

**Q&A With Winemakers Bob Rawson and Fred Dick**  
*Celebrating Urbano Cellars' 10-Year Anniversary*  
August 7, 2016

**Q: How did you get started as wine-makers?**

We were neighbors and we both liked wine. Friends of friends had us help during a crush at Rosenblum way back in the early days when it was one of the first wineries in the East Bay. On the way home we decided, "We can do this!"

We made our first wine in Bob's garage, because it was bigger. A friend got us grapes and loaned us a crusher, bin and barrels. Our first wine was a Syrah because it is the most forgiving for a beginner to make. We made wine after work and on weekends in Bob's garage for a couple of years.

**Q: When did you go into commercial wine-making?**

We were thinking about buying an existing winery. But we stepped back and then decided to do our own thing.

Our goal was to craft a high quality hand-crafted wine at an affordable price point. We had to build relationships with growers, and we've expanded our varietals as production grew. We started with Rhone varietals and Sangiovese and have branched out. We felt like why make another cab when everyone else is doing it? Visiting vineyards and looking at grapes is like being a kid in a candy store!

**Q: How did you find your current location? What's good about it?**

Going into wine making in a practical sense without a boatload of money means that you need to find a good facility. Initially we started out making wine at other vintners' locations before we found our home here. We made wine in Emeryville, Oakland and Fairfield before moving here in 2011.

This is a great location for wine production – close to the Bay and it's very cool. We get cooler temperatures and breezes and we are surrounded by other structures on either side, so we are insulated. Minimal light and sun get in and it's very cool and cave like, creating the perfect conditions for making wine. Another winery was here previously, so we benefitted from some infrastructure that was in place too.

It has plenty of space and for visitors—a huge parking lot.

**Q: Where did the name Urbano come from?**

Well, we eliminated our surnames pretty quickly. As a surname "Dick" can be considered a profanity by some software—or at least a source of giggles, and Rawson may have had some trademark issues. We chose "Urbano," named after Urbano Drive, a street in our neighborhood in San Francisco, which was originally a racetrack in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It gave us a sense of place and it also connotes urban. We were urban wine makers.

**Q: How much wine do you make?**

We make about 1,200 cases a year. Doing the math for you, that's around 14,000 or 15,000 bottles! One-third of what we produce goes into our keg program, the Fourth Street Red and Fourth Street White labels.

Our goal with this label is to make food-friendly blends that are great everyday table wines. We sell a lot in our 1-liter reusable, refillable bottles. It works really well – people who live nearby drop in for refills regularly, and it suits environmentally conscious Berkeley. We avoid the bottling costs and can sell at a lower price and people get 33% more wine! We started this in 2007 and 2008 and it's been a big hit. The tap system is a good value for everyday wines, because it's more sustainable with lower materials costs.

**Q: What are your most popular varieties?**

Sangiovese and Cotes du Clements, which is a big seller and is our play on a Cotes du Rhone. Our Barbera is really popular too and wins awards. We're in several restaurants locally.

**Q: Who is in your club and who visits the tasting room?**

Many people from the neighborhood. Local folks bring their friends—the majority are probably from a 10-mile radius. We have lots of regulars—recent graduates of Cal who live nearby, empty-nesters, people of all ages and backgrounds. At our 10-year anniversary party, I talked with a Stanford physicist and his wife who are regulars, a couple of Google engineers, an artist, several retirees and families with young kids and lots of dear friends who've been with us from the early days. It's a really warm, friendly and diverse crowd.

**Q: What do you offer in the tasting room?**

Besides wines (usually 5 to taste), we have art shows of local artists. We actually have a curator, who puts on the shows and all of them have been terrific—an all-woman show based on a Maya Angelou poem, some international artists, etc. We have T-shirts (black and slimming) that say Urbano, but that's all we sell besides wine and mead.

**Q: What kinds of events do you host?**

For our tenth anniversary, we had a fantastic paella party, with great food and a band. We try to have an event every quarter – and make it something educational/informative and fun. We have had cheese making classes, several weird-film fests, a movie screening, a book signing, sipping and painting, wine and chocolate tasting, and regular artists' receptions for each of the artists featured in the tasting room.

**Q: How do you divide the responsibilities?**

We share the wine-making role. Bob handles business and compliance and Fred handles marketing and social media. It's kind of like being married – although we are both married to wonderful wives, and we are no longer neighbors. The business partnership has worked for 10 years through ups and downs.

**Q: What inspires you for the next 10 years?**

The triumph of producing great wine and feedback from our customers. Wines have improved as we go forward. We learn by doing – each year and each crop is a course in itself! The fun is in the making of the wine; it's a privilege to make wine.

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