

Frank Altamura

A Lifetime Passion

Frank Altamura's lifelong pursuit as a winemaker is fueled by his passion for viticulture. Born and raised in Napa Valley, Frank began working with his cousin, a vineyard manager, right out of high school and knew that this would be his life's calling. Formal viticultural training began at Sterling Vineyards in 1976 under the tutelage of Ric Forman where he began to explore what winemakers were looking for from the vineyard. This concept was further developed from the winemaker's perspective at Caymus with friends Chuck Wagner, Randy Dunn and mentor Charlie Wagner.

“Growing up in Napa Valley and surrounded by farming, my most influential experience came from working at Caymus for five years where we developed many grape varieties from Burger to Zinfandel, refining the concepts of soil and climatic influences and growing for quality rather than quantity,” reminisces Frank. “As we worked to get the most from each vineyard site, I learned that it was important not to have pre-conceived ideas about what to expect from a vineyard, rather to discover the flavors that the vineyard offered. My job now as a winemaker is to successfully get those flavors into the bottle which, incidently, is only about 10% of the whole process, 90% happens in the vineyard.” Over twenty years later, richly textured Altamura Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese are lauded for their intensity and silky integration of the elements unique to each the vineyard sites on the expansive Valley Oak lined ranch in Wooden Valley.



Frank and Karen Altamura established Altamura Winery in 1985. Many of the early vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon were sourced from a vineyard located on a sprawling 400 acre ranch in historic Wooden Valley that had been settled by members of Karen Altamura's family in 1855. Frank sensed the long-term potential for this growing region and began extensive site selection research within the Napa Valley to ensure optimal vineyard development on the Ranch. They began their adventure, taming what had once been a cattle ranch by clearing 65 acres and planting to Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese on six different sites. Caves were dug and meticulous construction was begun on the stone winery. Lured by the natural beauty and rural atmosphere, the Altamuras found their home in Wooden Valley.