

Flying Otter Winery FAQs

1. Where did you get your name?

The Flying part is simple; it's a reflection of my interest in aviation and the fact that I'm building my own airplane. The otter part comes from my last name, Utter. My oldest known ancestor, Nicholas Mattson Utter was the first "Utter" in America. He came to the New Sweden Colony aboard the ship Orn in 1654. Prior to 1901, Swedish people used what is called Patronymics, a system by which children are known as the son of a certain individual. An example would be Nils, the son of Anders would be known as Nils Anderson, while Nils' son Peter would be Peter Nilson. This created problems in large military units where people had the same first and last names. Many of these soldiers were given military surnames when entering the service as may have happened with Nicholas Mattson Utter. Various techniques were used to assign these names, including the use of animals. Utter is Swedish for Otter.

2. How long have you been here?

(My usual answer to this question is "since about noon") We moved to Adrian and bought this property in 1996, started the vineyard in 2005 and started the winery in 2010.

3. What made you decide to get into the wine business?

Bob has had a (nearly) lifelong love of wine. He dabbled in winemaking throughout his life, improving his techniques along the way through self-education and trial and error. He got serious about viticulture and winemaking in about 2004 and started taking classes from VESTA, a national grape and wine education program.

4. How many vines do you have? Around 5-6,000.

5. What varieties of grapes do you grow?

We grow all cold climate hardy varieties. The reds are Frontenac, Marquette, Petite Pearl, and trial sections of Sabre Vois, St. Croix, and Norton. The whites are Frontenac Gris, LaCrosse, LaCrescent, St. Pepin, Brianna, and Frontenac Blanc.

6. How much wine do you make?

It depends on what your definition of "make" is. (And I'm NOT a politician) In 2014 we produced by fermentation ~1135 gallons of wine. We bottled around 1535 gallons of wine. This is about 7675 bottles, or 640 cases. The bottling and production figures don't always match because some wines take longer than a year to be properly aged and ready for bottling so our stock in the aging process varies.

7. How long have you been making wine?

Bob had made wine throughout his life, but we started making wine commercially in 2010.

8. How did you learn how to do this?

Bob is an engineer so he enjoys technical learning. He reads textbooks on the beach. He started out learning by reading books, visiting internet focus groups, and attending conferences. He added VESTA classes and has taken most of their course offerings.

9. How long does it take to make wine?

Whites are pressed right after picking. Reds are fermented on the skins and must be pressed after fermentation. The fermentation process takes 1-3 weeks. After that the process of racking, filtering, fining, aging, and all cellar treatments can take anywhere from 6 months to years. Whites are usually ready sooner than reds.

10. So, are you retired?

If by retired you mean working over 60 hours a week (each) for three business, then yes.

11. Do you visit wineries in your spare time?

What is this "spare time" of which you speak? (We do whenever we get a chance – it is always fun to visit wineries.)