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Report # 29: The Wines of Monterey County

Introduction



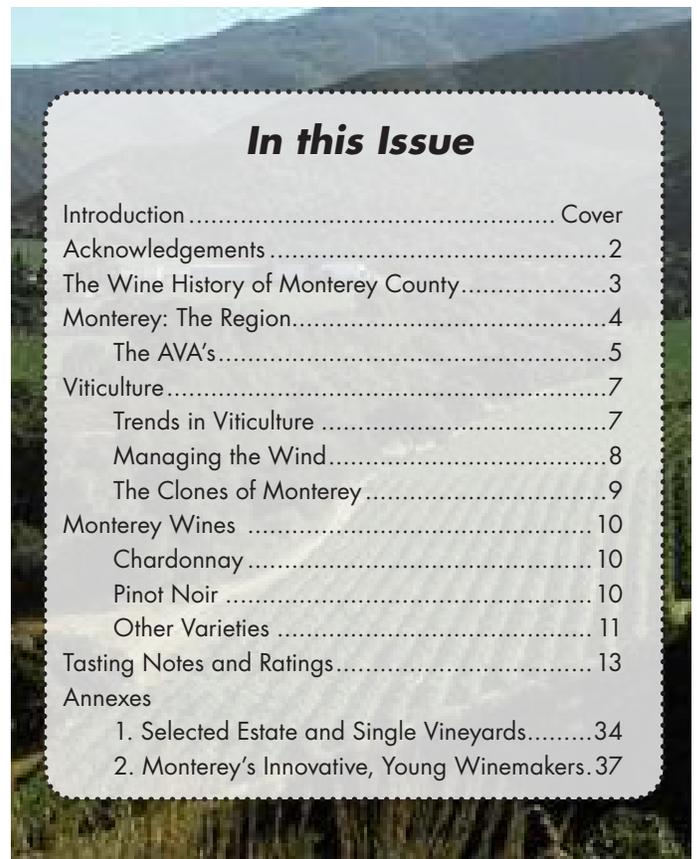
Monterey County is one of California's largest premium wine grape producing regions—only Sonoma and Napa are larger

in terms of vineyard acreage. While Monterey does not yet have the name recognition of its northern competitors, that is changing quickly. We tasted over 250 wines in Monterey and at our offices in preparing this report and found a large number of world class, elegant wines that reflect the diverse terroir of the county. In terms of plantings, Monterey is still Chardonnay country, but Pinot Noir has a very firm foothold, and other varieties like Syrah are also staking a claim to the region's future. In this report we study the microclimates, grapes, vineyards and wineries of Monterey and look at how they and the exciting winemakers of the county are raising the bar on quality.

Monterey has come very far, very fast as a wine growing region. A half century ago it had hardly any vineyards. Thirty years ago it mainly produced grapes and wine under contract to California's large, commercial wineries. Today Monterey is recognized for producing premium and super-premium wines, at wineries located throughout California.

There are nine distinct and separate AVAs and 45 thousand acres of vineyards within Monterey's almost four thousand square miles of territory. Each year they produce about 200 thousand tons of wine grapes, 40 percent more than Napa County. In other words, Monterey is a huge, diverse winegrowing area. That size and diversity makes it difficult to describe it in simple terms.

What the different AVAs—from Chalone in the north to Hames Valley in the south and Carmel Valley in the west—share in common is low rainfall, large diurnal temperature variations, and a strong ocean influence, albeit one that weakens as one moves south in the Salinas Valley. A two mile deep submarine canyon (the Monterey Canyon) lies just off the coast of Monterey, and its cold water moderates temperatures and contributes fog and strong, cool winds that rush through the 80 mile long Salinas Valley. The location of each AVA relative to the Salinas River and



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the Monterey Bay determines its daytime temperature, strength of winds, and exposure to fog and sun.

In what follows, we explore the vineyards and wines of Monterey. We began this journey two years ago with an in-depth look at the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. In this report we continue the journey through the other varied parts of Monterey. At the end of this exploration we conclude that Monterey has all the ingredients for future success. We expect that in two decades its name will roll of the tongues of wine aficionados like Napa and Sonoma do today. It's this future and the dedicated growers and winemakers of the region that make Monterey such an exciting wine region today.

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**Mike Potashnik, Publisher
Don Winkler, Editor**

The Wine History of Monterey County

Most of Monterey's vineyards are in the Salinas Valley, mostly on the benchlands and foothills overlooking the valley. There are two important exceptions—the Carmel Valley, which runs inland from the Pacific, and the San Antonio Valley, a highland valley that lies at the southern end of the county, nestled between two ranges of the Santa Lucia Mountains.

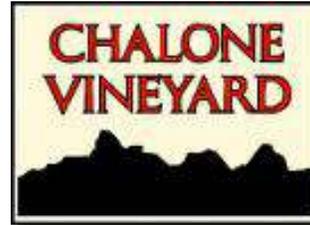
Monterey's wine history dates back to the late 18th century when the first vineyards were established by Franciscan friars at the San Antonio de Padua mission in the San Antonio Valley and at the Nuestra Señora de la Soledad mission in the Salinas Valley. While these vineyards did not survive the Mexican Government's secularization of Alta California in 1835, they were the genesis of vineyards that are found today in Arroyo Seco and throughout the Salinas Valley, in the benchlands and foothills of the Santa Lucia Highlands and Gabilan Mountains (Chalone), the Carmel Valley, and parts of the San Antonio Valley, San Lucas, and Hames Valley [see map below].

In the modern era, there were isolated attempts to establish vineyards in diverse parts of Monterey. A French immigrant named Lucian Charles Tamm planted the first vineyard in the Gavilan benchlands in the late 19th century. About the same time, another Frenchman planted a vineyard in the warm, inland Cachagua portion of the Carmel Valley. Others started vineyards in the early 20th century, but commercial grape growing and the establishment of Monterey's first winery had to wait until the second half of the 20th century, thanks to urbanization around San Jose and to U.S. tax incentives.

The 1960s. Urban expansion in the Livermore and Santa Clara valleys led the large winemakers in those areas to seek out new places for vineyards, including Monterey. In 1961 Edmund Mirrassou planted his Mission Ranch Vineyard in Arroyo Seco to Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Noir. Karl Wente followed suit, also in Arroyo Seco in 1962. And, about the same time, Paul Masson planted a one thousand acre vineyard named Pinnacles (now owned by Estancia) on the east side of the Salinas Valley. A little later, William Durney planted what is today the Heller Estate Vineyard in the Cachagua part of Carmel Valley. By the end of the 1960s, Monterey had over a thousand acres under vines, and French Colombard was the most widely planted varietal.

The 1970s. The next big wave of plantings in Monterey came about in the 1970s, motivated in part by the rage for agricultural tax shelters. Between 1971 and 1974, 25 thousand acres of grapes were planted, mostly in the central-southern part of the county (Gonzales, Soledad, Arroyo Seco and San Bernabe, especially) where land was flat and easily cultivated. The biggest investor was the Prudential Insurance Company of New Jersey, which

planted the world's single largest contiguous vineyard (8,100 acres) in San Bernabe in 1972-4. In that same year Alfred Scheid created the Monterey Farming Corporation and planted 2100 acres to vines as an investment vehicle for his brokerage clients; he later bought them out and created Scheid Vineyards. Doug Meador planted the 365 acre Ventana Vineyards in Arroyo Seco for investors about the same time. And Rich Smith planted the Santa Lucia Highlands vineyard Paraíso for a group of investors.



Dick Graff—Chalone's Wine Pioneer

Dick Graff is one of those bigger than life wine pioneers. He studied music at Harvard, joined the Navy, moved to California and, like others before him, discovered,

became intrigued by, and in 1964 purchased an interest in Chalone and then set off to UC, Davis, to learn to make wine. He made good wine that received high complements from visitors as different as Julia Child and André Tchelistcheff, but the winery struggled financially until a bottle of 1969 Chalone Pinot Blanc found its way to the desk of Phil Woodward, a San Francisco business consultant who loved wine. Woodward provided the management expertise to complement Graff's winemaking. The partnership of Graff and Woodward helped Chalone realize its potential, and in 1984 they took Chalone public and with that came the infamous, annual shareholder meetings held at the winery. In 1998 Dick Graff died when his single engine Cessna lost power on a flight back to Chalone.

Source: W. Philip Woodward and Gregory S. Walter (2000). *Chalone: A Journey on the Wine Frontier*. Carneros Press

Numerous others also took the plunge and planted in Monterey in the 1970s: Gerald McFarland and Phil Johnson planted in the Highlands; Jerry Lohr planted 280 acres of estate vineyards in Arroyo Seco; Bill Jekel planted his Sanctuary Estate Vineyard in Arroyo Seco; and, of course, Dick Graff and Phil Woodward expanded the vineyards and winery at Chalone in the Gavilan Range. By the end of the 1970s, Monterey had about 32,000 acres of vines. Unfortunately, the rush to plant sometimes resulted in a poor match between terroir and the varietal planted. In particular, growers soon learned that Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Zinfandel were a misfit for much of Monterey as they matured fully only in exceptional years.

The 1980s and Beyond. In a little over two decades, Monterey had gone from under a thousand acres to about 36 thousand acres of vines. By 2000 this had grown to 41 thousand acres and by 2010 to 45,893 acres. Total acreage appears unlikely to grow rapidly in the near future; today less than six percent of total acres planted

are non-producing (i.e., young vines), barely enough to meet replacement needs.

Of considerably more importance than continued growth in acreage is the sustained improvement in viticulture over the past decade. The original plantings of the 1970s have been slowly replaced by new varieties, new clones, and new rootstock as growers become more familiar with local growing conditions. In some cases the pace of change has been rapid. As an example, the purchase of Prudential's huge San Bernabe estate by the Indelicato family in 1988 resulted in a massive replanting and modernization of the vineyards. Improvements in viticulture were accompanied by improvements in winemaking. Scheid, for example, moved from producing jug wines under contract to other producers to making and marketing its own wines, including a line of upscale reserve wines made from estate fruit.

Monterey's Future: The New Winemakers. With better plant material and improved viticulture, Monterey fruit is today highly sought out by winemakers. About 70 percent of all grapes are, in fact, sold or transported to wineries outside Monterey, reflecting both high demand for Monterey fruit and the difficulty in establishing new wineries due to Monterey County's environmental restrictions.

Despite the regulatory obstacles, the number of wineries and of world class enologists making wine in Monterey continues to grow. The number of wineries has more than quadrupled over the past decade. They vary in size from the tiny to the very large, including Delicato's two million gallon winery in San Bernabe and Scheid's 4.5 million gallon winery in Arroyo Seco. Annex I provides a listing of innovative, young winemakers who are making wine in Monterey today. It includes such outstanding talent as Annette Hoff of Cima Colina, Ian Brand of Coastview and De Tierra, Peter Figge of Figge Cellars, and Paul Clifton of Hahn Estates.

In addition to talented winemakers, Monterey has added to its list of premiere wineries over the past decade: Coastview (established in 2007), Cima Colina (2004), Pelerin (2002), Figge Cellars (2004), Pierce Ranch (2005), Chualar Canyon (2010) and Caraccioli Cellars (2006). These wineries source their fruit from throughout Monterey County and its AVAs.



Caraccioli Cellars Enters the Scene

Caraccioli is one of the most exciting new winemaking ventures in Monterey. It was launched in 2006 when native-born Gary Caraccioli enticed his Uncle Jim and

Phil to expand into the wine business with the goal of making an exclusive and original wine not made anywhere in the Santa Lucia Highlands. This turned out to be a sparkling wine, and to produce one that was sophisticated and complex Gary recruited a first-class wine making team consisting of Joe Rawitzer, a Monterey County native, and Michel Salgues, who was born and raised in France and is reputedly the finest sparkling wine maker in California. They are an extraordinary team with rich professional backgrounds and experience in still and sparkling wine. Michel, who heads up the winemaking, spent 20 years producing the wines at Roederer Estate in Anderson Valley. Caraccioli's first releases of sparkling wines, a 2006 Brut and a 2006 Brut Rosé reviewed in this report, are outstanding and we expect they will get even better in the coming years. The Pinot Noir and Chardonnay they produce are also very well done.

Monterey: The Region



(Map courtesy of Ernest & Julio Gallo Winery)

Monterey is a large, diverse wine growing region. It is diverse in terms of altitude, temperature, wind and soils. This diversity is reflected in its nine AVAs, but like most appellations, there is as much variation within the AVAs as between them. The huge San Bernabe Vineyard alone has 22 different microclimates and 13 soil types.

Altitude. Most vineyards are planted on the low benchlands overlooking the Salinas River, where the valley floor lies about 120 feet above sea level, but altitudes increase as one moves away from the river. Thus,

vineyards in upper reaches of the Santa Lucia Highlands reach 1400', and the vineyards of Chalone reach 1900' and those of Coastview as high as 2400'. Altitude, of course, affects temperatures, sunlight and wind. High altitude vineyards like Chalone sit above the valley fog belt and so receive more sun and warm up more quickly during the day, but temperatures plummet at night.

The Salinas Wind. Excepting the Carmel Valley, Monterey vineyards are not directly exposed to the Pacific. However, the entire region is strongly influenced by its cold waters. Less than 100 yards offshore begins one of the world's most spectacular marine canyons (nicknamed the Blue Grand Canyon), some sixty miles long and two miles deep. The extremely cold waters of the canyon keep coastal temperatures low and produce the evening fog that rolls in late every afternoon. They are also the engine behind the natural air conditioning that cools off the hot vineyards of the Salinas River Valley.

Each summer day as the southern part of the valley warms up, a thermal updraft is created that sucks in the cool air of the Pacific. The cool air arrives at the vineyards in the form of strong, cool winds followed by an evening fog. The vineyards located at the northern end of the valley—Santa Lucia Highlands and Arroyo Seco—cool off first, followed by those at the southern end of the valley—San Lucas and San Bernabe. The high altitude vineyards—in the Highlands and the Gabilans—are much less affected by the wind than low altitude vineyards, and some of the inland canyons—the Sycamore Canyon of Arroyo Seco, the Cachagua part of Carmel Valley, and San Antonio Valley—are relatively unaffected.

The humid fog carries with it the risk of mildew and botrytis, but that risk is offset by the drying effect of the strong winds. In addition, the fog becomes weakest and often disappears altogether just when needed, in September and October, allowing temperatures to rise and grapes to ripen for harvest.

Temperatures and Precipitation. A vineyard's altitude and its proximity to Monterey Bay by and large determine its climate. Low altitude vineyards at the northern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands or on the eastern side of the valley are the first to receive the cooling afternoon winds and the last to give up the morning fog cover. Vineyards further south cool down later and warm up sooner in the morning. Mountain vineyards are less affected by the wind and fog and receive more hours of sunlight, but experience very cool nights and huge diurnal temperature swings. The interior valleys stay hot the longest and for that reason are the best places to grow slow-ripening grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon.

Since southern vineyards warm up sooner than those in the north, peak daytime temperatures are also higher in the south. On average daily temperatures rise by about 0.5° Fahrenheit per mile as one progresses south, producing

what vintners in the area call the thermal rainbow™. On a typical summer day, temperatures in southern Monterey County may be 40° higher than in the north. For example, in the month of September 2010, the average high temperature in the Santa Lucia Highlands at the Hahn weather station was 84° compared to an average high of 101° at the Hames Valley Vineyard station. In the same month, Hahn had 15 hours of temperatures above 95° compared to 71 hours at Hames¹.

Annual rainfall varies between 10" to 13" in the Salinas Valley and about 22" in Carmel Valley. While dry farming is thus possible in Carmel, growing grapes requires irrigation in all other parts of Monterey. The winegrower can thus carefully regulate drip irrigation to control vine vigor, taking account of the rapid drainage of Monterey vineyard soils and the high rate of evapotranspiration due to the heat and wind.

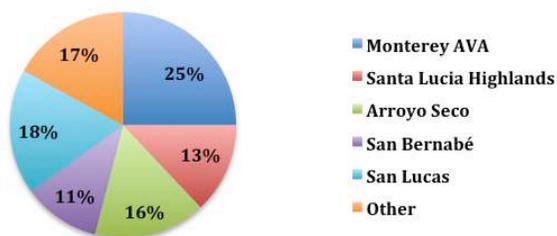
Soils. A 2007 study of soil types in Monterey County found 22 different soil types within the Monterey AVAs, but the predominant types are all sandy loam with varying amounts of clay and gravel. Vineyards on the benchlands have alluvial soils that allow for good drainage, while those at higher altitudes have more decomposed granite and even basalt. Vineyard soils are not uniform—Talbot in the Santa Lucia Highlands has some blocks with enough sand to act as a prophylactic to phylloxera, allowing some of its Chardonnay to be self-rooted. Morgan has sandy loam soils sufficiently deep that mature vines need not be irrigated. Soils in the Chalone AVA and elsewhere in the Gabilans have relatively high amounts of limestone and calcium carbonate, which are found in only trace amounts elsewhere in Monterey. Soils in Arroyo Seco have high amounts of gravel and stones called Greenfield Potatoes that do an especially good job of retaining heat; as the name suggests, the stones resemble potatoes.

The AVA's

Most of Monterey's vineyards are located in the Salinas Valley. Besides the amorphous Monterey AVA, they are, from north to south along the river, the Santa Lucia Highlands, Arroyo Seco, San Bernabe, San Lucas, and Hames Valley. There are three small AVAs that sit outside the valley. These are: Carmel Valley, Chalone, and San Antonio Valley. In addition, there are some vineyards—Coastview, De Tierra, Silvestri—which are located within Monterey County but outside the boundary of any AVA. The accompanying chart shows the distribution of Monterey's vineyard acreage by AVA; the number for the Monterey AVA excludes the acreage contained in other Salinas Valley AVAs.

¹ Western Weather Group www.westernwx.com

Percentage Distribution of Vineyard Acreage by AVA



The AVAs of the Salinas Valley

Monterey (1984). The Monterey AVA encompasses a huge area running approximately 100 miles from north of Monterey Bay to the border with the county of Paso Robles. Except for an arm that runs west through the lower Carmel Valley to the Pacific, the Monterey AVA parallels Highway 101 and the Salinas River. It includes about 40 thousand acres of planted vineyards, or about 90 percent of the county’s total. It also encompasses the five smaller AVAs of the Santa Lucia Highland, Arroyo Seco, San Bernabe, San Lucas, and Hames Valley. About 13 thousand acres of Monterey AVA vineyards lie outside those five smaller AVAs; they include such well known vineyards as Pinnacles (Estancia), Riverview (Scheid), and Le Mistral (Ventana). The Monterey AVA shares the climate and soil characteristics of its five constituent AVAs described below.

Santa Lucia Highlands (1992). The Santa Lucia Highlands AVA is about 22 thousand acres total, of which about 6 thousand acres are planted to vines. It lies to the west of the Salinas River and to the east of the Sierra de Salinas mountains. Its vineyards climb from the benchlands, where the soils are mostly alluvial, to the highlands, where the soils are mostly infertile, decomposed granite. Its climate varies significantly by altitude, with the benchlands subject to strong winds and cool fog and the highest of the Highlands (above 500’) remaining above the fog and receiving more hours of sunlight, higher daytime temperatures, and large diurnal temperature variations. The Santa Lucia Highlands is best known for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and is home to many of Monterey’s most prestigious wineries—Hahn, Lucia, McIntyre, Mer Soleil, Morgan, Paraiso, Roar, and Talbott among others. Considerably more detail can be found in our Report # 20: The Santa Lucia Highlands.

Arroyo Seco (1983). The Arroyo Seco AVA is about 43 thousand acres with 7 thousand planted to vines. Since it is to the south of the Santa Lucia Highlands and lies mostly on flat benchland, Arroyo Seco is a bit warmer and partially exposed to the evening fog and the strong Salinas Wind. Its soils are predominantly alluvial

deposits of sand and gravel loam; it’s home to large, heat-absorbing stones called Greenfield Potatoes. It provides ideal growing conditions for Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir and Syrah. An arm of Arroyo Seco extends west up the Arroyo Seco River and Sycamore Canyon, which is warmer and largely protected from the fog and wind. Arroyo Seco produces fruit for some of Monterey’s largest wineries, including Carmel Road (Jackson Family Wines), Jekel, J. Lohr, Scheid, Ventana, and Wentle.

San Bernabe (2004). San Bernabe is 25 thousand acres in size, of which 5 thousand acres are planted to vines. These are in one single vineyard owned since 1988 by Delicato Family Vineyards, which also has the only winery in the appellation. About 40 percent of the vineyard is under contract to other California wineries.

San Lucas (1987). The San Lucas AVA lies immediately south of San Bernabe. It is made up of alluvial fans and terraces with an elevation that ranges from 300’ – 1250’ and has a distinctive soil called Lockwood Shaly Loam, which is comprised of alluvial sand, shale rock and sandstone. It is home to about 8 thousand acres of vines but has no wineries since Lockwood Vineyards closed its facility. It includes large vineyards owned by Lockwood, Diageo (Paris Valley Ranch), Blackstone, and Robert Mondavi (Pine Creek). Hames Valley (1994) is Monterey’s warmest AVA. It has 2200 acres of vineyards but no wineries. Bordeaux varietals like Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petit Verdot do well here .

AVAs Outside the Salinas Valley

Carmel Valley (1983). Given its proximity to Monterey and Carmel-by-the-Sea, Carmel Valley is the AVA best known to tourists. It’s a small AVA of about 300 acres of vineyards with higher rainfall than the rest of Monterey. The AVA includes only the warmer, upper portion of the Carmel Valley; the lower portion—between Highway 1 and Carmel Village—is part of the huge Monterey AVA, much of which is subject to fog and a strong coastal influence. Thus, the Pelio Vineyard, where Figge sources fruit, and Talbott’s famous Diamond T Vineyard—a chalky shale, 1200’ mountaintop vineyard with yields under one ton per acre—are part of the Carmel area but not part of the Carmel AVA.

The AVA’s Cachagua Valley area has a unique microclimate of extreme heat and cold that results in late budbreaks, a very long growing season, and November harvests. It’s one of the few areas of Monterey well-suited to growing Bordeaux varietals, and 70 percent of the grapes grown here are Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Some of the better known Carmel wineries with vineyards in Cachagua include Bernardus, Galante, Georis, and Heller.

Chalone (1982). Only 300 acres of the Chalone AVA’s 8,640 acres are planted to vines, yet this is one of Monterey’s most renowned appellations, due to the

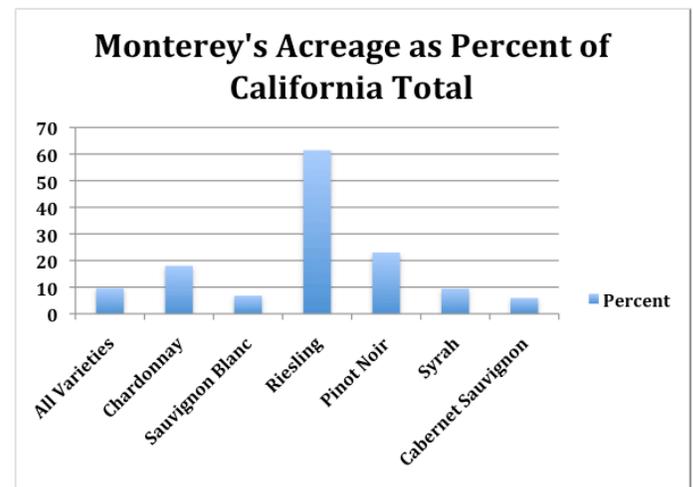
colorful history and fine wines of Chalone Vineyards. Located in a mountain valley of the Gabilan Mountains, the AVA is one of the few in California to have significant amounts of limestone and calcium carbonate in addition to decomposed granite in its soils. While one of Monterey's hottest wine growing sites, Chalone also has some of the highest diurnal variations due to the height of its vineyards (1800'). The limestone soils, intense sunlight, and cool evenings contribute to the acidity and skin tannins that make Chalone wines so long-lived. The region is best known for its white wines, including old plantings of Chenin Blanc and Pinot Blanc, although Pinot Noir and Syrah also excel. Chalone has only three wineries—Chalone Vineyards, Michaud Vineyard, and Graff Family Vineyards—although other producers (e.g., Testarossa, Brosseau, Roessler) from outside the area make wine from Chalone fruit.

San Antonio (2006). Monterey's newest AVA with just 600 acres of vineyards is a highland valley (980' altitude on average) nestled in the Santa Lucia Range between the Pacific and the Salinas Valley. It is home to Lake San Antonio, the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation, and the San Antonio de Padua mission. Iberian and Rhone varieties appear to do especially well in this region. Only three wineries—Pierce Ranch, Line Shack, and Marin's Vineyard—are located within the AVA.

Viticulture in Monterey County

Monterey County has 46 thousand acres of wine grapes, less than 10 percent of California's total. It is slightly smaller than Napa's 50 thousand and Sonoma's 64 thousand acres but far smaller than Fresno's 215 thousand acres of vineyards. In 2010, Monterey's vineyards yielded 177 thousand tons of grapes, down about 15 percent from the yields of the previous five vintages.

Among the most popular varieties, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir represent 52 percent and 19 percent, respectively, of all Monterey County plantings. As shown in the graph, today 18 percent of all California Chardonnay and 23 percent of all California Pinot Noir (second only to Sonoma County) is grown in Monterey. While Monterey is justifiably best known for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, Riesling is the grape whose plantings are most highly concentrated in Monterey; 61 percent of all of California's Riesling vineyard acreage is located in Monterey, reflecting its growing popularity and its success in the county.



Monterey differs from Napa and Sonoma in one important respect. Monterey's vineyards are larger, and ownership and vineyard management are more highly concentrated. The largest vineyards are very large—Delicato's San Bernabe vineyard alone is now 4300 acres with 21 miles of irrigation canals and at least 13 different soil types. And vineyard ownership is concentrated—Scheid has 6000 acres, Constellation 5000+, Kendall Jackson 4000, and Hahn Estates about 2000. Vineyard management is, too—Rich Smith has 2500 acres, while Steve McIntyre's Monterey Pacific farms almost 8000. In total, over 70 percent of all of Monterey's vines are cultivated by just ten organizations.

Trends in Viticulture

Viticulture has evolved rapidly in Monterey since the establishment of the first commercial vineyards just fifty years ago. Those first vineyards were planted to traditional California clones—Wente Chardonnay and the Martini, Swan, and Pommard Pinot Noirs—and popular varieties—Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sylvaner, French Colombard—on sites conducive to mechanized farming and overhead irrigation. As growers gained experience with their terroir, and as technology changed, numerous changes were made in viticulture:

Irrigation methods changed. The overhead sprinklers popular in the 1970s were replaced by regulated drip irrigation that both conserves water and permits precise stress management of the vine. [Overhead sprinklers are still used for frost protection.] Kendall Jackson has gone so far as to recycle water in the winery.

Self-rooted vines replaced by grafted rootstock. Monterey was phylloxera free until the first infestations were discovered in 1983. Thus, the early vineyards were self-rooted, and they remain so in a few sandy locations not conducive to phylloxera [such as some Chardonnay plantings at Talbott], but the in general vines today are grafted onto rootstocks (e.g., Freedom, 1103 Paulsen and 5C Teleki) that are not only resistant to phylloxera and nematodes but also better adapted to the soils of the region.

Varieties matched to terroir. Growers learned to match varieties to terroir. In particular, they learned that Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot did poorly except in hot microclimates like the Cachagua Valley in Carmel and Hames Valley. They discovered that Iberian Peninsula varieties do well in the hot San Antonio Valley. They also learned that Chardonnay and Pinot Noir both do exceptionally well in most of Monterey, especially the mid-valley and northern cooler sites that are exposed to daily fog or are at high altitudes.

Trellising and vine density increased. Scheid moved from the vertical trellis adopted in the 1970s to the divided canopy (VSP) trellising today. Growers today almost universally use VSP trellising, although experiments continue (e.g., Trentino Pergola trellising at Belle Gloss), and some vineyards prefer Smart Dyson (e.g., San Bernabe). While plant vigor can be largely controlled through irrigation in Monterey, many vineyards have also increased vine density over time. Scheid, for example, averaged 454 vines/acre when its vineyards were first planted in the 1970s, compared to the high 700's today. In the Highlands, most vineyards are planted 5x8 today, with some (e.g., Garys' Vineyard) are 5x6, and Jackson Estates' Panorama Vineyard is 4x4..

Increased use of organic and sustainable practices. Few vineyards in Monterey are certified organic—the Heller Estate vineyard in Cachagua Valley, Morgan's Double L vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands, and Coastview in the Gabilan Range—are exceptions.

The Monterey County Certified Organic (MCCO) program provides organic certification. However, 40 Monterey vineyards—including McIntyre, Chula Viña, Hahn, Paraíso, Ventana and Wrath—are certified members of the Central Coast Vineyard Team (CCVT) established in 1994 by Santa Lucia Highlands grower and vintner Rich Smith, Steve McIntyre, Dana Merrill, Robert Lavine, and others to foster sustainable viticultural practices; wineries meeting the CCVT criteria are certified as SIP (Sustainability in Practice). Organic and sustainable practices minimize the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides through the use of beneficial management practices for pest treatment and plant nutrition. For example, in lieu of chemical fertilizers, Dan Lee of Morgan applies a compost tea through the drip vines four times per year; it's also now being used at Rosella's and Gary's vineyards in the Highlands.

The experience of Monterey's single largest vineyard in San Bernabe is illustrative of these developments. The Prudential Insurance Company originally planted 8 thousand acres to a large number of varieties and adopted overhead sprinklers for irrigation. When Delicato purchased the vineyard in 1988, they initiated a major redevelopment that included reducing the size of the vineyard to the best sites, replanting with varieties better suited to the terroir and introducing better clones and rootstocks, and installing drip irrigation.

Managing the Wind

As noted earlier, the Salinas wind roars through the valley from Soledad in the north to Greenfield in the south, generated by temperature differences between the hot interior Salinas Valley and the cool Monterey Bay. The wind has many benefits. It rapidly dries the vines after the fog rises and reduces the risk of fungal infections. It also provides an inhospitable environment for many of the pests that make life difficult for the vine, reducing the need for the use of pesticides. The wind also thickens the skin of the grape, possibly contributing more of the elements that give wine its flavor and color.

On the other hand, the wind contributes to rapid leaf transpiration and soil evaporation, requiring careful monitoring to ensure optimal irrigation. It can also reduce the vigor of the vines, with 25 year old trunks just half the size of those in Napa or Sonoma. Above 7.5 mile per hour, the wind shuts down the stomata of the leaves of the vines. This, in addition to the cooler temperatures, requires longer hang time for the fruit to fully mature. This is another reason why harvest times in Monterey are significantly later than other parts of California.

Growers manage the wind in various ways. One way is to plant wind breaks of Casurina, a tall evergreen Australian tree, that reduce wind speed by about half. Windbreaks also improve irrigation efficiency and spraying conditions and increases yields. Estancia, for example, finds that Chardonnay yields approximately double. Planting vineyards north-south also reduces the effects of the wind, which flows unobstructed through the vineyard.

The Clones of Monterey

The original Monterey County plantings of the 1960s and 1970s used the traditional clones most available at that time. The advent of certified, disease-free clones from around the world in the 1980s and 1990s gave growers a larger menu from which to choose and to match clones to growing conditions—many French Dijon clones have been selected for newer Monterey vineyards. However, the original California Chardonnay and Pinot Noir clones have not been discredited, merely complemented. Growers find that having multiple clones in a vineyard reduces risk and can add complexity to the wine.

Chardonnay Clones. The original source of Monterey Chardonnay is the Wente Clone (UCD 2A), which was widely planted in the early 1970s in the Arroyo Seco [see box]. Some of the original, self-rooted vines still exist, especially in sandy soils not hospitable to phylloxera, but it's UCD 4, the heat-treated, virus free version of the Wente Clone that became the work horse of California vineyards. In recent years, several Dijon ENTAV clones, mostly 76, 95, and 96, have been added to the grower's menu. However, many others are also being used. Carmel Road, for example, adds clones 6, 15, 17, 39, and Rued in its Monterey Chardonnay. On the other hand, the Chula Viña fruit that Cima Colina uses is all clone 76. In general, the leaner, high acid Dijon clones complement the rich tropical character of the Wente clone.

Monterey: The Genesis of Chardonnay in California

Chardonnay is obviously important in Monterey. What is less well known is how important Monterey Chardonnay is to California. In 1962 the Wente winery of Livermore planted its first Chardonnay vineyard in Arroyo Seco using what has come to be known as the Wente clone. This clone was itself derived from budwood from Meursault that Charles Wetmore, the President of the California State Viticultural Commission, imported in 1882 and planted in his own Livermore vineyard. Chardonnay is genetically unstable and mutates quickly, and Ernest Wente systematically selected vines with the best traits. Thus, when the popularity of Chardonnay began increasing among California growers in the 1970s, the Wente vineyard in Arroyo Seco became a major source of plant material for growers throughout California. However, there are more than one Wente clone. The old Wente clone (UCD 2A) was susceptible to yield-reducing viruses and to millenderage. However, in the late 1950s UC Davis scientists obtained budwood from the Wente vineyards and created heat-treated, virus free vines that no longer suffered from millenderage (i.e., hens and chicks) and produced higher yields. This new Wente clone (UCD 4) was the basis for a rapid increase in plantings throughout California, from about 150 acres total in 1960 to over 100 thousand acres by 2000. It is now the industry standard for California. Source: N. Sweet, Foundation Plant Services, UC Davis, November 2007.

Pinot Noir Clones. The first plantings of Pinot Noir in Monterey were almost entirely of the Martini clone, which was popular throughout California in the 1970s. Most of these original plantings were on their own rootstock. The Martini clone came from experimental plantings of Louis Martini from Inglenook Winery budwood; it has been used extensively for sparkling wines. Later on in the 1990s, the Swan clone became popular; it comes from Joseph Swan's 1969 plantings at his Russian River Valley Joseph vineyard, but its true origins are murky. It reputedly is a suitcase clone from the Domaine Romanée-Conti. In any case, the Swan clone has long been a California favorite. The Pommard is another popular clone in Monterey. It was imported to California in the 1940s by Dr. Harold Olmo of UC Davis. It is known for its mid-palate weight and rich dark fruit.

While the Martini, Swan and Pommard clones are still planted, attention in recent years has been focused on the Dijon clones, especially 115, 667, 777, 828, and 943. Clone 115 is the most important clone from the past decade and can stand on its own; it is intense, complex and has substantial tannins. Clone 667 has high-toned aromas and is balanced, but it is firmly tannic and thus often blended. Clone 777 is delicate and more feminine with red berry character. The 828 clone is new and very promising. And clone 943 is also new with huge aromas and very small berries.

As with Chardonnay, Monterey growers most often plant multiple clones of the same varietal. Thus, Morgan, has 14 different clones of Pinot Noir in his Double L Vineyard. Estancia's Pinnacles Ranch Vineyard is also planted to several different clones.

Monterey Wine

Monterey produces a wide variety of exciting wines, reflecting the diversity of the county's AVAs. Chardonnay and Pinot Noir together represent over half of all vines planted in Monterey County. The Bordeaux varieties Cabernet Sauvignon and Monterey account for another 22 percent of vines, leaving just 21 percent, or a little under 10 thousand acres planted to at least another 24 varieties. Chardonnay and Pinot Noir not only dominate Monterey plantings, they also are among the finest premium wines produced in Monterey based on our tastings. Other varieties and blends shine in particular locations or wineries, but Chardonnay and Pinot Noir show consistently high quality almost everywhere.

Chardonnay

As noted earlier, Chardonnay is Monterey's white grape. Not only is Monterey the original source of vine cuttings used throughout the state, but Chardonnay is also the only variety that is highly successful county-wide. Superb wines are made from vineyards in Carmel Valley, the Gabilans, Arroyo Seco, the Santa Lucia Highlands (SLH), and throughout the Salinas Valley.

While Chardonnay is ubiquitous, it comes in various styles. There is the unabashedly commercial style from high yielding vineyards made with a good dose of residual sugar and vanilla oak. These wines are not the reviewed this report, first because our focus is premium, not supermarket, wines but also because most of these wines are made outside county boundaries and rarely carry the Monterey moniker. Having said this, we found a number of good quality, medium-priced Chardonnays designated as Monterey wines. Excellent value wines selling for under \$20 a bottle are offered by Carmel Road, DFW/San Bernabe, Hess, Jekel, Le P'tit Paysan, Talbott, Ventana, Wenté, and Wrath, among others. Reviews of these wines can be found in the Tasting Notes section of this report.

The style of premium Chardonnays depends on many factors—vineyard location, clonal selection, and winemaking. Vineyards located at the northern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands and the upper reaches of the Gabilans and Carmel Valley produce more restrained, crisp wines than those of the southern Salinas Valley where riper flavors prevail. Our top-rated Chardonnays [see the table below] come from several parts of Monterey.

Clonal selection also plays a role with the Wenté clone often yielding more tropical notes and the Dijon clones tending to citrus and melon. The old vineyards of Chalone, Talbott, Wenté, and others are often planted mostly to Wenté. Newer vineyards of these and other growers may use Dijon clones—e.g., Coastview (clone 96), Pelio Vineyard (clones 15, 96), Carmel Road (clones 76, 96, Rued). Morgan (76, 95, 96 plus four others).

Finally, although winemakers like to say that the vineyard makes the wine, winemaking also significantly affects Chardonnay styles. Winemakers make choices about commercial vs. natural yeasts, fermentation in oak vs. stainless steel, the percent of the wine undergoing secondary fermentation, the oak aging regime, if any, etc. Thus the Caraccioli Chardonnay sees no malo, while the Scheid Reserve Chardonnay sees a little more than half malo, and Talbott does 100 percent malo on all its Chardonnays. Oak treatment also varies with Carmel Road Arroyo Seco Chardonnay seeing 45% new oak, the Talbott Sleepy Hollow Chardonnay barrel fermented in oak and then aged 12 months in 30 percent new French oak, the Wrath Chardonnay San Saba barrel fermented and aged 10 months in 70 percent new French oak, and the Scheid Chardonnay Reserve given 20 months in 57 percent new oak. There are, of course, also several Chardonnays not aged in oak (e.g., Morgan Metalico) or aged in neutral oak (e.g., Wrath Ex Anima). In addition, many producers make more than one style. Thus, De Tierra makes different Chardonnays using fruit from multiple regions, with differing degrees of malo and oak treatment. Wrath makes several styles using fruit from its San Saba Vineyard.

Top Rated Chardonnay	Price	Score
De Tierra Vineyards 2009 Vindegard Chardonnay Monterey	\$20	92
Chalone Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Estate Chalone	\$25	91+
J Lohr Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay October Night Arroyo Seco	\$25	91+
Bernardus 2009 Chardonnay Sierra Mar SLH	\$40	91
Caraccioli Cellars 2007 Chardonnay SLH	\$29	92
Carmel Road 2007 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco	\$35	91
Coastview Vineyard 2009 Terraces Chardonnay Monterey	\$35	91
De Tierra Vineyards 2007 Chardonnay Coastview Vineyard Monterey	\$24	91
Estancia 2007 Chardonnay Reserve Monterey	\$20	91
Figge Cellars 2009 Chardonnay Pelio Vineyard Monterey	\$35	91
J.Lohr Vineyards 2008 Chardonnay Arroyo Vista Arroyo Seco	\$25	91
McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Estate Block K-1 SLH	\$38	91
Talbott Vineyards 2009 Logan Chardonnay SLH	\$22	91
Talbott Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Sleepy Hollow SLH	\$40	91
Wrath 2009 Fermata Chardonnay Monterey	\$35	91

Pinot Noir

Monterey County is one of California's top producers of Pinot Noir. The Santa Lucia Highlands, the Salinas Valley, and the Gabilans are especially well-suited for growing Pinot Noir. These areas generally have cool climates, with relatively warm daytime temperatures, and long hours of sunlight, followed by cool evenings, and good exposure to coastal breezes. As revealed by our wine reviews, the Santa Lucia Highlands is Monterey's premiere growing area for high quality Pinot Noir. This is also reflected in the strong demand for its grapes within and outside Monterey.

Our earlier Report # 20 The Santa Lucia Highlands: Unique Terroir, Marvelous Wines explores in some depth the characteristics of Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir. However, increasingly other regions of Monterey are also producing high quality Pinot Noir fruit and wines.

Stylistically, the Pinot Noirs of Santa Lucia Highlands and Monterey generally fall into two main styles. One of the styles we call **bold dark fruit** and the other, **red berry fruit**. Both are distinctly California in style due to their ripe fruit character. However, they are different from each other due to their vineyard sources, clonal make up, and the predilections of the winemakers. For example, the wines of Gary's Vineyard, Wrath's San Saba Vineyard in Monterey, and Chalone's Vineyard lean towards the bold style--dark ruby in color when young with fruit that is more plum and black cherry in aromas and flavors. In contrast, the Pinot Noirs of Rosella's Vineyard, Salacci's Vineyard, Ventana's Mission Ranch in Arroyo Seco, and quite a few others are generally medium-ruby in color, less earthy, and more pure red berry in character.

The stylistic character of each Pinot Noir producer can also vary depending upon the vintage. In California the 2009 and 2007 vintages were generally outstanding and for Pinot the 2009 appears to have been almost perfect for many producers. Favorable weather conditions led to even-ripening, intensity of flavor, and excellent structure. Thus our tastings found many outstanding 2009 Pinot Noirs. In the accompanying table of top wines scoring above 91 points and in the Tasting Notes and Ratings that follow, we offer our assessment of the Pinot Noirs of Monterey County.

Top Rated Pinot Noir	Price	Score
De Tierra 2009 Pinot Noir Salacci Vineyard Monterey	\$32	93
Lucia 2009 Pinot Noir Garys' Vineyard SLH	\$50	93
Talbott 2009 Pinot Noir Cuvée RFT Diamond T SLH	\$70	93
Testarossa 2009 Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard SLH	\$59	93
Testarossa 2009 Pinot Noir Garys' Vineyard SLH	\$59	93
Bernardus 2007 Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard SLH	\$75	92
Cima Colina 2008 Pinot Noir Tondre Grapefield SLH	\$48	92
Figge Cellars 2009 Pinot Noir Pelio Vineyard Monterey	\$39	92
Lucienne 2009 Pinot Noir Lone Oak Vineyard SLH	\$50	92
McIntyre 2009 Estate Pinot Noir Block 3 SLH	\$46	92
Morgan 2009 Pinot Noir Double L Vineyard SLH	\$50	92
Pelerin 2008 Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard SLH	\$54	92
Testarossa 2009 Pinot Noir Pisoni Vineyard SLH	\$67	92
Wrath 2009 Pinot Noir McIntyre Vineyard SLH	\$49	92
Lucia 2009 Pinot Noir SLH	\$40	91+

In addition to the spectacular Monterey Pinot Noirs noted in the table, there are a large number of very high quality Pinot Noirs scoring above 90 points from wineries like Belle Glos, Caraccioli, Chalone, Estancia, J. Lohr, Michaud, Paraiso, Pessagno, Pisoni, Scheid, Sequana and Ventana. Space does not permit listing each of these wines

individually, but complete reviews can be found in the Tasting Notes and Ratings.

Other Varieties

As noted earlier, Monterey grows a wide number of varieties aside from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and some of the wines produced from them are superb. These wines tend to be made in low volumes and lack much market presence outside of California, but they are well worth searching out.

Whites. The number of outstanding non-Chardonnay white wines is disappointing, especially considering the qualities of the few that we reviewed. We were especially impressed with the old vine Pinot Blanc and Chenin Blanc produced by Chalone and Michaud and the De Tierra Pinot Gris. Equally impressive are the new sparkling wines being produced by Caraccioli Cellars, which give French Champagne a run for its money. Good Rieslings are made by Carmel Road, Morgan and Pessagno, but given the history of this varietal in Monterey and its growing popularity, the limited offerings are disappointing.

Bordeaux Varietals. Much more impressive are the non-Pinot Noir red wines being made in Monterey, especially Bordeaux varieties and Syrah. The Bernardus Marinus, Cima Colina Meritage, De Tierra Five by Five, Georis La Chapelle, and Le P'tit Paysan Meritage are all first rate blends of Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux varieties. It's no accident that these wineries are mostly located in or near Carmel Valley. From the same area come Galante's Cabernet Sauvignon and Heller's Cabernet Franc. Finally, we found two excellent Merlots—the Georis Clos de Mouton and the McIntyre Merlot.

Top Rated Bordeaux Varietals and blends	Price	Score
Bernardus 2008 Marinus Carmel Valley	\$28	93
Georis 2005 Clos de Mouton Carmel Valley	\$85	93
Galante 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Blackjack Pasture Carmel Valley	\$50	92
Cima Colina 2007 Meritage Carmel Valley	\$30	91+
Le P'tit Payan 2007 Meritage Monterey	\$24	91
Heller Estate 2005 Cabernet Franc Carmel Valley	\$50	91
Georis 2006 La Chapelle Carmel Valley	\$50	91
De Tierra 2008 Five by Five Monterey	\$38	91
McIntyre 2009 Kimberley Vineyard Merlot Arroyo Seco	\$19	90+
Galante 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Rose Hill Carmel Valley	\$35	90
Scheid 2007 Claret Reserve Monterey	\$60	90

Rhone Varietals. High quality Syrah, Petite Sirah, and other Rhone varietals and blends are produced in selected areas of Monterey but are not widely available or produced in large quantities. The most famous of these wines is Ventana's Le Mistral, which is undeniably the finest Rhone blend in Monterey and one of the finest in all of California. Among single varietals, we were most impressed with Monterey's cool climate Syrahs. In addition to the Syrahs listed in the accompanying table,

we especially liked those made by Graff Family Vineyards, Hammond Vineyards, Morgan Winery, and Silvestri Vineyards.

Top Rated Syrah	Price	Score
Lucia 2009 Syrah Garys' Vineyard SLH	\$40	93
Wrath 2009 Syrah Fairview Vineyard SLH	\$39	92+
Michaud 2005 Syrah Chalone	\$34	92
Testarossa 2009 Syrah Garys' Vineyard SLH	\$54	92
Figge Cellars 2006 Syrah Sycamore Flat Arroyo Seco	\$39	91
Lucia 2009 Syrah Susan's Hill SLH	\$40	91
Wrath 2009 Syrah Doctor's Vineyard SLH	\$39	91
Coastview Vineyard 2007 Syrah North Block Monterey	\$29	90+
De Tierra 2006 Syrah Monterey	\$20	90+

Finally, one would be remiss in not acknowledging the excellent Petite Sirah being produced by Pierce Ranch in the San Antonio Valley and by Scheid in the Salinas Valley. In addition, Chalone and Le P'tit Payan are turning out tasty Grenache, and Sycamore Cellars crafts a lovely GSP.

The Wines of Monterey County: Tasting Notes and Ratings



Don Winkler (l), Editor, and Mike Potashnik (r), Publisher, tasted more than 250 wines from Monterey County for this report. The wines were tasted at the International Wine Review offices and on a trip to Monterey County in late July-August 2011. On that trip we were able to visit most of the key wineries in Monterey County, meet the winemakers, and taste through their portfolios. We also had many interesting discussions about the wines, winemaking, and vineyards.

Monterey's wineries produce an impressive variety of wines at different price levels. For this report, we concentrated mainly on tasting premium wines with a retail price above \$15, our goal being to inform readers of the high quality of the premium wines being produced in Monterey County. It may come as some surprise to readers that high quality premium wines are being produced by wineries, both large and small, throughout Monterey County, although the most interesting wines are still those handcrafted by smaller artisanal wineries from estate vineyards.

The wines reviewed here include those produced by wineries outside of the county who purchase Monterey fruit and sell wines carrying the Monterey appellation name or the name of one of Monterey's nine AVAs. Since we recently published a comprehensive report on the Wines of the Santa Lucia Highlands (Report # 20), we provide tasting notes on only selected wineries of the Highlands.

The International Wine Review rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. The ratings are:

95 and above	A wine of distinction
91-94	A wine of outstanding or superior quality
89-90	A wine of very good to excellent quality
87-88	A wine of good quality
85-86	A wine of fair or acceptable quality
84 and below	Not recommended

Because of the large number of wines tasted, we were unable to include tasting notes for each and every wine reviewed for the report. Some tasting notes are listed with scores and prices under "Other Wines Tasted," and the complete tasting notes are included in our Tasting Notes Archive at www.i-winereview.com. Subscribers may use the iWineReview Search function to locate all reviews of individual producers and their wines.

Belle Glos

Belle Glos produces distinctive Pinot Noirs from several California AVAs, including the Santa Lucia Highlands. This Pinot Noir is sourced from their 90-acre Las Alturas Vineyard, located in one of the highest-altitude and lowest-yielding sites in the Santa Lucia Highlands. All Belle Glos wines including those of Las Alturas Vineyard are ripe, spicy and stylish with bold flavors. The winemaker is Joseph Wagner. Email into@belleglos.com

Belle Glos 2009 Pinot Noir Las Alturas Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$45) 91

This is a perfumed wine with aromas of dark cherry, toast and spice. Aged for 9 months in French oak, it offers pure and concentrated dark cherry fruit on an elegant palate with beautiful balance, a velvet smooth mouth feel, and a long finish.



Bernardus Winery

Founded by Ben (Bernardus) Pon, a Dutch professional sportsman, Bernardus Winery is situated in the Cachagua area of Upper Carmel Valley on a 220 acre estate consisting of 50 acres of vineyards planted to Bordeaux varieties. Bernardus' winemaker is Dean De Korth, who studied winemaking in the Loire and has had extensive experience in Burgundy and in local wineries. Bernardus purchases grapes from Rosella's Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands for vineyard designated Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Tel. 1 (800) 223-2533

Bernardus 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Monterey (\$15) 88

This basic Sauvignon Blanc is mainly fermented in stainless steel and includes 5% Semillon. Some 60% of the fruit is from the Griva Vineyard in Arroyo Seco and consists of the Musque clone. It is fruit forward, soft and round and approachable with aromas of citrus and melon. A good value.

Bernardus 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Griva Vineyard Arroyo Seco (\$20) 90

The Sauvignon Blanc Griva Vineyard is also produced from the Musque clone. It is 100% cold fermented in stainless steel and is pungent and grassy like a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc with grapefruit and asparagus notes on the palate and prominent minerality. It has 5% Semillon that is barrel fermented in neutral oak. After fermentation the wine rests in large neutral oak tanks before bottling. A delicious wine.

Bernardus 2009 Chardonnay Sierra Mar Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 91

This Chardonnay is produced from fruit of a new vineyard in the Highlands owned by Gary Francioni, co-owner of Garys' Vineyard and Rosella's. It is starbright yellow straw and offers aromas of flint with hints of butterscotch and honeysuckle on the nose. Richer in flavor than the Monterey County Chardonnay, it is full and round on the palate with flavors of ripe orchard fruit and smoky oak. Aged in 40% new oak for 9 months, with full malolactic fermentation, the wine has a rich mouth feel and a very long finish.

Bernardus 2007 Pinot Noir Ingrid's Vineyard Monterey (\$80) 91+

The Pinot Noir Ingrid's Vineyard is a fruit rich, complex wine offering aromas of black cherry, caramelized oak and cigar box. It is light and elegant on the palate yet concentrated with dark Syrah-like flavors, high acidity and round gripping tannins. This is a wine with layers of earth and fruit finishing long.

Bernardus 2007 Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$75) 92

The Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard is a beautifully focused wine with a core of dark cherry fruit, earth and toasted oak. It is soft on the attack with a velvet smooth mouth feel, ripe round tannins and a long persistent finish. An outstanding wine.

Bernardus 2007 Marinus Monterey County (\$28) 93

Marinus is a first-class vineyard-designated Bordeaux blend from the upper Carmel Valley. It consists of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot and other grapes. It is a beautifully knit wine of small thick-skinned grapes offering pure aromas and flavors of blackberry, cedar and cigar box with density on the palate. The high quality of this wine is the result of many improvements in the vineyard that have taken place since 2007.

Other Wines Tasted

Bernardus 2008 Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc Griva Vineyard Arroyo Seco (\$50) 88, Bernardus 2009 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$20) 88, Bernardus 2009 Chardonnay Monterey (\$22) 89



Caraccioli Cellars

This is a relatively new winemaking venture of Monterey County native Gary

Caraccioli, Joe Rawitzer and Michel Salgues. They are an extraordinary team with rich professional backgrounds and experience in still and sparkling wine. Michel, who heads up the winemaking, is originally from France and spent 20 years producing the wines at Roederer Estate in Anderson Valley. Caraccioli's first releases of sparkling wines reviewed here are outstanding, and we expect they will get even better in the coming years. The still wines are also very well done.

Caraccioli Cellars 2006 Brut Santa Lucia Highlands (\$52) 93+

This lovely Brut is Caraccioli Cellar's first release, and it is a winner. Produced by the Méthode Champenoise, it is bright, crisp and elegant with a rich mousse and attractive subtle apple and pear flavors and leesy notes. Overall, the wine is beautifully balanced, combining power and elegance. A blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay, the grapes for this sparkler were sourced from lots of Talbot's Sleepy Hollow Vineyard.

Caraccioli Cellars 2006 Brut Rosé Santa Lucia Highlands (\$52) 91

The Brut Rosé displays a light salmon hue and is a blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay. It is bright and crisp with excellent acidity, fresh bold flavors and hints of light toast on a long and very satisfying finish.

Caraccioli Cellars 2007 Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$29) 91

The 2007 Chardonnay exhibits ripe melon and pear fruit aromas with light smoke and toasted oak. Aged for only 3 months in oak, it reveals a creamy mouth feel, good crisp acidity and freshness, and a firm, satisfying finish.

Caraccioli Cellars 2008 Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$29) 90

The newly released 2008 Chardonnay exhibits light melon fruit aromas and flavors with a hint of charred oak. Still young and evolving at this stage, it appears to be less ripe and more tightly wound overall than the 2007.

Caraccioli Cellars 2007 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$47) 91

The medium ruby 2007 Pinot Noir delivers pure delicate cherry and pomegranate fruit aromas with nuances of toasted oak. On the palate, it reveals delicious fruit flavors, excellent balance, and nicely rounded tannins, allowing for early drinking.

Caraccioli Cellars 2008 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$47) 91

The newly released 2008 Pinot Noir delivers bigger and spicier flavors than the 2007. It is a young wine with great potential, already revealing elegance and balance. It offers delicious red berry fruit with layers of flavor, round silky tannins and a long finish.

Carmel Hills Winery

Carmel Hills Winery is a modest winery in Carmel Valley owned and operated by Paul and Lynn Stokes since 1996. The wines are handcrafted from 16-acres of estate vineyards situated at 600-800 ft. in the Carmel Hills and from purchased fruit. Lynn Sakasegawa Stokes who has a degree in biology, produces the wines in small lots totaling 150 cases. Tel. 831-659-0750

Carmel Hills 2009 Unfiltered Chardonnay Carmel Valley (\$29) 89

This Chardonnay offers aromas of tropical fruit, toast and hazelnut. Fermented in stainless steel, it goes through 30% malolactic fermentation and spends three months in French oak. It reveals good acidity and freshness with excellent mouth feel and a crisp finish.

Carmel Hills 2009 Pinot Noir Carmel Valley 89+

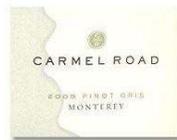
This Pinot Noir is sourced from the Carmel Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands. Medium ruby in color, it offers medium cherry/raspberry fruit and spicy stem notes on the nose. Aged for six months in French oak, it is quite elegant, fresh and flavorful. Only 75 cases.

Carmel Hills 2009 Pinot Noir Hidden Hills Vineyard Carmel Valley (\$35) 87+

The Hidden Hills single vineyard Pinot Noir exhibits a light red ruby hue and has aromas of light cherry. While sweet on the palate, it is lightly concentrated and rosé-like in character. It might best be served chilled.

Carmel Hills 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Phoenix Red Monterey (\$23) 87

This Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot blend. boasts a raspberry dark chocolate truffle nose with mint edge. It has nice weight on the palate with assertive, unusual flavors of chocolate, mint, and cedar. It has a long finish, but is quite hot.



Carmel Road

Founded in 1997, Carmel Road is part of the Artisans and Estates portfolio of Jackson Family Wines. The winery produces excellent wines sourced from high quality vineyards in the Monterey and Arroyo Seco AVAs: Rincon, Hacienda, and Clark Ranch. The winemaker at Carmel Road is the talented Ivan Gitenov of Bulgaria. The Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are first-class. Tel 800-273-8558

Carmel Road 2009 Pinot Gris Monterey (\$16) 89

This is Carmel Road's first release of Pinot Gris and it is a very good one. Blended with Chardonnay, Riesling and other grapes, it offers fresh orchard fruit on the nose with a touch of lime citrus. Fermented in stainless steel and neutral French oak, it reveals a fragrant fresh character with a round creamy mouth feel and a chalky finish.

Carmel Road 2009 Riesling Monterey (\$14) 88

The light gold-colored Riesling reveals notes of diesel and stone fruit. It is rich and round in the mouth with green apple and ripe apricot fruit flavors. It reveals a light sweetness from residual sugar and good acidity. Fermented in stainless steel and oak barrels.

Carmel Road 2009 Chardonnay Monterey (\$18) 90+

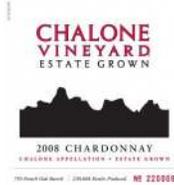
This lovely medium-gold Chardonnay offers aromas of melon, stone fruit and vanilla that are mirrored on a full lush palate. Fermented in stainless steel and oak, with 80% malolactic fermentation, it is very nicely balanced with good acidity and a crisp finish. The grapes come mainly from Clark Ranch near Soledad. Mostly clone 4, some 15, 17, and Dijon clones.

Carmel Road 2007 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$35) 91

The 2007 Chardonnay reveals a yellow gold color and aromas of stone fruit, flint and a touch of honeysuckle on the nose. On the palate it offers assertive spiced peach and tangerine flavors with spicy oak. Aged in French oak, 35% new, and with 100% malolactic fermentation, it boasts a rich round mouth feel and a long finish. A lovely exotic wine mainly sourced from the outstanding Clark Ranch, which is set in the shadows of the Santa Lucia Mountain range.

Carmel Road 2009 Pinot Noir Monterey (\$20) 90

Medium light ruby red in color, the 2009 Pinot Noir is nicely flavored with medium cherry, earth and spice on the palate. It is soft on the attack and has good acidity and fine tannins on the finish. The grapes are sourced primarily from low yielding young vines of the Panorama Vineyard and Clark Ranch.



Chalone Vineyard

The 1,100-acre Chalone Vineyard Estate--250 acres planted to vines--is situated on the rugged Gabilan Mountain Range at 1,800 feet above the Salinas Valley. It was launched in 1964 by the late Dick

Graff, a charismatic entrepreneur and winemaker. Dick Graff was later joined by fellow wine enthusiast Phil Woodward who took over the financial and marketing aspects of the winery and the two created what became the Chalone Wine Group. Chalone's unique terroir and expert winemaking have made this winery one of Monterey County's finest for the production of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Its Chenin Blanc made from 100 year-old vines is also outstanding. Winemaking is in the capable hands of Robert Cook. The Chalone Wine Group was purchased by beverage giant Diageo in 2005. Tel. (800) 407-9047

Chalone Vineyard 2009 Chenin Blanc Estate Grown (\$25) 91

Made from the oldest, head trained Chenin Blanc vineyard in California (first planted in 1919) and fermented 50/50 in stainless steel and neutral oak, this is a terroir driven wine that reflects the special soil and climate of the Gabilans. Hand picking at night and whole cluster pressing in small presses contribute to the freshness and crispness of the wine. The wine shows minerals, yellow peach, and lemon citrus notes. It's a delicious and elegant wine made of very low yielding vines (0.6 tons/acre).

Chalone Vineyards 2009 Pinot Blanc Estate Grown (\$25) 92

This is one of the best Pinot Blancs we've tasted anywhere. It shows chalky minerals, guava and fresh pineapple on a bone dry but fleshy, even oily, palate. It's made from fruit of the Puesta Vineyard and undergoes some barrel fermentation. It reputedly has great aging potential due to its high acidity (6.7 to 7.0 g/l) and tannins from skin contact.

Chalone Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Estate Grown (\$25) 91+

Solid yellow straw color. The Estate Chardonnay is beautifully balanced, a superb combination of richness and freshness. Smoke, almond, citrus, toasted oak and orchard fruit all make their appearance on a round, full palate accented by bright acidity. The wine goes through about 80 percent malolactic fermentation..

Chalone Vineyards 2009 Rosé Estate Grown (\$17) 88

This rosé reflects the deft touch of winemaker Robert Cook and his experience at Rioja's outstanding Artadi winery. Made of 100% Grenache, it's light to medium pink rose in color and reveals a refined nose of cranberry, licorice, and fresh roses. It shows a touch of residual sugar on the palate but finishes crisply.

Chalone Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Estate Grown (\$35) 90+

Medium dark ruby in color, this is an earthy wine with excellent structure, good acidity, and firm round tannins. It shows smoke, earth, herbs, and a hint of cinnamon on the nose. On the palate it shows good length and elegance with dark red cherries and high-toned raspberry notes. This Pinot Noir is a blend of different Dijon clones and clones provided by David Bruce in the 1970s.



Chesebro Wines

Chesebro Wines is a small family winery owned and operated by Mark Chesebro, one of Monterey County's accomplished winemakers. The winery is

located in Carmel Valley and produces about 1000 cases annually in lots of 300 cases or less. All the wines are vineyard designated and sourced from two main vineyards: CM Ranch in Carmel Valley and Cedar Lane Vineyard in Arroyo Seco. Grapes are also purchased from F&G Vineyard in Arroyo Seco. The winery has a highly diverse portfolio of well-made wines.

Chesebro Wines 2009 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$20) 89

The 2009 Chardonnay is a crisp, lightly flavored wine that offers flavors of apple, pear, citrus and toast. It has a creamy texture on the palate with high acidity and a zesty finish. Sourced from Cedar Lane and Mission Ranch vineyards.

Chesebro Wines 2009 Vermention Cedar Lane Arroyo Seco (\$18) 88+

The 2009 Vermentino offers delicious flavors of apple, pear and melon with a touch of lemon citrus. It is crisp, fresh and spicy on the palate with excellent balance. This may be the only Vermentino produced in Monterey, or one of the very few of this variety.

Chesebro Wines 2009 Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco (\$23) 88

The 2009 Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco exhibits a medium ruby hue and aromas of ripe plum, toasted oak, and loam. On the palate it has a soft texture with dark fruit flavors and spice, good structure and a long finish. The grapes are sourced from Mission Ranch and Cedar Lane Vineyard.

Chesebro Wines 2006 Syrah Cedar Lane Arroyo Seco (\$18) 89

The Syrah Cedar Lane is a blend of 6 clones grown in Mark Chesebro's Cedar Lane Vineyard Medium ruby in color, it offers aromas of red and black berries with a note of herbs and black pepper. It is medium-bodied on the palate with soft round tannins and a long pleasant finish.

Chesebro Wines 2006 Syrah CM Ranch Carmel Valley (\$18) 89

The Syrah CM Ranch is sourced from Mark Chesebro's vineyard in Carmel Valley. It offers an opaque ruby hue to the core, is aromatic and very ripe and lush on the palate with lots of cassis and blackberry fruit and toasted oak. It tastes a good deal riper than the Syrah Cedar Lane, revealing lots of sweet fruit and alcohol.

Chesebro Wines 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Late Harvest Arroyo Seco (\$18) 90

The 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Late Harvest is a magnificent dessert wine. It has a golden yellow color and is packed with sweet botrytized fruit flavors of honey, apricot, and light citrus. It offers moderate sweetness and rich viscosity on the palate with touches of lingering tropical fruit. The wine also has excellent acidity and will pair well with soft cheeses, foie gras and fruit. Excellent effort.

Cima Colina

This small estate produces high quality, handcrafted wines. The grapes for Cima Colina wines are sourced from the winery's own Hilltop Ranch Vineyard near Carmel Valley and other vineyards in Arroyo Seco, Santa Lucia Highlands, San Antonio and Chalona. Annette Hoff Danzer, who joined the winery in 2004, serves as manager and winemaker. Annette has produced wine at several California wineries and learned her Pinot Noir winemaking at Saintsbury. Cima Colina produces excellent Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah.
Tel. (831) 620-0645

Cima Colina 2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Cedar Lane Vineyard Arroyo Seco (\$16) 87

This Sauvignon Blanc is a very dry crisp wine. On the palate it is mouth filling, yet light in citrus fruit flavor and high in acidity. A young and rather austere wine at this stage of development.

Cima Colina 2008 Chardonnay Chula Viña Vineyard Monterey (\$33) 89

Light yellow in color, this Chardonnay is sourced from the Chula Viña Vineyard in the Gabilan Mountain foothills. It exhibits aromas and flavors of citrus and melon with mineral notes. Aged in oak for 9 months, it exhibits light fruit flavors, bright acidity and a refreshing finish. Bottled without fining or filtration.

Cima Colina 2007 Pinot Noir Hilltop Ranch Monterey (\$43) 89

This estate Pinot Noir is blended from three blocks of the Hilltop Ranch vineyard, which is situated at 700 ft above sea level and 14 miles from the Pacific coast. Dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of red and blue fruit and smoke. It has moderate fruit intensity on the palate with firm gripping tannins on the finish.

Cima Colina 2007 Pinot Noir Chula Viña Monterey (\$28) 91

The Pinot Noir Chula Viña is sourced from the foothills of the Gabilan Mountains and displays aromas and flavors of dark cherry, spice and toasted oak. It is ripe tasting on the palate with soft round tannins, excellent balance and overall structure and a persistent finish.

Cima Colina 2008 Pinot Noir Tondre Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands (\$48) 92

This Pinot Noir offers ripe black cherry fruit aromas with notes of rose petal and earth. Aged in 40% new oak, it is very flavorful and elegant on the palate with excellent balance and a long finish. The best of the three Pinot Noirs in this fine lineup.

Cima Colina 2007 Meritage Lockwood Oaks Vineyard San Antonio Valley (\$30) 91+

Dark ruby. This delicious blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot offers earthy black cherry aromas and flavors with toasted oak notes and spice. Soft on the attack and medium-bodied, it boasts concentrated black fruit flavors, smoke and licorice with long satisfying finish.

Coastview Vineyard

Owned by John and Julie Allen, Coastview Vineyard is located in the Gabilan Mountains above the Salinas Valley near the town of Chular. It is a 2,600-acre property with 30+ acres planted at 2,200-2,400 ft on rocky granitic soils. Located above the fog line, the vineyard benefits from a cool climate for producing Chardonnay, Syrah, Grenache and other grapes. The wines are made by the talented young winemaker Ian Brand. Coastview Vineyard grapes are also sold to several producers in Monterey County. The Coastview Terraces Chardonnay and North Block Syrah are exceptional.

Coastview Vineyard 2009 Estate Chardonnay Monterey (\$25) 88

This estate Chardonnay is medium yellow and exhibits light tropical and orchard fruit flavors and a touch of coconut, crisp on the mid-palate with good acidity. It has a creamy smooth palate with chalky minerals and a very long finish.

Coastview Vineyard 2009 Terraces Chardonnay Monterey (\$35) 91

This Chardonnay is barrel fermented with native yeast and 25% stems. It has a light yellow hue and offers aromas and flavors of lemon zest, melon and minerals. It boasts a creamy palate and loads of minerals with some herbal and nut notes. It reveals excellent acidity and finishes long and crisp. A delicious wine.

Coastview Vineyard 2007 North Block Syrah Monterey (\$29) 90+

Coastview's Syrah exhibits a dark ruby color and complex aromas of blackberry fruit, oak and earth. It is soft and velvet smooth on the palate with good fruit concentration, cracked pepper, dark chocolate, oak and violets. The wine is nicely layered with earth and savory notes and a long finish.

**De Tierra
VINEYARDS**

De Tierra

De Tierra is owned and operated by Tom Russell, one of California's largest

organic vegetable growers. The estate is located just 5 miles from the Pacific in an area called Corral de Tierra, a high valley situated between the Santa Lucia Highlands to the east and the Carmel Valley to the west. Tom planted the vineyards in 1998 to Pinot Noir (cuttings from Gary Pisoni's vineyard), Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, and Chardonnay. Later on, he planted Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir at the Silacci Vineyard north of the Santa Lucia Highlands. De Tierra also purchases from local vineyards. The wines of this estate are crafted by the talented and omnipresent winemaker Ian Brand, and they are outstanding. Tel. (831) 754-3176

De Tierra Vineyards 2009 Pinot Gris Monterey (\$20) 91

This lovely cool climate Pinot Gris is from the low-yielding Silacci Vineyard just north of the Santa Lucia Highlands. Yellow gold in color, it reveals a ripe melon and apple flavors with neutral oak and a creamy mouth feel. One of the best Pinot Gris in the region.

De Tierra Vineyards 2009 Vindegard Chardonnay Monterey County (\$20) 92

Yellow gold straw in hue, the Vindegard Chardonnay offers a gorgeous nose of very ripe yellow apple, a touch of smoke and honey, and minerals. On the palate it shows ripe orchard fruit, and light hazelnut with beautiful balance and a long finish. It is sourced from the Coastview and Sargentini vineyards and fermented in stainless and neutral oak with arrested malolactic fermentation. Great value.

De Tierra Vineyards 2007 Chardonnay Coastview Vineyard Monterey (\$24) 91

The yellow gold Chardonnay Coastview Vineyard reveals lovely honey and hazelnut aromas. It has a velvet texture with some wood spice, again beautifully balanced, finishing with a nutty, herbal character. Granitic soils. Great value

De Tierra Vineyards 2008 Five by Five Monterey County (\$38) 91

This Cabernet-based Bordeaux blend. sourced from Coastview has a medium dark ruby color and aromas of ripe cassis, cedar, and herbs. Aged in 40% new oak, it offers ripe fruit, firm tannins and a long finish. Young and needs more time in the bottle.

De Tierra Vineyards 2007 Pinot Noir Salacci Vineyard Monterey County (\$32) 93

This magnificent Pinot Noir is crafted with special fruit from the Salacci Vineyard situated just north of the Santa Lucia Highlands. Medium ruby in color, it offers aromas of dark red cherry and cedar. Aged in 35% new oak, it is elegant and refined on the palate with purity of fruit, good acidity, fine tannins and a very long finish.

De Tierra Vineyards 2006 Syrah Monterey (\$20) 90+

The 2006 Syrah is made with fruit from Chalone and Coast View vineyards. Pure black and red berries on the nose, it is a fruit-forward elegant bottling with violet and blackberry notes, and minerals. The wine finishes clean with firm gripping tannins. Delicious.

Other Wines Tasted:

De Tierra Vineyards 2008 Estate Chardonnay Monterey County (\$32) 90, De Tierra Vineyards 2007 The Puzzler Monterey (\$16) 88, De Tierra Vineyards 2006 Merlot Monterey (\$20) 89, De Tierra Vineyards 2007 Pinot Noir Monterey County (\$20) 90

DFV Wines / Fog Head/ Loredona

DFV Wines are produced by the Indelicato family owners of San Bernabe Vineyard in Monterey County and other vineyards in Lodi, Napa Valley and elsewhere in California. DFV's principal operation is based in the San Bernabe Vineyard, the 5000 acre estate in the San Bernabe AVA. DFV wines are produced under a variety of labels. Those reviewed here include Fog Head, Loredona, and Noble wines produced in large volumes and offered at low prices. San Bernabe Vineyard also produces very good premium wines that were tasted during a visit to San Bernabe, but are not available commercially. Tel (707) 265-1700

Fog Head 2009 Chardonnay Limestone Ridge San Bernabe

The Chardonnay Limestone Ridge is made from grapes grown in the cooler northern section of the San Bernabe Vineyard. Produced in very small quantities (300 cases), it is mainly served at the lovely San Bernabe guest house and at special events. It is a ripe-tasting Chardonnay with bold tropical fruit flavors and sweet oak. It is rich and flavorful and very much California-style Chardonnay. Not commercially available.

Fog Head 2009 Hillside Pinot Noir Reserve Monterey

The Hillside Pinot Noir is sourced from an easterly-facing hillside parcel of sedimentary soil with patches of limestone. It offers ripe dark cherry fruit flavors with notes of eucalyptus and light toast. It is well made with ripe tannins, excellent balance, and a firm finish. Not commercially available.

Fog Head 2007 Blow Sands Syrah Reserve Monterey

This Syrah is a good cut above Fog Head's entry level wines. It is sourced from a special parcel of sandy loam soils in San Bernabe. It exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of blackberry fruit, eucalyptus, and light pepper. It is soft on the palate with good fruit concentration, round tannins and a long finish. Not commercially available.

Loredona Vineyards 2010 Pinot Grigio San Bernabe (\$15) 88

The 2010 Loredona Vineyards Pinot Grigio is a fresh tasting wine with aromas and flavors of red apple and light toast. Fermented in stainless steel and aged in oak, it offers a toasty round mouth feel, concentrated spicy fruit flavors, and a honeyed finish.

Noble Vines 2010 Chardonnay 446 Single Vineyard Monterey (\$13) 89

This new Chardonnay release (2010) from San Bernabe Vineyard offers loads of attractive orchard and tropical fruit aromas and flavors with nuances of toasted coconut. It has a nicely balanced palate, with good acidity and a long and fresh tasting finish, clean and bright. A terrific Chardonnay for the price!

Other Wines Tasted:

Fog Head 2009 Pinot Noir Highland Series San Bernabe (\$9) 87, Fog Head 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Highland Series San Bernabe (\$11) 87

Estancia

Estancia was established in 1986 by Agustin Huneus on the vineyards previously owned by Paul Masson in the Salinas Valley town of Soledad. Today Estancia owns more than 2000 acres consisting of the Stonewall Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands and Pinnacles Vineyard in Soledad where it grows Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah and other cool climate varietals. It also owns Keyes Canyon Ranches in Paso Robles devoted to Bordeaux varietals. Estancia's premium wines are well made and good value and their reserve wines are excellent. Scott Kelley who joined Estancia in 2007 is Director of Winemaking. Estancia is owned by Constellation Brands. Tel. (831)-678-7000

Estancia 2007 Chardonnay Reserve Monterey (\$20) 91

The Estancia Chardonnay reveals pear and apple with light oak aromas on the nose that are mirrored on the palate, which is soft and buttery with a creamy mouth feel. The wine is nicely balanced with good structure and has a firm dry finish.

Estancia 2007 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$30) 90

The Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands is a dark fruit-forward Pinot Noir with ripe spicy black cherry and plum fruit and toasted oak. On the palate it reveals more dark spicy fruit and toasted oak with good balance, round tannins and a long finish.

Estancia 2009 Pinot Noir Pinnacles Ranches Monterey Country (\$16) 89+

The Pinnacles Ranches Pinot Noir is a light-bodied offering with dark cherry aromas and smoked oak. On the palate it shows good flavor concentration, soft round tannins, excellent balance and acidity, and a long finish. Excellent value.

Estancia 2008 Pinot Noir Reserve Santa Lucia Highlands (\$30) 91

This 100% Pinot Noir is sourced from Estancia's Stonewall Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands. It has a dark ruby color and aromas of ripe red berry fruit, plum and light oak. It is soft and generous on the palate with a velvet texture, complex red berry flavors, and a pleasant long finish. Very well done. Gentle handling of fruit in the vineyard and the winery has paid off.



Figge

This boutique winery was launched by winegrower Peter Figge in 2004. It produces hand-crafted, vineyard-designated, small-lot wines from

local vineyards such as Pelio, Paraiso, La Reina and Sycamore Flat. Peter Figge serves as winemaker and produces high quality and quintessential Monterey cool climate Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Total production is under 2,000 cases. Tel. (831) 384-4149

Figge Cellars 2009 Chardonnay La Reina Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$35) 90

The 2009 Chardonnay La Reina Vineyard offers fruit forward aromas and flavors of melon, orchard fruit, and citrus with light oak notes. Aged for 11 months in one year old barriques, it reveals a light creamy round mouth feel, excellent balance and a crisp dry finish.

Figge Cellars 2009 Chardonnay Pelio Vineyard Monterey (\$35) 91

The 2009 Chardonnay Pelio Vineyard boasts ripe melon fruit and notes of vanilla and flint. It is crafted from low-yielding fruit with good intensity of flavor, excellent balance, and a long finish. A superb wine.

Figge Cellars 2009 Pinot Noir Paraiso Santa Lucia Highlands (\$39) 91

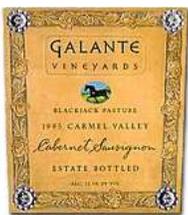
The Pinot Noir Paraiso is a light and elegant Burgundy-styled Pinot Noir. It has a bright ruby hue and dusty cherry aromas with ripe red berry flavors. Fermented in open top fermenters and aged in primarily used oak for 11 months, the wine has wonderful finesse and elegance and a long finish.

Figge Cellars 2009 Pinot Noir Pelio Vineyard Monterey (\$39) 92

The Pinot Noir Pelio Vineyard is a step up from the Pinot Noir Paraiso. It is a complex wine that exhibits ripe cherry fruit, smoky oak and spice. It has freshness and intensity of flavor from its exposure to coastal influences and low yields of less than 2 tons per acre. It is well structured with a persistent finish.

Figge Cellars 2006 Syrah Sycamore Flat Arroyo Seco (\$39) 91

This is a cool climate Syrah crafted in small open top fermenters and aged in oak for 18 months. It has a dark ruby hue and flavors of blackberry, black cherry, toasted oak, and black pepper. It is soft and elegant on the palate with a silky smooth texture and finish.



Galante Vineyards

This small family winery is owned and operated by Jack Galante, an affable and energetic rancher/grower whose great grandfather founded Carmel. The Galante ranch located in the Cochagua region of Carmel Valley AVA totals 700 acres, of which 40 acres are planted with vines. Galante vineyards turns out big earthy, bretty Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux single varietals and blends. The wines are crafted by winemaker, Greg Vita. Total annual production is about 4000 cases. Tel.1- (800)-Galante

Galante Vineyards 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Carmel Valley (\$25) 89

The Sauvignon Blanc combines grapefruit/citrus aromas and flavors with chalky mineral notes. It is crisp and flavorful on the palate with freshness and bright acidity. Fermented in stainless steel and aged in new French large format oak barrels giving it a hint of oak and light creaminess with a dry finish.

Galante Vineyards 2006 Pinot Noir Almond Flat Carmel Valley (\$25) 88

Medium ruby in color, the Pinot Noir Almond Flat reveals earth aromas and flavors of dark cherry and toasted oak. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it is soft on the attack with black fruit and assertive earth notes that linger on the finish.

Galante Vineyards 2007 Estate Merlot (\$35) 88+

The 2007 Estate Merlot exhibits a dark ruby color and offers aromas of ripe red plum and earth. It is soft and round on the palate with more red plum flavors and notes of mushrooms and forest floor. The wine shows good balance and firm gripping tannins through to the finish.

Galante 2006 Rancho Galante Cabernet Sauvignon (\$25) 89

The Rancho Galante Cabernet Sauvignon reveals blackcurrant and cassis fruit on the nose with earth and Brett nuances. Aged for 12 months in French oak, the wine reveals lots of sweet oak, dark fruit and forest floor on the palate, finishing with firm gripping tannins.

Galante Vineyards 2007 Red Rose Hill Cabernet Sauvignon Carmel Valley (\$35) 90

The Red Rose Hill Cabernet Sauvignon is 76% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% of a blend of Merlot, Malbec, and Petite Sirah. Aged for 12 months in 50% new French oak, it reveals aromas of black fruit, dark earth, mushrooms and Brett on the nose. On the palate it boasts predominately dark fruit with red fruit notes.

Galante Vineyards 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Blackjack Pasture Carmel Valley (\$50) 92

One of the strongest wines in this impressive lineup is the 100% Cabernet Sauvignon Blackjack Pasture. It boasts ripe cassis fruit and smoky charred oak and forest floor on the nose with lush and layered dark fruit and earth notes on the palate. Excellent integration of fruit and oak.

Other Wines Tasted:

Galante Vineyards 2009 Double M Carmel Valley (\$28) 88, Galante Vineyards 2009 Malbec Carmel Valley (\$35) 89, Galante Vineyards 2008 Petite Sirah "Olive Hill" Carmel Valley (\$40) 88+

Georis

This winery dates back to 1982 when Belgian-born Carmel restaurateur Walter Georis planted his vineyard in the Cachagua region of the Carmel Valley AVA. Today the winery consists of 16 acres of Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties. He uses no chemicals in his vineyards and keeps yields low. Georis wines are well made by the young Belgian winemaker Damien Georis. The winery's most noteworthy wines are La Chapelle, a Bordeaux blend, and Clos de Mouton, a 100% Merlot inspired by Chateau Petrus. Tel (831) 659-1050

Georis 2006 La Chapelle Carmel Valley (\$50) 91

The La Chapelle is an aromatic and flavorful wine offering rich and concentrated blackberry fruit, black currant, lead pencil and toasted oak. It is rich and concentrated with an elegant mouth feel, round tannins, and a long complex finish with a touch of herbs.

Georis 2005 Clos de Mouton Carmel Valley (\$85) 93+

The Clos de Mouton is a 100% Merlot offering a deep purple color and aromas of violets, plum, mushroom, and earth. It is soft and round on the palate with silky tannins, excellent balance, and a long persistent finish. A complex and layered wine, Old World in style, produced from a Georis vineyard selection.

Graff Family Vineyards

The wines from this estate are produced by Dick Graff, formerly of Chalone Vineyard, with winemaking assistance from Dan Karlsen. The wines are from experimental plantings of Syrah, Mourvedre and Muscat started back in the 1980s with cutting from Joseph Phelps and Luis Martini. All profits from the winery go to a foundation that gives scholarships to promising winemakers. 1000 cases produced annually.

Graff Family Vineyards 2008 Pinot Blanc Chalone (\$20) 89

The 2008 Pinot Blanc reveals tropical pineapple and vanilla notes. Aged for 10 months in 30% new French oak, it is soft and delicate on the palate with lovely integrated flavors of fruit and wood and a long pleasant finish.

Graff Family Vineyards 2007 Consensus Chalone (\$25) 90

This blend of 90% Syrah, 8% Mourvedre and 2% Viognier has an opaque ruby hue with aromas of blackberry, dark chocolate, minerals and charred oak. Soft on the attack, it is nicely focused with excellent concentration and complexity on the palate and a light forest floor note. on the finish.

Graff Family Vineyards 2007 Mourvèdre Chalone (\$25) 88+

The 2007 Mourvèdre is medium dark ruby in color with aromas of cassis, red berry fruit and charred oak. It is aged in 25% new French oak for 10 months and has very nice volume on the palate with wood spice and red fruit. Finishes long.

Graff Family Vineyards 2008 Muscat Chalone (\$15) 88

This Muscat was originally developed at UC Davis for Louis Martini who planted Muscat in Bakersfield and made Moscato d'Amable. It is medium yellow straw with tropical and herbal aromas. It has a flavorful palate showing ripe apple juice with 12% residual sugar and a nice long apple cider finish.



Hahn Winery/ Hahn SLH Estate

Nicolaus "Nicky" Hahn and Gaby established their first vineyards in the late 1970s in Monterey County. The Hahn Estate now owns 650 acres of

vineyards ranging in elevation from 200 to 1,200 feet. Hahn wines are 100% produced in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. Hahn Winery is the primary wine brand produced by Hahn, who also produces Lucienne in the Highlands and Smith & Hook and Cycles Gladiator elsewhere in California and Copa del Rey in Chile. Paul Clifton is winemaker and Andy Mitchell is vineyard manager at this attractive estate, which is a popular tourist destination in the Highlands.

Hahn SLH Estate 2010 Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$25) 89+

Hahn's estate Chardonnay offers aromas of tropical fruit, vanilla and toasted oak. It has a light creamy mouth feel with ripe fruit flavors and more notes of oak and butterscotch. It is well made and pleasant to drink.

Hahn SLH Estate 2009 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$30) 90+

Hahn's estate Pinot Noir exhibits a lovely medium-ruby color with concentrated and pure aromas and flavors of red berry fruit, toasted oak spice. It has round tannins, beautiful balance and a firm finish. A tasty wine.

Hammond Vineyards

Hammond Vineyards is a relatively new wine venture established by the talented winemaker, Reggie Hammond who up to a few years ago made the wines at Ventana. Reggie Hammond specializes in producing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir but is also producing Grenache and other Rhone varietal wines. He initially sourced fruit from Ventana and crafted his wines at a neighboring winery. Tel. (831) 320-2752

Hammond Vineyards 2006 Dua Arroyo Seco (\$18) 90

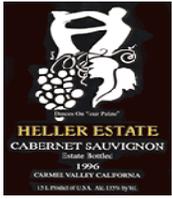
The Dua is a blend of 70% Syrah and 30% Grenache. It reveals lots of red fruit on the nose and palate followed by a smooth attack and a velvet texture. It has good acidity and freshness with dusty cherry fruit, minerals and chocolate. The tannins are soft and round and the finish is persistent.

Hammond Vineyards 2006 Grenache Arroyo Seco (\$18) 88+

Reggie Hammond's Grenache is light and fresh offering red fruit aromas and flavors with notes of spice. On the palate the wines is velvet smooth with good balance and acidity and a long finish. Aged in American and French used barrels.

Hammond Vineyards 2006 Syrah Arroyo Seco (\$18) 88

The Syrah is an easy drinking wine that is light-bodied with red fruit on the palate and notes of pepper. It's a light, red fruited cool climate tasting Syrah with notes of pepper and spice that is soft and pleasant on the attack with lots of tannic grip.



Heller Estate Organic Vineyards

This estate is one of the first established in Carmel Valley in 1968. Its founder, William Durney was one of the pioneers of the wine industry in Carmel Valley and led the initiative to establish the Carmel Valley AVA.

In 1993 the winery was sold to the Hellers who upgraded the winery and the vineyards. Today the Heller Estate consists of 1000 acres of mountain vineyards (300 planted) overlooking the Cachagua Valley. The vines are essentially dry-farmed and 100% certified organic. Rich Tanguay is the winemaker and all wines are estate-bottled. Tel. (831) 659-6226

Heller Estate 2009 Chenin Blanc Carmel Valley (\$25) 88

The 2009 Chenin Blanc exhibits melon, peach and grapefruit on the nose. On the palate, it is crisp and fresh tasting with good acidity and balance and a dry finish.

Heller Estate 2009 Chardonnay Carmel Valley (\$24) 88

The Estate Chardonnay offers aromas of tropical fruit and butterscotch. Cold tank fermented and aged in 100% used oak for 8 months, it is lightly concentrated on the palate with good acidity and freshness and lingering oak on the finish.

Heller Estate 2004 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Carmel Valley (\$40) 89

The 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon offers spicy red and black fruit aromas on the nose with hints of chocolate. It is pleasant on the attack with good texture and balance and dry tannins.

Heller Estate 2005 Cabernet Franc Carmel Valley (\$50) 91

The 2005 Cabernet Franc is the strongest wine in the line up. It is very fragrant, fresh and delicious tasting with pure plum and blackberry fruit. It is beautifully structured with round tannins and a persistent finish with rich chocolate and tobacco notes.

Heller Estate 2007 Malbec Carmel Valley (\$40) 89

The Malbec offers attractive red plum aromas on the nose with chocolate and herbal flavors on the palate. Aged for 18 months in oak, it has good concentration and ripe round tannins with notes of vanilla and wood spice.

Other Wines Tasted:

Heller Estate 2004 Merlot Carmel Valley (\$40) 86, Heller Estate 2007 Merlot Rosé Carmel Valley (\$18) 87, Heller Estate 2007 Petit Verdot (\$50) 88+

The Hess Collection

The Hess Collection consists of a diverse portfolio of premium wines from Napa Valley and other growing areas including the Monterey AVA. The very drinkable Hess Select Chardonnay and the outstanding single vineyard Chardonnay Shirttail Creek Vineyard are part of the Hess Collection portfolio.

Hess 2009 Select Chardonnay Monterey (\$11) 88+

This pleasant drinking Chardonnay offers aromas and flavors of tropical and orchard fruit and melon with a restrained touch of oak and almond nuance. It is soft and round on the palate, beautifully balanced, and has a long crisp finish.

Hess Chardonnay 2010 Shirttail Creek Vineyard Monterey (\$13) 90+

Sourced from selected blocks of the 352-acre Hess Shirttail Creek Vineyard, this delicious fruit forward Chardonnay offers lovely aromas and flavors of ripe tropical fruit and pear. Fermented in stainless steel without malolactic fermentation, it reveals a soft and ripe attack with a light creamy mouth feel. Unmistakably California in style, it finishes with excellent acidity and freshness.

Holman Ranch

Located at the northern end of the Carmel Valley AVA, Holman Ranch is a new family owned and operated winery situated about 12 miles from the Pacific Coast. The Ranch's 19 acres were first planted with vines in 2007, and the wines have been made by winemaker Greg Vita, who also makes the wines at Galante. Holman Ranch's first commercial vintage was in 2010 and the results are promising. Tel (831) 659-2640 .

Holman Ranch 2010 Chardonnay Carmel Valley (\$28) 90

This light straw-colored Chardonnay offers aromas of orchard fruit and light toasted notes. On the palate it reveals light fruit flavors, a honeyed leesy texture, excellent balance and a crisp finish. An attractive crisp lean style.

Holman Ranch 2010 Pinot Gris Carmel Valley (\$22) 88+

This Pinot Gris has a lovely citrus nose with a hint of minerality. It is soft on the attack and shows moderate acidity finishing with some brightness. Unfined and unfiltered.

Holman Ranch 2009 Pinot Noir Carmel Valley (\$30) 88

The Holman Ranch Pinot Noir exhibits a bright ruby color and aromas of earth, cigar box, dark and red cherry. It has a nicely flavored palate, but tastes very young with high acid and firm, ripe tannins.

Holman Ranch 2010 Rosé of Pinot Noir Carmel Valley (\$22) 88+

The Rosé of Pinot Noir displays spicy ripe red berry fruit aromas with modest red fruit flavors on the palate. It has freshness with bright acidity and a crisp finish.

Holman Ranch 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Carmel Valley (\$18) 88

This Sauvignon Blanc from the Musque clone has a light yellow straw hue and citrus aromas with a light touch of asparagus. The palate reveals notes of lime zest with green beans. The wine is nicely balanced and finishes very bright and crisp.

Jekel Vineyards

This winery founded by Bill Jekel in 1972 was one of the pioneers in the development of the wine industry in the Salinas Valley. Its wines are sourced from the Gravelstone and Sanctuary Estate vineyards located in Arroyo Seco. Jekel produces cool climate Riesling and Chardonnay and Bordeaux varietals. Its Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are reviewed here. Jekel is currently owned by Fetzer www.jekel.com

Jekel Vineyards 2010 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$13) 88

The 2010 Chardonnay is a well-crafted wine revealing aromas of melon and pear that are mirrored on the palate. Nicely balanced with good acidity and freshness, the wine is easy-drinking with pleasant fruit flavors and a crisp finish. Good value.

Jekel Vineyards 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Arroyo Seco (\$15) 87

The 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon is rustic in character with an opaque ruby hue and aromas of ripe blackcurrant fruit and sweet charred oak. On the palate it offers more spicy black fruit, a soft texture, hard tannins, and a short finish.



J. Lohr Jerry Lohr is one of a handful of pioneers in the late 1960s who recognized the winegrowing potential of California's Central Coast. Selecting the Arroyo Seco appellation of Monterey

Country for his first vineyard, Jerry planted his original 280 acres of grapes in 1972 and 1973, and constructed his San Jose winery in 1974.

J.Lohr Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay October Night Arroyo Seco (\$25) 91+

The 2009 Chardonnay October Night has a yellow straw hue and aromas of orchard fruit and flint on the nose. Aged in French barrels (20% new) with 100% malolactic fermentation, the wine is full and rich on the palate offering more sweet orchard fruit, crisp acidity, excellent balance and a chalky finish. A lovely elegant wine floral in character and delicious in flavor.

J.Lohr Vineyards 2008 Chardonnay Arroyo Vista Arroyo Seco (\$25) 91

Like the October Night, the 2008 Chardonnay Arroyo Vista offers attractive orchard fruit and flint aromas on the nose. A delicious tasting wine, it boasts flavors of orchard fruit and a hint of lime citrus. Aged in barrel for 15 months with 40% of the wine going through malolactic fermentation, this beauty reveals a creamy palate with lots of toasted oak and vanilla that are beautifully integrated with the fruit. An estate-bottled wine in the traditional California mode.

J. Lohr 2010 Wildflower Valdiguié Monterey (\$10) 88

Valdiguié is an obscure varietal from southeast of Bordeaux similar in character to Gamay Noir from Beaujolais. Medium to light bright red in hue, the wine offers lively red berry fruit with loads of raspberry juice on the palate. As in Beaujolais, a portion of up to 30% of the wine is made by carbonic maceration. Young and fresh tasting with tannic grip, it is best served chilled. A fresh and fruity picnic wine.

J.Lohr Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Fog's Reach Arroyo Seco (\$35) 91

The medium ruby Pinot Noir Fog's Reach (newly bottled when we tasted it) offers dark cherry, herbs and a note of earth. Aged in 40% new French oak, it is nicely flavored with dark cherry, earth and a touch of bramble. Finishes with ripe tannins, lots of ripe fruit, and good length. The grapes are from several different clones--Pommard 4, 115, 667, and 777--and are fermented in open top fermenters.

Le P'tit Paysan

The Le Pitt Payson wines are produced by winemaker Ian Brand in partnership with Coastview Vineyard owners John and Julie Allan. The grapes are sourced from the Pierce Ranch in San Antonio Valley and other vineyards in Monterey County and are crafted at neighboring wineries. The wines are mainly made of Bordeaux and Rhone varietals. 2,500 cases produced.

Le P'tit Paysan 2009 Chardonnay Monterey (\$17) 88

Yellow straw. This Chardonnay offers aromas of ripe orchard fruit with notes of almond and light hazelnut. It is soft and round on the palate and fresh tasting with simple flavors. It has good balance and a pleasant finish.

Le P'tit Paysan 2010 Pierre's Pirouette Rosé Monterey (\$17) 89

Made from 50% Syrah and 50% saignée from Tempranillo, Grenache and other varieties, this delicious rosé is light pink rose in color with fresh berry and cranberry on the nose. It is light and delicate on the palate with good balance and a dry crisp finish.

Le P'tit Paysan 2007 Meritage Monterey (\$24) 91

This is a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Cabernet Franc and Petite Verdot. It is dark ruby red with notes of red plum, cassis and sandalwood. It is full flavored with very good complexity and layers of flavor and has a long persistent finish.

Lucia and Pisoni Vineyards

Lucia is a project of winemaker Gary Pisoni and sons Jeff and Mark. The grapes for Lucia wines are sourced from Garys' Vineyard and the Pisoni Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. Gary Pisoni oversees all aspects of the project, while son Mark manages the vineyards, and son Jeff crafts the wine. Lucia wines are well made, ripe and flavorful.

Lucia 2009 Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 90

The Lucia Chardonnay offers melon, pear and lemon tart aromas on the nose and nicely integrated rich tropical fruit and oak on the palate. It is a delicious tasting wine, beautifully balanced, elegant and easy drinking.

Lucia 2009 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 91+

Dark ruby to the core, the Lucia Pinot Noir boasts ripe and flavorful blue and plum fruit, violets and lots of acidity. It is nicely structured with concentrated flavors and focus. A delicious wine that is quite young and still has lots of tannic grip to resolve..

Lucia 2009 Pinot Noir, Garys Santa Lucia Highlands (\$50) 93

A gorgeous wine. Elegant yet full of fragrant aromas of black cherry fruit, violets, and toasted oak. Beautifully balanced and concentrated on the palate, it exhibits purity of plum, cherry, and black raspberry fruit flavors, big round tannins and a long luscious finish.

Lucia 2009 Syrah Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 93

This cool-climate Syrah boasts aromas of black berry, earth, charred oak, and mushrooms. On the palate it offers lush blackberry fruit flavors with nuances of black pepper and leather. It is a big and flavorful wine with ripe fruit and excellent structure but still has lots of hard tannins that need time to soften. Sourced from a small section of Syrah grapes at Garys' Vineyard.

Lucia 2009 Syrah Susan's Hill Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 91

This young opaque ruby Syrah is big and earthy in character with lots of savory black fruit and cassis. Situated on one of the highest elevation points of Pisoni Vineyards, the vines for this wine are highly stressed and low yielding. Like other Lucia wines, it has big tannic grip and a persistent finish. Needs time.

Pisoni Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$65) 91

Produced by Gary Pisoni, this Pinot Noir is dark ruby to the core and offers lots of up front cherry fruit and plum. It is nicely focused with good flavors, ripe tannins, and light grip on the finish. Stylistically elegant with big red berry flavors.



Lucienne Vineyards

First released in 2005, Lucienne Pinot Noirs are single vineyard bottlings of the Hahn Family Wines in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. The grapes for these wines are sourced from

small blocks of Hahn Estate's Lone Oak Vineyard and Doctor's Vineyard.. The two Pinot Noirs reviewed here are of excellent quality and differ in character. The winemaker is Paul Clifton.
Tel (866) 925-7994

Lucienne Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$50) 91

The Pinot Noir Doctor's Vineyard is medium ruby in color and displays dark cherry and toasted oak aromas on the nose. On the palate it is nicely concentrated and silky smooth with lovely red raspberry fruit, toasted oak and notes of chocolate. It is masculine yet elegant with good balance and acidity and round firm tannins on the finish.

Lucienne Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Lone Oak Santa Lucia Highlands (\$50) 92

The Pinot Noir Lone Oak is an elegant wine with mild aromas of red berry fruit on the nose. It is soft and lush on the attack with a velvet smooth silky texture and concentrated red berry fruit flavors, oak and spice. Aged in 35% new oak with round tannins, the wine has a long persistent harmonious finish. Lone Oak is located in the cooler northern section of the Santa Lucia Highlands.

Manzoni Estate Vineyard

The Manzoni's have been farmers in the Salinas Valley since their arrival from the Swiss-Italian Alps in the 1920s. Today Mark Manzoni with brother Mike farm about 350 acres of row crops and 6 acres of vineyards. The Manzoni estate vineyard is located in the cool northern part of the Santa Lucia Highlands.

Manzoni 2008 Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$26) 88

The 2008 Chardonnay displays a yellow-gold color with tropical fruit aromas and flavors. It has a creamy palate with butterscotch and caramel notes. It is well-balanced with a finish of medium length.

Manzoni 2009 Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$26) 89+

The medium ruby Pinot Noir offers delicious dark red berry fruit aromas and toasted flavors with herbal notes. It is light and elegant on the palate with good balance and structure and a long finish.

Marin's Vineyard/Black Diamond Cellars

Located in the San Antonio AVA, Marin Vineyard (also known as Black Diamond Cellars) is a tiny wine project owned and operated by Duane and Kristen Wolgamott. Their 5.5 acre vineyard is planted with Viognier and Syrah. Their grapes are partly sold to neighboring wineries. Roughly 650 cases produced annually.

Marin's Vineyard 2010 Viognier San Antonio Valley (\$20) 88

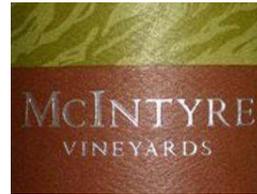
The 2010 Viognier is pale straw and offers white peach aromas with notes of white pepper and spice. On the palate, the wine is fruit forward and easy drinking with good purity of fruit flavors, excellent balance and a dry finish. This is the winery's second Viognier vintage.

Marin's Vineyard 2009 Syrah San Antonio Valley (\$25) 88

This estate Syrah exhibits nice purity of black cherry aromas and flavors with notes of cracked paper. Aged in 20% new oak, it is medium ruby in color and has ripe red fruit flavors with notes of toasted oak. It has a cool climate character and is easy drinking.

Marin's Vineyard 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon San Antonio Valley (\$25) 88

This is an uncomplicated Cabernet Sauvignon. It has fresh red fruit flavors, dark cherry and cassis aromas and is fruit forward with ripe, chalky tannins on the finish. Easy drinking.



McIntyre Vineyards

McIntyre Vineyards was founded in 1987 by Steve and Kim McIntyre. Steve graduated with a Masters in enology from CSU Fresno and serves as managing partner in the Monterey Wine Company.

The McIntyres follow responsible, sustainable viticultural practices. Steve makes some of the County's best Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from three different AVAs—Arroyo Seco, Monterey, and the Santa Lucia Highlands. He also crafts special Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from selected vineyard blocks. Tel (831) 678-4845

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Estate Block K-1 Santa Lucia Highlands (\$38) 91

This starbright, light yellow straw Chardonnay reveals smoky oak and summer melon with a green mango accent. It's lush, clean and full on a refined, Burgundian palate with nicely integrated flavors, good acidity, and finishing very long with hazelnut notes. This wine will pair beautifully with salmon, trout, and white meat dishes.

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Estate Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$28) 90+

The yellow gold straw Estate Chardonnay has a spicy, grilled pineapple nose with smoke and honeysuckle accents. Mostly this is a wine of terroir, quite distinct for a California Chardonnay in its minerality, subtle flavors, and high acidity. The palate is creamy and mouth filling.

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Estate Chardonnay Block K-1 Santa Lucia Highlands (\$38) 91

This starbright light yellow straw Chardonnay reveals smoky oak and summer melon with a green mango accent. It's lush, clean and full on a refined, Burgundian palate with nicely integrated flavors, good acidity, and finishing very long with hazelnut notes. This wine will pair beautifully with salmon, trout, and white meat dishes.

McIntyre Vineyards 2008 Estate Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$38) 91

The medium dark ruby 2008 Estate Pinot Noir offers purity of spicy dark red fruit, good acidity, and a nicely balanced palate of concentrated dark red cherry. It finishes with ripe, sweet tannins. This wine gets better with every passing vintage.

McIntyre Vineyards NV L'homme qui ris Santa Lucia Highlands (\$29) 91

LQHR is a Methode Champenoise blend of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay that spends 7 years on its lees. Yellow gold in color, the bouquet is rich with nuts and sherry notes. The creamy, finely beaded palate also shows nuts along with yeast, toasted brioche, and apricot stone fruit. The finish is extremely long with freshly made apple pie notes. This California wine tastes like old tête de cuvée Champagne. Would be great with aged cheese. The fruit comes from the McIntyre estate in the Santa Lucia Highlands. The Pinot Noir in this vineyard is the Heritage clone planted in 1973. See our article on this wine.

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Estate Pinot Noir Block 3 Santa Lucia Highlands (\$46) 92

This is quintessential Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir with bold, dark red cherry fruit, earth, toasted oak, and savory herbs showing on the nose and densely flavored palate. The wine is beautifully balanced, well structured, firmly tannic, and delicious.

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Kimberley Vineyard Merlot Arroyo Seco (\$19) 90+

This brilliant dark ruby Merlot shows rich scents of ripe, red fruit with a hint of blueberry. Soft and velvet like on an effusively fruity palate, it is lush and balanced with ripe tannins on a long, flavorful finish. Absolutely delicious, and one of the better Merlots we've had out of California this year.

Other Wines Tasted:

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Mission Ranch Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco (\$36) 89,

McIntyre Vineyards 2009 Vin Gris of Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$15) 89



Mer Soleil Vineyards

The Wagner Family, owners of Mer Soleil Vineyards have been farming grapes and producing wine in California for three generations. They began in Napa Valley in 1915 and in 1972 established Caymus

Vineyards, which produces one of California's finest Cabernet Sauvignons. In 1972, son Chuck Wagner began planting land in Monterey County's Santa Lucia Highlands and producing barrel fermented Chardonnay and later unoaked Chardonnay called Silver under the Mer Soliel label. These two Chardonnays different in style, are fine examples of the high quality of Chardonnays being produced in Monterey.

Mer Soleil Vineyard 2010 Silver Unoaked Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$23) 90

The pale straw Silver is a delicious unoaked Chardonnay with a creamy mouth feel and flavors of citrus and orchard fruit. It is crisp and fresh on the palate with a very dry finish. Attractive ceramic bottle too.

Mer Soleil Vineyard 2008 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$27) 89

The 2008 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay has a yellow gold hue and aromas of tropical fruit, banana and toasted oak that are mirrored on the palate. It offers a buttery and creamy mouth feel, rich with cedar notes and a dry slightly bitter finish.

Mer Soleil 2004 Late Santa Lucia Highlands (.375l) \$30) 89+

Late is a rich tasting dessert wine made of botrytised Viognier grapes. Golden amber in color it offers aromas of apricot and rose petal with flavors of passion fruit. It exhibits a honeyed creamy mouth feel with medium sweetness and moderate acidity on the finish.

Mercy Vineyards

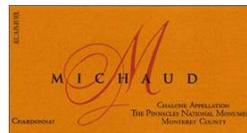
Established by long time friends, Mark Dirickson and Mike Kohne, Mercy Vineyards in located in Arroyo Seco. Mercy Vineyards sources its grapes from neighboring Zabala Vineyard, Cedar Lane Vineyard and Griva Vineyards. Winemaking is overseen by consultant winemaker Alan Philips who served as Director of Winemaking and General Manager of Foley Estates and Lincourt Vineyards before joining Mercy. The two wines reviewed here are entry level; the winery also produced single vineyard wines that we have not tasted. Tel (831) 233-6756

Mercy Vineyards 2008 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$25) 90

The 2008 Chardonnay reveals pleasant aromas of ripe melon and tropical fruit on the nose. On the palate, it offers ripe fruit flavors with toasted oak and vanilla. It has a creamy mouth feel, is nicely balanced with fresh acidity, and has a lingering finish. Sourced from the Zavala Vineyard.

Mercy Vineyards 2008 Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco (\$32) 87+

The Pinot Noir reveals aromas of spicy red fruit with notes of tomato followed by a soft attack of red and black fruit flavors and toasted oak. Aged for 9 months in oak, the wine reveals round tannins, good acidity and a long finish. The grapes for this wine were also sourced from the Zavala Vineyard.



Michaud Vineyard

The Michaud Vineyard is owned and operated by Michael Michaud, one the most accomplished winemakers

in Monterey County. His career spans more than 40 years, most of it devoted to winemaking at Chalone and at his own vineyard, which consists of 28.5 acres. Michael Michaud serves as winemaker with assistance from the talented Justin Kahler. All the wines of this estate are excellent. Tel. (650) 529-0973

Michaud Vineyard 2006 Chardonnay Chalone (\$30) 90

The 2006 Chardonnay exhibits a medium dark yellow straw color. It showcases tropical and orchard fruit on the nose with notes of earth, toasted oak, minerals and chalk. Whole cluster pressed, fermented with native yeast, and aged for 18 months in barrel with 100% malolactic fermentation, this youthful wine reveals considerable toasted oak at this early stage of development and will need time to settle down. Michaud's Chardonnays improve with age, and we expect this one to be no different.

Michaud Vineyard 2009 Pinot Blanc Chalone (\$30) 91

Dark yellow gold in color, this delicious Pinot Blanc is a rich and beautifully made wine. It offers highly aromatic ripe tropical fruit on the nose with a creamy mouth feel, honeyed fruit flavors, and a long finish. This Pinot Blanc was planted in early 1970s and is all dry farmed.

Michaud Vineyard 2006 Pinot Noir Chalone (\$38) 91

The medium-ruby colored Pinot Noir offers notes of wild dark cherry, earth and cedar on the nose. It is soft and delicate on the attack with bold fruit flavors and gripping tannins on the palate. Finishes with medium length and ripe flavors of cherry and earth. This wine was co-fermented with nine Pinot Noir clones using native yeast, aged for 18 months on the lees, and bottle aged for 3 years.

Michaud Vineyard 2005 Syrah Chalone (\$34) 92

This is a delicious Syrah. Semi-opaque ruby, it offers ripe blackberry and blueberry aromas with notes of spice. Aged for 22 months in barrel, it shows sweet ripe densely flavored fruit on the palate with rich blackberry and red fruit flavors and chalky notes on the finish. This Syrah is produced from cuttings of vines originally sourced from the Chave vineyard in Hermitage.



MORGAN

northern section of the Santa Lucia Highlands. Morgan produces a wide variety of high quality wines sourced from within the Santa Lucia Highlands and Monterrey County as a whole. Tel (831) 626-3700

Morgan Winery

Dan and Donna Lee are owners of this winery located in Salinas and its 65-acre organic certified Double L Vineyard situated in the

Morgan 2010 Riesling Double L Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands 88+

The 2010 Riesling is very aromatic offering with aromas of orchard fruit, lychee and rose petal. On the palate it is off-dry with a creamy mouth feel, firm structure, and good acidity through to the finish. Not at all cloying and terrific for spicy food. This is the first vintage of this delightful wine.

Morgan 2009 Chardonnay Double L Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$36) 91

Morgan's Chardonnay displays fragrant melon, tropical fruit and toasted oak aromas on the nose. Kept on the lees for 9 months (30% new) after fermentation, the wine reveals a ripe creamy mouth feel with rich fruit flavors, vanilla and minerals. This is a rich and full-bodied wine that is among the better Chardonnays of the Highlands.

Morgan 2009 Pinot Noir Double L Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$50) 92

The medium ruby Pinot Noir offers aromas of dark cherry, pomegranate and raspberry. On the palate it is ripe tasting with rich fruit flavors, toasted oak and a round mouth feel. Still young the wine has excellent balance with round tannins and a long finish. Young and promising.

Morgan 2009 Syrah Tierra Mar Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 90

Opaque ruby, the Syrah Tierra Mar displays earthy dark fruit and mocha aromas with slightly reductive notes. It is highly concentrated on the palate with ripe blackberry, boysenberry, and chocolate notes. This is a big shouldered wine rich in extract and having round tannins on the finish.

Paraiso Vineyards is family owned and operated by Rich Smith, son Jason and other members of the Smith family. Rich Smith is a pioneer of the Santa Lucia Highlands, having planted his first vineyard in 1973. The Paraiso Springs Vineyard consists of 400 acres with sixteen different vineyard blocks of varying elevations, micro-climates and soils. The wines are made by Rich Smith's son-in-law, the talented winemaker, David Flemming. The wines reviewed here are new releases of Paraiso's most interesting cuvees. (831) 678-0300

Paraiso 2009 Faite Santa Lucia Highlands (\$65) 90

The Faite is made entirely of fruit from selected rows of Block 7 of Paraiso's estate vineyard which consist of Pinot Noir clone 115 and 667. This wine exhibits a masculine structure consisting of a nose of dark cherry and plum, leather and earth. On the palate it reveals ripe red fruit flavors with herbal/stemmy notes. The wine has excellent acidity and balance, tannic grip and a long finish. Early in its evolution, it will undoubtedly improve and deserve a higher rating. Less than 150 cases produced.

Paraiso 2009 West Terrace Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 91

The West Terrace is also sourced from Block 7 of Paraiso's estate vineyard. It is medium ruby in hue and displays aromas and flavors of red berry fruit, smoke and earth. On the palate it offers a velvet texture, good fruit concentration with herbal notes and boasts round tannins on the palate with a long finish. Limited availability.

PESSAGNO
WINERY



Pessagno

This winery is owned and operated by Steve Pessagno. A former mechanical engineer, Steve earned a degree in Enology from California State University at Fresno in 1986 and went on to work for Jekel

Vineyards and Lockwood Vineyards and also has made the Manzoni wines. He purchased his own winery in 2004. Steve Pessagno produces small quantities of high quality Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Port. (831) 675-9463

Pessagno 2009 Riesling La Estancia Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$16) 89

This is a pleasant dry Riesling with fresh fruity aromas and ripe apple and pineapple notes with a touch of diesel on the nose. It has light fruit flavors on the palate with good acidity and a crisp dry finish.

Pessagno 2008 Chardonnay Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$32) 89+

The 2008 Chardonnay is sourced from the Talbott's Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, one of the region's finest. It displays aromas of fresh stone fruit and apple on the nose, and has a soft and creamy palate. Moderate oak is combined with good fruit intensity and balance, and a long finish.

Pessagno 2008 Intrinity Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$45) 90

Yellow gold in color, the Intrinity Chardonnay offers fresh melon fruit and toasted oak on the nose. It has ripe fruit flavors on the palate with good acidity and a long satisfying finish. A delicious wine sourced from neighboring Santa Lucia Highlands' vineyards and Steve Pessagno's best Chardonnay.

Pessagno 2008 Pinot Noir Four Boys Santa Lucia Highlands (\$55) 91

This Pinot Noir is produced from the estate's 3.5 acres of Pinot Noir vineyards. It displays a dark ruby color and offers black cherry fruit and notes of resin and spice. It is light and delicate on the palate with good structure and acidity and a long persistent finish.

Pessagno 2002 Port Hames Valley Vineyard Hames Valley (\$36) 92

Steve Pessagno, a Port enthusiast himself, produces excellent Port California style following the standards and methods of Portuguese Port Law for "declared" Vintage wines. His Port is a blend of the Portuguese varieties Touriga Nacional, Tinta Cao, Souzao and Tinta Roriz and sees two year of barrel aging. This 2002 vintage is rich and ripe tasting with flavors of raisins, licorice, and chocolate, a round full palate, natural sweetness, and a persistent finish.

Pessagno 2005 Port Hames Valley Vineyard Hames Valley (\$36) 89+

The 2005 Port is also delicious but lacks the depth and richness of the older vintage. It combines red and blackberry fruit flavors with notes of licorice and chocolate. It has good structure and acidity for aging and a pleasant finish.

Pelerin Wines

Chris and Cathy Weidemann, former students at U.C. Davis founded Pelerin (Pilgrim in French), a small artisan winery. Chris serves as winemaker, having worked at Newton Vineyard and Morgan Winery and alongside John Kongsgaard and Dean De Korth, two of California's top winemakers. Cathy, the daughter of Rick Smith of Paraiso Vineyard, is responsible for management and marketing. The wines reviewed here are new releases and indicative of Chris Weidemann's excellent winemaking.

Tel 831-320-0146

Pelerin 2009 Les Tournesoles Santa Lucia Highlands (\$27) 89

Les Tournesoles is a blend of 68% Roussanne and 32% Viognier. Light hay in color, it offers attractive aromas of white peach, pear, honeysuckle and melon. Aged in oak for 6 months, it has a creamy mouth feel, a soft texture, excellent balance, and a medium long finish.

Pelerin 2008 Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$54) 92

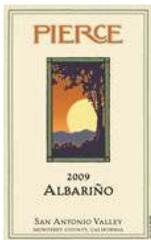
The Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard is a very fruit forward wine with aromas of dark cherry, plum toasted oak and earth notes. It is full flavored on the palate with a velvet texture, beautiful balance, ripe tannins and a long finish. Outstanding.

Pelerin 2008 Syrah Les Violettes Santa Lucia Highlands (\$36) 90

The cool climate Syrah Les Violettes has a medium ruby hue and offers perfumed aromas of blackberry, licorice and garrigue with red berry accents. On the palate, it reveals delicious black fruit flavors with good balance, firm tannins and a persistent and flavorful finish.

Pelerin 2007 Syrah Mesa del Sol Vineyards Arroyo Seco (\$27) 87+

The warm climate Syrah Mesa del Sol Vineyards has an opaque ruby hue and aromas of black fruit, charred oak, and roasted meat on the nose. It is a rather rustic wine, monolithic in character, light on the palate with dry tannins and a coarse finish.



Pierce Ranch Vineyards

Located in the San Antonio Valley at the far southern end of Monterey County, Pierce Ranch Vineyards is owned and operated by Josh Pierce. Pierce Ranch's 33 acres, first planted in 1999, are devoted primarily to Petite Sirah and other white and red white varieties, particularly Portuguese

and Spanish, such as Trincadeira, Tinta Bairrada, Albariño, Tempranillo, and Cosecheiro. The wines are well-made and of excellent quality. Josh Pierce serves as winemaker and is assisted by Ian Brand. Tel (831) 372-8900

Pierce Ranch 2010 Albariño San Antonio Valley (\$16) 89

The pale straw Albariño offers fragrant tropical fruit and citrus aromas. Fermented and aged in stainless steel and French oak, it reveals a rich and creamy palate with hints of white pepper and citrus and a pleasantly tangy finish. Sourced from the estate vineyard's limestone soils situated at 1,100 ft and from the Rias Baixas clone.

Pierce Ranch 2009 Albariño Sur Lie San Antonio Valley (\$22) 89+

This Albariño is barrel fermented sur lie in 33% new French oak. Yellow straw in color, it combines notes of citrus and toasted oak on the attack with creamy apple, lime zest, and almond nuances on the palate. It has a ripe round palate with superb acidity and offers an interesting alternative to the non-oaked Albariño.

Pierce Ranch 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon San Antonio Valley (\$18) 89

The Cabernet Sauvignon boasts a dark ruby color and aromas of blackberry, cassis and toasted oak. On the palate it offers flavors of concentrated black fruit, sweet oak and herbs, gritty tannins and a long persistent finish.

Pierce Ranch 2007 Petite Sirah San Antonio Valley (\$18) 91

Petite Sirah ripens well in San Antonio. This opaque ruby bottling has a complex nose of dark cherry, blackberry fruit, chocolate and violets. On the palate it reveals more lush ripe black fruit with a soft voluptuous texture and firm tannins on the finish.

Pierce Ranch 2008 Petite Sirah Block One San Antonio Valley 92

This Petite Sirah sourced from limestone and calcerous rock is from one of six vineyard blocks on Pierce Ranch. It exhibits boysenberry and dark chocolate shavings on the nose. Aged in 60% new oak, the wine boasts a refined palate with velvet mouth feel, round tannins and a persistent finish.

Pierce Ranch 2007 Tempranillo San Antonio Valley (\$20) 89

The Tempranillo reveals a dark ruby color and aromas of dark cherry, leather, herbs, and earth. Aged in French, Hungarian and American oak for 18 months, it shows lovely dark cherry and plum flavors on the palate with spicy oak and dry tannins.

Wines Tasted:

Pierce Ranch 2006 Vinho Doce San Antonio Valley 375 ml (\$23) 89, Pierce Ranch 2009 GSP San Antonio Valley (\$15) 88+, Pierce Ranch 2008 Cosecherio San Antonio Valley (\$22) 89

Scheid Vineyards

One of the largest and most successful family wineries in Monterey County, Scheid Vineyards owns more than 10 vineyards consisting of 4500 acres, and its winery in the Greenfield area produces up to 2 million cases of wine annually. Most of the Scheid wines are produced under contract from other wineries, although it also turns out 8,000 cases of wine under its own label at different price points. The wines reviewed here are some of their regular wines and the top of line reserve wines, and both are excellent quality. Tel (831) 655-9990

Scheid 2009 Viognier Monterey (\$24) 88

Stone fruit with a floral note grace the bouquet of this Viognier produced from the fruit of a single block of vines within Scheid's San Lucas Vineyard. It's a nicely balanced wine with crisp acidity, but there's not a lot of varietal character on the palate. Still, it's an attractive and easy to drink wine.

Scheid 2008 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Estate Monterey 89+

Made from hand harvested grapes of the Baja Viento Vineyard and fermented in oak barriques. This is a very nicely balanced wine showing light toasted oak flavors along with rich orchard fruit with tangerine and lime zest notes. Rich, flavorful with good acidity and sustained flavorful finish. Very good.

Scheid 2008 Pinot Gris Monterey (\$19) 88

The cool 2008 growing conditions in the Salinas Valley resulted in harvesting Pinot Gris a full 44 days later than the previous year. Perhaps that's why this Pinot Gris has more intense, complex flavors than often found with this varietal. Melon shows on the nose while the palate has notes of honeydew, tangerine and just a hint of resin. It finishes with brisk acidity and good length. The fruit comes from the Mesa del Rio Vineyard on the east side of the Salinas Valley.

Scheid 2007 Chardonnay Reserve Monterey Riverview Vineyard (\$45) 90

This flavorful California Chardonnay has a striking green-tinted, medium straw color. Although this wine is now four years past the vintage, it maintains a very fresh ripe citrus and pineapple bouquet with notes of butterscotch and rich smoky oak that carry over to the palate. It's a well-balanced wine with good fullness on the mid-palate and brisk acidity on a long finish. Smokey toasted oak makes itself known but not nearly as prominently as one would expect from 20 months in oak. The fruit for this wine comes from Scheid's Riverview Vineyard in the foothills of the Gabilan Mountains.

Scheid 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve Monterey (\$50) 91

The 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve is a blend of fruit from four different Monterey County vineyards, all of which benefit from the early afternoon cooling winds that roar down the Salinas River Valley. The wine shows beautiful purity of red cherry fruit with raspberry and light violet notes on the nose and a medium weight, velvet-like palate of concentrated fruit. It finishes with tannic grip and lingering cherry essence. Aged for 20 months in 100% new French oak, there is noticeable wood on the finish.

Scheid 2007 Claret Reserve Monterey (\$60) 90

The 2007 Claret Reserve is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc. This very ripe attractive earthy blend boasts rich black cherry /compote flavors, a soft round palate, toasted oak and good acidity on the finish.

Scheid 2008 Petite Sirah Monterey (\$35) 89

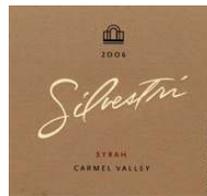
Opaque ruby. This Petite Sirah exhibits attractive juicy blackberry and plum fruit aromas that are mirrored on the palate with notes of sweet oak. It is nicely concentrated with a lush mouth feels, good acidity and gripping tannins on the finish.

Scott Family Estate 2009 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$25) 90

This lovely Chardonnay offers aromas of apples and citrus with light toasted oak. It reveals freshness on the palate with rich spicy melon flavors, excellent balance and a long satisfying finish. Produced from family farmed Dijon clonal selections in Arroyo Seco. The winery also produces an estate Pinot Noir not reviewed here. Rutherford Wine Company

Sequana 2009 Pinot Noir Sarmiento Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$32) 91

Medium ruby, the Sequana Pinot Noir shows fresh and flavorful dark cherry with sweet oak on the nose and lush palate. This Pinot Noir is produced by winegrower James MacPhail from the grapes of the Sarmiento Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands. The grapes come from two separate 10-year old vineyard blocks, each with different clones.



Silvestri Vineyards

Located in Carmel Valley some 15 miles from the Pacific Coast, Silvestri Vineyards is owned by Alan Silvestri a highly accomplished film composer/musician. Alan and wife Sandra and their children moved to

Carmel Valley from Los Angeles in 1989. In 1998 they began planting 10+ acres of vines and had their first commercial vintage in 2003. The winery produces good quality Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Syrah with winemaking assistance provided by Mark Chesebro..

Silvestri Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Carmel Valley (\$20) 89

The 2009 Chardonnay displays a medium lemon color and aromas of tropical fruit and toasted oak that are mirrored on the palate. The wine is well made, nicely balanced, medium-bodied, and has a crisp long finish.

Silvestri Vineyards 2007 Pinot Noir Carmel Valley (\$35) 90+

The 2007 Pinot Noir has a medium ruby hue and aromas of blueberry, plum, spice and toasted oak. It is soft and smooth on the attack and offers concentrated red fruit flavors with excellent mouth feel and balance, soft tannins and a long and delicious finish. A wine to pair with grilled lamb or pork loin.

Silvestri Vineyards 2006 Syrah Carmel Valley (\$16) 90

The Syrah is medium dark ruby in color and offers earth and spicy blackberry fruit with licorice and loam on the nose. On the palate it reveals good acidity and structure with lots of tannic grip on the mid-palate and finish. A dense flavorful wine that still needs time in the bottle.

Sycamore Cellars

After growing grapes for more than 15 years, Sycamore Cellars began making its own wine in 2008. The 71 acre vineyard is situated in the warm arm of Arroyo Seco and is well suited for growing red grape varieties and Chardonnay. Dan Karlsen, the current winemaker at Talbott Vineyards and Mike Levin formerly of Kendall Jackson, have helped produce the wine.

Sycamore Cellars 2009 Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$22) 87

Light yellow straw, the young 2009 Chardonnay displays light orchard fruit and citrus with some lees notes on the nose. Fermented in neutral oak, it is also dry on the attack with prominent acidity and light zesty notes.

Sycamore Cellars 2009 GSP Arroyo Seco (\$18) 89+

The GSP combines Grenache, Syrah and Petite Sirah with a touch of Cinsault. Barrel fermented in neutral oak, it offers ripe plum, cinnamon, fresh herbs and a hint of chocolate. Straightforward and easy drinking, the wine finishes medium long with lots of bright fruit and good acidity.

Sycamore Cellars 2009 Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco (\$24) 89

This young medium ruby Pinot Noir offers fresh red cherry aromas that are mirrored on the palate. On the palate it offers flavorful dark cherry fruit with good freshness and acidity, good structure and balance, and lots of tannic grip. Sourced from Dijon clones 667,777, and 115.

Sycamore Cellars 2008 Syrah Arroyo Seco (\$18) 87

The Sycamore Syrah is dark ruby in color and offers dark cherry, chocolate and earth aromas on nose. On the palate it displays a soft attack and earthy rustic fruit flavors with gentle tannins and a lush finish.

TALBOTT



Talbot Vineyards

Founded by Rob Talbot a quarter century ago, Talbot Vineyards produces outstanding Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Its grapes are sourced from estate vineyards in two Monterey

County AVAs, the Carmel Valley and the Santa Lucia Highlands. Talbot offers excellent and highly affordable wines in its Kali Hart series as well as higher end single vineyard and special cuvee wines in its Diamond T series. Winemaking at Talbot is under the direction of the highly creative and unorthodox winemaker, Dan Karlsen. Dan spent many years at Chalone and only joined Talbot a few years ago. Tel. (831) 659-3500

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Logan Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands (\$22) 90

The Logan Chardonnay, a selection from Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, has a refined bouquet of flinty minerals and ripe orchard fruit. It reveals a clean and elegant palate with concentrated fruit flavors, excellent structure, and good acidity. Impressive.

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Chardonnay Sleepy Hollow Vyd Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 91

The Sleepy Hollow Chardonnay is from Talbot's own estate in the Santa Lucia Highlands. It displays a yellow hue and aromas of flowers, fresh pear and melon fruit on the nose and palate. It is nicely balanced with good structure, moderate oak flavors, excellent acidity and a good firm finish. Top-of-the-line Chardonnay.

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Logan Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$25) 92

The Logan Pinot Noir exhibits a medium ruby color and reveals black cherry fruit on the nose and palate with notes of toasted oak. It is soft on the attack with good concentration and balance with herbs and spice. It is a nicely structured wine and finishes long.

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Sleepy Hollow Vyd Santa Lucia Highlands (\$40) 91

The 2009 Pinot Noir Sleepy Hollow enjoys a medium ruby color and aromas of red cherry, earth and spice with a touch of herbs. Medium weight and somewhat lighter than the Logan, it reveals nicely concentrated fruit and full ripe tannins on the palate. A terrific bottling.

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Diamond T Vineyard Monterey (\$52) 90+

This is the inaugural release of the Diamond T vineyard Pinot Noir. Crafted from selected barrels and aged in 100% new French oak, it offers earth and red berry fruit aromas with herbal notes and minerals. It is nicely balanced with good acidity and round tannins on the finish. The Diamond T Vineyard was planted in 1982 and is located on a 1,200 foot mountaintop 8 miles from Carmel Bay.

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Cuvee RFT Diamond T Vineyard Monterey (\$70) 93

This is a very special Pinot Noir named in honor of the patriarch of the family Robert Flook Talbot (RFT). Sourced from the low-yielding Diamond T Vineyard, it is medium-ruby in color and offers pure dark red cherry and plum aromas and flavors. Aged for 12 months in new French oak, it displays a beautifully balanced lush palate of ripe flavors, round tannins and a long lasting finish. Outstanding.

Other Wines Tasted:

Talbot Vineyards 2009 Kali Hart Chardonnay Monterey (\$19) 87+, Talbot Vineyards 2009 Kali Hart Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$21) 88

Testarossa Winery

Testarossa Winery is owned and operated by Rob and Diana Jensen, both Silicon Valley engineers with a passion for wine. The winery was founded in the garage of their home in Sunnyvale in 1993. In the late '90s Testarossa moved to its current facilities, an imposing 19th century Jesuit-owned Novitiate winery in Los Gatos. Testarossa owns no vineyards and sources fruit from several vineyards in Santa Barbara County, Sonoma County and Monterey County. The grapes for half of its total production (13,000 cases of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Syrah) are sourced from top Santa Lucia Highlands vineyards. Bill Brosseau has been Testarossa's winemaker since 2003.

Testarossa Winery 2009 Chardonnay Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$44) 92

The Chardonnay Rosella's Vineyard is an elegant wine showing aromas and flavors of orchard fruit and citrus. It has rich and focused fruit flavors on the palate with beautifully integrated oak and a creamy mouth feel. The wine is beautifully balanced and has excellent acidity on the finish.

Testarossa Winery 2009 Pinot Noir Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$59) 93

The Garys' Pinot Noir shows ripe red cherry fruit with notes of loam. It is soft and velvet smooth on the palate with notes of light wood spice. It has lovely balance, ripe tannins, and a long finish.

Testarossa Winery 2009 Pinot Noir Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$67) 92

Dark ruby to the core, the Pinot Noir Pisoni offers ripe, earth and fruit aromas of cherry and plum with spice and toasted oak. It is full on the palate with good concentration, a velvet texture and light tannins. A big, delicious wine.

Testarossa Winery 2009 Pinot Noir Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$59) 93

The Rosella's Pinot Noir is silky and elegant with delicious cherry and raspberry fruit and a touch of toast and earth. Soft on the palate it reveals excellent acidity and good grip on the finish.

Testarossa Winery 2009 Syrah Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$54) 92

This Syrah from Garys' vineyard boasts an opaque ruby hue and an earthy nose with notes of loam, blackberry fruit, smoke and charred oak. The wine is richly concentrated and delicious although heavily oaked and tannic and needs time to evolve.

Testarossa Winery 2009 Pinot Noir Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$56) 90

The Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noir is still somewhat restrained on the nose with light fruit and toasted oak, smoke and herbs. It will fill out in the bottle and can be expected to be rich tasting and more concentrated, as many of the wines are from this fine vineyard.



Ventana Vineyard/ Le Mistral

Ventana Vineyard is synonymous with its founder, Doug Meador, one of the pioneers of the Monterey County wine industry.

Doug Meador first planted the vineyard (2,500 acres) in 1974 in Arroyo Seco and in the ensuing years cultivated a wide variety of first class grape varieties and bottled high quality wines. Today, Ventana is owned and operated by Randy Pura and a small group of local growers. The winery also has a new sister vineyard, Le Mistral, founded by Joseph Phelps some 10 years ago outside of King City. Le Mistral is a terrific addition to the Ventana portfolio and is produced in Monterey County with technical support from Phelps' winemakers. The Ventana wines are well made and offer good value. Ventana also sells grapes to several producers in Monterey County AVAs.

Tel (831) 372-7415

Ventana Vineyards 2010 Pinot Gris Monterey (\$19) 88

This yellow-gold colored Pinot Gris is ripe in style with aromas and flavors of mango, passion fruit and peach. Fermented in stainless steel, it has good acidity and balance and light sweetness on the finish.

Ventana Vineyards 2009 Gewurztraminer Arroyo Seco (\$19) 88

Lychee, rose petal and a touch of cinnamon are combined in this Gewurztraminer. It is medium-bodied with good balance and light sweetness on the palate, followed by a crisp finish.

Ventana Vineyards 2009 Goldstripe Chardonnay Arroyo Seco (\$19) 88+

The Goldstripe Chardonnay displays green apple and tropical fruit aromas on the palate. Half fermented in oak and half in stainless steel, it goes through 50% malolactic fermentation with lees stirring. Fresh and well balanced on the palate, it shows restrained fruitiness, a soft and light creamy palate, and a crisp finish.

Ventana Vineyards 2008 Pinot Noir Mission Ranch Arroyo Seco (\$37) 91

A substantially better Pinot Noir is the 2008 Pinot Noir Mission Ranch, which is produced higher on the Mission Ranch bench land. It is an elegant wine with ripe cherry fruit flavors and lightly toasted oak. Although crafted the same way as the 2008 estate Pinot Noir, the Mission Ranch is more refined and flavorful with a silky texture and a long lasting finish.

Ventana Vineyards 2008 Syrah Arroyo Seco (\$19) 90

The 2008 Syrah offers ripe aromas of blackberry, black pepper and toasted oak. It is lush and concentrated on the palate with purity of fruit and notes of chocolate, soft round tannins and a long finish.

Ventana Vineyards 2008 Le Mistral Monterey (\$45) 92+

The 2008 Le Mistral is a delicious dark ruby Southern Rhone blend of 62% Syrah, 28% Grenache, 5% Alicante Bousche and 5% Petit Sirah. The wine boasts ripe red and black fruit with toasted oak aromas. On the palate it reveals elegance and perfect balance with soft round tannins and a persistent finish. The grapes for Le Mistral are sourced from the Le Mistral Vineyard in the foothills outside of King City in southern Monterey County. The vineyard was purchased by the new owners of Ventana in 2008.

Other Wines Tasted

Ventana Vineyards 2010 Dry Rosado Arroyo Seco (\$19) 87,
Ventana Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco (\$29) 88

Wente Vineyards

Founded over 125 years ago in Livermore Valley, Wente Vineyards is one of the oldest operating family wineries in California. Today it consists of more than 2,000 acres of vineyards which include 800 acres in Arroyo Seco. The two wines reviewed here, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, are premium wines from those vineyards.

Wente 2009 Chardonnay Riva Ranch Arroyo Seco (\$20) 88+

The Wente Chardonnay Riva Ranch is a ripe tasting wine with generous aromas of coconut, vanilla and tropical fruit on the nose, which are mirrored on the palate. Barrel fermented and aged in new and neutral oak for 10 months with "battonage," it reveals a creamy mouth feel, excellent balance, and a long finish.

Wente 2008 Pinot Noir Reliz Creek Arroyo Seco (\$22) 88

The medium ruby-colored Pinot Noir exhibits a nose of dark cherry and plum with notes of herbs, loam, and toasted oak. Fermented in stainless steel and aged for 20 months in new and neutral oak, it is a well-structured wine with a light mid-palate, tannic grip and a firm finish. Sourced from old Pommard and Martini clones.

Wrath

This small artisanal winery and its San Saba Vineyard are located just below the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. The estate consists of 72 acres planted with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah and other varieties. Steve McIntyre serves as vineyard consultant. Many of these handcrafted wines are produced in very small quantities from Wrath's own estate vineyard and neighboring vineyards. The wines are crafted by the young and talented winemaker Sabine Rodems.

Wrath 2009 Fermata Chardonnay Monterey (\$35) 91

This solid yellow Chardonnay is not allowed to complete secondary malolactic fermentation, thus the name Fermata. The wine shows a rich, complex nose and flavors of ripe tropical fruit, hazelnut and coconut with bright acidity. Made from a barrel selection of old Wente clones, it's aged in 55 percent new French oak. Delicious, in the California style.

Wrath 2009 Pinot Noir 115/667 Monterey (\$35) 91

This estate blend of the 115 and 667 Pinot Noir clones exhibits intense fruit and fatness on a full, round palate that reveals dark cherry, earth, and a hint of stems. It sees 45% new oak and 20% whole cluster fermentation. Finishes with a nice length and notable purity.

Wrath 2009 Pinot Noir Pommard 4/777 Monterey (\$35) 91

Although this estate blend of Pommard 4 and 777 clones sees the same 45% new oak as the 115/667 blend and just slightly (30%) more whole cluster fermentation, it reveals more assertive savory earth, stem and light vanilla notes. It shows concentrated fruit on a velvet palate.

Wrath 2009 Pinot Noir McIntyre Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$49) 92

The Pinot Noir McIntyre Vineyard is the most focused and well-structured of the numerous Pinot Noirs offered by Wrath. It shows hugely concentrated fruit with spice notes on the nose and palate along with a somewhat leaner mouth feel and firm tannins. It's made of 100% 115 clone and sees about 45% new oak and 20% whole cluster fermentation. Delicious.

Wrath 2009 Tondre Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands (\$49) 91

The Tondre Pinot Noir from the Tondre Grapefield Vineyard is a well-focused wine, linear and firm, with violets, dark cherry, and pomegranate on the nose and good fruit concentration with a touch of cocoa on the palate.

Wrath 2009 Pinot Noir San Saba Monterey (\$49) 92

The Pinot Noir San Saba is a beautiful, intensely flavored, juicy wine with a long, long finish. A melange of dark cherry, loam and smoky oak suffuse the palate. It's a barrel selection of Pommard 4, 1667 and 777 clones aged 10+ months in 45% new French oak. About 20% whole cluster fermented.

Wrath 2009 Syrah Fairview Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$39) 92+

A beautiful Syrah and perhaps our most favorite wine of the entire Wrath portfolio, this wine shows abundant fruit, but it's the roast meat, earth, chocolate and black pepper that provide the complexity that makes this wine so enjoyable. It's rich, focused, and finishes very long. Absolutely first rate!

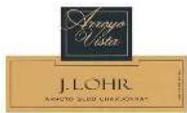
Other Wines Tasted:

Wrath 2010 Ex Anima Sauvignon Blanc Monterey (\$19) 89, Wrath 2009 Syrah Cerberus Monterey (\$38) 89+, Wrath 2010 Ex Anima Chardonnay Monterey (\$19) 90, Wrath 2009 Ex Vite Pinot Noir Monterey (\$25) 89, Wrath 2010 Ex Anima Syrah Monterey (\$25) 90, Wrath 2009 Syrah Doctor's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands (\$39) 91

Annex I

Selected Estate and Single Vineyards of Monterey County

Monterey has long been known as a region of growers more than one of producers. However, its reputation is changing with a number of premium Monterey wine producers making fruit from selected estate and single vineyards. Here we identify some of the estate and single vineyards in Monterey that are the source of the region's highest quality premium and super premium wines. There are too many such vineyards to include all of them, so the following list is our personal selection of many of the best. Also, we previously did an exhaustive report on the vineyards of the Santa Lucia Highlands in our Report #20: Wines of the Santa Lucia Highlands, so the following list includes only selected vineyards that provide fruit to multiple producers.



Arroyo Vista Vineyard (Arroyo Seco AVA)

J Lohr's Arroyo Vista Chardonnay, one of Monterey's finest Chardonnays, is grown in the Arroyo Vista Vineyard located

in the heart of the Arroyo Seco AVA. The vineyard soil is composed of loam sand and gravel and is intermixed with a base of rocks known as Greenfield potatoes. These small rocks absorb heat during the day and radiate back heat after sunset. They also effectively limit root growth to the top three to five feet of soil, helping to balance the fruit and shoot growth of the Chardonnay vines. J Lohr oversees over 1,100 acres of estate vineyards in Arroyo Seco and the Santa Lucia Highlands that produce Chardonnay, White Riesling, Pinot Noir and Valdiguié.

Cedar Lane Vineyard (Arroyo Seco AVA)

This 60-acre vineyard at the mouth of the Arroyo Seco Valley is owned by winemaker Mark Chesebro and two partners. The vineyard is farmed by Michael Griva, a fourth generation neighboring grower. (see Griva Vineyard). Founded at the base of the Santa Lucia Mountains, it contains sand and cobblestone soils for good drainage. The climate during the growing season typically involves foggy mornings, sunny mid-days and cool windy afternoons. The vineyard is planted to multiple varieties including 7 different clones of Pinot Noir and 6 clones of Syrah. It also enjoys a cool climate suitable for growing the Musque clone of Sauvignon Blanc and Vermentino.



Chalone Vineyard (Chalone AVA)

The Chalone Vineyard is located in a unique spot high in the Gabilan Mountains underneath the Pinnacles National Monument and just east of the Salinas River Valley.

It's rugged but beautiful territory with California's most unique high altitude terroir. Its soils consist of low-yielding, limestone deposits interspersed with decomposed granite and clay. Situated above the fog that covers the Salinas Valley much of the day, it is exposed to intense sunlight

tempered by mists and cool air from the Pacific Ocean. These growing conditions set Chalone Vineyard apart and account for the special qualities of its wines. Originally developed by the larger than life wine pioneer Dick Graff and partner Phil Woodward, Chalone Vineyard is today owned by the Diageo Corporation.

Chula Viña Vineyard (Monterey AVA)

Located in the foothills of the Gabilan Mountains, this vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It is on a bench overlooking the Salinas Valley, and cooling fog keeps Chula Viña fruit from ripening too quickly. Its Pinot Noirs are of Dijon clones 115, 777 and Pommard; its Chardonnay is of clone 76. Cima Colina's excellent Chardonnay is sourced from this vineyard.

Clark Ranch (Arroyo Seco AVA)

The Clark Ranch is set in the shadows of the Santa Lucia range and is slightly warmer than most vineyards in the valley. The site features alluvial fans of sand and gravel loam over ancient riverbed cobblestones referred to locally as Greenfield Potatoes. In addition to providing excellent drainage, the Greenfield Potatoes reputedly contribute to the distinct mineral quality of Clark Ranch wines. The vineyard was planted between 1993 and 1996 with a diverse array of clones and rootstocks. The wines from Clark, especially the Chardonnay, tend to be silky, elegant, spicy and structured. This vineyard, Rincon Vineyard and Hacienda Ranch are owned or leased by Kendall Jackson Vineyards and are sources of grapes for Carmel Road and other wines.



Coastview Vineyard (Monterey County)

This 35-acre, organically farmed vineyard is part of a 2,600 acre former hunting ranch. It is owned by Coastview Vineyards and

located in a remote area on top of the Gabilan Mountains just above Chualar Canyon on the eastern edge of the Salinas Valley ranging in altitude from 2,200 to 2,500 ft. It is about due east of Sleepy Hollow Vineyard at the north end of the Santa Lucia Highlands and about 20 miles east of the coast. It was planted in 1999 by owners John and Julie Allen at the suggestion of Doug Meador who at the time owned Ventana Vineyard. The soils are mainly decomposed granite and limestone. Coastview has 7 acres of Chardonnay of mostly clone 96, 15 acres of Syrah (clone 1 and Alban) and small amounts of other grapes. In addition to selling grapes to some of Monterey's best known wineries, Allen began producing his own wine in 2007.

Doctor's Vineyard (Santa Lucia Highlands AVA)

Doctor's Vineyard is a 243-acre vineyard owned by Hahn Estates/Smith and Hook Winery. It is located in the southern region of the Highlands at an altitude ranging from 250-900 ft and is planted with eleven different clones of Pinot Noir (including own-rooted Martini, Calera and the Dijon clones 667 and 777), five different clones of Syrah, and Malbec on 5C rootstock. Much of the Pinot Noir is grafted to what was originally Merlot. Grapes from Doctor's Vineyard show riper fruit flavors than vineyards such as Hahn's own Lone Oak Vineyard that is just a few miles to the North, closer to Monterey

Bay. Among the wineries purchasing fruit from Doctor's Vineyard is Wrath, which produces a stellar Doctor's Vineyard Syrah, and Lucienne Vineyards and Testarossa with their Doctor's Vineyard Pinot Noirs.



Garys' Vineyard (Santa Lucia Highlands AVA)

Garys' vineyard is jointly owned by boyhood friends Gary Pisoni and Gary Francioni, who established this 50-acre vineyard in 1997. The vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir and Syrah. The Pinot Noir is from the Pisoni clone grafted to 3309 and 5C rootstock. The vineyard soil is comprised of Arroyo Seco sandy loam. Garys' sits in the middle of the Highlands region at 300 feet above sea level and rises to 500 feet. Some of California's most prestigious wineries purchase fruit and produce wines bearing the Garys' Vineyard moniker, including AP Vin, Kosta Browne, Morgan, Roar, Siduri, and Testarossa. The wines made from Garys' fruit thus reflect both the winemaking techniques and viticultural preferences of the winemakers. Most of the wines from this vineyard show great depth of dark fruit flavors and a notable mineral and earth element on the Pinot Noirs.



Griva Vineyard (Arroyo Seco AVA)

Bernardus produces its Sauvignon Blanc from this 293-acre vineyard planted by Michael Griva for Bernardus. The vineyard sits next to the Santa Lucia Highlands in the Salinas Valley. The soils are sandy and rocky. The Griva family has farmed on the Central Coast for six generations. In 1905, they bought the current vineyard, which is comprised of alluvial soils, rocks, gravel and sand. Griva has also provided fruit to Mercy and other producers. It is planted with the Sauvignon Blanc Musque clone, Chardonnay of the Robert Young clone and Pinot Noir 667, 777, and 4 (the Pommard clone).

Heller Estate Organic Vineyards (Carmel AVA)

This estate is one of the first established in Carmel Valley in 1968. Its founder William Durney was one of the pioneers of the wine industry in Carmel Valley. In 1993 the winery was sold to the Hellers who upgraded the winery and the vineyards. Today the Heller Estate consists of 1000 acres of mountain vineyards (300 planted) overlooking the Cachagua Valley. The vines are essentially dry-farmed and 100% certified organic.



Le Mistral Vineyard (Monterey AVA)

The Le Mistral Vineyard is located in the Monterey AVA south of King City. It was first planted by Joseph Phelps in the mid-1990s to produce a Rhone blend that was aptly named Le Mistral after the blustery winds of the southern Rhone that are also found in Monterey Country. The vineyard is planted with Rhone varietals such as Syrah and Grenache and produces a very attractive Rhone blend. The Le Mistral Vineyard was recently purchased by Randy Rua of Ventana Vineyards and is managed with the assistance of Steve McIntyre of Monterey Pacific Vineyards. Le Mistral is one of the finest red blends produced in Monterey County.

Lockwood Oaks Vineyard (San Antonio AVA)

This 84-acre vineyard, which is part of a 245-acre estate, is owned and managed by grower Joyce Yates. The vineyard was planted between 1999 and 2000 and produces big red varietals like Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec. The soils are mainly Lockwood Loam, Gravelly Loam, and Shaly Loam. Lockwood Oaks sells fruit to Cima Colina, Estancia and Robert Mondavi, among other Monterey County wineries.



Marinus Vineyard (Carmel Valley AVA)

Located in upper Carmel Valley (Cachagua) at 1200 ft., the 41-acre Marinus Vineyard is owned by Bernardus winery. The vineyard is situated 13 miles from the Pacific coast and benefits from nightly cool breezes, which contribute to acid development. Planted in 1991, the vineyard consists of well-drained decomposed granite and chock. The vineyard is divided into small blocks, each with its own terroir according to soil type and exposure. The vineyard is the source of outstanding fruit for Bernardus' Bordeaux blend.



Pelio Vineyard (Monterey AVA)

Figge Cellars sources grapes from four vineyards in Monterey County, of which the Pelio Vineyard is perhaps the finest. The 15-acre vineyard sits on the North side of the Carmel Valley, at about 1,000 feet above sea level. Its cool growing climate produces high quality grapes at yields less than 2 tons per acre. The vineyard is planted with 12 acres of Pinot Noir and 3 acres of Chardonnay.

Pierce Ranch Vineyards (San Antonio AVA)

Located in the San Antonio Valley at the far southern end of Monterey County, Pierce Ranch Vineyards is owned and operated by Josh Pierce. Pierce Ranch's 33 acres, first planted in 1999, are devoted primarily to Petite Sirah and Portuguese and Spanish varietals like Trincadeira, Tinta Bairrada, Albariño, Tempranillo, and Cosecheiro.



Pinnacles Vineyard (Monterey AVA)

Estancia is based in Soledad on property previously owned by Paul Masson. The property was purchased by Augustin Huneus in 1986 and became Estancia's Pinnacles Vineyard. The vineyard, located on the east side of the Salinas Valley, was planted to cool climate varietals like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The Pinnacles Vineyard sits on sandy soils and was the first vineyard in California to install a permanent irrigation system. Estancia also owns the 80-acre Stonewall Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA which is 100% Pinot Noir.

Silacci Vineyard (Monterey AVA)

This 12-acre organically farmed vineyard is located at 400 ft. in the northern-most edge of the Santa Lucia Highlands mountain range, just north of the Santa Lucia Highland AVA. It is the northern most Pinot Noir vineyard in Monterey and yields elegant cool climate fruit. Located 18 miles from the Pacific Ocean, with a southeast exposure, it consists of nutrient depleted soils of Arroyo Seco sandy loams and has yields below two tons per acre. The Pisoni Clone was planted here in 1999. The vineyard sells its

grapes to ten different California wineries, including De Tierra in Monterey County. Owners Robert and Rusti Silacci are also sourcing grapes from this vineyard for Rustique Wines, a joint venture with Gary Pisoni and Tom Russell, owner of De Tierra.



Gravelstone Vineyard (Arroyo Seco AVA)

The Gravelstone Vineyard is a 135-acre property developed by pioneer, Bill Jekel, and is one of the main sources of grapes for Jekel Vineyards. It is located in the center of the Arroyo Seco AVA, northwest of the town of Greenfield, which gives it good exposure to afternoon cooling winds. This location is best for Chardonnay, which makes up the bulk of the vines at the site, as well as Riesling and Pinot Noir. Jekel Vineyards also sources Bordeaux varieties from the 122-acre Sanctuary Vineyard in the southeastern corner of the Arroyo Seco AVA.



Riva Ranch (Arroyo Seco AVA)

The Riva Ranch Vineyard is owned and operated by Wente Vineyards and is the source of the grapes for its Riva Ranch Chardonnay. Wente planted it in Arroyo Seco in 1962, and it is presently has two Wente clones—the original Clone 2A which provides intense varietal character and is low yielding and Clone 4, a second generation clone, and three Dijon clones. Wente also has grown Pinot Noir on the property since the early 1960s. Gravelly loam soils with rich shale and limestone deposits are found here. There are several blocks near Reliz Creek dating back to 1963 that are planted with the old Pommard and Martini clones.

Riverview Vineyard (Monterey AVA)

Riverview is one of Scheid Vineyards' quality growing parcels. It's 215 acres of decomposed granite soils are located on a bench that is the gateway to the Gabilans. Overlooking the Salinas River, it has a southwestern exposure and is subject to persistent morning fogs. It's mostly planted to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Other Scheid vineyards include Viento and Mesa del Rio in the Greenfield area and the warm San Lucas located south of King City. The Viento vineyard is the source of fruit for Scheid's Clone 667 Pinot Noir Reserve.



Rosella's Vineyard (Santa Lucia Highlands AVA)

This outstanding 50-acre vineyard is farmed by Gary Francioni and his wife Rosella. Rosella's Vineyard lies just north of Garys' Vineyard and is just about in the center of the Santa Lucia appellation with an ideal southeast exposure. Planted in 1996 on Arroyo Seco Sandy loam soil, Rosella grows Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and a small amount of Syrah. The Chardonnay is from Dijon clones 76, 95 and 96 and the Pinot Noir is from the Pisoni and Dijon 113, 667, 777, and 828 clones. It is trellised in the Vertical Shoot Position. Gary Francioni customizes his wine farming to the demands of the client, including irrigation, leaf pulling, cluster thinning, fertilizing, and timing of the harvest. Among the wineries producing Rosella Vineyard wines are Bernardus, Kosta Brown, Morgan, Pellerin, Roar, Siduri, and Testarossa. Rosella's Vineyard Pinot Noirs tend towards elegance and red fruit.

Sleepy Hollow Vineyard (Santa Lucia Highlands AVA)

This 450-acre hillside vineyard owned by the Talbott family is one of the more northerly-located vineyards in the SLH appellation. It is divided into Sleepy Hollow North and Sleepy Hollow South & West. Sleepy Hollow North is 115 acres of Chualar gravel-loam soil containing a high percentage of granite-based rock. The vineyard has a mainly northeast exposure. Sleepy Hollow South & West is divided into two blocks—Blocks A and B. Its soil is almost pure sand and gravel. Block A includes Chardonnay, Pinot Noir (Martini and Dijon clones 114 and 115), and Syrah plantings, while Block B is planted to Chardonnay (Wente clone) and Pinot Noir (Martini clone) only. The vines are over 30 years old. Some of the oldest Chardonnay plantings of the Wente clone are planted on their own rootstock, since the sandy soil is inhospitable to phylloxera. Wines carrying the "Sleepy Hollow Vineyard" designation include La Rochelle, Martin Alfaro, Pessagno, Talbott and Testarossa.

Sycamore Flat Vineyard (Arroyo Seco AVA)



The Sycamore Flat Vineyard has 60 acres planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Petite Sirah, Pinot Noir, Grenache, Cinsault, and Sangiovese. Nestled in the Santa Lucia Highlands and situated in the Arroyo Seco Canyon, it enjoys a micro climate different from the rest of the Salinas Valley. It is 10 degrees warmer and protected from the afternoon winds that affect the vineyards in the rest of the valley. The vineyard is owned and operated by Robbie Madsen and his family, who are also owners of Sycamore Cellars. Figge Cellars is among the wineries which sources Syrah grapes from this excellent vineyard.

Tondre Grapefield

Tondre Grapefield was established by father Tondre and son Joe Alarid. Planted in 1997, it currently consists of 100 acres of Pinot Noir planted to Dijon clones 777, 115, 667 and Pommard 4; the most recent plantings (in 2005) add clones 828 and 953 to the mix. The vine densities are 7x8, 4x8, 6x8 and 5x8 with an average of 1075 plants per acre with a NW-SE orientation. Yields are below two clusters per shoot with an average of thirteen shoots per vine, which yields 3.5 tons per acre. The soil consists of decomposed granite, gravel, and sandy loam. The vineyard is planted at 174 to 400 ft. Tondre has numerous customers for its fruit, including Bernardus, David Bruce, Cima Colina, Morgan, and Pellerin. Tondre can produce beautiful Pinot Noirs with somewhat spicy black and red fruit.



Zabala Vineyards (Arroyo Seco AVA)

Zabala is one of Monterey County's oldest vineyards, first planted in Arroyo Seco in 1972. It is located in the center of Monterey County bounded by the Santa Lucia bench and the Arroyo Seco River. It is known for its rocky, gravel soils and coastal breezes. Its grapes include Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Mercy Vineyards is among the wineries that source grapes from this vineyard.

Annex 2

Monterey's Innovative, Young Winemakers

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 annex we put the spotlight on these winemakers and their wines.

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, Michael 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.

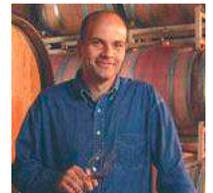


Annette Hoff, Winemaker, Cima Colina

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

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 at Morgan Winery.



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>



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.



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.



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.



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