



BALLETTO
V I N E Y A R D S

Estate Grown • Estate Bottled • Sonoma County

JOHN BALLETO

OWNER, FOUNDER, PRESIDENT

For Balletto Vineyards owner and founder John Balletto, life comes down to two things: family and farming.

After the untimely death of John's father in 1977, the then-17-year-old decided to forego a promising collegiate athletic career and instead put his family first by dedicating his college years to helping his mother, Hazel, on the farm. They only had \$200 in the bank, a flatbed Chevy truck and five acres of land in Sebastopol, California, but John was dedicated to his family and determined to succeed in the farming business. Today, John has grown that business into one of the few family-run estate wineries in the Russian River Valley.



Alongside his wife, Terri, John expanded the business into the largest vegetable farm north of the Golden Gate Bridge at its peak. They grew more than 70 different vegetables on 700-plus acres, and more than two million cases of mixed vegetables moved through John's facility each year.

Always looking for new ways to succeed, John sought advice on how to deal with farming challenges presented by insufficient water capacities. A conversation with friend and neighbor Warren Dutton of Dutton Ranch led John to plant his first vineyards in 1995, which are less water dependent compared to other crops being farmed at the time.

John again stood in the face of adversity when three El Niño storms caused nearly \$2 million dollars in damage to their plantings in the spring of 1998. Between the storms and the NAFTA Agreement that implemented a few years prior, the vegetable business became less and less attractive.

In 1999, John decided to apply his years of farming knowledge to wine grapes, and transitioned all of the vegetable land to estate vineyards. Since the vineyards are in Russian River Valley, the natural focus was Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The success of the wines made from John's fruit inspired him to pursue a winemaking project of his own, and he created "Balletto Vineyards" in 2001. That first vintage he made 391 cases of Balletto Vineyards Russian River Valley Chardonnay and 689 cases of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Since then, he has grown Balletto Vineyards to 22,000 cases, and each bottle is estate grown using the top 10 percent quality fruit.





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John is not only passionate about family and farming, he is an active leader in his community, as well. Among the numerous organizations in which he's been involved are:

- Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation Agricultural Trust: President, 2002-2009; Honorary Lifetime Member
- Sonoma County Winegrape Commission: President, 2008-2010; Currently a board member serving on two committees.
- Sonoma County Harvest Fair: Board member; President, 2009
- Sebastopol Sunrise Rotary: Member; Sunrise Club since 2003; Paul Harris Fellow
- Palm Drive Hospital – Sebastopol: One of "35 for Palm Drive" families that helped save the hospital, 1998
- Sonoma County Farm Bureau: Director, 4 years
- Hessel Fire Department: Volunteer, 10 years

