



Dr. Joseph Gali Pediatrician, Farmer, Winegrower

Helping to pick fruit in his uncle's orchard as a teenager, Dr. Joseph Gali may not have foreseen becoming both a pediatrician and a farmer. Yet, it's a duality that he loves. Growing wine grapes takes study, thought, precision and care.

It's also a lot of hard work. With 22,410 grapevines planted on the Gali Vineyards property, there are more than 20 miles of vine rows to care for, year-round. Joseph farms the 18 acres by hand, with occasional help during pruning and harvest timeframes. His commitment to the farm is foremost and constant.

Born in Antioch, Turkey, Joseph graduated from medical school in Istanbul and completed his pediatric residency in New York City. He has been caring for his patients in the Bay Area since 1988. Joseph has a deep appreciation and reverence for the practices and arts that have come before him, both in medicine and in farming.

Education is important. As a self-taught farmer, reading and re-reading books, articles and manuals is part of Joseph's practice. California's land has allowed him to hone his growing talents, producing everything from persimmons and kiwis to quince, mulberries, and honey from his many beehives. Cooking is also a hobby.

"If you want something done right, you do it yourself," he says.

When he and his wife Janice purchased an abandoned apple orchard in Corralitos, CA, Joseph decided to plant multiple varieties of blueberries – a surprising choice for the area. Strawberries, blackberries and raspberries were the norm at the time (2004), not blueberries, which (Joseph learned) are a finicky, labor-intensive crop.

The switch to growing wine grapes came in 2013. Joseph was excited to discover that his parcel of land could be planted in the exact orientation recommended in textbooks for optimal sun exposure: vineyard rows angled at 23 degrees northeast-southwest, on a south-facing slope. He planted chardonnay, pinot noir, syrah and tempranillo – a red grape grown mainly in Spain's Rioja region.

Noting the similarities between Rioja's soil types and diurnal temperature variations compared to his vineyard location, Joseph called a wine grape nursery. He and the proprietor found one hearty tempranillo clone compatible with their cooler climate, soil and water composition. Experimenting again, he planted one acre.

"Tempranillo can grow vigorously. It needs taming and crop load reduction to produce exceptional, balanced wines. Although it is an early ripening varietal in Spain (hence the name: the early one), in our cool, marine-influenced vineyard, it is picked the latest – around Halloween – along with our Syrah." He now also grows albariño, a Spanish white wine grape.

Farming using sustainable viticultural practices is part of Joseph's ethos. Care and connection to nature mean treating the vines – and, by extension, the wildlife within their land's ecosystem – with as many organic and natural methods as possible.

"Everyone that I've met in agriculture has been very willing to share their knowledge, whether it's a neighbor or the expert at the nursery or the vineyard crew that helps to tend to our land," says Joseph. "They share news and farming practices. There are lots of challenging decisions to make each year. Mother Nature isn't predictable, so it's really helpful to hear how others are handling what comes."