



“This excellent winery continues to carve out a well-deserved reputation for its interesting red wine portfolio”

Robert M. Parker Jr.

Ray Coursen is winemaker and owner at Elyse Winery in Napa Valley, California. Ray and his wife Nancy run the winery and their children, Elyse and Jake are the namesakes for their labels *Elyse* and *Jacob Franklin*.



In 1983, Nancy and Ray were both working in Cape Cod restaurants, Ray asked Nancy when she'd be ready to move to California. He had a dream of learning to make wine. "Tomorrow," Nancy said. That year Ray worked the harvest at Mt. Eden Winery in Saratoga, starting at the bottom, picking grapes and digging ditches. After the harvest, they moved to Napa Valley and worked at a B&B. Nancy ran the place and Ray tended the gardens and planted a vineyard. Ray then worked at Tonella Vineyard Management, here the owner taught him why you need to prune, trellis, train, and generally coddle grapevines, and the vineyard workers gave him on-the-job-training.

Next Ray worked at Whitehall Lane Winery. Though he started in the tasting room, the winemaker, Art Finkelstein, took Ray under his wing, put him in the cellar, and eventually promoted Ray to winemaker. Art taught Ray that the secret of great wines is in the blend. In 1987, Ray & Nancy started Elyse Winery with 286 cases of Zinfandel from the Morisoli Vineyard, which is still one of our primary fruit sources. For a decade they were nomads, buying grapes and crushing at various custom crush facilities, and then in 1997, they finally bought a small winery on Hoffman Lane.



What will you find in a bottle of Elyse & Jacob Franklin wine? Ray makes wines that he wants to sit down and enjoy – juicy, rich, voluptuous wines. "I like a little oak, but I don't want it to be overpowering – I want to taste the fruit. I love wines that pair well with food. A meal without wine is eating; a meal with wine is dining – it's a conversation, an event. It's what wine is about. When I make a wine, my tastes and techniques will influence the process, but what's most important is the fruit. The fruit dictates what the wine will be. We're fortunate to work with an amazing group of growers and vineyards, whose fruit keeps taking us to wonderful places. The wines we produce depend on the fruit that's available, because I just can't say no to wonderful fruit. "



Ray says, "Winemaking is cooking without a flame." Our winemaking philosophy at Elyse & Jacob Franklin is similar to the approach of a chef. Great chefs search for the best ingredients and then carefully prepare them so the layers of flavors in the food all reach the table. At Elyse & Jacob Franklin, we're constantly searching for wonderful fruit to work with. Besides the vineyard at the winery, we've been fortunate to find amazing fruit from vineyards stretching from Carneros to Howell Mountain.

Location is paramount, but a vineyard needs more than location to grow high quality fruit. Ray started his career in the vineyard, and his decades of experience have taught him that good wines result from continuous work in the vineyard - planting the right clones for the vineyard site, pruning to ensure lower yields and higher fruit concentration, canopy control to bring the fruit to full and uniform ripeness, and thinning to maximize flavors. As a fellow winemaker once said, "The best wines come from the vineyards with the most footprints in them."

