

Ryan Hodgins
Winemaker, FEL Wines

Ryan Hodgins is winemaker for FEL Wines, which produces Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris from vineyards in the Anderson Valley and Sonoma Coast.

Raised in the Pacific Northwest, Hodgins attended Oberlin College in Ohio, where he often had conversations with his plant biology professor about winegrowing. Though he explored a few careers upon graduation, his interest in wine was piqued, and he soon relocated to California and enrolled in the Master's program at U.C. Davis and graduated with a degree in Viticulture & Enology. As a means of researching the topic for his thesis – Pinot Noir tannins in the Willamette Valley – Hodgins got his first hands-on vineyard experience while working harvest at Witness Tree Vineyard in Salem, Oregon. Upon graduation in 2004, he spent a year gaining experience in other regions at wineries such as Acacia Vineyard in Napa, where he served as harvest enologist, and Krishna Valley Winery in India, where he served as visiting winemaker.

In 2005, Hodgins returned to the United States and accepted a full-time position as assistant winemaker and viticulturist at Hanzell Vineyards, a role that helped hone his expertise in Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Sonoma. While at Hanzell, Hodgins also worked as the founding consulting winemaker for Breggo Cellars in the Anderson Valley. Cliff Lede's acquisition of Breggo Cellars (now FEL) in 2009 allowed Hodgins to become full-time winemaker. Lede purchased the Savoy Vineyard in 2011, a benchmark vineyard in the Anderson Valley, giving Hodgins access to his first estate vineyard.

Hodgins has a strong connection to the region and to his vineyards. He spends much of his time in the vineyards and exercises a hands-off approach in the winery, in favor of letting each vineyard and each block speak in the bottle. Both Hodgins and Cliff Lede share the same vision for FEL Wines: to create an exciting portfolio of wines that are complex and elegant with pronounced acidity and the ability to age well.

On the rare days that he is not in the winery or walking the vineyards, Hodgins spends time in the garden with his wife and three young children, feeding their appreciation for Mother Nature and agriculture.