

Paso Robles' Rising Sons

A local maximum-service wine facility allows small producers to step into the spotlight **by Meridith May**

Nicholas Miller, heir to the celebrated Bien Nacido Vineyard in Santa Maria and Central Coast Wine Services, oversees marketing and sales for French Camp in Paso Robles, while his family also operates Paso Robles Wine Services. This 156,000-square-foot cooperative lends its expertise in all aspects of the winemaking business to over 35 wineries and “alternating proprietors.” Winemaking is under the leadership of James Hendon, and operation of the facility, with a press capacity of up to 100 tons a day, is managed by David Sartain.

Miller invited a handful of local Paso winemakers to an intimate sipping session with THE TASTING PANEL, a one-on-one with winemakers, possibly destined for stardom, who utilize the many wine business opportunities at Paso Robles Wine Services, from custom crush to compliance issues.



Thomas Banish.

Black Hand Cellars

Black Hand Cellars 2005 “Alibi” is a Bordeaux blend that melds black fruit with coffee and dark cherry. “Behind every hit and run, there’s an alibi,” quips owner Thomas Banish, whose own version is a Syrah-Grenache-Mourvèdre blend that’s more hit than run. Suggesting hands stained by working with the glorious grape, the label also refers to dealings with the Black Hand mafia during Prohibition, according to Banish, who also acts as assistant winemaker at Paso Robles Wine Services. Black Hand has stained our minds with indelible Rhône varietals from Paso’s top vineyards.

www.blackhandcellars.com



Clavo Cellars

A 600-case winery, Clavo Cellars is the private label of Neil Roberts, who acts as vineyard manager for Peachy Canyon, Robert Hall and several other high-profile Paso Robles wineries. Once a viticulturalist for Mondavi on the Central Coast, Roberts started his own consulting business a couple of years ago and now has a “few moments” to produce noteworthy Rhône-inspired wines.

His **Clavo 2005 “Collusion,”** a mighty, dusty and grainy Malbec blend (with Cab Sauv and some Petit Verdot), could have contained a super shot of espresso along with a deeply expressive dose of boysenberry. The fruit hails from the Margarita vineyard on the southern rim of Paso.

And the name? Roberts explains it: “The guys in the vineyard would endearingly call me ‘clavo’; it means ‘nail’ in Spanish—they mistook my name, ‘Neil,’ for ‘nail.’”

www.clavocellars.com



Christian Lazo Winery

Winemaker and farmer Steve Christian bought his first vineyard in 2002. “It was an abandoned vineyard from the ‘70s,” he points out, reminiscing about the run-down five-acre plot of head-trained Zinfandel in Paso’s Westside district. It took about five years to bring these abandoned vines back, and in 2004 Christian bought an additional ten acres on the well-known Richard Sauret vineyard. The following year, Sauret asked Christian if he would be interested in an additional 15 acres adjacent to the ten.

Top Soil: Part II *Paso Robles' French Camp Vineyard*

Last month, THE TASTING PANEL spotlighted Bien Nacido Vineyards, a living legend in the Santa Maria Valley. Its cousin to the north—also owned by the Miller family—is French Camp, a 1700-acre premium quality property first planted in 1973 and bearing fruit with its first vintage in 1976.

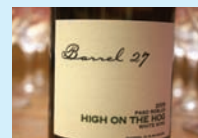
Located in the southeastern portion of the Paso Robles AVA, this remote site is surrounded by the Santa Lucia foothills, experiencing warm days, an afternoon wind tunnel effect and nighttime drops in temperature that can fluctuate as much as 50 degrees.

"We're actually backing away from mainstay varieties," offers Nicholas Miller, property owner. "Our direction seems headed for white Rhône varieties, Malbec, Malvasia Bianco and Albariño."

Summerland 2005 French Camp Zinfandel exudes chocolate and dark berries with a lush mouthfeel—and that's just the begin-

ning. From there it shows a center of cranberries and blueberries in an elegant package.

www.summerlandwine.com



Barrel 27 2006 "High on the Hog" is a Paso Robles

white blend of 42% Viognier, 34% Roussanne and 24% Marsanne—an intense and sumptuously fruity wine that defines the superlative nature of French Camp vineyard.

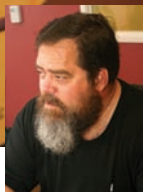
www.barrel27.com



This is not the first time Anglim caught our eye and

palate. The **Anglim 2006 "Cerise"** is a blend of Mourvèdre, Syrah and Grenache, with that special touch of Viognier. Once again, we notice Steve Anglim's delicate gloved-hand touch, a featherlike glistening of red fruit with mocha swirls, surprising us with mango melting into truffle and earth.

www.anglimwinery.com



Christian Lazo 2005 Paso Robles Zin is a gobby, luscious mouthful. (right) **Steve Christian Farms Paso Robles Zinfandel**.

The swish-and-swash finger painting design on his label was created by his two-and-a-half year old son. "The focus group consisted primarily of grandparents," says Christian. "They all agreed that Jacob's art would be the best to grace the bottle."

www.christianlazowines.com



Kiamie Wine Cellars

Kiamie Wine Cellars wowed us with **2005 Kiamie Kuvée**, a red blend—primarily of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and

Syrah—that combines power and elegance. The wines are crafted at the Paso Robles Wine Services facility by Winemaker Steve Glossner and the fruit is sourced from four vineyards in Westside Paso Robles, a region well known for its calcareous soils (think chalk, flint and limestone).

www.kiamiewines.com

Vista Creek Vineyards

Tempranillo shows promise in Paso Robles, but the fruit from Vista Creek Vineyard, specifically, shows an element that makes it a dream-come-true for Patti and Charlie Youngclaus. The couple moved from Madera in California's Central Valley to Paso Robles to create vineyard-designated wines. Bright raspberry and juicy cherry burst from the **Vista Creek 2004 Paso Robles Tempranillo**.

www.vistacreekvineyards.com



French Camp Vineyard, Paso Robles