

PATIANNA[®]

Organic Vineyards



Patti Fetzer

Proprietor

As one of eleven children in the pioneering Fetzter family of Mendocino County, Patti Fetzter recalls, “We all wore a lot of hats. Our family did everything, with very little outside help. When building our winery on the Home Ranch in Redwood Valley, my brothers pounded the nails while my sisters and I followed behind with paint buckets and brushes.” Patti spent her childhood on the family’s Home Ranch, a 720-acre Redwood Valley property purchased by her parents, Barney and Kathleen Fetzter, in 1958.

Patti acknowledges her entire family for influencing her life. The fifth born child of Kathleen and Barney, she grew up in a self-sufficient household that valued hands-on, hard work. She remembers her father saying, “If you live on this ranch, you work on this ranch.” Along with the work came the satisfaction of dreaming, planning and building the legendary winery: Fetzter Vineyards. Their prominent brand was the first to make the commitment to organic growing in the 1980s. As Patti says, “It was a natural progression of how we lived and what we believed.”

Growing up immersed in the wine business, Patti has experience in all sides. “In the early days we all worked every aspect of the business, from picking grapes in the vineyards to winery work and marketing. On a given day I might go from bookkeeping to topping barrels in the cellar to the bottling line. When a 40-foot semi pulled up to the dock, my younger sister Mary and I would hop on the fork lift and load the truck.”

“Eventually, with the help of my dad, we all found our niches in the business,” says Patti. “He encouraged me to focus on design and marketing; I created the calligraphy on Fetzer’s first labels.” When Brown-Forman purchased the winery in 1992, Patti was Vice President, Marketing Services. She had her own design studio and support staff, with seventy-five work dockets always in progress. Self-contained, Fetzer had its own national sales force and Patti’s creative marketing support. Now Patti is the first of the Fetzer women to launch her own label, and she did so in a package she designed.

With the introduction of Patianna wines, beginning with the 2003 vintage, Patti is continuing her heritage. The Patianna organic vineyard is a property that has been in her family since 1984. Patti remains tied to Mendocino County, an unspoiled region known for its close-to-the-land lifestyle. From her vantage point, Mendocino remains rural, rustic and closely identified with organic farming.

Patti and her husband Gregg Hileman built their home on a hillside overlooking Patianna Vineyard. Organics is deeply instilled in their lifestyle. “My mother taught us to put things back better than we found them,” remembers Patti. “Mother Nature deserves the same.”

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