

# EXPOSURE



## A FULL-BODIED EXPERIENCE

*Life on the Farm: Brenna Pratt*

Story by [Fresno State](#)

May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Despite having no experience, Brenna Pratt was drawn to the complexity and creativity of winemaking. She knew that Fresno State's enology program would be a challenge, but she was all in.

Since transferring to Fresno State in 2018, Brenna has cultivated her winemaking skills and found a home in her department.

"A lot of the professors really teach from the ground up," Brenna says. "I didn't even know how to set up a pump or anything that went on out there, and then a few months later I was

You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story [click here](#).

Brenna has always been up for a challenge and wanted a program that would combine scientific rigor, physical labor and creative freedom, giving her the perfect blend of both hard and soft skills.

“I really liked that it is encapsulating of so many disciplines,” Brenna says. “I found this field that is blending the hard chemistry classes with some creativity and also the really hard work of wine making. It's a lot more down to earth than people realize.”

### A full-bodied experience



## DAY IN, DAY OUT LEARNING

Alongside the enology curriculum, Brenna has gained additional hands-on learning experience working as a student assistant in the Fresno State winery. In her first few months, Brenna quickly mastered a range of operations and has since played an instrumental role in producing Fresno State's student-made wines.

“I definitely learned very quickly how much work goes into winemaking. You live and breathe this stuff for three months, five months, the whole year,” Brenna says. “You really have to love what you're doing to be in this, but it's pretty easy to love.”

Brenna is responsible for monitoring and executing the year-long process from start to finish, and although each year brings new milestones, she takes immense pride in the smaller moments and “day in, day out learning.”

You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story [click here](#).

“Looking back through the experience that I've had here, it's pretty crazy just how much I've grown up and grown into this field and made it mine when it really wasn't my whole life,” Brenna says.

→Did you know? Fresno State has operated the first commercially bonded winery on a university campus in the U.S. since 1997.

**Crush Season:** During fall 2020, Brenna led a group of students to process over 60 tons of grapes from both Fresno State and regional vineyards, including those in Sonoma and Napa Counties. Once the grapes are gathered, they are sorted, destemmed, and sent to a tank to chill. Next, a yeast starter is added to the mixture to begin the fermentation process. Throughout fermentation, Brenna monitors the sugar and temperature levels and makes adjustments if needed. Once fermentation is complete, the young wine is drained from the tank and the remaining grape seeds and skins, known as the cap, are pressed to extract the liquid and acids necessary to formulate red wine.



You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story [click here](#).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](#).





**Barreling Down:** After straining the wine of any excess solids, it is put into oak barrels where it will age for about one year. During aging, the wine develops its flavor profiles and often takes on the flavor of the barrel. Knowing this, Brenna and her colleagues will deliberately choose barrels with either older or newer wood from varying regions to create distinct flavors.

You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story [click here](#).



You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).





**Prepping for Bottling and Canning:** As the 2020 wines settle into the aging process, Brenna prepares to bottle and can the 2019 wines that have been maturing over the last year. Now that each barrel of wine is fused with flavor, Brenna takes samples from the barrels and creates test blends to ensure each wine is well-balanced. Once she finds the perfect formula, wine from the correlating barrels is filtered, moved back into tanks and prepared for production.

You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story [click here](#).



You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).



You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).



**Bottling and Canning:** For Brenna, bottling day is “showtime.” She and her colleagues spend hours bottling and canning multiple wines. Although some wines may be bottle-aged to round out their flavors, after leaving the line, most bottles and cans are ready for market. Seeing the entire lifespan of a wine is rare, and although Brenna finds satisfaction in the process, she also finds comfort in knowing that past and future students will all have a hand in the same product.



You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](#).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).



You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](#).





You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](https://fresnostate.exposure.co/a-full-bodied-experience?slow=1).

**Did you know? Donald Gumz left a portion of his estate to the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, allowing the Fresno State winery to renovate part of its facility.**

## CONQUERING NEW CHALLENGES

With years of hands-on experience and a strong technical background, Brenna is excited to find her place in the industry. After graduation, she will move to Paso Robles, where she has been hired by a local winery to work the harvest season this fall.

As an alumna, Brenna will join the elite list of Bulldog alumni who have been impacted by their experience in the winery, including the 2021 Distinguished Alumnus Award recipient, Marcello Monticelli.

“It's an exciting time to be on the cusp of these big things,” Brenna says. “It's really exciting to know that I'll always have these connections with people and be able to connect with future students.”

Brenna is proud of how far she's come and is grateful to have had the opportunity to excel in this industry and use the skills she's learned to conquer her next challenge.

“It's really cool to look back, and look forward and look at where I've come from and really appreciate it,” she says. “It's been so hard, but it's really led me to this place of growth and strength.”

You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story [click here](#).





Did you know? Fresno State student-made wines won one gold medal and three silver medals at the 2020 San Francisco Chronicle International Wine Competition.

## WHERE BOLD BEGINS

YOU CAN HAVE A HAND IN STUDENT SUCCESS.

[Support Fresno State — Give Now](#)

Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson, Story by Victoria Cisneros, Video by Chris Samaro — University Brand Strategy and Marketing*

You're viewing a version of this story optimized for slow connections. To see the full story click [here](#).

