

## Biography of James Hopper

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Director of Viticulture for Mission Hill Family Estate



Photo by: James O'Mara and Kate Ryan

An Australian native of Wodonga, a small town in Victoria, James Hopper has been with Mission Hill Family Estate since 2006. Hopper was an early adopter of the BC Wine Grape Council's "BC Sustainable Winegrowing Program" created in 2011. As the current Vice Chair of the Council, he is a big believer in sharing research information and education with a broader audience to raise the stature of wine quality throughout the Okanagan Valley.

Originally, Hopper earned a Metallurgical Engineering degree before receiving his Viticulture degree from Charles Sturt University in Australia in 2002. The university's curriculum is designed for vineyard management with extensive studies on viticulture, vine physiology, vine pests and diseases, and water and soil management. That knowledge, combined with his engineering background and natural approach to problem-solving, made him an attractive candidate for Proprietor Anthony von Mandl and Winemaker John Simes. In order to take Mission Hill to the next level, outside-thinking and pushing the boundaries

are encouraged. Exactly what Hopper brings to the table.

Hopper is based at the Black Sage Bench Vineyard in southeast Oliver. His focus is on innovation at every level and the interactive nature of vineyard management with winemaking and production. He is exposed to the full spectrum – deciding what to plant and where, growing the best quality grapes, and being part of the winemaking decision process. Because Mission Hill has five distinct vineyard holdings in the Okanagan Valley with a variety of soil, climates, and elevation, nothing is ever stagnant. The exciting challenge is for constant improvement in an ever-changing environment and ensuring that grape quality advances every vintage.

One aspect of this is the winery's overall commitment to sustainability. Hopper is a major proponent of that and views sustainable farming as one that conserves energy, resources, and finances while delivering a positive impact on the fruit's quality. In Hopper's view, being a good steward of the land and propelling business forward is the perfect combination.

He is passionate about sailing and owns four boats in various states of repair. He met his wife while they were sailing on a tall ship circumnavigating Australia. For now, the Okanagan Valley's beautiful landscape is his sanctuary.

For the future, Hopper will continue to take calculated risks in the vineyards with an eye to continual quality improvement for the vineyards and the grapes.