



Meet Brittany Bagley, owner of Bagley's Poplar Ridge Vineyards

Describe your business:

Bagley's Poplar Ridge Vineyards is a farm winery, founded in 1980 by my dad. We currently manage approximately 20 acres of various wine grapes, and everything is planted for a purpose, to be used for specific wines. At Bagley's we make it, grow it, and produce everything right at the winery, and can therefore be referred to as an "estate winery".

Tell us your story:

While I grew up spending most summers at the winery, and oftentimes helping out, it was the unfortunate passing of my father in 2008 when I abruptly became fully responsible for the entire operation. Since then, I've just been trying hard to improve everything that is here slowly, piece by piece. My dad had been winemaking for other wineries for years, with Bully Hill Vineyards and Wagner Vineyards, when in the late 70s he decided to start out on his own, making Bagley's one of the oldest wineries on Seneca Lake. My dad was rebellious, marched to the beat of his own drum, and didn't necessarily participate in large marketing initiatives. Instead, dad focused on making great wine, and a warm, welcoming tasting room. I grew up helping out at the winery in the summers in the vineyards and the tasting room, and loved it. I loved talking to the customers, being around people and sharing a good experience.

What has helped you succeed and gain experience:

Through the process of just trying to improve, making the tasting rooms, wines, and vineyards better each and every year has been key to helping the winery succeed, with me gaining more experience each season. Even with only small improvements, it adds up over time. I enjoy being an alternate, different experience on the wine trail, as our tasting room has a different feel than many other tasting rooms. I love the region and area and promoting the Finger Lakes and what we've been working towards for 40 years now, and finally seeing so many wineries succeed is pretty awesome.

What inspires you:

Seeing the business flourish, trying to take it from what it was, to something better, even with small steps, are all inspirational experiences for me. I also love hearing good customer feedback, reminding me that the little steps I've been taking the past 10+ years has yielded positive results.

What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges:

The overall running of the business definitely keeps me up at night, if the grape crop will be ok this season, if the next wine festival will yield enough sales, trying to find staffing and hoping they can provide the experience I want my customer to receive and taking risks that I'm not sure how they're going to work out, like our recent tasting room expansion. All of those concerns and more keep me up at night, and are challenging for me. But I definitely sleep better now than I did a few years ago. Allocation of money and resources is a constant source of concern, as we consider expanding the tasting room again and start running larger events, I'm oftentimes worried, not knowing if such decisions will be a net financial positive decision, or not. It is a tricky thing, balancing expansion versus funding.

We have seen many new wineries and breweries over the last ten years. I am concerned about keeping up in a market that has become very saturated. I am also worried about keeping up with new trends in the wine industry, when we can sometimes barely keep up with what we are currently doing. As in canned wine (trending products), specialty tours, and events. It is difficult for a small winery with few employees to keep up with what the experience-driven customer desires.

What is your favorite local activity:

I love the local food and visiting all the different regional wineries and breweries. I also enjoy hiking through our many beautiful gullies, being on the lake, and am lucky to live in a good community where there are so many fun, good people to spend time with. A community that cherishes the local beauty and encourages local businesses to succeed is a constant source of appreciation, and even joy, for me.

Is there anything else we should know about you:

I love to travel, and explore different areas and cities and cultures. I love spending time with my dog Willy; he's pretty awesome. My husband and I both enjoy doing work on our house and other projects. Other than that, I don't have a ton of hobbies, because I'm always pretty busy with the winery and vineyards!

Bagley's Poplar Ridge Vineyards

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