



STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS

OUR PEOPLE

Nicki Pruss Winemaker

Nicki Pruss was on a very different career path when she was sidetracked by a fascination with wine. After graduating from the University of California in Santa Barbara, the native Californian moved to Chicago. There she graduated cum laude from the Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine and completed her podiatric surgery residency at Columbus Hospital. She returned to California as a podiatrist, but then in 1995 she took an extensive bicycle tour of the wine regions of France and Germany.

She had long been an enthusiastic amateur beer-maker, but during this European trip she realized that the career she really wanted was in wine. "Winemaking offers a chance to combine technical science with artistry," she says. "I like the creative challenge of working with nature to produce world-class wines."

Nicki returned to Northern California and began taking every class on wine and viticulture that Napa Valley College offered. One of her teachers was Bob Broman, winemaker at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars during the 1980s. He encouraged her to become an intern at the winery in 1998.

Nicki has been a valuable member of the winemaking team ever since. Her talents were quickly recognized and nurtured by founding winemaker Warren Winiarski and she was promoted up the ranks of winemaking from lab tech, to enologist/lab director, to assistant winemaker, associate winemaker, and in 2005, winemaker.

Throughout her tenure at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, she has continued to attend the University of California at Davis for course work. But most of her practical winemaking education has occurred on the job, working with and learning from Warren and other winemaking alumni. "When people ask," says Nicki, "I say I went to the Stag's Leap Wine Cellars School of Wine. It gets a knowing nod of approval. This winery is largely regarded as one of the most advanced learning grounds in the Napa Valley."

Nicki's contributions at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars have been numerous. She was instrumental in taking the Napa Valley regional Cabernet program to the estate-based ARTEMIS Cabernet program, and revitalizing the winery's Sauvignon Blanc program with a style that has been widely successful.

She holds a Certificate in Viticulture and Winery Technology from Napa Valley College, a B.A. in Biological Sciences from UC Santa Barbara, and is a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine – cum Laude from the Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine, Chicago, IL. She is a member of the American Society of Enology and Viticulture, the California Enological Research Association, and the Napa Valley Wine Technical Group.