

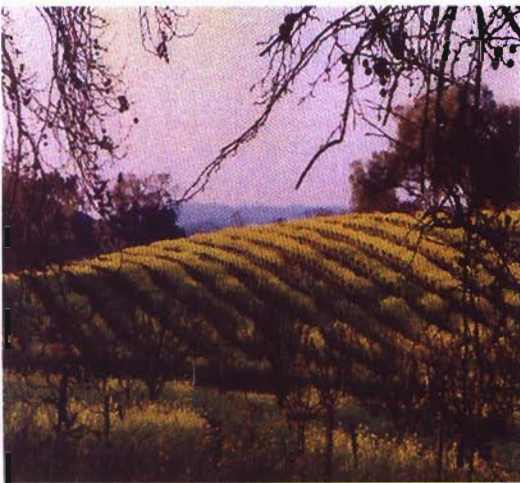
# Optima Wine Cellars

## It's "All in the Family" for this stellar winery

When Mike Duffy decided to start his own winery, he briefly struggled to think of a name - then plucked **Optima**, so he claims, "out of thin air."

Now, more than twenty years later, he finds the moniker quite fitting. The dictionary defines Optima as the plural of Optimum, which means "the best of several outcomes." The story of Optima and the Duffy Family could have had several different endings. But this one truly is among the best.

Below: Optima's Alexander Valley Cabernet vineyard



Optima, located in picturesque Healdsburg, California, is the epitome of a small family winery, annually producing only 4,500 cases of top-quality Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Chardonnay, and Zinfandel Port, with plans to expand into Petite Sirah and Gewurztraminer in the next few years. The limited production allows everyone in the family - Mike, Nicol and sons Danny, Chris, Tyler and Will- to be personally involved in all aspects of the operation. And it enables Mike, as winemaker, to employ winemaking techniques that larger wineries don't have time for, such as counter-pressure racking, extended maceration and unfiltered wines.

The Optima label made its first appearance in 1984 on 400 cases of Cabernet Sauvignon, crafted by Mike and his late wife, Tina. Over the years, Mike worked full time as winemaker for two other wineries, most notably Trefethen in Napa Valley and Field Stone in Alexander Valley. Optima, in a sense, was his "weekend warrior" project. Gradually, Optima's case production increased and Mike expanded into different varietals. Meanwhile, the Duffy family grew along with the winery, producing three robust sons, Danny, Chris and Will.

Below: Founders Mike and Nicol Duffy celebrate their twentieth year in business.



In 1997, Mike left Field Stone to operate Optima full-time, a move he made because it allowed him to spend more time with his family. In addition to making wine, he coached his kids' soccer and baseball teams and immersed himself into the role of "Dad." Sadly, Tina succumbed to cancer.

Just down the road in Santa Rosa, Nicol Massa Trenam, a widow, was raising her son, Tyler. Holding a degree in Accounting, Nicol's dream was to work for a winery. A family friend told her wineries were usually all family run. Instead, she took a job with an accounting firm, but kept hoping that someday she would work in the wine industry. In 2001, she and Tyler moved to Healdsburg. One of the first things Tyler did was tryout for a traveling soccer team. His coach? Mike Duffy.

Mike and Nicol met on the soccer field. Nicol enjoyed Mike's company and invited him to dinner at her house. Unaware that he was a winemaker or owned a winery, she asked if he'd like a glass of wine. When he answered in the affirmative, Nicol plucked a bottle of her favorite varietal from the refrigerator. The wine? Optima Chardonnay. You can guess the rest of the story.

"It was destiny", says Nicol. "All I had to do was learn how to drink red wine." Today the entire Duffy Clan pours heart and soul into Optima. Mike makes the wine, Nicol runs the office, and both market the wine in nineteen states from California to Florida. The boys top barrels, label bottles and drive forklifts, helping out on weekends and vacations. Sixteen-year old Danny is assuming the role of junior winemaker, having produced a 2003 Rose' of Cabernet to help finance the 1968 Mustang Fastback he's restoring. Chris and Tyler are both looking to make wines to support their car fantasies- a 1969 Mustang Mach 1 and a 1968 Camaro, respectively. And young Will, just pushing five years, is saving his work dollars for "a big tractor."

"For us, it's totally a family affair," says Nicol. "Each bottle that leaves the winery represents our hard work, our dreams and our devotion to each other."