



# slocity taste

## Ten Questions with Lynn Diehl

Doug Timewell — Toucan Wines

In the Arroyo Grande Valley AVA along the foothills of the Huasna Valley, you'll find Toucan Wines. It's where Doug Timewell and Terrie Leivers produce ultra-premium estate Zinfandels and Petite Sirah. Doug sat down with Lynn Diehl this week to answer Ten Questions.

**It's truly Fall in the Huasna Valley. You've already had frost out here?** Yes. We had three nights where the winery was covered in frost. Terrie's garden was wiped out. It's the lowest section of the property. So, her tomatoes are gone and the peppers. The upside of frost is that it affects the yellow jackets. It starts to kill them and kills the fruit flies, too, which are always a pain. We get nests of yellow jackets all around the property. This was one of the worst on my record. They come and attack the fruit.

**So, yellow jackets have good taste, they like grapes?** They love grapes. They start loving protein to develop. We put out traps during the year trying to catch the queens and trying to stop the development of the underground nests. Later in the year they're looking for sugar and grapes are a great source.

**Do you have almost all of your grapes picked now?** We're only a three and a half acre vineyard so we'll pick about six to six and a half tons of estate vineyard fruit and we've got most of it in.

**You began by being a home winemaker didn't you?** Yes, I started in 1992. Terrie and I made our first wine from the Lytton Springs Vineyard in Sonoma County, although it didn't turn out very well. We also made wine that year from the Montebello Vineyard in Cupertino. After that, in 1993, we started making wine from fruit from the Benito Dusi Ranch. Ever since then, up to 2002, we've continue to develop our relationship with Benito.

**When did you move to the Central Coast?** We moved here from Cupertino. Terrie went to school in Santa Barbara. I was born in Santa Barbara, so we're Central Coast native in a sense. We bought here about twelve years ago. We planted the vineyard in three phases beginning about ten years ago and we started working on the vineyard immediately. We were working full time and we'd come down here on the weekends and



put in the infrastructure. We moved here permanently about eight years ago. I had been in corporate sales and marketing for 25 years; now I'm a winemaker fulltime.

**So, it wasn't retirement, but a career change?** I wasn't really looking at being in the wine business as a career. It was more of an extension of the home winemaking that we did and just wanting to continue to have fun on our new property. As the volume grew a little bit from the first release in '04 of a hundred cases to 300 cases in '05 it became more serious.

**It must help in the marketing of your wine that you have sales and marketing background? People find that once you produce wine, you have to sell it.** Everybody has a comfort or discomfort level with some aspect of business and because small businesses, in particular the wine industry, requires some sales and marketing that's something I'm comfortable with. We are fortunate to have Lunds in the Arroyo Grande Village as a place where I pour wine on Saturdays. We don't have winery tours. We are way out here on Huasna Road – nine miles way out here from the Village of Arroyo Grande. I love it out here. We were driving out last night and there were six deer by the gate – probably just waiting for us to leave, I imagine.

**What do you see for Toucan Wines ten years from now? Will you add any other varietals? Will you be larger and have a larger case production?** I suspect we're going to stay the same size. I'm not sure I can see five to ten years out, but

at five years I imagine we'll be the same. We do the estate Zinfandel and estate Petite Sirah and that is about three hundred case of wine; we're doing our port style Toucanet, a dessert wine, and I cannot imagine, other than the occasional vineyard, doing more than 400 cases of wine. It's just not what I want to do. I didn't get into this for a new career. I just wanted to have fun and, hopefully, get it to pay for itself.

**You talked about your relationship with Mr. Dusi – what has he taught you about winemaking and life in general?** The relationship is very important to me. He's like an adopted uncle. He has plenty of family, but I consider myself a friend. I talk to him all the time. In part, what I've taken away from Benito is just the idea of farming. I think he is my mentor in establishing the benchmark for what a farmer should be and his came from his father. If I should farm Zinfandel it should be head trained – the way it's been done for hundreds of years using cuttings that were the original clones that came into the country. So, I took my cuttings from the original 1923 planting of the Dusi Vineyard and I've tried to grow a vineyard that will one day look like it's been here for an awful long time.

**Have you had a chance to pass the philosophy along to anyone else?** I have and I'm excited about that. I've been able to pass it along in bits and pieces. Recently, we had a volunteer and friend who also bought a small piece of property and wanted to do head trained vines and couldn't find any information on developing such a vineyard because they're just not planted anymore. She came out and volunteered at harvest. We spent a lot of time, dozens of emails back and forth trying to fuel her quest about what to do and the timing to do it. I felt good about it. ♣



Lynn Diehl is the owner and host of Wine Region News Weekend TV-Sundays at 5 p.m. on KCOY CBS-12. The print version of "Ten Questions" may be edited for space considerations. The expanded podcast is available online at [www.wineregion-news.com](http://www.wineregion-news.com).



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