

OLE MISS

A L U M N I R E V I E W

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Urban Legend

Aging Well  Possibilities Instead of Disabilities

AGING WELL

KRUTZ FAMILY CELLARS
MAY BE IN ITS INFANCY,
BUT THE OPERATION IS
GROWING QUICKLY AND
MAKING A NAME FOR ITSELF
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

BY BENITA WHITEHORN

is MySpace profile gives the impression of a bachelor gone wild, a free spirit living for the moment.

Maybe he is, but, in person, Patrick Krutz (pronounced Krootz) (BBA 01), is clean-cut, polite and neatly dressed in a Pima cotton plaid green shirt and jeans. He's at ease in his 6-foot-4-inch frame, and is earnest and passionate about what he does

for a living: concocting his own wines under the label Krutz Family Cellars in Sonoma County, Calif.

On one of the first temperate days in March, he traveled to Oxford to see his brother, Cole Krutz (BA 07), and an Ole Miss basketball game. Meeting at one of his old stomping grounds, the Burgundy Room, Patrick opens a bottle of his 2004 vintage Pinot Noir, with permission from the bartender, of course, and describes it:

"I get cedar on the nose, then it turns almost into pomegranate, plum, almost some rich fig. And that's just getting

started," he says. "And then you get this cooperage. Of course, this is my baby. I know this guy. And then I start getting more of a toastiness on the mid-palate, but then there's some sweetness, like a vanilla that comes in there, and, on the finish, I get more of a pepper, kind of a lingering spice. It's not a cayenne by any means because it doesn't burn you, but it's almost like a paprika."

Patrick has gone skydiving and bungee jumping in New Zealand, but winemaking might be his greatest adventure. While his business is in its embryonic stage, it shows great potential. From his 2005 vintage, he expects to produce about 600 cases of wine, compared with 120 cases from his 2003 vintage. Simply by e-releases, word of mouth, tastings and placement in a few retail shops, his wines are selling well. His Web site, <www.krutzfamilycellars.com>, is expected to launch any day now.

A native of Jackson, Miss., Patrick moved to Carmel, Calif., in 2002, where he first worked at The Cheese Shop, which has sold wine, cheese and gourmet foods since 1973. There, he met a couple of people who mentored him in the art of winemaking: general manager Michael Burke and Dylan Sheldon, who makes wines with his wife, Tobe, under the label Sheldon Wines.

"[Patrick] joined up with us, doing a small amount of wine for his family label, just to learn the ropes," says Sheldon, who also is Patrick's roommate. "We had almost no wine equipment. The Romans had more wine equipment [than we did]. Every piece of equipment broke down on us. The first day was an 18-hour shift with about two 10-minute breaks. We were like, 'Yup, this is pretty much how it goes.' We worked well over 100 hours a week over the first four weeks. We stopped going home and set up inflatable mattresses [in the winery]. It was a trial-by-fire vintage for the boy, and he made it out relatively unscathed."

OLD-WORLD WAYS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Patrick Krutz and Sheldon are custom-crush clients, meaning they buy grapes from established vineyards. They make their wines at a co-op facility in Sebastopol, a town of 8,000 about 60 miles north of San Francisco that is as famous for its apples as wine. Krutz learned from Sheldon to treat each barrel of wine as if it were his own child. He uses a basket press, which is a gentler way of

squeezing juice out of grapes than the stainless steel, hydraulic presses that major wineries use. Yet he also is willing to use new techniques, such as sending his wine to a facility that adjusts the amount of alcohol and finds the "sweet spot" if he thinks the wine needs it.

"My philosophy of making wine in general is I love the old-world techniques, the less manipulation the better, but if I can make a better wine out of what I have at the time, then I'm going to do that," Patrick says.

Most people who go to the University of California-Davis, which offers the study of winemaking, come back to the way Patrick makes wine, Burke says. "In California, it's called minimal handling because it does make a richer, rounder wine."

Patrick's latest releases are a 2004 Santa Lucia Highlands Hillside Chardonnay, 2004 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and, most recent, his 2004 K-squared Stagecoach Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon.

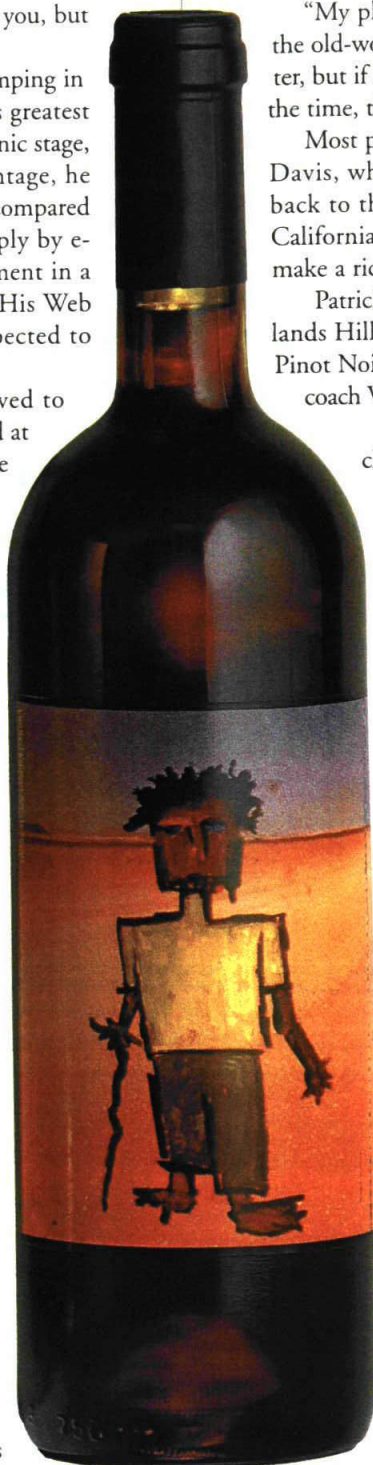
"I think they're top-notch," Burke says. "The chardonnay is unfiltered, and it has particles in it. It's really rich on the palate. [It has] hints of apple, coconut, pear. The pinot noir is close to world-class. I think the fruit source could have been a little better. His K-squared, you could put it in with \$500 bottles of wine. (It sells for \$59.95.)"

Patrick's father, Fred Krutz (BA 72, JD 77), a partner in the law firm of Forman, Perry, Watkins, Krutz and Tardy in Jackson, Miss., provided the start-up money for Patrick's winemaking venture.

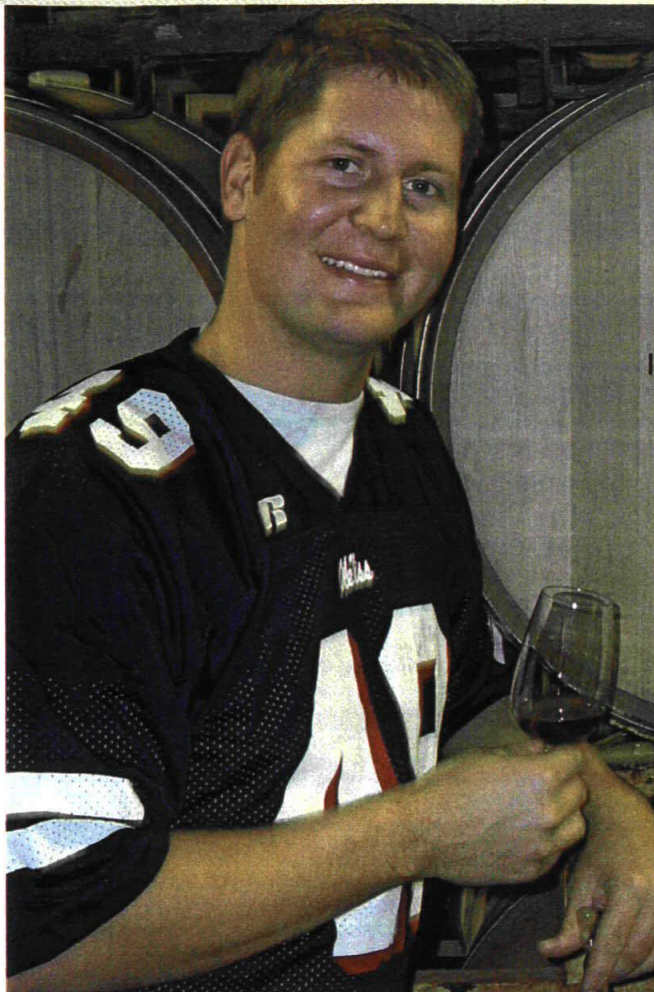
"My feeling is as long as [my sons] found something they loved to do and needed help to get it off the ground, as long as they gave me a business plan just like they would a bank, then I felt like they should give it a shot," Fred Krutz says.

While Patrick enjoys roaming California's idyllic vineyards searching for the perfect grapes for his wines, he hasn't forgotten his Mississippi roots. The K-squared bottle and his business card feature original art that is reminiscent of the Delta. A small magnolia blossom graces the other side of the business card. Patrick catches early morning Ole Miss games on satellite TV at a Santa Rosa sports bar where the bartender calls him "Mississippi." He tries to attend as many Ole Miss baseball and basketball games as he can and even attends at least two football games a year during the busy harvest and crush season.

"I still have Mississippi plates, Ole Miss to be exact," he says.



*A bottle of "K-squared"
Cabernet Sauvignon.*



Patrick Krutz pays attention to every barrel to produce handcrafted wines in Sebastopol, Calif.



FROM VINE TO MARKET

While Patrick Krutz is creating his own wines on the West Coast, his brother, Bryan Krutz, is selling wine on the East Coast. Bryan (BBA 03) runs Courtyard Wine and Cheese Bar in the luxurious yet family-oriented resort community of Rosemary Beach, Fla. His wife, Cindy Krutz (BAE 03), helps run the business and is opening Willow, a clothing boutique, across the street.

Bryan's father, Fred Krutz, and his father's law partner, W.G. Watkins (BA 76, JD 78), bought the wine bar from a previous owner in 2005. With his business degree and base knowledge about wine that he picked up from his father, Bryan, along with Cindy, moved to the beach to run the bar full time. They have a couple of other companions living with them, his yellow Labrador retriever and her bichon frise, and they give treats to dogs who visit the courtyard with their owners.

The 750-square-foot bar specializes in small-production boutique wines. Bryan says he has tasted about 90 percent of the 2,500 bottles of wine in store. During the busy season in summer, Bryan says the bar averages about 50 people at night. "At a 10-seat bar, that's pretty packed."

Bryan sells Patrick's wines by the bottle and glass, and at tastings.

"We are the only place that sells [Patrick's wines] on the Florida Panhandle. I cannot keep them on the shelf. I really can't. The pinot noir I've been sold out of for months."

Bryan says he was excited about Patrick's producing his own wines but was anxious, as well.

"It was kind of weird because he was with me the first time I tried it. Luckily, there was no acting necessary. Across the board, they really are outstanding wines. I would feel comfortable about pairing them up with just about anything, and I have."



The Krutz family sometimes ships wine ahead to share on vacation as they do here in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Pictured clockwise: Patrick (far right), Cherry, Cindy, Bryan, Fred and Cole.

FROM FATHER TO SONS

Though a bit too laid-back to be the coat-and-tie wearing sort, Patrick and Bryan Krutz might have become lawyers like their father if their parents had not paid a visit to The Cheese Shop in Carmel around 1990. (Little did the Krutzes know that Patrick would end up working at the shop years later.)

Fred and Cherry Krutz and W.G. and Polly Watkins had traveled to Pebble Beach to play golf and happened to stop by The Cheese Shop. Owner Kent Torrey recommended some wine, cheese and bread to take on a picnic, and the foursome have been hooked on wine ever since.

"They've become very good clients of ours," Torrey says. "Two of the most fun things to do in life are eating and drinking. The Krutz and Watkins families share that passion."

Having become an avid wine collector, Fred Krutz passed on his love and knowledge of wine to his sons, Patrick, Bryan and Cole, at the dinner table.

"I would go over some fundamental things with them. First, you look at the color, then you swirl it to try to get the oxygen in it. Then after you do that, you get a nose of it, that is, smell it, then you taste it, swirl it around your mouth some, then swallow it and try to think about the taste of it."

Krutz also passed on two rules: "You ought to drink what tastes best to you," and "You should never base what you think about a wine based on the cost. Don't be a wine snob."

The Krutz family is so much into wine that they sometimes ship wine ahead during vacations. They taste the wine together, then write down and compare notes about each bottle.

And then there was the time Patrick picked the wine without his dad's guidance. He was still living at home with his parents, but they were out of town, and he had some friends over for dinner.

"We were grilling out burgers, and we were just looking for a cheap bottle of wine," he says. "I went into the cellar and grabbed a wine."

Unable to reach his parents, he knew they wouldn't mind his getting a bottle. Unfortunately, the bottle Patrick pulled from the cellar was not one you would ordinarily pair with burgers.

"Long story short, I grabbed a \$200-\$300 bottle of wine," he says. "It was a bottle of 1992 Diamond Creek. Red Rock Terrace was the vineyard, and it was a cabernet sauvignon. It's one of the most prestigious California cabernets there is."

Patrick says he knew he was in trouble when he took the first sip, but his dad was forgiving—this once.

Fred Krutz remembers that he told his son, "That was a mistake. You didn't mean anything by it, but I wouldn't want you to make a habit of it."

Patrick says that one of the reasons he named his business Krutz Family Cellars is that the best bottle of wine he's had in his life was shared among nine family members at his brother Bryan's wedding reception. It was a Chateau Latour in an imperial bottle, which is equivalent to about eight bottles.

"There's something about opening a bottle of wine, versus opening a bottle of liquor or a six-pack of beer, where you can share it with your family at a meal, and it makes it that much better." *AR*