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Randle G. Johnson Biography

**Randle G. Johnson, Winemaker and co-owner, Calafia Cellars
Winegrower, Artezin Wines, and Director of Winemaking, Bodega Colomé,
Argentina**

A native Californian, Randle attended the University of California at Davies, graduating with a M. S. in Viticulture in 1974. As a viticulturist of the original Souveraine Winery in Rutherford, he gained first-hand knowledge of grape and wine characteristics produced by the differing micro-climates throughout the Napa Valley. In 1975 he became the assistant to Souveraine's winemaker, Phil Baxter.

In 1977, Randle became the vineyard manager and cellar master for Mayacamus Vineyards, located at 2,000 on Mount Veeder in the western hills of Napa Valley. This experience fostered an interest in the unique attributes of mountain grapes. He had found his professional "home". His passion and enthusiasm for Mt. Veeder inspired him to make his own wines from this intense fruit. Thus, in 1979, Randle began Calafia Cellars, in parallel with his professional career.

In 1983, after two years as the first winemaker at Stags' Leap Winery, Randle joined the winegrowing project of Donald Hess as winemaker and was asked to produce elegant wines from Mount Veeder, then known for big, tannic red wines. Pioneering the use of piegage, or cap punching, on mountain Bordeaux varietals, the mission was accomplished. The wines were noted for their complexity, depth, structure, and round, supple tannin profiles.

In the meantime, Calafia was specializing in small lot wines from both sides of Mt. Veeder. Randle produced Cabernet, Merlot, and Zinfandel from both the

southeastern slopes (Napa) and the western exposures (Sonoma) from Mt. Veeder, and also Sauvignon Blanc from Rutherford. He combined his mountain experience with cutting-edge techniques to produce wines that met with acclaim. He was once dubbed "god of Zinfandel" in 1982 by "Berkeley's Trumpetvine Wines, and still receives teasing remarks from old Zinophiles! After joining The Hess Collection, Randle focused Calafia on the traditional Bordeaux varietals as well as the emerging varieties in California of Malbec and Petit Verdot.

In 1996, the vision and passion went global to South Africa, Chile and Argentina with the establishment of Hess Family of Fine Wines. Randle did consultation at Mont Gras Winery in Chile, and also consulted with Bodega Norton of Argentina to help create a French oak barrel program and designed a major winery addition.

In 2001 Hess purchased Bodega Colomé in northern Argentina with Randle becoming the Director of Winemaking. He spends ten weeks a year at Colomé, working with vineyards ranging from 5500 to 9850 feet in elevation. Experience from Mt. Veeder has certainly been applicable!

In 2004, Hess created a new brand, Artezín, dedicated to the heritage varietals of California, and appointed Randle as winegrower and winemaker. Artezín currently produces Zinfandel, Carignan, Charbono, and Petite Sirah. Randle has returned to his Calafia Zinfandel roots.

Currently, Calafia is focusing on red Bordeaux blends, which Randle and co-owner MaryLee Johnson passionately believe will be a strong market category in the very near future.

In addition to Calafia, Randle currently concentrates his efforts on Artezín Wines, Bodega Colomé in Argentina, and is the senior member of the winemaking team at The Hess Collection Winery.

Calafia Cellars 629 Fulton Lane St. Helena, California 94574 Phone 707 963-0114

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