

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S QUARTERLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

STORE HOURS



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LOSS OF A MONTEREY COUNTY WINE FOUNDING FATHER - *Richard Smith*



I met Rich Smith about eight years ago. I was pouring wine behind our tasting bar when a couple walked up and began talking to me. I was immediately struck with the genuine interest the gentleman showed in me, and his warming smile was comforting. Only later did I realize I was talking with one of the founding fathers of the Monterey County wine industry. And now, with his recent passing, I'm not at all surprised to hear of all the similar impressions of Rich shared by all who had the good fortune to meet him.

For those who do not recognize his name, Rich is a legend of the Monterey County wine industry. Sure, we've been growing wine grapes in Monterey County for some time, the first vines were planted by Spanish missionaries.

And in the mid-20th century, Monterey County became a popular destination to grow grapes for mass production wines. But it wasn't really until the 1970s that the County's potential to be something more started to become realized. That realization continues to this day, thanks in many ways to a few Monterey County wine industry pioneers, including Rich Smith.

Rich and his wife Claudia first moved to Monterey County in the early 70s and began growing wine grapes. What was originally intended to be a short-term job turned into a lifetime pursuit. Did Rich realize he was not only securing his own legacy, but that of Monterey County as a premiere wine region, when he planted his first vines on the slopes of what is now the Santa Lucia Highlands? Even if he did not fully realize the potential initially, he surely did later.



Along with Nicky Hahn, (yes, that Hahn name should look familiar to those familiar with Monterey County wines), Rich was behind the movement to establish the Santa Lucia Highlands as its own distinct wine grape growing region (AVA) in the early 1990s. Rich was such an important player in the initial process and beyond, that the Director of the Santa Lucia Highlands Wine Artisans collective recently stated: "There is not a single grower or vintner on the Central Coast who has not benefited from Rich's tireless work in promoting the region." Today the Santa Lucia Highlands is considered one of the world's best wine locations.



But let's get back to some roots. Rich and his wife started as growers. Growing the grapes remained a vitally important aspect of the operation to Rich even after he began making wine as well. By 1987, the growing business was doing well enough to purchase a 350-acre vineyard. In 1989, the first Paraiso Vineyard-labeled wines, a Pinot Noir and a Chardonnay, were made from fruit grown on the Paraiso Vineyard estate vineyard.

Continued Inside

RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

PELERIN - 2012 SLH Pinot Noir



Winery: Each of Pelerin's wines entails a unique and delicious sensory experience. In part, this is because they use a simple approach to winemaking. Everything is accomplished by relying on twenty five years of experience and five basic senses rather than through any processing technology or numbers. In this way, the wines have a very natural “spirit” and coherence which arises as a result of each decision and action along the way.

Tasting Notes: The 2012 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir leads with aromas of ripe cherries, baking spices, and mint. Medium-full bodied on the palate, yet showing bright acidity, the flavor profile moves toward fresh strawberries, caramel, with a touch of black pepper and licorice on the finish. Overall, the balance and presentation of the wine represents a fine hybrid of the California and Burgundian styles.

Pelerin
2012 SLH Pinot Noir

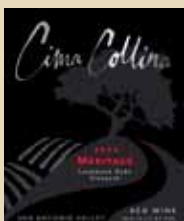
Alcohol
14.5%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Composition
100% Pinot Noir

Aging Potential
7-8 years

CIMA COLLINA - 2010 Meritage



Vineyard: Monterey County is easy to understand. The further north you are, the cooler the climate. Head south and you find progressively warmer temperatures. Cima Collina's 2010 Meritage was grown in the Lockwood Oaks Vineyard, owned and managed by the fabulous Joyce Yates, in the southernmost reaches of Monterey County in the “San Antonio Valley” AVA. She grafted over some of her Cabernet Sauvignon at our request to produce the Petit Verdot, Malbec and Merlot in this blend. The rocky soil, southfacing aspect and hot daytime/cool nighttime temperatures assure wonderful ripe flavors with less astringency than typically associated with Bordeaux varietals. This is the third Meritage they have produced from this vineyard.

Winemaking: They harvested the Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec on October 20, 2010 and the remaining grapes on October 30, 2010. In the winery they sorted the bunches to assure only the best and most consistently ripe bunches made their way into the wine and finally aged the blend in French & American oak barrels for 14 months.

Tasting Notes: The result is a rich, dark wine that is luscious in character. Black currant, spice, chocolate and cocoa notes rise up in the aromas. The flavors are infused with blackberry fruit, more black currant, cocoa and mocha, with a touch of herbal and spice characters. The wine is rich, the finish long.

Cima Collina
2010 Meritage

Alcohol
14.7%

AVA
San Antonio Valley

Composition
54% Cabernet Sauvignon
5% Malbec
13.6% Cabernet Franc
13.6% Merlot
13.8% Petit Verdot

Aging Potential
8-10 years

HELLER - 2012 Malbec



Winery: Overlooking the Cachagua region of Carmel Valley, (“Cachagua” is believed to be an Indian derivative of the French “cacher” and the Spanish “agua” – “hidden waters”), and framed by the dramatic surrounding hills, lie the beautiful vineyards of the Heller Estate Organic Vineyards. The vineyards are planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Noir, Petite Sirah, Malbec and Petit Verdot at an altitude of 1200 – 1500 feet.

Vineyard: Certified organic since 1996, Heller Estate has been a pioneer of organic grape growing in the Carmel Valley Appellation. The organic practices of cover cropping, composting, and water conservation drive the superior grape quality and signature Heller Estate wines. Heller Estate is dedicated to growing each and every varietal with respect for the soil, water and air and is proud of the minimal impact on the surrounding environment.

Tasting Notes: Nicely layered, integrated nose with fruit forward notes of freshly crushed blackberries/cassis and rounded notes of sweet oak and cedar. Bright, explosive mouth feel with sour blackberry and cherry being predominant. Medium-light body with light tannins and a crisp fruity finish. This zesty Malbec is a perfect example of how lovely and fruity this wine can be while still having enough tannin structure to hold up to any type of beef dish from barbeque to filet mignon.

Heller
2012 Malbec

Alcohol
13.3%

AVA
Carmel Valley

Composition
100% Malbec

Aging Potential
8-10 years

Cover Article Continued



Paraiso Vineyards has been a primary member of Monterey County's top quality wineries ever since. With a beautiful tasting room at their Santa Lucia Highlands estate, another now open in Carmel-by-the-Sea, and a presence stretching across the country and internationally, Paraiso Vineyards is now a giant in Monterey's wine industry. And Rich's positive influence didn't just bring success to Paraiso Vineyards and the greater Santa Lucia Highlands, but to Monterey County's wine industry as a whole.

Rich was a founding member and past President of what is now the Monterey County Growers and Vintners Association. And anyone who's fortunate enough to know A Taste of Monterey has the legacy of Rich Smith to thank... as Rich was also one of our own founding fathers.

Rich will be missed by all who knew him. But his legacy will continue, not just in the ever-growing reach of Paraiso Vineyards, but also through the ever-growing reach of Monterey County wines.

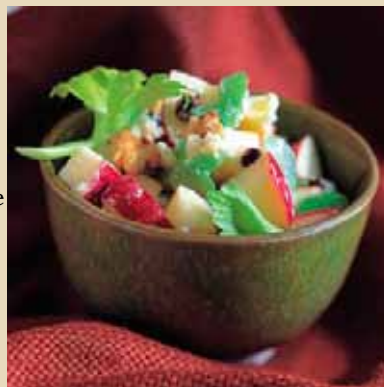
Bryce Ternet - is a contributing editor and is the author of: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula."

RECIPE

Apples and Walnuts with Stilton Cheese

Ingredients

6 oz.	Stilton cheese
1 Tbs.	extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs.	red wine vinegar
2 Tbs.	heavy cream
1 tsp.	freshly ground pepper
6	sweet eating apples, such as Braeburn, Gala or Red Delicious, unpeeled, cored and cut into 1/2-inch dice
4	celery stalks, thinly sliced, plus several whole celery leaves for garnish
2 Tbs.	dried currants or raisins
1 Tbs.	fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup	coarsely chopped walnuts, toasted



Directions

1. Put one-third of the cheese in the bottom of a large bowl.
2. Add the olive oil and, using a fork, mash together the cheese and oil.
3. Add the vinegar and continue to mash and to mix.
4. Add the cream and pepper and mix well to make a thick, chunky dressing.
5. Add the apples, sliced celery, currants and lemon juice to the dressing and mix well.
6. Crumble the remaining cheese and sprinkle it over the salad along with half the walnuts.
7. Mix them into the salad gently and evenly.
8. Transfer the salad to a serving bowl and garnish with the remaining walnuts and the celery leaves. Serve immediately.

Serves 6

VISITING Varietals



PINOT BLANC

Pronunciation:
pee noh blahnk

Pinot Blanc may not receive the same respect given to noble varieties like Chardonnay and Riesling, or even other Alsatian whites like Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer. But at its best, with grapes from low-yielding vines, Pinot Blanc can produce exciting values: creamy, medium bodied wines, with honey-like aromas and flavors.

A relative of both Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc is grown in a number of countries under a variety of names. In Germany, it is Weisseburgunder, while in Italy, it is called Pinot Bianco.

Still, the fact that we are most familiar with the grape as Pinot Blanc is a dead tip-off that the best examples of the grape come from France. In France, Pinot Blanc is most notably grown in Alsace, where it is either bottled on its own, used as a major component in the sparkling wine Cremant D'Alsace, or blended with other varieties in the region's traditional wine, Edelzwicker. We don't see much Edelzwicker, since the export market for this wine is virtually non-existent. But we're happy that we can get a decent amount of single-varietal Pinot Blanc from Alsace; the wine is made in some form by almost every Alsatian winery. These can be rich, sometimes tropical, smoky wines that are low in acidity. Look for offerings from Domaine Marcel Deiss and Domaine Schoffit.

In the U.S., some California vintners are producing Pinot Blanc with the same techniques used to make expensive Chardonnay, including new oak and malolactic fermentation.

CHEESE

Varietals



STILTON

Pronunciation: STILL-tuhn

This is one of the best British cheeses, worthy of a sonnet. It is a quintessential English cheese, suitable not only for celebrations, but also to perk up everyday dishes. It is the only British cheese to have a Certification Trade Mark and an EU Protected Name.

The Stilton cheese can only be produced in the three counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. The cheese is made from locally produced cow's pasteurized milk. It is made in a cylindrical shape and allowed to form its own coat or crust. The distinctive feature of this cheese is magical blue veins radiating from the centre of the cheese.

Traditionally, this cheese has been paired with sherry and port wine. It is also a good choice to go with walnuts, crackers, biscuits and breads.









It is smooth and creamy with complex, with a slightly acidic flavour when young. As it matures so the texture becomes softer and creamier with a mellow flavor. It makes an excellent dessert cheese and is traditionally served with Port at Christmas. However, it can be enjoyed all year round and is worth trying with a dark cream sherry or a sweet dessert wine. It is also very versatile and can be used in hot or cold recipes.

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