



# The International Wine Review

May 2013

## Report #36: The Wines of Santa Barbara

### Introduction



This report examines one of the most exciting wine regions in California—the wine producing valleys of Santa Barbara. It is a wine region of great diversity that enjoys a cool climate for

producing high quality Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, and other varieties. Since the release of the movie *Sideways* in 2004, Santa Barbara and its wines, especially Pinot Noir, have become world famous. However, the story of the land, the winemakers, and their outstanding wines is not well known and partly motivates this report.

After a brief introduction to the geography of Santa Barbara, we look into the history of its wine industry. We explore the growth and development of the vineyards and wineries in the Santa Maria Valley, the Santa Ynez Valley, the Santa Rita Hills and other smaller growing regions. Since the special vineyards of Santa Barbara are not well known outside the region, we provide an annex describing the most important ones that are a source of fruit to multiple Santa Barbara wineries. We also discuss how over the decades Santa Barbara became an important producer of premium wines and the roles played by many pioneers and investors whose passion and determination built the wine industry.

The report also examines the terroir that contributes so importantly to the rich diversity of Santa Barbara's growing areas for cool climate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah and the warmer conditions for growing Grenache and other Rhone and Bordeaux varieties, including Sauvignon Blanc. We also identify the high quality and diversity of Santa Barbara's vineyards and discuss the dramatic improvements in viticulture over the past several decades, including the introduction of sustainable viticulture practices.

### *In this Issue*

Introduction .....	1
Santa Barbara's Top Producers .....	3
The Geography of Santa Barbara .....	4
Historical Highlights .....	4
Climate and Soils .....	7
Viticulture and the Vineyards .....	9
The Grapes and Wines .....	11
Chardonnay .....	11
Pinot Noir .....	12
Syrah .....	14
Sauvignon Blanc .....	14
The Restaurants of Santa Barbara Wine Country .....	15
Tasting Notes and Ratings .....	17
Annexes	
1. The Vineyards of Santa Barbara .....	42
2. Map of Santa Barbara County Wine Regions ..	46

There are more than 100 wineries, large and small, producing premium wines today in Santa Barbara County. The vast majority of these wineries craft well under 5 thousand cases. The majority of the producers in the Santa Maria and Santa Ynez valleys are also family owned and managed. The report examines the wines produced in Santa Barbara, focusing on the three most important varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. We identify the top producers, their winemakers and the wines they produce. In the last section we provide tasting notes and ratings of the more than 300 wines tasted for this report.

As Santa Barbara has become better known for its wines, it has also become an outstanding destination for wine

# Introduction

*Continued from page 1*

and food enthusiasts. Today, in the city of Santa Barbara and throughout Santa Barbara County, there are countless opportunities to taste wine while enjoying the local cuisine. We explored many of these opportunities during our visit and report on the many fine dining venues in some detail.

The future of Santa Barbara County's wine industry looks bright. The improvements in viticulture and winemaking of the past decades have increased the quality of the wines and attracted the attention of the wine media and buyers of fine wine across the United States. The future growth of the industry depends in part on the effectiveness of its marketing promotion activities like those carried out on behalf of all the AVAs under the umbrella of the Santa Barbara County Vintner's Association.

**Acknowledgements.** It would not have been possible to produce this report without the cooperation and collaboration of numerous individuals and organizations. First and foremost, we would like to thank The Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association for their support and collaboration. In particular, we wish to thank Jim Fiolek, former Director of the Association, for his keen interest in the report and his help at every stage of our work. We also appreciate the help provided by Fran Clow in arranging our trip to Santa Barbara, the schedule of visits to the wineries and other logistics. Many individuals in Santa Barbara were very generous to us during our visit, inviting us into their homes and showing us the local culinary scene. In particular, we would like to thank Steve and Cathy Pepe, Ken Volk, John and Christie Hilliard, Frank Ostini, Budi Kazali, and Doug Margerum. We also appreciate the help from Nicholas Miller in organizing a vineyard visit and tastings at Bien Nacido Vineyard and the Central Coast Wine Services. We very much appreciate the warm welcome we were given by so many winemakers and growers during our visit. Finally, we owe a special debt of gratitude to Ken Brown and Jeff Newton for advising and educating us and correcting sections of this report. Obviously, all remaining errors are our own responsibility alone.

Mike Potashnik and Don Winkler

The i-WineReview is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, VA 22101. Our email is: [info@iwinereview.com](mailto:info@iwinereview.com) Rates for one-year subscriptions are \$69 for the online edition and \$89 for the print edition. Combined online and print subscriptions are \$99 for 1 year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of [i-winereview.com](http://i-winereview.com). Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at [www.i-winereview.com](http://www.i-winereview.com) Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

## Previous Wine Reports



Issue 1	California Petite Sirah
Issue 2	Red Table Wines of Portugal
Issue 3	Grenache Wines
Issue 4	Syrah
Issue 5	Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec
Issue 6	The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality
Special Report	Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha
Issue 7	New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs
Issue 8	The Wines of Ribera del Duero
Issue 9	Champagne
Issue 10	Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood
Issue 11	2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois
Issue 12	California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update
Issue 13	The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave
Special Report	Introduction to Sherry
Issue 14	The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne
Issue 15	The Wines of Chianti Classico
Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited
Issue 24	The New Wines of Portugal Double Issue
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria
Issue 26	The Diverse Wines of Argentina Double Issue
Issue 27	Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World
Issue 28	The Wines of Priorat
Issue 29	The Wines of Monterey County
Issue 30	The Wines of South Africa Double Issue
Issue 31	Brunello di Montalcino
Issue 32	The New Wines of Israel
Issue 33	The Wines of Paso Robles
Issue 34	Champagne Revisited
Issue 35	The Wines of Soave
Special Report	South African Chenin Blanc

**These reports are available online at [www.iwinereview.com](http://www.iwinereview.com)**