



BLACKBIRD  
VINEYARDS

**Sarah Gott**  
Consulting Winemaker

Growing up in the Bay Area, Blackbird Vineyards' consulting winemaker Sarah Gott was always attracted to the idea of a life in the country close to nature and animals. Her first ambition was to go into veterinary medicine, but attending UC Davis, she fell in love with the university's esteemed viticulture and enology program and the rest was history. *"I'd spent a lot of time in the wine country with family friends when I was growing up,"* says Gott. *"Food and wine had always been a big part of my life, so becoming a winemaker seemed like a natural progression."*

Gott joined Blackbird in 2003 soon after it was purchased by Michael Polenske, who has turned the acclaimed vineyard into a winery in its own right. Located in the Oak Knoll AVA, Blackbird Vineyards, renowned for producing exceptional Bordeaux style fruit coveted by many top labels, is a winemaker's dream. Although most of that season's grapes were already spoken for, enough remained for a small crush. Preliminary indications for that first vintage are more than promising. Blackbird's 2003 Merlot was given a score of 95 by Vintrust, which praised its complexity and richness. *"It is with wines like this that we never question why we are in this business,"* enthused ACME Fines Wines News. Coming on board with Blackbird squares with Gott's belief that, *"the importance of the vineyard is number one."*

*"The quality of the fruit is what drives the quality of the wine,"* says Gott, who adds that she feels most at home working with Bordeaux varietals. *"Blackbird is in a unique location, in the renowned Oak Knoll AVA of the Napa Valley. It has deep soils, which lead to early ripening, and that's especially good for Merlot. It's cool enough so you get some longer hang time. But you also get the ripeness you want in terms of extraction and flavor and tannin development."*

After receiving a BA in Fermentation Science, specializing in Enology, Gott quickly gained experience by completing harvest internships at Gloria Ferrer Sparkling Winery in Sonoma, Joseph Phelps Winery in St. Helena, and at Wirra Wirra in South Australia's McClaren Vale, all within three years. In 1994, she returned to Joseph Phelps as assistant winemaker, becoming head winemaker in 2002. Two years later, she became winemaker at Quintessa, in St. Helena. In 2004, balancing the demands of family and children, Gott struck out on her own as a consulting winemaker. Among other projects is her collaboration with her husband's winery, Joel Gott Wines.

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