



Derek Benham

OWNER/CEO

Derek was born and raised in Bakersfield, California, a gritty little place at the southern end of the great San Joaquin Valley, best known for its Kern County country western music. Derek spent his childhood summers working in the fields pulling weeds, harvesting potatoes, and trellising grapes to the soundtrack of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. All of which shaped him for the road ahead.

As Derek grew up, his mother Phyllis, an ardent environmentalist and bird watcher, frequently took him into the Sierras for long hikes, camping trips and bird counts. She was fearless, spending days in the mountains on her own with a young child and a notebook to record her wildlife and bird observations. Her love of nature inspired her son to follow in her footsteps whenever possible.

Derek attended the University of California, graduating in the late 70s, and joined the wine industry in sales with a Lodi based winery. In 1990, Derek and his brother founded Codera Wine Group and created the Blackstone brand. Two years later, they purchased the old Hallberg apple cannery in Graton, California, which had been converted to a winery in 1979. After seven successful years, Blackstone was sold in 2001. That same year, Codera was dissolved and Derek started Purple Wine Company based in Graton.

In 2014, Derek created Raeburn Winery. Having made wine in the Russian River Valley for decades, Raeburn Chardonnay is a nod to this beautiful region, its world-class vineyards, and thriving watersheds—with the egret crest as homage to Derek's mother and his dedication to land stewardship.

When he's away from the winery, Derek is on the slopes skiing or paddling out to catch his next wave. He enjoys traveling with his wife and three children and most importantly, he enjoys a good sunset with a glass of Raeburn in hand.

