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Erik Miller

Kokomo Winery
Dry Creek Valley

ERIK MILLER, OWNER and winemaker at Kokomo Winery in Healdsburg, didn't move to Sonoma to make wine.

From Kokomo, Indiana, he came here for the beauty and quality of life he discovered while visiting a friend. Miller relocated to Sonoma in 1999 and took the first job offered, a financial planning gig that required that he wear a suit and tie.

"It took two months to realize it wasn't for me," he said.

He made his way to wine, first working in production at Belvedere Winery outside Healdsburg (now VML Winery).

"Two weeks into harvest and I fell in love," Miller said.

His next position was at Amphora Winery, working for owner Rick Hutchinson, and in 2004, Miller started the Kokomo label. By 2008, he had partnered with Randy Peters, a fourth-generation farmer who has vineyards in Dry Creek Valley, Russian River Valley and the

Sonoma Coast, and the match proved fruitful for both.

Kokomo has two wines on the Top 100 — 2015 Pauline's Vineyard Dry Creek Valley Grenache Rosé and 2014 Winemaker's Reserve Peters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir. Miller has become a rosé whisperer of sorts, with his pale-pink wines winning competitions throughout the state. The Kokomo 2015 North Coast Rosé won Best of Class at the 2016 North Coast Wine Challenge, scoring an impressive 97 points.

"One thing that sets Kokomo apart is that we do a lot of varieties, all grown where they should be," Miller said. "I'm proud of the fruit farmed by Randy."

Zinfandel is a Miller favorite.

"It's important to us to showcase what we believe is California's grape, especially when it's grown and made in Dry Creek Valley, where we think is the best place to do so. It's food-friendly with natural acidity," he said.

