

DEBRA MATHY  
PROPRIETOR OF DUTCHER CROSSING WINERY

Debra Mathy is an adventurer, and her journey to become the proprietor of Dutcher Crossing Winery is her most memorable quest. “My destiny was to be a business woman and own Dutcher Crossing Winery,” she stated. “It has been a long road, but I’m here, heading happily forward.”

An educator by training, Debra has always loved wine. Her first trip to Europe, when she was in high school, initiated her taste buds to the savory beverage. She went back to Europe many times throughout college and graduate school, developing a passion for wine, German whites in particular. “I remember sitting in an Austrian weingarten near Vienna,” she reminisced. “I fell in love with the region, culture, cheese, bread and wine.”

A number of years later, with her father’s guidance, she started pursuing her dream of owning a winery. “My dad was a successful businessman in Wisconsin, and he wanted to help me realize my dream if it was feasible.” she explained. “He was insistent that I approach my goal with a business focus. We embarked on our quest to find a winery that had it all—premium wines, community focus and excellent business potential.” In between her teaching job in Colorado, she and her father made multiple trips to various wine regions in Oregon, Washington, California and Europe. During one visit, she saw 33 wineries in four days.

In 2001, they hired an Australian wine business consultant to help with the search for a suitable winery and vineyard. They continued to gather data and finally narrowed the search to St. Helena and Healdsburg. “It took a lot of time to find the right place. I called upon all my connections and scouts,” she recalled. In 2006, her father passed away after battling a long illness. Within months, Debra visited Dry Creek Valley to speak with the founders of Dutcher Crossing Winery.

“It was Winter Wineland in January of 2007,” said Debra. “I made an offer and escrow closed in less than 40 days, on March 7. It was a very personal journey, from start to finish.” Although not there with her in person, she knows her father would be proud of the winery she chose, fulfilling their longtime dream.

Today, Debra and her team are moving forward. She enjoys close working relationships with her staff, winemaker and growers, considering them as part of her winery “family.” Representing Dutcher Crossing’s future direction, a new label showcases a vintage high-wheel bicycle as a commemoration of the journey and the road ahead. “The last Christmas present I received from my dad was this high wheeler,” said Debra, an avid cyclist and lover of bicycles. “The icon represents Dutcher Crossing Winery’s pursuit of small-lot winemaking, attesting to the guiding power of my father’s imagination, and the timeless qualities of an artisan approach to life.”

In addition to completing wine and viticulture courses at U. C. Davis, Debra Mathy graduated with a B.A. in education from the University of Arizona and a Masters degree in nutrition from Colorado State University. She is also an athlete, owning a unicycle, eight bicycles and the magnificent 1900s high wheeler. A bicycle is her first choice of transportation, and she often bikes the vineyards. Debra can almost always be found during business hours to greet and say hello to visitors. Her golden lab, Dutchess, is her tail-wagging sidekick, winery dog and official greeter. Their friendliness and enthusiasm reflect the overall culture of Dutcher Crossing.

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