

AMAEL ORREGO

Winemaker, Benton-Lane

Amael's story as a winemaker comes full circle at Benton-Lane Winery. He grew up in the countryside outside of Santiago, Chile—where wine had a regular place at the dinner table—and earned a degree as an agricultural engineer specializing in oenology and viticulture. Chasing a fascination with both the science of farming and the creativity of winemaking in his early career, he cold-called Chilean wine industry legend, Agustin Huneus. That conversation would shape his professional trajectory.

Amael was invited to work a harvest at Flowers on the Sonoma Coast, then returned the following summer to intern at Quintessa. This experience led to a position as assistant winemaker for Emiliana Vineyards in Chile, before becoming head winemaker for Kingston Family Vineyards, also in Chile, in 2015. He oversaw all winemaking and production operations for 7,000 cases annually, specializing in single-vineyard pinot noir and chardonnay. His work earned him Young Winemaker of the Year awards from La Cav and Tim Atkin, both in 2022.

When Amael was offered the position of winemaker at Benton Lane in late 2022, it felt like destiny. Not just because of his deeply rooted relationship with Huneus Vintners—he had also met Sofia Araya, the woman who would become his wife, through his Flowers internship—but because of his longstanding love of the pure and noble character of pinot noir and chardonnay. For Amael, joining a classic brand like Benton-Lane is a dream come true, one that has gratefully brought him to Oregon's Willamette Valley to work with his favorite varieties, while helping to bring this dynamic and biodiverse vineyard to its fullest potential and truest expression.