

ALEXANDER VALLEY VINEYARDS



Katie Wetzel Murphy

Owner and Brand Ambassador

Katie Wetzel Murphy has a unique knowledge of Alexander Valley Vineyards that comes from decades of experience on the historic property that her parents purchased in 1962. In the early days, the family planted grapevines on the property, selling the fruit to other growers, but there was always a desire to make wine from their own grapes. From the beginning, her parents Harry and Maggie Wetzel decided that this was to be a family-made wine that reflected their unique property. Katie recalls one of her first crushes with the family: “In the late ‘60s I had to de-stem the grapes and then pull any I missed from the basket press”. When time to bottle, the adobe “cellar” was converted to the adobe “bottling line”. Family and friends were called in to hand bottle and cork those early family made wines. Harry and Maggie made sure that all pitched in, learning as they went.

Katie officially joined Alexander Valley Vineyards in 1979 shortly after earning her B.A. in Agricultural Economics from the University of California at Davis. At the time, the winery was being run by her brother Hank Wetzel, who was the winemaker, and his wife Linda. It was a natural fit for the family owned winery. Katie recalls “Hank and Linda needed assistance with sales and marketing, our production was growing and we had just entered national distribution.” She quickly jumped into the role of winery ambassador, traveling the country in a quest to find new customers for the fledgling winery, along the way building a sales network to take care of AVV’s accounts. In those early years, few outside of Northern California knew anything about the region, Katie shared her love of the Alexander Valley and knowledge of Sonoma County everywhere she went. Now both areas are household names and known as world class wine regions. Today, she can still be found doing the same. Visitors to the winery often ask about the car with the California Sin Zin license plate. Katie chose the name for AVV’s iconic Zinfandel and has proudly displayed the plate on her car for years.



During her tenure, much has changed at Alexander Valley Vineyards including production, which has increased tenfold. However, Katie’s position at the winery shows one thing hasn’t changed; AVV remains a family business with multiple generations of the Wetzel Family working in the business.

Katie is married to Dennis Murphy of Murphy Ranch. Katie and Denny also cultivate their own vineyard, growing Cabernet Sauvignon on the western benchlands of the Alexander Valley that surround their home.

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