

ELLMAN Estate Winery Appoints Michael Ploetz as General Manager

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The appointment follows a formative year that brought winemaking home to the estate and introduced The Studio tasting experience



As ELLMAN Estate Winery celebrates one year of welcoming guests to its Napa Valley estate, the family-owned winery on the Silverado Trail announces the appointment of Michael Ploetz as General Manager. The anniversary marks a formative year of hospitality, highlighted by the family bringing winemaking home to the estate and opening The Studio, its tasting space at the base of Soda Canyon in the shadow of Atlas Peak.

Founded by vintners Lance Ellman and Neil Ellman, the estate reflects the family's South African roots and long connection to Napa Valley. During early visits to the valley, the Ellmans saw parallels between Napa's two mountain ranges and the landscape of their native Stellenbosch. The family's 20-acre estate vineyard, rooted in an ancient riverbed of cobbled, well-drained soils, was planted in 1999 to the "Palmer" clone of Cabernet Sauvignon. In 2016, fruit from the vineyard became the foundation for the family's first estate wine.

In its first year welcoming guests, ELLMAN brought winemaking home to the estate after years at custom-crush facilities and opened The Studio, its tasting space within view of the vineyard that shapes the wines. Today, the estate farms, produces, and shares its wines from one place, fulfilling a long-held vision for the family.

"Our family came to Napa Valley to build something enduring and to bring generations of entrepreneurship into a more personal expression of hospitality," said Neil Ellman, proprietor. "Michael understands that vision. He brings the care and precision this estate deserves, and he shares our belief that a great winery is built on relationships as much as on the land."

Ploetz joined ELLMAN in early 2026 as Estate and Sales Director, working closely with longtime General Manager Justin Vazquez as the estate prepared for its continued evolution. He brings more than two decades of experience in luxury hospitality, including senior food and beverage leadership roles with The Peninsula Hotels and Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Ploetz also led operations and openings for the José Andrés Group in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. In Napa Valley, Ploetz has led direct-to-consumer and hospitality programs at estates associated with winemakers Michel Rolland, Philippe Melka, and Jennifer Williams. As General Manager, he oversees the estate's hospitality, membership, and continued growth.