

Heitz Cellar

Westin Lawrence

Second Generation Owner



From her earliest days growing up surrounded by her father's busy cotton farm to her energetic embrace of the wine industry, Westin Lawrence is a do-er. "I'm a hands-on person, I do better when I'm in the midst of it," she says. "I'm nobody to say 'Eeek, a spider!' I like getting my hands dirty and getting things done." At Heitz Cellar, Westin is bringing that spirit and her considerable creativity to engaging with every aspect of the business, from checking on pump-overs to redesigning the tasting room.

While growing up in Nashville, TN, Westin found two of her strongest creative passions: film photography and the gracious hospitality of the Southern table. "I loved everything about film and the darkroom," she recalls. "And with entertaining, you want that warm feeling of bringing everyone together, making them feel special with the dishes you serve. I love introducing people over food and having them make new connections."

Westin decided to put serious work into pursuing both subjects, first spending two years at the University of Alabama studying film before transferring to the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena, CA to focus on the culinary arts. For someone who grew up surrounded by agriculture, Napa Valley's vineyards made Westin feel at home and the wines intrigued her. "The vineyards were a dream come true for me. And it's hard not to fall in love with wine when you're living here, surrounded by it."

After moving to New York to complete her Bachelor's degree at CIA's Hyde Park campus, Westin couldn't wait to return to Napa Valley. "I surprised myself," she says. "I always thought once I left home that I would walk away from agriculture and enjoy city life—but I found out that that's not me, I love the land a little too much and can't let it go." The very same day she graduated, Westin got on a plane and moved back to St. Helena.

While Westin sees similarities between the agriculture of her childhood and viticulture, she is also fascinated by the differences. "This has so much more detail, passion and love for the product. It's not just a crop," she observes. One of her favorite parts about being a vintner is getting to see it from beginning to end, from the grapes to the wine. "I remember my mom had a huge garden and we'd pull radishes out of the ground and eat them. That ability to grow your own produce to put on the table, that put me on the path of wanting to see things start-to-finish. Wine naturally came next."

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When not at the winery, Westin loves to be outside, hiking, walking and spending time in the vineyards. She also enjoys traveling the world, with a perspective instilled by her family. “My parents didn’t want us to grow up and not understand what the rest of the world is,” she says. “I’m glad they did that for us, we ended up better people because of it.” She especially loves regions with hundreds of years of tradition to explore. “When you bring your life to these other regions, you see how much you love to learn something new. It’s so interesting. You grow this appreciation for other people, their culture, how they live and how it forms around their industry, whether it’s wine or food.”

Westin says she is awed and amazed to be part of Heitz Cellar and part of the team: “I don’t take it for granted. I value learning from them and their expertise.” As for the winery’s future, “We want to preserve and renew,” she says. “To properly preserve it you have to renew a few things but in the best way possible. Heitz is always going to be Heitz.”

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