



HOW MANY HATS? BALANCING BEING WINEMAKER & OWNER WINERY OPERATIONS

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WINEMAKER & MANAGING PARTNER, BAKER FAMILY WINES
COLUMNIST, WINEMAKER MAGAZINE

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I JUST WANT TO MAKE WINE!

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WHERE DOES IT ALL START?

- With a dream...
 - To learn how to like wine
 - To make wine and make the wines I like to drink
 - To work for myself
 - To own my own winery...



LEARNING HOW TO MAKE WINE

- Started simple –
 - Five-gallon carboy of Zinfandel juice
 - Fermenting
 - Vibrant color
- Confusing at best
 - Where were the skins?
 - Why was it fermenting?
 - How did it get its color?

I NEEDED TO GO TO SCHOOL!

- MS Science Food Science and Technology
 - Thesis –Focused on Wine and Health
- Still needed to get some practical winemaking experience
- School did not prepare me for business though!
 - Specialized programs in wine business management
 - Sonoma State
 - UC Davis GSM and various extension programs

Experience of a lifetime!!!

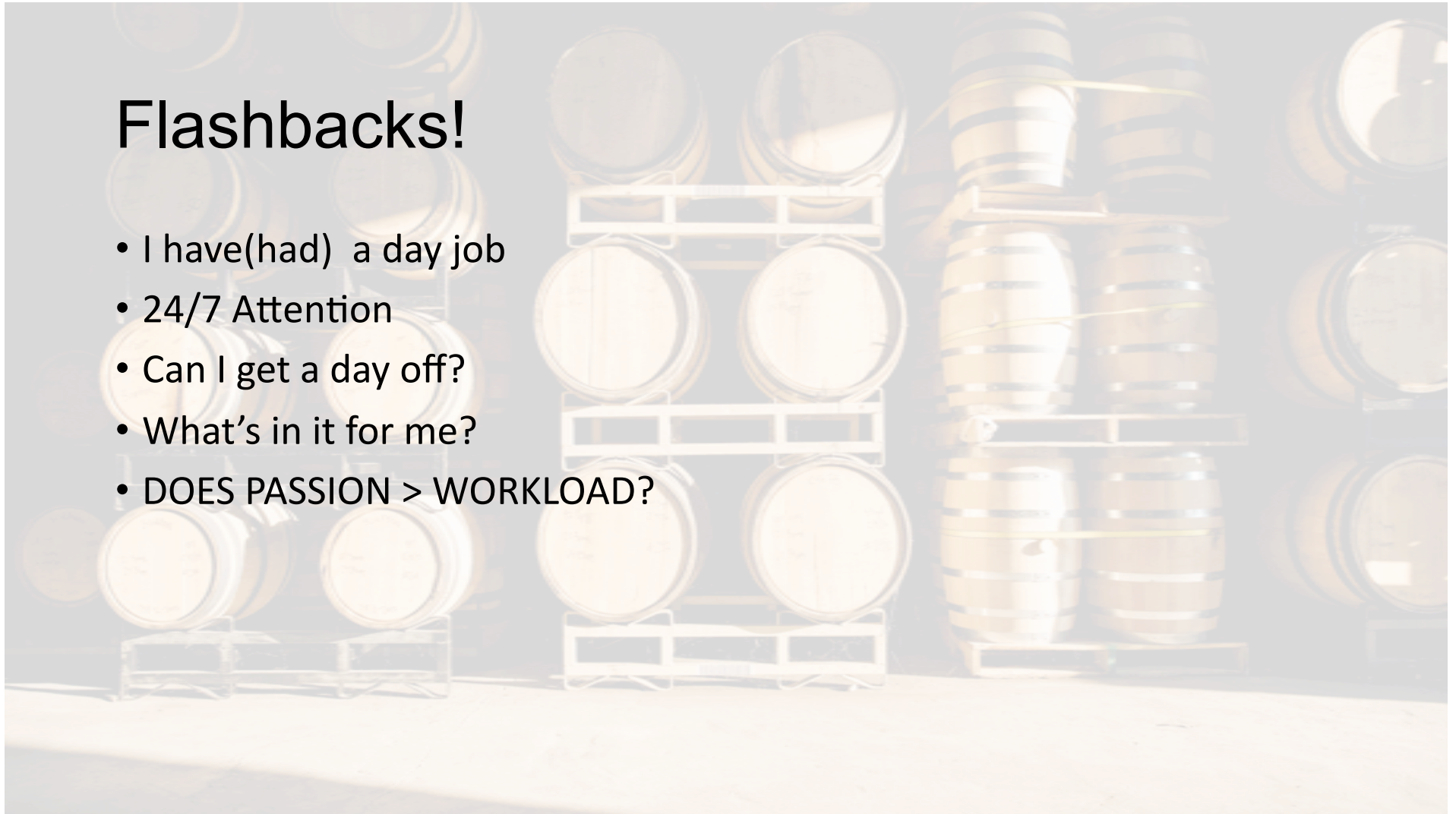
- Amador Foothill Winery - Reality!!!
 - Ma/Pa Team
 - Saw the roots of small winery operation
 - ~6000 Cases/Year
 - 24/7 Operations were the norm
 - Focused on all aspect of sales – DTC and distributorships

What did I learn?

- WOW!
- THAT'S A LOT OF WORK!
- DOES PASSION > WORKLOAD?
- Many years pass
- Eventually....
 - Dusty wanted a vineyard
 - Dusty wanted to form a company...No, No, No and maybe another no!

Flashbacks!

- I have(had) a day job
- 24/7 Attention
- Can I get a day off?
- What's in it for me?
- DOES PASSION > WORKLOAD?



And then we move on...

- Business Plan – San Francisco seemed like a good plan
- Location, Location, Location – until someone had an apparent better plan
- Permitting – Easy but tedious
 - Local
 - State
 - Federal
- Marketing Strategy
 - Finding the key people who share your dream...and not wanting to take advantage of your bank account!

Baker Family Wines Production

- 2013 - ~140 Cases
- 2014 - ~70 Cases
- 2015 - ~400 Cases
- 2016 - ~ 800 Cases
- 2017 - ~ 1000 Cases
- 2018 to Present – 1200 Cases



Baker Family Wines Production

- 2013 - ~140 Cases (San Francisco)
- 2014 - ~70 Cases (SF)
- 2015 - ~400 Cases (SF)
- 2016 - ~ 800 Cases (SF)
- 2017 - ~ 1000 Cases (SF)
- 2018 - ~1200 Cases SF → West Sacramento
- Presently – ~1200 Cases

Business Plan Revisited

- San Francisco seemed like a good plan – But the company grew!
 - Ninety miles each way!
 - ‘Day Jobs’ get in the way
 - Tenant – Landlord relationships
 - Contract Labor Availability
 - Loss of general control of operations - Cooperative has multiple calendars
 - Multiple days required to complete monthly tasks → Hotel/Meals etc!
 - Distance limited customer interaction

Business Plan ~~Revisited~~ **Revamped**

- ~~San Francisco~~ West Sacramento seemed like a ~~good~~ better plan – ~~But~~ and the company grew!
 - Ninety miles each way! **Reduced to 5 miles RT**
 - ‘Day Jobs’ get in the way **Retired**
 - Tenant – Landlord relationships **Eliminated**
 - Contract Labor Availability **Hired regular staff/EDD/WC Insurance**
 - Loss of general control of operations **Complete control**
 - Multiple days required to complete monthly tasks → Hotel/Meals etc! **Sleep in my own bed each night!**
 - Distance limited customer interaction – **not anymore!!!**

Business Plan Moving Forward

- Company has grown despite the challenges of Covid-19
- Partnered with neighboring brewery for joint tasting/taproom
- Social Media (IG/FB) based marketing
 - Expand on sales by increasing the advertising budget
- Engage in some exclusive wine production/promotion agreements
 - Local wine merchants – Custom labeling
 - Bulk wine sales
 - Continued success of our DTC sales through the TR
 - Wine Club
 - Outside endeavors – Partnering with AMA Waterways for Euro Wine cruises

...Other Duties As Assigned (Added Slide)

- Webmaster/IT Specialist
- Outside Sales
- Tasting Room Associate
- Point of Sale
- Media Relations
- Social Media Director
- Event Planner
- Laboratory Director
- Janitor
- Purchasing
- CFO
- Shipping Clerk
- Warehouse Person
- Compliance Officer
- Vineyard Worker

So what happened to the winemaking?

- Critical component to the success of the winery
- Make it happen with a strict attention to detail
 - Calendar
 - Bulk wine management
 - Topping schedules
 - Bottling timetables
 - Deliveries
 - Risk Management – Keeping ahead of problems – knowing what can be done tomorrow if necessary

So what happened to the winemaking?

- If you are small, then the right balance between winemaking and business operations can be achieved
- What is the definition of small?
 - Consider your personal situation
 - Day Job
 - Family
 - Recreation aka...
- Business growth is not a bad problem to have –‘attainable/sustainable’

Final Thoughts

- Pat H – Being a home winemaker allows you to focus on your passion
- Stuart S – The business really will not get the attention it needs until you get rid of the day job.
- Bob M – Follow your Dream
- Lori – Let your desire be greater than your obstacles
- Unknown – Your heart know the way, run in that direction
- Chik- Work/Life Balance is essential for success