



VINEYARD & VITICULTURE

In 2007, after an extensive search that spanned the West Coast of the United States, the Murphy family acquired an ideal unplanted 200-acre property in the hills of the Santa Maria Valley. Over the next two years, the Murphys, along with Santa Barbara County Vineyard Manager Jim Stollberg and Winemaker Dieter Cronje, meticulously planned the design of the Presqu'ile Vineyard with an emphasis on diversity. To achieve their vision, they mapped the site's deep sandy soils, distinct airflows, patterns of sunlight, hillside angles and elevations. With the insights derived from these measurements, they planted the vineyard to maximize the diversity of row directions, spacing, clones and rootstocks. To further augment this diversity with older vines, Presqu'ile also acquired an adjacent 11-acre parcel of Clone 777 and 667 Pinot Noir vines planted in 2001. Collectively, the result is a winemaker's dream, offering a treasure trove of individual blocks and sections, allowing Dieter to craft complex and layered small-lot wines.

One of the most essential elements in what makes the Presqu'ile Vineyard so special is the valley itself. The Santa Maria Valley American Viticultural Area (AVA) was established in 1981, making it the second oldest AVA in California after Napa Valley. It is also one of the world's most unique AVAs. Along with the nearby Sta. Rita Hills, the Santa Maria Valley benefits from the only two transverse mountain ranges on the entire West Coast of North and South America. Framed between the San Rafael Mountains to the north, and the Solomon Hills to the south, this geographic feature creates a natural funnel, drawing in cool marine air. Additionally, ocean temperatures just off the coast of Santa Maria are typically only about 55° to 59° F, further cooling the ocean breezes funneled into the valley. As a result, the average annual temperature is just 64° F, resulting in a true cool-climate viticultural region boasting one of the longest winegrowing seasons in California (125 days on average).

In fact, if the Santa Maria Valley were not situated in a sunshine-filled southerly latitude location, it would not be warm enough to fully ripen Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. But because it is, the long period of ripening yields complex wines with low pHs, exceptionally balanced natural acidity and intense flavors—all essential elements of great Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Adding to the quality of the region's grapes, the average rainfall in Santa Maria is only approximately 14 inches annually, meaning vine vigor can be controlled, and the irrigation can be tailored to needs of each block and vineyard section. In addition, the site's sand and sandy loam soils hold very little water, forcing the roots to dig down deep for nutrients, while contributing to low yields of ideally small clusters and berries.

The Presqu'ile Vineyard is located a mere 16 miles from the Pacific Ocean. With 73 total acres of vines, it features 32 acres and five clones of Pinot Noir, 17 acres and six clones of Chardonnay, 16 acres and six clones of Sauvignon Blanc, 6.5 acres and three clones of Syrah, and 1.25 acres of Nebbiolo. The vineyard includes three different kinds of rootstocks, as well as own-rooted vines. Ranging in elevation from 700 to 1,000 feet, the undulating site provides an array of exposures that add to the uniqueness of the different blocks. In keeping with the Murphy family's belief in stewardship and conservation, the Presqu'ile Vineyard is Sustainability in Practice (SIP) certified. Rigorous, non-negotiable and measured by an independent third-party auditor, SIP is widely considered the gold standard for sustainability certification. Unlike organic certification, which looks exclusively at chemical usage, SIP also audits social responsibility, water conservation, energy efficiency, clean water and much more.

While approximately 85% of the wine made at Presqu'ile is entirely estate grown, Presqu'ile also partners with a handful of the finest cool-climate vineyards in the region, including Rim Rock, Steiner Creek and the legendary Bien Nacido Vineyard.

Bien Nacido Vineyard

Originally planted in 1973 by the Miller family, Bien Nacido is located in the heart of the Santa Maria Valley, where it has achieved legendary status. It has been hailed as one of the "Top Ten Vineyards in the World" by Wine & Spirits, and one of "The Five California Vineyards You Need to Know" by The Wall Street Journal. In addition to being recognized for its remarkable Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Bien Nacido was also the first vineyard in California to grow cool-climate Syrah.

Today, Bien Nacido is still owned by the Miller family, and farmed by acclaimed vineyard manager Chris Hammell. Presqu'ile sources Pinot Noir from two prized blocks of Bien Nacido, including the coveted Block G, which was planted in 1973 and yields small clusters that produce a dense, sappy, structured expression of Pinot Noir, with exotic signature notes of Seville orange and five spice. Presqu'ile also sources grapes from the steep northwest-facing Block 44, which produces a more lush and fruit-driven expression of Pinot Noir.

Steiner Creek Vineyard

The Steiner Creek Vineyard is located on the Phelan Ranch, three miles north of Cambria in San Luis Obispo County. Members of the Phelan family have farmed the ranch for four generations, and in 2007 Greg Phelan planted 13.25 acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The vineyard features sandy, cobbled soils that yield miniscule quantities of very high-quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The characteristics of Steiner Creek's soils are markedly different from those found in Santa Maria Valley. It is also significantly cooler. These factors, and the severity of the site, lead to wines with a very distinctive set of aromas and flavors. As Steiner Creek's youthful vines have evolved they have continued to produce more and more complex wines.

Steiner Creek features an interplanting of Chardonnay clones 4, 76, 95 and 96. Together, these clones yield a medium-light bodied wine with bright acidity and layers of green apple, pear, peach blossom, flinty minerality and hints of Meyer lemon peel.

For its Pinot Noir selections, Steiner Creek has interplanted clones 667, 777, 115 and Pommard. In the growing conditions of Steiner Creek, these clones produce thick-skinned grapes that contribute to the color and body of the wines. At the same time, the wines have a palpable sense of their oceanic origins with excellent structure, pure, crystalline fruit notes and earthy minerality.

Rim Rock Vineyard

Also farmed by Greg Phelan (of Steiner Creek), Presqu'ile is the only winery to source Pinot Noir from this small 2-acre vineyard gem. First planted in 1988, Rim Rock is located just eight miles inland in southern San Luis Obispo County, on a southwest-facing slope comprised primarily of fine limestone-laden shaley loam. Known for its low yields and high-quality fruit, the vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir clones 667 and 115, with the 115 fruit being own-rooted. Because of its south-facing orientation, the fruit gets abundant sun, which adds to the depth and tannic nature of the Pinot Noir. Year after year, the yields are very small at Rim Rock—often just 1.5 to 2.0 tons an acre. Rim Rock produces a complex and deeply concentrated Pinot Noir, with silky tannins and abundant layers of black cherry, black currant, savory spices, cassis, dried meat and hints of forest floor.