***Meet Steve Anderson, Winemaker***

In 1993, a series of events led this Oregon State University horticulture graduate to a career in winemaking. Hired to be the vineyard manager for Eola Hills Wine Cellars, on his first day of work he was asked if he could lend the head winemaker a hand during harvest.

Steve jumped in and suddenly became, as he puts it, “A bona fide cellar rat.” Following the harvest and crush, the hard-working cellar rat was promoted to assistant winemaker.

Five years later, Steve left for a position as head winemaker at another Oregon winery. With two harvests under his belt and a solid reputation as an up-and-coming winemaker, he was surprised by a call from Tom Huggins, the founder of Eola Hills. Asked if he’d like to return as head winemaker, his response was swift: “Absolutely.”

Twenty-two years later, Steve now oversees production of 26 different varieties of wine, producing 65,000 cases of wine a year. Decorated with medals and ribbons, his office walls attest to the many awards his wines have won over the years. His latest project is a hard cider made from local apples, Cuckoo’s Nest.

Born and raised in Oregon, Steve lives near the winery in Rickreall. When he’s not making wine, Steve raises heritage pigs and tends a bountiful organic garden. He fishes for salmon and trout, and brings home elk for the family table. An excellent cook, Steve makes everything from hot sauce to salmon jerky to wine-based sauces and desserts.

Steve enjoys suggesting wine pairings to enhance the flavors of food and wine. He’ll suggest what goes with roasted lamb and wild Oregon mushrooms (Pinot noir), or what wine goes best with pizza or baked beans (Zinfandel). In football season, he’ll pair a cold white wine or rosé to balance the spiciness of hot chicken wings.

In 2015, Steve will lead the winery’s transition to an estimated record 100,000 cases of wine as the winery’s newest vineyard, Legacy Estate, comes into full production. It will be a challenge, but one that we know that this talented cellar rat will enjoy.

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