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Robert Mondavi Winery ushers in a new era with Director Kurtis Ogasawara

Kurtis Ogasawara leads Robert Mondavi Winery

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Director of winemaking Kurtis Ogasawara captures the unique personalities of legendary vineyards.

In the world of winemaking, few names are as revered as Robert Mondavi Winery, a beacon of quality and innovation in Napa Valley. The recent appointment of Kurtis Ogasawara as Director of Winemaking marks a new chapter in the winery's storied

history, as it embraces a transformative period with both a winery and hospitality overhaul. Ogasawara, who stepped into his role in April 2023, is not just carrying forward the legacy of the winery but also propelling it into a future where sustainability and organic practices are at the forefront of luxury wine production.

Kurtis Ogasawara is no stranger to Robert Mondavi Winery, having joined the team as an assistant winemaker in 2015. Over the years, his contributions have been pivotal, particularly in the realm of sustainable farming. A significant milestone was achieved under his guidance in 2023, with the To Kalon Vineyard receiving organic certification. His current leadership team includes two winemakers and two enologists, reflecting a collaborative approach to winemaking that leverages diverse experiences and backgrounds.

The philosophy driving Ogasawara's vision is dual-focused: setting new benchmarks in quality and excellence while ensuring these standards are sustainable for future generations. This philosophy is deeply ingrained in the care of the vineyards, especially the illustrious To Kalon Vineyard in Oakville. Ogasawara emphasizes the unique personality of each block, aiming to fully express these characteristics through their wines. This approach is supported by the ongoing multi-year renovation of the winery and the To Kalon Fine Wine Cellar, which includes the installation of smaller tanks to facilitate the production of more single-plot wines.

Sustainability is not an afterthought at Robert Mondavi Winery. With over a decade of sustainable farming practices and recent organic certification, the team is committed to preserving their vineyards for future generations. This commitment is intertwined with their winemaking philosophy, as evidenced by Ogasawara's outlook on the 2023 vintage. He describes it as "killer", attributing its success to optimal weather conditions that led to a slow but complete ripening process, resulting in wines with exceptional freshness and fruit intensity.

The winery's commitment to excellence extends beyond the vineyards to its hospitality services. The newly opened Arch & Tower in downtown Napa offers an innovative approach to wine tasting in one of the valley's historic buildings. Additionally, the Highway 29 Visitor Center is undergoing renovations, set to reopen in 2025, offering

guests an immersive experience in the heart of the To Kalon Vineyard.

For Kurtis Ogasawara, each year is a canvas for innovation and evolution, a sentiment that resonates with his ambitious plans for the winery. As he steps into the shoes of his predecessors, Ogasawara is not only a part of Napa Valley's winemaking legacy but is also setting the stage for its future. His approach blends respect for tradition with a forward-thinking vision, ensuring that Robert Mondavi Winery remains a pillar of excellence in the global wine community.