

# BEST OF SHOW: DESSERT

## QUADY WINERY, 2022 ESSENSIA ORANGE MUSCAT DESSERT WINE

BY REBEKAH KRUM



**A**fter his graduation from UC Davis, Andy Quady and his wife Laurel emptied their savings to take a trip to France and enjoy the fine food and wine the country has to offer. At a lunch in Orange, they were served a dessert wine called Muscat Beaumes de Venise, which the locals were pouring over their cakes to enjoy. Though neither knew it at the time, this wine would inspire Andy when he began working on Quady Winery's orange muscat dessert wine, Essensia. They call it this because "it encapsulates the very essence of the orange muscat grape."

Essensia is a fortified dessert wine, meaning that alcohol is added to stop the fermentation process when the winemaker believes it is complete. This gives the wine a 15% ABV

(alcohol by volume) and a luxuriously thick texture from the remaining sugar that didn't ferment. Head Winemaker Darin Peterson describes orange muscat as "an uncommon varietal with aromas and flavors of spiced citrus, honeysuckle and stone fruit." Orange muscat grapes are an atypical choice for wine, but one that Quady made due to its outstanding compatibility with the bright, temperate climate of the San Joaquin Valley.

Quady Winery celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2025, stated to be "50 years of daring to be different, 50 years of pioneering sweet wines in the U.S." Quady began making wine in 1975 at the behest of his dear friend Darrell Corti, who encouraged Quady to break new ground in the California wine industry by producing a

quality vintage port with the promise to stock Quady's completed wine in his stores. This era was when Americans first began seeking domestic alternatives to classic wines. Quady noticed that there was a demand for dessert wine that was not being fulfilled and chose to take on the task himself.

Quady Winery's current Head Winemaker, Darin Peterson, began his career in 2001 and joined Quady Winery in the summer of 2005. After ten years he became a Winemaker, and he was then promoted to Head Winemaker in 2022. He says he is most inspired by the challenge of making wines. "The best wine that you and your team can make is always still out there. What Andrew and Laurel experienced in France, and how that later became Essensia, is a great story. My job is to continue to pay homage to that feeling of discovery and curiosity and to make something enjoyable that we can share with everyone."



## “IT ENCAPSULATES THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE ORANGE MUSCAT GRAPE.”

Other members of the Quady Winery team include fellow Winemaker Crystal Weaver-Keissling, Cellarmaster Juan Cuevas, and Bottling & Labeling Operations Manager Daniel Mejia. Mejia has worked with Quady Winery for 40 years, and though Cuevas has only been with Quady Winery for 5 years, he has 25 years of experience working in the wine industry overall.

Located in Madera, California, Quady Winery is open from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, and its tasting room is open from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily.

Pictured from left to right are: Winemaker Crystal Weaver-Keissling, Head Winemaker Darin Peterson, Owner and President Andrew Quady, Owner and CFO Laurel Quady.

