

# Brandborg Vineyard and Winery: Couple discovers wine community

By CRAIG REED  
For the Capital Press

ELKTON, Ore. — From U-picking grapes and making wine in his Northern California garage in the mid-1980s to his own 5-acre vineyard, winery and tasting room in Elkton, it's been quite a journey for Terry Brandborg.

He and his wife, Sue, established Brandborg Vineyard and Winery in 2002.

The couple met at a wine festival in Jackson Hole, Wyo. They married in 2001 and soon began looking up and down the California coast for land to start their own vineyard and wine business. They discovered they didn't have the money for California's high land prices so they looked farther north.

The Brandborgs had friends in Sutherlin, Ore., and during visits with them, the couple visited wineries in Douglas County. They were able to meet winemakers Richard Sommer at Hucrest Winery, Philippe Girardet at Girardet Vineyards, Scott Henry at Henry Estate Winery and Earl Jones at Abacela Winery.

The Brandborgs were told Douglas County offered a variety of soil types and micro climates.

With their knowledge of a coastal climate from their experiences in California and encouragement from Jones at Abacela, the Brandborgs checked out the Elkton area.

"I found the climate data from the state forestry nursery (near Elkton) and it was a bull's-eye for what we were looking for," Terry Brandborg said. "Elkton is always the coolest of the Umpqua areas that grow grapes. The elevation here is only 142 feet and there's a pretty gentle flow of cool breezes with fog from the Pacific Ocean."



Craig Reed/For the Capital Press

**Terry and Sue Brandborg in their Elkton, Ore., tasting room. The couple established Brandborg Vineyard and Winery in 2002.**

They made the decision in 2002 to purchase a southwest facing hillside property 5 miles west of the small town. That same year, with the help of some high school students, the Brandborgs planted 5 acres of Pinot noir grapes.

The initial thought was to build a "modest winery and tasting room" next to the vineyard, but the Brandborgs quickly realized the location would limit a retail presence. They built a two-story facility in Elkton, just across the sidewalk from Highway 38, a popular route to the coast.

The Brandborgs' first vintage of their Elkton wine totaled about 2,500 cases. They continued as a two-person crew until three years later, when they produced 6,000 cases and decided it was time to hire more help.

Between its Brandborg label and custom making wine for a few other labels, the Brandborg Winery now averages about 10,000 cases annually. The Brandborg wines are made from its own vineyard grapes and also from grapes of several

other small Elkton area vineyards — Bradley, Anindor, Michaels, Elk Valley and Hundredth Valley.

Brandborg's main red wine is Pinot noir, and its main white wines are Pinot gris, Reisling and Gewurztraminer.

A few other niche red wines are also made to provide a variety in the tasting room, but they're not in distribution.

"We put every effort into making quality wine for others as we do our own," Terry Brandborg said of the winery. "We're grateful to have discovered this little niche community, this region."

Brandborg has been an advocate for the Douglas County wine industry. He's been a board member of the Umpqua Valley Winegrowers Association and has twice been its president, from 2007 to 2010 and from 2016 to 2020. From 2010 to 2014, he served on the Oregon Wine Board.

He also helped lead the effort that in 2013 resulted in the Elkton area being designated an American Viticulture Area.



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