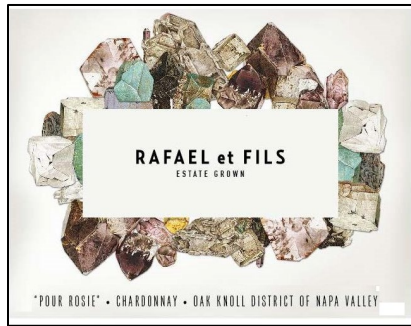


Rafael et Fils

Napa Valley

(California sales only)



Marc Rafael manages this property on the foothills of the Mayacamas range in the Oak Knoll District. A former cattle ranch, it lies tucked away in a southwest corner of Napa Valley with 25 acres of vines growing mostly at 400 to 500-feet above sea level on the rolling hilltops—the flanks frequently being too steep—of the 50-acre property. The vines are Cabernet save for two acres of Chardonnay. This site is relatively cool, strongly influenced by its proximity to the San Pablo Bay, and Marc tries to maintain a low-key, more elegant style of Napa Cab that his corner of the valley

permits—the style that made Napa famous and captivated his parents in the 1970s, and that is all but bygone today.

Marc took over the estate from his parents in 2010. Georg, his father, was born in Germany before the Second World War and spent his early years in what became East Berlin. He left at age 15 (the Wall hadn't yet been built) on his own and ended up landing a job in a hotel in the Black Forest as an elevator operator. By the time he retired, this enterprising man had his own boutique line of hotels in the south of France named Rafael Hotels.

It was Georg who bought the Oak Knoll property in 1982, having fallen in love with Napa as it was then. He took down some fencing and put in the vineyards. The plan was to make the property self-sufficient by selling wine grapes. Original clients were Duckhorn and Far Niente, but the long-term client has been Honig, which sells its version of Rafael Cabernet in its tasting room.

Georg started commercially bottling some wine from his grapes in 1996. Today roughly 60% of the grapes are sold while 40% go into the Rafael et Fils label.

When Marc came on, he hired Brad Kitson to help him make the wine. With the 2012 vintage, Marc introduced a new label. The big change, however, has been a clear turn toward organic farming. Some years ago, the winery earned Napa Green status, a rigorous sustainability standard set in Napa but independently certified; and subsequently the winery was awarded Fish Friendly Farming, a step undertaken by Marc to protect the property's watersheds. He lives next to the property now with a young family and he's committed to going more organic in the vines in the years ahead.