

FIDDLEHEAD CELLARS

STEPHEN VILLA – Assistant Winemaker / Punch Down Specialist / Music Maker



Stephen muses that if it weren't for sneaking a few bottles from his mother's wine collection at an early age, he may never have developed a taste wine. (The team at Fiddlehead is glad for this early indiscretion!).

Stephen amuses us every day with his dry sense of humor, his extremely diverse love of music and his cool, calm and collected demeanor. Just when Kathy thinks things are wrapped up, he has a knack of putting forward a most provoking question. Never missing a beat – he is thorough, interested in the challenge, and is always willing to go the extra mile.

A lifelong resident of Lompoc, Stephen barely migrated out of the area as he attended the University of California, Santa Barbara. While there, he expanded his oenological pursuits by working in a local wine shop... there he expanded his appreciation for the diversity of wine and wine regions (beyond his mother's cellar) and developed an understanding of the wine business, especially with relating to consumers. This experience makes it very easy for Stephen to jump in and address technical questions with visitors, share harvest stories with a tasting room tour, and run the cash register flawlessly (unlike Kathy!). And as his former employer still stocks Fiddlehead, we're pretty sure they've forgiven us for stealing him away.

Joining the Fiddlehead team in 2008, Stephen has worked his way up through the ranks, starting out as lead grape sorter for harvest; then onto a permanent position as cellar rat. Now as the exalted Assistant Winemaker, he works closely with Kathy on even the most critical winemaking decisions.

Stephen maintains an active lifestyle, including competitive league basketball, running and biking (even after a grueling day of work!). These days he often runs on the glorious grounds of our local Santa Ynez Mission and bikes through the scenic Los Padres National

FIDDLEHEAD CELLARS

Forest. In the near future we intend to toast him with Fiddlehead when he successfully completes his first marathon.

With music, Stephen and Kathy often battle it out as to what they should listen to in the cellar. In Kathy's words, his taste in music ranges from the most incoherent and bizarre to magnificent classical compositions. He could just as easily be found at a post-punk concert as he could at an art opening celebrating local culture. He is also secretly a movie buff. While Hitchcock's *Vertigo* is his top choice, Stephen appreciates anything from the screwball classics of the 1930's, to the boom of American independent films in the late 60's/early 70's, with the French New Wave being his absolute favorite period of films.

In his words, "it's the 'hands-on' approach at Fiddlehead that I love best." He is directly involved in every aspect of production; from vineyard to cellar, from barrel to bottle... sharing in the pride of the exquisite results! And when the busy days of harvest roll around and he is up at 3am to pick grapes, followed by a long day of cellar work and evening punch downs, Stephen just needs to grab a bottle of Fiddlehead and all the fond memories from that particular vintage year come flooding back, refreshing his passion for all things Fiddlehead.

In the end, Stephen is a perfect fit for Fiddlehead, and we applaud his contributions in keeping our wines in the top ranks.