

The International Wine Review

Monterey's Innovative, Young Winemakers



Monterey County is well known for its fine vineyards and quality fruit, which is purchased by some of California's most illustrious wineries. It's less well known for fine winemaking, although its reputation in that area is rising rapidly as we've already pointed out in our report on the **Santa Lucia Highlands**. The continued rising of Monterey's wine star depends critically on its young, winemaking talent. During our travels to the AVAs of Monterey County we've had the opportunity to talk with and taste the wines of many of the young winemakers who are making some of Monterey's most innovative and exciting wines. In this article we put the spotlight on these winemakers and their wines.

Learn more about Monterey wines and read the reviews of the wines made by the following winemakers in our upcoming Report # 29 **The Wines of Monterey County and its AVAs**.

Sabrine Rodems, Winemaker, Wrath Vineyard

Sabrine earned her MS in Viticulture and Enology at UC, Davis, did an internship at Gloria Ferrer Winery and then joined Wrath (then called San Saba) Vineyards in 2004 where she is full-time winemaker. She is currently a board member of the Monterey Vintners and Growers Association. She is also consultant winemaker at Ventana Winery. She makes exceptionally good Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from both Santa Lucia Highlands and Arroyo Seco fruit.





Justin Kahler, Asst. Winemaker, Michaud Vineyard

Prior to joining Michael Michaud's wine operation in the Gabilan Mountains, Justin worked at the Peter Michael Winery in Napa and the Church Road Winery in New Zealand. He's a 2004 graduate of California State University, Fresno, where he majored in enology and chemistry. He's also owner and winemaker of JK Wine Co. in Paso Robles where he makes stellar Syrah. He is also the winemaker at Calcareous Vineyards in Paso Robles.

Robert Cook, Winemaker, Chalone Vineyard

Robert Cook has been senior winemaker of Chalone Estate Vineyard, located under the Pinnacles National Monument. Prior to joining Chalone, he was director of winemaking for seven years at Estancia in the Santa Lucia Highlands and winemaker at the prestigious Artadi winery in Rioja, Spain. He holds a BS of Science in Fermentation from UC, Davis, and also has work experience at Stat's Leap Wine Cellars and Opus One. Pictured here, Robert at our tasting held at the Chalone winery. Robert's non-interventionist winemaking allows the unique Chalone terroir to express itself through the wines.



Ian Brand, Winemaker, Coastview and De Tierra

After serving in the Peace Corps in Ecuador, Ian Brand came to Monterey to surf and then came to find that his undergraduate environmental science degree was useful background for winemaking. He learned winemaking at Bonny Doon, then became assistant winemaker at Big Basin, and in 2007 partnered with John Allen, owner of Coastview Vineyard, in making Coastview Vineyard and Le P'tit Paysan wines. Ian is also winemaker at De Tierra Vineyard and consults for Pierce Ranch Vineyards in Monterey County. Ian obviously has a lot of natural talent when making wine. Pictured here, Ian at our food and wine pairing lunch at De Tierra. He makes great Chardonnay and Pinot Noir across the AVA spectrum in Monterey County.

Annette Hoff, Winemaker, Cima Colina

Annette has made Pinot Noir at several California wineries, including Saintsbury and Estancia, and has also made wine in New Zealand. In 2004 she took on the job of developing and managing a new winery, Cima Colina, located in the Carmel Valley. She demonstrates that world class Pinot Noir wines can be made from fruit grown in multiple AVAs in Monterey County



Ivan Giotenov, Winemaker, Carmel Road

Ivan comes from a winemaking family in Southern Bulgaria. He joined Carmel Road, part of the Jackson Family Wines empire, in 1999 and worked his way up to winemaker. However, prior to Carmel Road he made wine in his native Bulgaria, Australia, and the Sierra Foothills of California. His Chardonnays from the Arroyo Seco and Monterey AVAs are superb.

Paul Clifton, Hahn Estates

A native of Monterey Bay, Paul started his career as a firefighter but found home winemaking more interesting and so took winemaking jobs at Bernardus Winery in Carmel Valley and Byington Winery in Santa Cruz. To move to the next level, in 2002 he headed off to New Zealand to do a postgraduate degree in Viticulture and Enology at Lincoln University. He joined Hahn Estates in 2003. His Hahn Estate Pinot Noir ranks among the best of Monterey.



Gianni Abate, Winemaker, Morgan Winery

at Morgan Winery.

Prior to joining Morgan Winery in 2005, Gianni worked for Robert Mondavi Corp on California's Central Coast. He earned a BS in Biology from the University of the Pacific with the idea of becoming a pharmacist. Instead, he applied his laboratory skills to winemaking, beginning his career at Bronco Wine Co. Today he makes some of Monterey's best wines

Chris Weidemann, winemaker, Pellerin and Paraiso

Chris is owner and winemaker of Pellerin Wines in Carmel Valley, CA. Chris received his degree in Viticulture and Enology from UC, Davis, in 1995. After graduation he worked at Newton Vineyard in Napa and Morgan Winery in the Santa Lucia Highlands before starting his own winery in 2002. He's also consulting winemaker at Paraiso Vineyards. His Les Violettes Syrah made from Paraiso fruit is one of our favorites.



Joseph Wagner, Winemaker, Belle Glos

Joseph Wagner has been viticulturalist and winemaker for Belle Glos since 2002 when he was just 20 years old. He is, of course, the grandson of the late, famed wine entrepreneur Chuck Wagner of Caymus fame. Pictured here, Joe pouring wine for us to taste in Las Alturas. In the video link below, he talks about the 2010 Pinot Noir harvest at the Las Alturas vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyX6I68ykuM&feature=player_embedded#!



Peter Figge, Winemaker and Owner, Figge Cellars

Peter earned a masters degree in viticulture from UC, Davis, before moving to the Monterey area and assuming the role of vineyard manager for Estancia Estates. While at Estancia, he helped Les Pelio develop a new vineyard, and its fruit was the catalyst for his winery, Figge Cellars, which he established in 2004. Peter makes handcrafted, vineyard designated Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Syrah. He purchases fruit from several Monterey vineyards—Pelio, Paraiso, La Reina and Sycamore Flat, and his wines reflect those vineyard sites. With a production of just 2500 cases per year, Peter's elegant wines are difficult to find but very much worth the effort.

James Ewart, Assistant Winemaker, Delicato

James hails from the Adelaide Hills where his father was a winemaker. After obtaining a diploma in viticulture from University of Adelaide, James worked at Mountadams Vineyards in Eden Valley, South Australia. In 2000 he took an internship at Delicato and stayed on. He now makes wine in both Monterey County and Napa, where he recently discussed making Cabernet Sauvignon: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uETkKwO65RA>



Jeff Pisoni, Winemaker, and Mark Pisoni, Vineyard Manager, Pisoni Vineyards

Jeff [on the left] grew up making wine with his father, the legendary Gary Pisoni, and earned his enology degree from California State University,

Fresno. He also makes wine at Baton Wines and at Fort Ross

Vineyard & Winery. Mark Pisoni [on the right] also literally grew up in his father's vineyard. He earned a BS in Agricultural Economics from UC, Davis, and an MS in Farm Business Management from Cornell University. Mark gave us an extensive tour of the Pisoni Santa Lucia Highland vineyard during our visit.



Scott Kelley, Director of Winemaking, Estancia

A native of Salinas, Scott Kelley combined a family background in agriculture and his interest in chemistry and studied fermentation science at UC, Davis. He started a brewpub in Monterey before joining Robert Mondavi in 2000 and then taking the position as director of winemaking at Estancia, which includes the 1200 acre Pinnacles and 100 acre

Stonewall vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Planted in 1986 by Augustin Huneeus, these vineyards are the fruit source for Estancia's Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines. Estancia and its vineyards was purchased by Constellation Wines in 1999. Scott assumed his winemaking duties at Estancia in 2007. His Monterey wines are not only delicious but also excellent values.