



Dave Phinney

### THE ELUSIVE ORIN SWIFT

Who is Orin Swift? No one, says Orin Swift Cellars owner-winemaker Dave Phinney. "I made up the name to honor my parents by merging my father's middle and my mother's maiden names. They encouraged me to explore many interests before settling down and then to learn a career from the ground up."

Phinney took his parents' advice quite literally. Ten years ago, he started as a cellar worker on the night shift at Robert Mondavi Winery. After honing his craft, he served as winemaker at Bennett Lane and Whitehall Lane wineries.

Although Orin Swift wines were first released in 1999, Phinney began working full time on his 20,000 annual case production only a year ago. His biggest seller is the Prisoner, a Zinfandel field blend with a distinctive Goya-based etching as a label. The high-end Mercury Head brand is partially allocated to restaurants. The profits from his Veladora Sauvignon

Blanc are donated to Puertas Abiertas, a health-screening program for farm workers.

Phinney recently purchased 48 acres in the hills of Soda Canyon above Oakville, where he plans to plant vines and build a winery where he can increase production. But he plans to keep things simple, following another piece of advice from his parents. "If you have a good wine with a good package at a good price," says Phinney, "people will understand its value."

#### Where to Find Them

Freeman Winery, (707) 823-6937, [www.freemanwinery.com](http://www.freemanwinery.com)  
 Neiman Cellars, (707) 224-9923, [www.neimancellars.com](http://www.neimancellars.com)  
 Bridesmaid Wines, (707) 963-2705, [www.bridesmaidwines.com](http://www.bridesmaidwines.com)  
 Orin Swift Cellars, (707) 967-9179, [www.orinswift.com](http://www.orinswift.com)