

**Everybody who grows grapes and makes wine is a little crazy.  
Here's how Tom and Rob got to that crazy:**



### **Tom Sinton, Proprietor & Consulting Winemaker**

Tom grew up on a ranch in the Paso Robles area where his family raised cattle, alfalfa and sugar beets. His mother tended a large garden of California natives, inspiring Tom's lifelong love of growing plants. At the age of 15, he spent a transformative summer with a family in Reims, France who, to his delight, served wine with every meal! The interconnectedness of food, wine, and family profoundly resonated with Tom, who went on to plant Shell Creek Vineyards in 1972 on the family ranch in Paso Robles. He received his Masters in Food Science at UC Davis and spent years farming grapes until reluctantly selling the vineyard in 1990. He spent the next few decades involved in non-wine-related ventures, but was unable to shake the desire to finish what he started in Paso Robles: to create a vineyard and winery that produced great wines, able to be enjoyed with every meal (well, not breakfast).

In 2011 Tom began to make a small amount of wine in Napa under the Starfield Vineyards brand with the help of his son, Rob. They made four vintages, but both quickly realized that Napa was too crowded and expensive to fulfill their dreams of establishing their own vineyard, winery, and tasting room.

Living together in the Bay area and sharing countless glasses of wine, Tom and Rob found themselves increasingly drawn to the Mediterranean varieties grown throughout The Rhone, which led to a monthlong trip during which they tasted at 4-5 wineries per day, taking extensive notes that would lay the groundwork for their winemaking philosophy. They began an exhaustive search across the West Coast to identify the perfect location to plant a vineyard of those varieties.

In 2012, they chose a 67-acre hillside property in the Sierra Foothills just east of Placerville, in the El Dorado AVA. Today, while Tom and Rob tag-team most of the vineyard and winery, Tom primarily manages the vineyard (and most other jobs that nobody else wants... like bookkeeping).



### **Rob Sinton, Winemaker**

Rob grew up as an urban kid in the Bay Area. He loved computer games, science and technology, showing little interest in wine-making. However, following the trajectory of his father, the age of 18, he spent a summer backpacking in Australia where he enjoyed great beer and Barossa Valley Shiraz with his mates. The proverbial die was cast. When he returned, he started brewing beer – memorably a seasonal pumpkin beer that never lasted long.

As luck would have it, Rob chose UC Davis for college. There he took a wine course, which led him to start home winemaking by fermenting some El Dorado Mourvedre. As soon as he had a chance, Rob switched his major to Viticulture and Enology.

Rob and Tom selected the Placerville vineyard site along with the layout and varieties. Although Tom developed and managed the vineyard through the early years, in 2020 Rob actively began working on the El Dorado winemaking with his father. In 2022, he relocated to Placerville to become head winemaker. Currently, Rob primarily manages the winemaking, but also takes the lead managing the technical infrastructure and the thousand landscape trees Tom and Rob have planted.



## Executive Chef, Yutaro Tachibe

Chef Yutaro's journey began in an environment of culinary pioneers. His father, Shigefumi Tachibe, former and longtime chef of Chaya Brasserie in Beverly Hills, invented tuna tartare and soon was selling 35,000 orders a year. While his father worked long hours at the restaurant, his mother, originally from Osaka, cooked for a growing family of seven, and instilled a deep appreciation of comfort food which has stayed with Yutaro to this day.

After completing his culinary education at the California School of Culinary Arts in Pasadena, Yutaro set out to refine his craft by working in some of California's Michelin-starred restaurants. In 2006, he joined the renowned Melisse, a 2-star Michelin restaurant located in Santa Monica.

In 2011, Chef Yutaro then accepted the position of sous chef at Benu, a 3-star Michelin restaurant led by Corey Lee in San Francisco. His dedication and expertise were recognized, and in 2014, he was promoted to Executive Sous Chef at Monsieur Benjamin, another culinary gem under Corey Lee's leadership. Continuing his collaboration with Corey Lee's team, Yutaro assumed the role of Executive Sous Chef at In Situ in San Francisco in 2016, which was awarded a Michelin star in 2017. Yutaro's culinary journey then led him to join the esteemed team at Wayfare Tavern in 2019, working alongside chef Tyler Florence as Chef de Cuisine.

Now, as the Executive Chef of Starfield Vineyards, Chef Yutaro brings his wealth of experience and expertise to oversee the entire culinary program. From creating innovative menus to developing his comprehensive programs, Yutaro embraces a hands-on approach to leadership and execution. His unwavering commitment to procuring locally crafted, high-quality ingredients resulted in a fruitful relationship with a neighboring farm, 24Carrot, who supplies him with certified organic produce. His culinary mastery and deep-rooted passion creates an extraordinary dining experience for our guests. With a nod to his culinary roots, Chef Yutaro seasonally offers the tuna tartare.



## Catherine Lehman, Tasting Room & DTC Manager

Catherine grew up in Folsom when it was a small, rapidly-growing Sacramento suburb, surrounded by open fields. On weekends Catherine and her family boated on the lake and hiked on the many nature trails in the area, sometimes starting or ending up at Karen's Bakery in historic downtown.

She received a BS in Soil Science from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, with concentration in Environmental Management. For her senior project, she tested vine-yard soil samples and subsequent wines for elements and presented the findings in Minneapolis at the annual Soil Science Society Meeting.

Her connection with the wine industry at Cal Poly led her to Tobin James Cellars in Paso Robles, where she conducted tastings and trained new personnel in hosting tastings and developing sales skills. Returning to Folsom, she took a job at Renwood Winery in Plymouth, where she learned all the functions of Direct to Consumer operations.

When Renwood sold in the spring of 2019, she moved to Starfield Vineyards with two colleagues, and helped open Starfield in summer of 2019, initially offering tastings in the Lake Pavilion, and later in the new Tasting Room. Within a year, she became Tasting Room and DTC Manager. Today she manages all day to day of the Tasting Room and Starfield events.

While at Starfield, she also honed her vineyard skills, helping Tom take fruit samples, testing Brix and pH, making crop estimates, and weighing in on leafing, crop thinning, and calling the pick. Catherine knows all sides of the wine industry, making her the ideal guide for trade visitors.