

Interview with Akiko Freeman, winemaker at Freeman Winery

Akiko Freeman is the winemaker at Freeman Winery in Sebastopol, California. Akiko guides every wine and every vintage as she has dedicated herself to the ideals of a family-run winery, and a belief that a wine bearing the Freeman name should reflect the Freeman touch. To achieve this goal, Akiko immersed herself in the world of viticulture and winemaking, and apprenticed herself to renowned winemaker Ed Kurtzman. Akiko oversees every aspect of Freeman's winemaking program, from the selection of vineyard partners to fermentation, racking, lot evaluations and blending. Her vision and refined palate have established Freeman as one of the great benchmarks for cool-climate New World winemaking, while also establishing Akiko as a winemaking talent in her own right. I present this week's Vintner in the Spotlight, Akiko Freeman





Akiko and Ken Freeman

South Florida Food andWine.com: For those not familiar with Freeman wines, tell us a bit about your winery and how you got started.

Akiko Freeman: Ken and I met when I first came to the US in my mid 80's. We both had a love of food and wine. Our jobs kept us traveling the globe trying new and different cuisine paired with great wines. We always had affection for Burgundy and while it's a tough grape to grow, we knew we wanted to someday own a winery and grow our own Pinot Noir. 20 years later, here we are! While we still love Burgundy, we are not trying to replicate these wines but rather reflect the unique terroir in and around the RRV and Sonoma Coasts. Our winery, which was an old apple farm, is located outside Sebastopol in the picturesque redwoods. We have two vineyards, one located on the property and another which is closer to the coast. While we use our own estate fruit, we also believe in working with growers to create the perfect blend and elegant style so well known to our wines.

South Florida Food andWine.com: If you had to classify your wine, what type is it? And why did you choose this classification?

Akiko Freeman: Our wines are a great representation of the fruit from this unique area and represent the utmost quality in viticulture and winemaking.

South Florida Food andWine.com: Tell us about the different wines within the Freeman portfolio.

Akiko Freeman: We have 4 Pinot Noir, 2 from Sonoma Coast area and 2 from Russian River Valley and 1 Chardonnay. Sonoma Coast wines (Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir and Akiko's Cuvee which is my special barrel selection wine from each vintage) tend to be more elegant, well balanced and complex – definitely food wines, Russian River wines more vibrant and outgoing – a little fruitier compared with Sonoma Coast wines, they are great with food but also nice just by itself to sip.

South Florida Food andWine.com: What is your most memorable wine moment to date?

Akiko Freeman: Good questions. Every time opening a new wine with my husband Ken is a special for me.

South Florida Food andWine.com: What is the most challenging thing about

being a vintner/entrepreneur?

Akiko Freeman: I wear a lot of different hats...one minute I'm in the vineyard and the next week I'm in NYC selling my wines. Obviously, you can guess my favorite...being in the vineyard, blending in the winery and watching the changes in the fruit from the vine to bottle.

South Florida Food andWine.com: Where can your wines be purchased?

Akiko Freeman: All over the US in select retailers and restaurants or directly from the winery.

South Florida Food andWine.com: Who is the one person you would love to share a bottle of your wine *with* and why?

Akiko Freeman: My late mother-in-law. I think she would be very amused and love it if she knew Ken and I started a winery. (and I am the one who do the winemaking.)

South Florida Food andWine.com: It's your last day on earth, what would your quaff and meal be?

Akiko Freeman: Rousseau Chambertin Clos de Beze 1964 – if I can find it. Anything to do with Truffles would do for the last meal.

South Florida Food andWine.com: What was the last restaurant you ate at and did you order/bring your wine?

Akiko Freeman: Acquerello restaurant in San Francisco. We had pasta with white truffles. We purchased an old Barolo the sommelier at the restaurant suggested. It was very special.

South Florida Food andWine.com: Other than your own wine, what is your quaff of choice?

Akiko Freeman: Burgundy wines (especially Armand Roussau and Ann Gros) and Northern Rhone's Domain Clape. From us, I love wines from Dehlinger winery and also admire Ted Lemon (Littorai winery.)

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