

Aaron Lieberman, Winegrower Iris Vineyards

Altruism meets Diversity through Contributions and Leadership in Willamette Valley

Aaron's altruism and interest in the Oregon wine industry started in 1990 while studying soil science at Oregon State University. Several grad students in his program had been in the Peace Corps and his father's younger brother, Sam, was among the very first Peace Corps Volunteers to serve in Morocco. These people were his inspiration to join and to serve. After graduation, Aaron spent three years in **Guatemala with the Peace Corps**. There he taught subsistence farmers how to improve crop yields through plant and seed selection as well as working extensively on improving corn and bean storage techniques for these same farmers.

Since Peace Corps in Guatemala, Aaron worked five years as a grower and vineyard manager, mostly with native Spanish speaking crews. He has continued to be involved with the **Latino community** in Oregon through his many friendships and, at times, through educational opportunities. For example, Aaron worked with **Chemeketa Community College** to translate course materials for their class on "Agricultural Supervisor Training". He then taught the Spanish language version of those classes.

In 1996, Aaron landed a job at Amity Vineyards. He subsequently worked in Viticulture at several other notable vineyards in the Willamette Valley in both development and management roles. In 2001 Aaron began working in commercial wine making starting with a harvest at De Ponte Cellars in the Dundee Hills under Winemaker Isabelle Dutartre. In 2002 he began making wine for his own label while working at Walnut City Wineworks. Aaron accepted the assistant winemaker position at Owen Roe in the spring of 2003 where he worked with David O'Reilly through the 2007 vintage.

Aaron became the first winemaker at [Iris Vineyards](#) in the spring of 2008, for his first and only gig as head winemaker. Having completed his sixteenth vintage at Iris, Aaron has a well-developed knowledge of the estate vineyard where he crafts Pinot noir in all its forms from super premium sparkling Blanc de noirs to rosé and still red wine.

Currently, he is very involved with the Oregon wine industry as a whole, primarily through the **Willamette Valley Wineries Association (WVWA)**. In 2019, Iris Vineyards was approved to participate in **Oregon Pinot Camp (OPC)**, and Aaron was asked to be on the steering committee for a three-year term. Because of his membership on the OPC steering committee, Aaron volunteered to be on the **WVWA Diversity, Equity, Belonging and Inclusion (DEBI) Taskforce** starting late in 2021, as well as the **WVWA Board of Directors**. His term started in January 2023.

His interest in the DEBI Taskforce stems not only from his experiences with the Latino community, but also because he proudly identifies as gay and, sometimes, queer. Over the years he has participated, supported and contributed to various **LGBTQ and BIPOC** events. The DEBI Taskforce facilitates Aaron's contributions to these marginalized communities.

Wine Industry Network just recognized Aaron as a "[Most Inspiring Person](#)" of 2024.

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