

# DEVONA



## JOHN ABBOTT – WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

While studying to be a veterinarian at Oregon State University, John developed a personal interest in wine and a fascination with a production process that blends both science and creativity. Out of curiosity, he began taking part in a variety of sensory evaluation assignments through the Food Sciences Department and discovered his natural affinity for sensing flavors and aromas. Some of his sensory work included the first legal tests of cork taint in wine. When he began to realize that veterinary medicine might not be the romantic experience of James Herriot's writings, he started to consider winemaking as a profession. His strong chemistry background from his pre-vet course-work prepared him perfectly for what was to come, and with encouragement from his professors, he arranged an exchange to the Viticulture and Enology program at Fresno State University.

John's professional winemaking career began in 1989, when as a new college graduate, he went to work for Pine Ridge Winery in the famous Stags Leap area of the Napa Valley. After working there with some of the region's best Cabernet Sauvignon and thinking he would eventually return to his home state of Oregon to make Pinot Noir, he joined Acacia Winery. Acacia, located in the Carneros region of the Napa Valley, is known for making perfectly finessed Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. During his first interview, with then-General Manager Larry Brooks, John learned about the Chalone Wine Group's fledgling project in Washington State called Canoe Ridge Vineyard. Four years later, and after working with the early vintages from the young estate vineyard through frequent visits, John accepted the opportunity to start the estate winery. He moved to Walla Walla, Washington and joined the Washington wine industry in July of 1994. During John's tenure at Canoe Ridge Vineyard, he became known for his consistently outstanding Merlots, Chardonnays, and Cabernet Sauvignons. Among his peers, he is appreciated for his technical expertise, infallible palate, and entertaining sense of humor.

The next phase of John's winemaking career began in the spring of 2002, when he left Canoe Ridge Vineyard to get back in the cellar. Proud of the success of Canoe Ridge, he was ready to begin again with a new focus and a new approach. It was at this time that John joined forces with his friend, Ken Harrison, and together

*precise, elegant wines from each side of the Columbia*

**JOHN & MOLLY ABBOTT**

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they founded Abeja. The two men were brought together by a common vision of quality and a passion for Cabernet Sauvignon. Under John's direction, Abeja rapidly became known for extraordinary, limited-production Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as Chardonnay, Viognier, and Syrah.

During John's winemaking career, a love of Pinot Noir and a desire to work with it again, had always been in his heart. So from the vintage of 2012, he began to make a small amount of Pinot Noir with fruit sourced from Oregon. He was still overseeing the wines at Abeja and Ken and Ginger Harrison were kind in allowing this side project. In 2015, he and his wife Molly set out on their own to begin Devona. This winery, with the addition of Oregon Pinot Noir to the cellar, brings John's winemaking career full circle and back to his roots. His earliest interest in wine began while he was at Oregon State University in the late 1980's. John honors both his deep roots in Oregon with the production of Pinot Noir and his nearly three decades of winemaking in Washington State with the production of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay. He has been described as one of Washington State's best and most modest winemakers. The winery is in a temporary location in Walla Walla, and future plans will have it moving to the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

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