

# WINE BUSINESS

## Freeman Vineyard & Winery Announces Three Additions to the Winery Team

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Press Release

by [Freeman Vineyard & Winery](#)

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**SEBASTOPOL, Calif., (Sept. 25, 2023)** Freeman Vineyard & Winery owners Akiko and Ken Freeman announce the addition of three new members to the winery's staff. They are:

- Kevin Hinchman, Brand Director
- Dar Cluster, Director of Hospitality
- Eiji Akaboshi, Associate Winemaker

"Bringing Kevin, Dar and Eiji into the family gives us a world-class team to represent and match the caliber of our wines," says proprietor Ken Freeman. "We are welcoming many more visitors to the winery than we have in the past and our sales continue to increase at a steady pace. With this strategic expansion to our team we'll be able to continue to provide hands-on attention to our winemaking while making our visitor experience even better."

Adds Winemaker Akiko Freeman, "We've taken great pride in our ability to grow our business organically over the years. Finding the right fit is important, because we'll be able to transition with the times quite easily."

## Kevin Hinchman, Brand Manager



Kevin Hinchman

Hinchman's responsibility as Brand Manager encompasses just about every aspect of the winery. He works with Ken Freeman in the national distribution arena, sets pricing, and serves as the face of Freeman Vineyard & Winery when Ken and Akiko are unable to attend events in far-away markets.

Based in Napa, the longtime wine pro has held key regional and national sales positions with TOR Wines, Cliff Lede Vineyards, and Patz & Hall.

## Dar Cluster, Director of Hospitality



Dar Cluster, the winery's new Director of Hospitality was Operations Manager at Flowers Winery before joining Freeman. The Monte Rio resident oversees winery visits, charity and corporate events, and wine club functions.

"I was already a member of the Freeman wine club, so when a tasting room position opened up here, it was a perfect blend of my passion for the wine business and my passion for Freeman wines. Visitors here appreciate our low-key approach. We talk one-on-one about the wines, the amazing setting, and about the people. We have conversations with our visitors, not lectures or sales pitches."

## Eiji Akaboshi, Associate Winemaker



Eiji Akaboshi

Akaboshi comes to Freeman as Associate Winemaker after working at Peju Winery, Green & Red Vineyards, and Rombauer Vineyards in Napa Valley, as well as Medlock Ames in Alexander Valley.

Since graduating with a master's degree in enology from Fresno State, Akaboshi has had what he calls "a circuitous career," in which he's "seen everything, done everything, and worked all over, learning all I could about winemaking and the wine industry."

When he first tasted Freeman wines a decade ago, he adds, "I loved Akiko's wines and their elegant style, and I'd always wanted to work with Sonoma Pinot Noir. Now it's like I'm fulfilling my dreams."

On a historical note, Akaboshi is the great-great-grandson of winemaker Nagasawa Kanae, a Japanese native who emigrated to Sonoma County in the 1800s and became known as the "Wine King of California." By the turn of the 19th century, he ran one of the state's largest and most influential wineries at Fountain Grove Winery in Santa Rosa. Eiji takes a lot of pride in carrying on the family wine tradition, despite the gap of five generations.