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## Krause brings it all home at Cinder Wines

By Andy Perdue and Eric Degerman

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Melanie Krause, Winemaker/Owner of Cinder Winery is pictured with her daughter Charli Schnerr (age 1 1/2) in a tasting room in Garden City that the company shares with two other wineries. Friday October 18, 2013 KYLE GREEN — [kgreen@idahostatesman.com](mailto:kgreen@idahostatesman.com)





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## • Visit the wineries

### THE URBAN WINEMAKERS COOPERATIVE

107 E. 44th St.

Garden City, ID 83714

Melanie Krause and Joe Schnerr began leasing a portion of the former Quality Produce packing and storage warehouse in 2008 to create a shared winemaking space. The occupants today include:

### CINDER WINES/KRAUSE FAMILY CELLARS

(208) 376-4023, [cinderwines.com](http://cinderwines.com)

Hours: Daily 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Winemaker: Melanie Krause

Wines produced: Chardonnay, Tempranillo, Syrah, red blends, rose, dry Viognier, off-dry Viognier, white blend.

First commercial vintage: 2006

Pressings: The 2012 off-dry Viognier earned gold at the 2013 Northwest Wine Summit.

### COILED WINES

(707) 480-4919, [coiledwines.com](http://coiledwines.com)

Hours: Saturday noon-6 p.m.

Winemaker: Leslie Preston

Wines produced: Syrah, red blend, Riesling.

First commercial vintage: 2008

Pressings: Preston worked at the renowned Stag's Leap Winery in the Napa Valley and Clos du Bois in Sonoma before deciding to raise her family in her native Idaho. Her 2012 Dry Riesling earned Best of Show and double gold at the 2013 Idaho Wine Competition.

TELAYA WINE CO.

(208) 557-9463, [telayawine.com](http://telayawine.com)

Hours: Friday-Saturday noon-6 p.m.

Winemaker: Carrie and Earl Sullivan

First commercial vintage: 2008

Wines produced: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, red blend, Viognier.

Pressings: The 2009 Syrah earned a gold at the Great Northwest Wine Competition, and the 2009 Turas red wine grabbed gold at the Sunset Magazine International Wine Competition. This summer, the 2010 Syrah was named Wine of the Week by Wine Press Northwest magazine.

HOUSE OF WINE

(208) 297-9463, [thehowofwine.com](http://thehowofwine.com)

Hours: Friday-Saturday noon-5 p.m.

Winemaker: Kathryn House

She handles lab work for 10 Idaho wineries and consults for Fraser Vineyard and Telaya. Known throughout the industry as "Kat," she married a Boise native and began her consultant business in 2010 after spending several years as assistant winemaker at famed Betz Family Cellars in Woodinville, Wash., and educator at South Seattle Community College's Northwest Wine Academy. The Washington State University grad also stages a variety of seminars for wine consumers at the winemakers cooperative and throughout the Treasure Valley.

## • Thanksgiving weekend tastings

Many Snake River Valley wineries will offer barrel and bottle tastings, food, tours, music and discounts over the long Thanksgiving weekend. For example, Cinder, Coiled and Telaya's combined Nov. 29-Dec. 1 barrel tasting includes live music and food trucks. Ste. Chapelle's annual Nov. 29-30 open house features live music and harvest chili and cornbread. Indian Creek Winery's Nov. 29-Dec. 1 event features different local artisans each day. For more winery news, Thanksgiving weekend event information, costs and directions, visit [idahowines.org](http://idahowines.org).

As a child, Melanie Krause unknowingly sowed the seeds for the rest of her life as she helped her parents tend the family garden in Boise.

Now, it's the winemaker's own daughter who provides a healthy perspective and makes a grown-up work space — Cinder Wines in Garden City — a better place.

"We've set up a kids room and nursery in two spare offices," Krause said of the Urban Winemakers

Cooperative that includes Coiled Wines and Telaya Wine Co. “My daughter, Charli, spends one day each week with us at the winery. The other winery owners and Kat House, owner of House of Wine, all have kids, as do several of our employees.

“We see other kids down at the winery at least once a week,” Krause continued. “What I find really fascinating is how wonderful it is for all the adults when any of the kids are there. They seem to inject a huge dose of cheer into the work environment, bringing smiles to everyone’s faces.”

Krause, 36, describes it as “a real revelation.”

The same could be said for her influence on the Treasure Valley since her homecoming in 2006.

“Cinder has had a tremendous impact on the Idaho wine industry,” said Moya Dolsby, executive director of the Idaho Wine Commission. “They are truly leaders. They are setting an excellent example of how, if a winery works hard to make good wine and goes out there to sell it, then success can be had.”

This fall, Cinder received acclaim in famed British writer Hugh Johnson’s annual “Pocket Wine Book,” a scouting report that read a “breakout Idaho winery making small amounts of marvelous Viognier, a unique Mourvedre/Tempranillo blend and very good Syrah.”

Johnson’s three-star rating for Cinder places it on par with many of Washington state’s top wineries. No other Idaho winery received as many stars.

“The reception has gotten better and better the whole time,” Krause said. “What started as a trickle has become a stream. It was certainly difficult to sell my wine the first year I went around, and now it’s just so easy. The first year, I had to bang down people’s doors and force my wine down their throat because they weren’t enthused with Idaho wine.

“Now that sense has totally turned around. We have people calling, ‘Hey, I need an Idaho wine on my menu.’ That never happened two years ago. The momentum is really exciting. It’s been building the last couple of years, and this last summer, our company and other Idaho wineries have had an incredible increase in sales.”

She gives much of the credit to the five years of training she received while working at Chateau Ste. Michelle in Paterson, Wash. And that might not have happened were it not for Joe Schnerr, whom she met while both were students at Washington State University.

“When I got out, I had a general biology degree and a Spanish degree and had agriculture in mind,” she said. “My husband, Joe — my boyfriend at the time — moved to Umatilla, Ore., to run a chemistry lab there. I thought, ‘Umatilla. That’s going to be the end of our relationship!’ But I looked around and realized right across the river are all the Washington vineyards. I thought, ‘That would be fabulous. I’ve got a good background for that.’ ”

Those years in her parents’ garden, her language skills and the research in WSU’s winter wheat lab made Krause an easy hire for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates in 2001. She spent two seasons as a vineyard technician before moving into the winery as an enologist. In time, she was promoted to an assistant winemaking position, working at the Canoe Ridge red wine production facility alongside future Columbia Crest winemaker Juan Munoz-Oca. Her supervisors were Ron Bunnell, now at his eponymous winery in Prosser, Wash., and Chateau Ste. Michelle winemaker Bob Bertheau.

“They were fantastic with the education they gave me,” Krause said. “I remain in touch with both Ron and Bob. They were great mentors, and they really helped me out.”

In hindsight, there’s little doubt that Krause’s winemaking talents and Schnerr’s business management would have worked in Walla Walla, where she would have been a bigger star at an earlier stage. Launching their winery in Hood River, Ore. — a recreation-minded community — was another option, but Krause believed in the Snake River Valley.

“The whole time I was working in Washington I was coming back to Idaho and exploring the vineyards and

tasting the wines and thinking, ‘Hmm, this place has a ton of potential,’ ” she said. “When my husband and I decided to start our own winery, we chose Boise, first for the climate and the idea we could make world-class wines here, and second for the business climate, and third, it’s an amazing place to live.”

Plans fell into place when they came upon a former fruit and vegetable processing warehouse in Garden City. Their business model didn’t necessarily include planting vines in wine country, and many of their personal ties are in Boise.

“That’s been a critical piece of luck — to find this building to lease,” Krause said. “There are huge marketing implications to being close to population.”

It also fit nicely into their lifestyle.

“Pre-Charli, I did bike to work frequently,” she said with a smile. “It’s about 20 minutes from our house along the Greenbelt”

Earlier this year, the other half of the warehouse became available, which allowed Krause and Schnerr to expand, remodel and also create a remarkable urban winery experience similar to those in Portland that are gaining national acclaim. The rolling garage doors have even turned Garden City into a summer night spot.

“We’ve been holding some events and wedding receptions, and people will come by on their way home from work — every day of the week — and we sell them wine,” she said. “They seem to enjoy the atmosphere, and that’s been a real boon to our business.”

Perhaps it’s not surprising that critical acclaim for Krause’s wines came before Boise truly embraced them. The 2006 Syrah from her first commercial vintage received Wine Press Northwest’s top rating of “Outstanding!” and Cinder earned the regional magazine’s Idaho Winery to Watch award in 2009. That same year, Wine Business Monthly named Cinder one of its “Hot Small Brands of North America.”

Last year, Wine Press Northwest selected Cinder as the Idaho Winery of the Year.

“Most of my experience in Washington has translated pretty easily here, and it’s fun to be in a cutting-edge region,” Krause said. “We’ve got a fairly big population here in Boise that didn’t have an indigenous wine industry, so we’ve had a great reception and sell a really high percentage of our wine right out of the door.”

The promise of continued success opened the door of opportunity wider for Schnerr, who was a chemist at Micron Technology. Their teamwork allowed Cinder to grow production from 1,000 cases to 4,000 cases a year, which doesn’t include the winemaking Krause does for Huston Vineyards in Caldwell or the time spent checking on the wines for Coiled and Telaya.

“Somewhere between where we’re at now and 10,000 cases, we’ll find a sweet spot,” Krause said. “That gives us pretty good margin, and we won’t have to distribute so widely that we’re constantly on the road while maximizing the productivity of this space. We’ve built it into a comfortable company where we have enough employees that we can step back and take a vacation once in a while.”

The growth not only means success but also the opportunity to get back some family time. “I don’t want to work stupid hours anymore, and I’m more conscious of delegating,” Krause said.

“We have a pretty cool working environment at the winery, but the difference that the kids make reveals to me how focused — and a little grim — the adults get when they are at work,” Krause said. “Being able to create a workplace where kids are welcome is one of the most rewarding parts of owning my business.”

More help is on the way. Melanie and Joe are expecting that the 2014 vintage will produce a baby brother for Charli.

Andy Perdue and Eric Degerman run Great Northwest Wine, a news and information website. Learn more about wine and see more of their stories at [GreatNorthwestWine.com](http://GreatNorthwestWine.com).

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