

‘You Never Give Expecting to Get Something in Return,’ Says Eugenia Keegan, Wine Executive of the Year | Wine Enthusiast’s 2021 Wine Star Awards

BY [STACY BRISCOE](#)



EUGENIA KEEGAN / PHOTO BY CAROLYN WELLS-KRAMER

“I joke that I’ve worked my whole career for this job,” says Eugenia Keegan, vice president of Oregon winery operations and business development for [Jackson Family Wines](#) (JFW).

The nuts and bolts of her job, Keegan says, is overseeing all the wine production for the company’s six Oregon-based brands. But anyone who knows Keegan knows nothing she does is just nuts and bolts.

The two facets Keegan loves about her work are team building and community service—both skills she discovered, honed and perfected early in her career.

“When I look back at my career starting in the early 1980s, I was already involved in planning and public service,” she says. “I have to complement Bouchaine, where I was CEO and president. They encouraged me to be a part of the community.”

During those early days in Napa and Sonoma, Keegan developed her love for both the philanthropic and the policy-oriented sides of community service.

“You get to be involved in policy without the politics,” says Keegan. “You work with like-minded colleagues, whether in your own industry or the broader community, to solve real problems.”

Keegan brought these ethics with her to JFW.

“When we started up here in 2012 and 2013, there were only two employees,” says Keegan. “Now, we have a team of 80 people, including growers, DTC and marketing. So, I really got to build a team from scratch.”

She comments there was an initial “bit of suspicion” when JFW first entered Oregon territory.

“People didn’t realize that JFW has boutique estates around the world and try to make the finest wines of place,” she says. “That’s really where the Jackson family is headed. Most acquisitions are in smaller, high-end properties.”

In the spirit of “the finest wines of place,” JFW encouraged Keegan to pursue her passion for local community service. Today, Keegan is education committee chair on the Oregon Wine Board as well as director- and chair emeritus, and previously served as a board member for the Oregon Winegrowers Association and the Willamette Valley Wineries Association.

“Something I’m involved in here that I had not done in California is education,” says Keegan, who also serves on both the Chemeketa Wine Advisory Committee and the Linfield Wine Education Advisory Council.

“Being involved on an academic level and with the curriculum has been really fun,” she says. “Particularly at Chemeketa Community College, where they’re hands on with those who may not be going on to a four-year college, but need trade learning, or for older students coming into wine who need transitional education.”

About being named Wine Executive of the Year, Keegan says, “it’s about the fact that people have noticed that for 45 years I’ve been doing this. It makes me even more happy that I thought community service had value—you never give expecting to get something in return.”