



MIKE WALLER

WINEMAKER, CALERA

A master of Pinot Noir, known for his terroir-driven approach to winemaking, Mike Waller has worked alongside legendary vintner Josh Jensen for more than a decade, helping to guide winemaking at Calera. Mike's winemaking style honors the character and complexity of Calera's six renowned sites on Mt. Harlan, which are the source for some of the New World's most revered wines. In the winery, Mike captures the nuance of these grand cru-caliber vineyards to create sophisticated wines renowned for their layered elegance and aging potential.

A native of Hollister, California, Mike grew up just ten miles from Calera. An avid homebrewer, Mike fell in love with wine during a trip to Napa Valley in his early 20s. "That was the first time I experienced wine on a more cerebral level," says Mike. "It was also when I started to see wine as a meeting point between science, agriculture and art." Eager to learn more, Mike took a job on the bottling line at David Bruce Winery, and soon after enrolled at UC Davis. While earning his degree in viticulture and enology, Mike worked at Saintsbury, where he began to develop a passion for Pinot Noir.

After graduation, Mike spent a year as the wine chemist at Beringer, before moving home to the Central Coast to become the assistant winemaker at Chalone in 2004. Mentored by acclaimed winemaker Dan Karlsen, Mike developed a deeper, more vineyard-inspired approach to winemaking. "I grew up on the Central Coast reading books like Steinbeck's 'The Pastures of Heaven,'" says Mike. "This is a region of pioneers who have followed their own path, while embracing a connection to the land. In the world of wine, these are often the foundations for greatness."

In 2007, when Josh Jensen invited Mike to become the assistant winemaker at Calera, he was thrilled. "Josh is rightfully a legend," adds Mike. "He sought out a place to grow his wines that was so remote, with no electricity, little water, and challenging growing conditions. He put everything on the line because this is what he believed it would take to make some of the finest wines in the world—and he was right."

Mike and Josh quickly discovered that they shared similar philosophies, palates and approaches to growing and making wine, and in 2009, Josh named Mike the winemaker for Calera. In the years since, Mike has developed an intimate understanding of Calera's vineyards that allows him to make elegant, age-worthy wines recognized for their cool-climate purity. From his judicious use of new oak to his measured incorporation of whole clusters, each of Calera's single-vineyard wines is made to frame the uniqueness of the winery's six Mt. Harlan vineyards. "Because we have some of the oldest vines on the Central Coast, the roots dig deep, delivering remarkable complexity," says Mike. "At the same time, each site is unique, with its own story to tell each growing season. These are the stories we strive to tell."

