

# FALCONE FAMILY VINEYARDS:

*Streamlined, Sustainable, Serious-But Never Stuffy*



BY LAURIE JO MILLER FARR

*"It's just the two of us," is how John and Helen Falcone described their small passion project just east of Templeton near Paso Robles. Yet, with backgrounds as Napa-based winemakers, the couple brings a solid combined experience of 76 harvests to their endeavors.*

It's a well-choreographed team approach. John is in the vineyard while Helen co-produces the wines and handles the business of bookkeeping, licensing, sales and marketing. Both "chefs" are in the kitchen for the vineyard-first "meat and potatoes" operation producing around 1,500 cases per year.

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

At the center of the Greater Paso Robles AVA, the family's 11 acres straddle two sub-appellations — El Pomar and Creston — where they planted four acres to Syrah and four acres to Cabernet Sauvignon.

"We believe great wines always come from great vineyard locations," John said. He recalls finding this isolated location with the desired sun and wind conditions, ideal climate, and clay-based soil on a hill at 1,200 feet elevation more than 20 years ago. There were unmistakable, compelling similarities in weather history

to Rutherford and Oakville. Driving back and forth from Napa with a baby in tow, they got busy with piles of U.S. Geological Survey maps and soil analysis, choosing a sweet spot that has been excellent for cultivating Cabernet Sauvignon. "Now we're surrounded by high-end producer's Cab vineyards," Helen observed with a glance toward Justin Vineyards planted nearby years later.

## SWEAT EQUITY

Naturally, it didn't happen overnight. The land was wide open, non-cultivated. "We brought in electricity, drilled the well, built the deer fence, developed the site from scratch," said John. "This took years of planning, plenty of sweat equity, and quite some time before the brand became sustainable. But, unlike many small producers, we knew what we were getting into."

## TINY BRAND, BIG COMMITMENT

John and Helen pointed out one of the key pillars of differentiation at Falcone Family Vineyards. "There are lots of tiny brands these days, but we are one of the few that actually owns the vineyard and produces wine from the grapes we grow ourselves, giving us the needed control and consistency."

Accolades abound. Take special note of Mia's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, named for the couple's daughter, a recent graduate in Wine & Viticulture at CalPoly. Tasting notes read, "Aromas of dust & cocoa powder, black cherry & anise with hints of caramel, vanilla & toasted pecans. Ample but soft tannins provide body and a long finish." One of John's favorites is Annaté, a non-vintage red blend. "I believe a non-vintage can be even better than a vintage wine," he declared. Only two barrels are produced - a blend of Petite Sirah, Syrah, and a touch of Cabernet Sauvignon.

Select restaurants in Southern California and San Francisco Bay Area feature the wines, although it's best to shop online, join the wine club, or set up a vineyard visit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
[www.FalconeFamilyVineyards.com](http://www.FalconeFamilyVineyards.com)