



*Wednesdays With Winemakers*  
*An Interview With James MacPhail By Ilona Thompson*  
*PalateExposure.com*

***Why did you become a winemaker?***

*James:* From an early age, wine always fascinated me – its history, the farming aspect, and the fact that you could make an agricultural product from the earth that brought joy to so many people. Always thought that was really cool. I did not ever expect to be where I am today, it just happened, with lots of hard work, sacrifice, and a bit of timing.

***If you weren't a winemaker what would you be and why?***

*James:* Professional baseball player. Making a living by going to the ballpark every day, and running out onto that green grass field to play baseball, I mean, what kid/adult wouldn't want to get paid doing that?!



James MacPhail

***What is your greatest strength as a vintner/winemaker?***

*James:* Attention to detail & the desire to learn more.

***What is your biggest weakness as a vintner/winemaker?***

*James:* The in-depth knowledge of veteran viticulturists.

***What's the one mistake you made in the cellar you would never repeat?***

*James:* Not hiring younger more able bodies to do more of the grunt work!

***What is your proudest achievement?***

*James:* Being the father to two beautiful, smart and fantastically fun daughters.

***What was your scariest vintage to date?***

*James:* I don't see any vintage as scary. I see them all as a gift from Mother Nature, and my job is to then execute the very best that I can. Vintage 2006 was my first "challenging" vintage – wet, cold, etc. – but I learned a lot from that vintage, and was able to apply everything I learned to vintage 2011. That's how I see challenging vintages working, you learn from one then you apply it to the next.

***What is your most prized possession?***

*James:* My sense of humor and ability to remain calm in crazy situations

***What's the oddest thing about you?***

*James:* Strange, random OCD

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**What song best sums you up?**

James: Bob Marley – Stir it Up

**What is your favorite memory?**

James: The birth of my two daughters.

**Which of the five senses is your strongest?**

James: Actually it is my sixth sense. As a winemaker, that is the game changer between a safe wine, a good



**What is your biggest motivation?**

James: To be the best.

**Which bottle of wine would choose to be stranded with on a deserted island?**

James: A slightly chilled bottle of a great vintage of white burgundy from a great producer.

**What is the difference between a good and great wine?**

James: All the components (acid, oak, alcohol, fruit, pH, RS, etc.) meld seamlessly together. A wine that displays its varietal characters from a sense of place with layers, depth, character, and shows soul. A wine that is not “perfect,” not pure and clean. Has style. You can taste all that.

**Name three individuals you would like to have dinner with.**

James: My wife. Michelangelo. Steve Jobs.

**Who is your winemaking hero?**

James: Didier Dagueneau. Taken from us way too early.

**What does the concept of "balance" mean to you?**

James: A wine whose sum of all parts are all harmoniously in sync. And yes, a wine that is 14.5% alcohol can still be a balanced wine!

**What is the one thing you want people to remember about your wines?**

James: That if they were stranded on a deserted island and had one Pinot to drink, it would be MacPhail.

**Best comment made about your wine? Was it by a consumer, trade or press?**

James: ONE of the best I've ever received was from a consumer: "Hands down the most food-friendly Pinot I have ever had. This is a wine any pinot geek should try. As a winemaker, I would call it "an epiphany". As a guy who really likes to eat and drink, I would call it 'delicious.'" ~ JB

Interview appeared July 22, 2015 as part of a series on the website [www.palateexposure.com](http://www.palateexposure.com)  
A destination site for a discerning consumer seeking the ultimate in wine, food and travel.  
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