

# RED LAVA VINEYARDS



## **Bud Lawson's Biography**

Bud Lawson, owner of Red Lava Vineyards and producer of Red Lava Syrah, knows soil. He believes that great wine begins in the vineyard. From many generations of farmers, he began his informal training as a child through observation and involvement with his family. Through his career as a land surveyor and work with construction companies he increased his knowledge about soil. Many hours of informal consultations from friends, colleagues and professionals has continued his wine grape growing education.

From the time he was a teenager he resided in Northern California, watching as vineyards were planted and the wine industry grew. He felt that if other people could grow grapes, so could he. While spending weekends and holidays at the vacation home he built on Clear Lake years ago, he noticed that vineyards were being planted in Lake County. Land was affordable here so he decided to plan for his retirement, combining his love for working with the land with the newly emerging Lake County wine industry. On a Sunday afternoon in 1998, while searching for the perfect vineyard site, he found a faded, old "For Sale" sign with a barely readable phone number. This untouched 80-acre parcel, covered with Manzanita, poison oak and pine trees, would become Red Lava Vineyards.

Everything about Red Lava Vineyards is hands on. Bud, seated on his bulldozer, cleared 10 acres and built roads with the help of his sons, Matt and Luke, and other family members. After having an informal tasting of different varietals that would be suited to the site, Bud asked his wife, Kristi, what wine she liked. Her answer was, "Syrah!", and the decision was made. He studied his site, then designed and planted the vineyard using close spacing and a syrah clone from the Rhone Valley.

In order for a vineyard to thrive in the hot summers of the Red Hills Lake County appellation it must have water, and with no streams or natural springs on the property a well needed to be dug. After a well-digging crew tried and failed to locate water, Bud used the ancient method called divining, passed down through generations in his family, to find the perfect location to drill. He walked the property with a Y-shaped branch until the tip of the branch pulled down strongly, indicating the exact spot that would become a high volume well.

Bud has a passion for his vines, and cares for them like they were his children. His viticultural practices are based on lessons he learned years ago from his family: study the land, listen to its needs and treat it with respect, and it will reward you with a superior product.