

Lisa Bishop Forbes, winemaker, production manager and consultant, Sonoma County, CA

“*Wine Business Monthly* is my go-to wine industry resource. I can always count on thorough, timely information for all aspects of the wine business around the country. I usually look for the varietal focus panels, winemaking trials and equipment reviews first, then something new to build up my knowledge base. Articles on marketing, management and HR are super helpful as my job involves a lot more than winemaking.

I just finished reading the October 2020 issue featuring the Salary Survey Report. Thanks to the editors for expanding the demographics this year. This is such useful information for all of us whether we are hiring managers or looking to advance in our careers. The wine industry can only move forward by being more inclusive and aware. I am really inspired by the Wine Industry Leaders highlighted in this issue. They make me want to do more and be better, both as a winemaker and human being.”



NAME AND TITLE: Lisa Bishop Forbes, winemaker

WINERIES: Ektimo Vineyards and Ross Road Custom Crush, Sebastopol, CA (winemaker, production manager) – Ektimo (from the Greek for appreciation) is a 2,000 case winery owned by the Xie family, focused on Russian River Pinot and Chardonnay. The winery and 7-acre estate Pinot Noir vineyard are located in the heart of the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Ektimo shares its production space with Ross Road Custom Crush, host to 15-20 clients making excellent, small volume wines.

Sutro Wine Company, Healdsburg, CA (consulting winemaker) – Alice Warnecke Sutro owns this up-and-coming winery making terroir-driven Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc from her family’s Warnecke Ranch in the Alexander Valley.

Bard Clan Wines, Point Richmond, CA (consulting winemaker) – Craig Riordan’s unique heron-named line-up includes Great Blue (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and blueberry wine), Ghlas (Chardonnay and apple wine) and La Garza, a spiced Cabernet Sauvignon port-style wine.

Roden Wines, Cotati, CA (consulting winemaker) – Wayne Roden makes a tiny amount of elegant Pinot Noir from his own vineyard, along with single vineyard Napa Valley Merlot and Dry Creek Cabernet Sauvignon.

CAREER BACKGROUND: I loved chemistry at Lodi High School and wanted to do something with it. What could be better than making wine? After graduating with an enology degree from Fresno State, I started my career at Joseph Phelps Vineyards, a formative experience for sure. Lessons I learned about the art of blending Insignia years ago stick with me to this day. From there I moved to Sonoma County and winemaking positions at Dry Creek Vineyard and Chalk Hill Winery, focused always on quality and letting the vineyards shine. Working with the Xie family to build their business has given me space to foster a collaborative and creative environment for the Ektimo team and our clients and expand my perspective on making wine. My consulting business is a natural extension—making excellent wines with wonderful people.

BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE: Climate change has hit everyone in the wine business very hard, especially in Northern California. Extreme heat spikes, fires and smoke in 2020 didn’t make for a smooth harvest. There isn’t much wiggle room with small-lot winemaking— some clients only make one wine. Pandemic aside, 2020 required thinking out of the box to make the best wine possible. I truly appreciate the willingness of my fellow winemakers to share ideas, resources and time. We’re a resilient bunch!