

**David Stansfield**, Sales manager, sommelier and self-proclaimed “cork dork,” Summerhill Pyramid Winery

Wine is something of a passion for David Stansfield, sales manager and sommelier at Kelowna, B.C.-based Summerhill Pyramid Winery. At 26, he says the reason he’s moved up the ranks is because of his welcoming, fun and unpretentious attitude – all characteristics the winery espouses. “There’s a lot of formality and tradition tied in with wine,” he says. “We try to push that aside.” The winery, which uses only organically grown grapes, is best known for its sparkling wines. Its Cipes Brut recently won Best Sparkling Wine at the Okanagan Spring Wine Festival. And in 2000, its Cipes Gabriel 1991 won a gold medal at the Chardonnay du Monde in Burgundy, France. The winery is also known for its bistro and pyramid-shaped cellar. Here, he talks about the opportunities, challenges and future for the B.C. wine industry.



David Stansfield

## Q&A

**What do you love most about your job?**

“Communicating Summerhill’s passion and talking about wine on a daily basis to as many people as possible. Convincing them they need to drink sparkling wine. Tasting world class wine every single day.”

**What is your management philosophy?**

“We work on a corporate flattening model as opposed to working in a hierarchical structure. We work as a team of equals. We have a president, a CEO and a tree of hierarchy that our staff goes by, but when we sit down to a meeting, it’s a dialogue.”

**What is the most challenging part of your job?**

“Multitasking. We’re a successful winery, but we operate as a small business so we each take on numerous tasks and wear several different hats.”

**How would you describe your operational or management style?**

“Leading by example. When I’m managing our wine shop, the best way to communicate to people our philosophy, how we want them to work and what style of service we want them to give, is by doing just that. We have a lot of young people working here and we try to let them know that they’re valued, that they represent the brand and so they’re as important to the winery as management is.”

**Where do you see the wine industry going?**

“B.C. just took over the number-2 spot for sales from Australia, so the B.C. wine industry will hold strong in the domestic market. On the international market it’s a ways off yet, but within the next 10 years B.C. will be a player on the international scene.”

**What are the issues your sector is facing?**

“Within B.C. it’s a lack of land, so we’re only able to create so much wine. For Summerhill it’s a lack of certified organic growers.”

**What about opportunities?**

“There’s a lot of opportunities in the B.C. wine industry for young people. It’s a young industry and the attitude is fresh and dynamic, creating a lot of opportunity for young people to get involved in wine making, viticulture, branding and marketing. For the B.C. wine industry, right now we’ve done well to conquer our own backyard. But we’re beginning to realize that the whole world of wine is much larger. I see the U.S. as the next big market for Canadian wine. It’s about to become the world’s number-1 importer of wine and I see us as having a unique position to provide certain wines to those markets. That said, due to the size of our growing area we can only provide certain products. B.C. isn’t going to be a bulk supplier; we’re not going to be supplying the Yellow Tails of the world. We’re going to be supplying high-end, ideally organically grown, crisp wines that are very much B.C., so there’s a lot of opportunity for us in the premium wine market.”

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**First job:** “Cellar hand at Summerhill.”

**Favourite food:** “Cipes Pinot Noir Brut.”

**Industry Mentor:** “Michael Bigatini. He trained me at Summerhill and has become probably Alberta’s best-known wine personality. He’s an incredibly knowledgeable guy. What I got from him was the passion to communicate that knowledge in an unpretentious and entertaining way – the style of service we give at Summerhill.”