook. The owner of Melrose Vineyards prepares salmon fillets for a wine dinner at the vineyard's event venue.

ERNST

Irrigation • Electrical • Tractor

Anthony and Matt will help you

**CONSERVE WATER AND ENERGY AND
PUT THE SAVINGS IN YOUR POCKET!**

Anthony Tasselli (left)

Is a Drip/Micro Specialist, fully trained in Irricad Design, plus a certified Nelson Twig System Designer. Ag and Environmental Tech degree from NC State.

Matt Corcoran (right)

Is a Certified Irrigation Designer with over 30 years irrigation experience, specializing in Micro-Irrigation, Filtration, and Water Treatment.

Ernst Irrigation is a full service dealership, including a Supervising Electrician on staff. We can handle it!

Website: www.ErnstIrrigation.com

20179 Main St. • St. Paul, OR 97137 • 503-633-1111

Trade Ally of
EnergyTrust
of Oregon