

# RIDGE

## VINEYARDS

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2014



David Gates, VP of Vineyard Operations, harvests fruit from Monte Bello

## Ridge: Sonoma's Largest Grower of Organic Grapes

In 2008—after more than a decade of sustainably farming our estate vineyards, and after five years of experimenting with new organic treatments—we began the process of organic certification. The move to organic farming brings our viticulture in line with our traditional winemaking, which employs only the noninvasive treatments used in fine winemaking since the mid-19th century.

“We have made steady progress in our transition to organic practices over the last seven years, and were able to certify our first vineyards in 2011,” says David Gates, head of vineyard operations since 1988. Our Lytton Springs and Geyserville zinfandels will be certified organic by 2015. Likewise, more than ninety-five percent of the Monte Bello and Estate cabernet grapes will be certified by then. “Our plan is to make every possible block organic,” says Gates.

We recently became aware that Ridge, though by no means a large grower, is the largest grower of organically farmed grapes in Sonoma County, and in the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation.

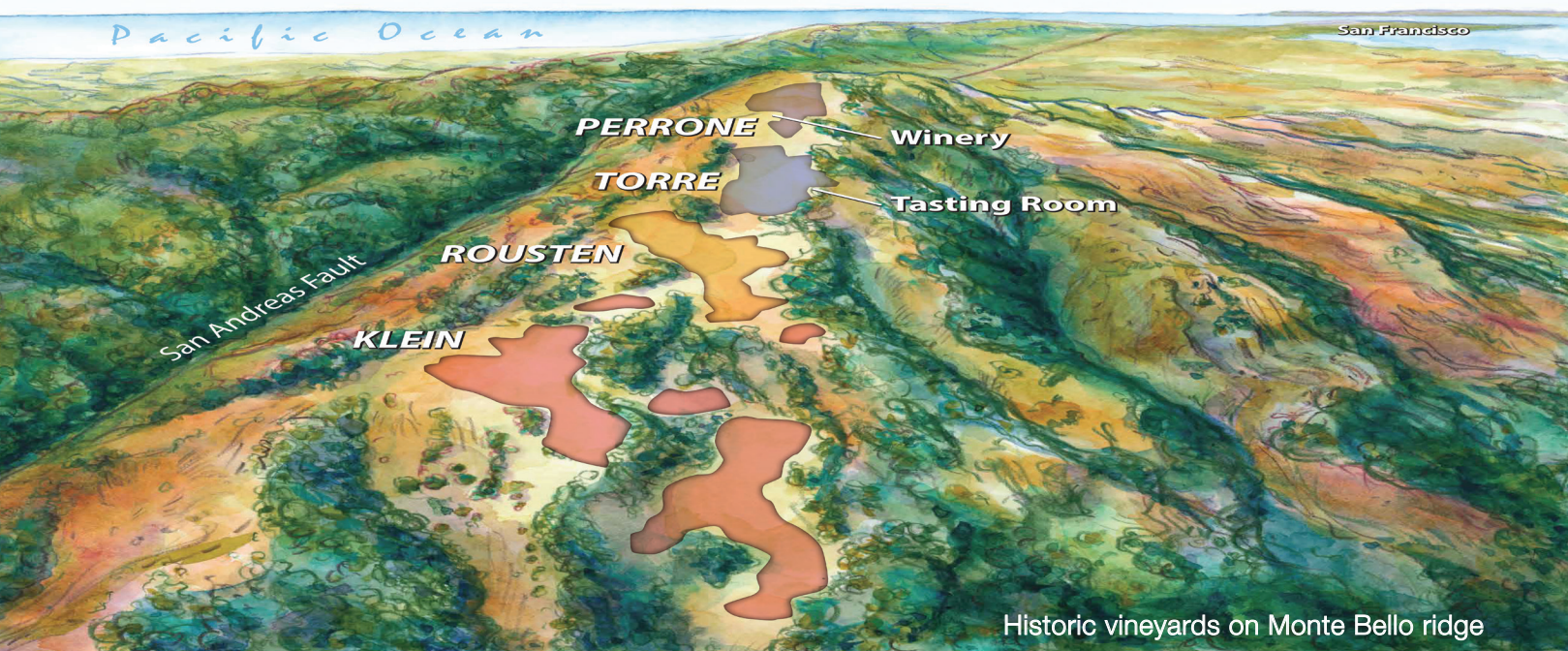
This information was reported by Pam Strayer, and resulted from research for her new software applications, *Organically Sonoma: A Tasting and Touring Guide*, and *Organically Sonoma: Wine Finder*. The information was a surprise to us, but served to remind us of the significant commitment we have made to organic farming.

East Bench is already 100% organic. Geyserville, and possibly Lytton Springs, will be so by next year. We plan to release the 2013 East Bench Zinfandel as the first Ridge wine to be labeled “100% organically farmed grapes.” Our Monte Bello and Estate Cabernets will be totally organic in the next few years.

“We decided to farm organically because we believe it leads to better grapes and higher quality wines. True organic farming focuses attention on the health of each individual vine, and on the soil’s microbiological life. We are stewards of the land; farming organically is the right thing to do—for our employees, the community, and for future generations. This approach in the vineyard, plus our traditional approach to winemaking, will provide the finest possible wines for our customers,” stated Paul Draper, CEO and Head Winemaker.

—David Amadia, VP of Sales & Marketing





Monte Bello Re-Planting Update, continued from page 3

The following is a short description of the clones we have planted at Rousten Ranch at Monte Bello.

### CABERNET SAUVIGNON

1. Fountaingrove clone. From vines planted in the 1890s at a commune near Santa Rosa. This clone was used in 1946 to replant cabernet at Monte Bello on vineyards abandoned during Prohibition.
2. La Cuesta clone. Propagated from vines Martin Ray planted at Mt. Eden in the 1940's that came from Rixford's La Cuesta winery in Woodside, planted in 1884. The original source were cuttings from Margaux.
3. Mt. Eden clone. Essentially the same DNA as the La Cuesta clone but has been 'Meristem' treated and certified. We planted 2.1 acres of it at Torre and we are considering further plantings at Rousten.
4. Jackson clone. Cuttings originally taken in 1964 from vines planted in the 1890s at the Jackson field station in the Sierra foothills. Very low yields, good intensity, have to watch excess vigor.
5. Shaw clone. Cuttings were taken from the Shaw vineyard (now Wildwood/Kunde in Glen Ellen) in 1939 by Professor Olmo of UC Davis. The original vines date back to the 1890s. Yields are low, quality high; can be excessively vigorous.
6. The See Ranch clone. From vines in the Oakville district of Napa dating back to 1969.
7. Four of the best Bordeaux clones from the certified French nursery system (ENTAV), chosen for the quality

of their tannins and aroma. We will see how they do in California.

8. Argentine clone. A clone imported from old vines at Mendoza. Average yields, good color, and tannins.

### CABERNET FRANC

1. Two ENTAV Bordeaux clones; one gives good structure and the other aroma.
2. An old Italian clone. Moderate yields, elegant wines.

### CHARDONNAY

1. The Mt. Eden clone supposedly originated with cuttings collected in the 1890s from Champagne by Paul Masson.
2. An old Wente clone. Ripens early. Elegant, complex wines.
3. A clone from the old Robert Young vines in Sonoma. Good acidity, low yields.
4. Two ENTAV Burgundian clones. One gives richness, with moderate acid. The other gives good productivity with aromatic, elegant wines.

To assess their quality, we will ferment each of these clones separately as they mature over a number of years. In the meantime, we will plant the old California clones: La Cuesta, Fountaingrove, Jackson, Shaw, Mt. Eden and Wente. When, as we expect, some of the other clones prove their quality, we will be able to create a mix of the best. This should produce more complex wines, and avoid a monocultural approach as we replant the rest of the abandoned vineyards on Monte Bello Ridge.

## MONTE BELLO RE-PLANTING UPDATE

In 2007, Ridge took out a long-term lease on much of the old Rousten Ranch to replant the vineyards—hoping that they produce wines that can contribute to our Estate and our Monte Bello. The Rousten family purchased this beautiful property for a song in 1901 or 1902, right after a major wildfire had swept through, burning all but a few firs, oaks, and laurels. The family fortunes changed right after the 1906 earthquake, when several springs magically appeared on their property. They quickly planted grapes and an orchard, and entered the wine business. How they managed during Prohibition is anybody's guess, but the winery reopened afterward, only to close in the late 1950s when Charlie Rousten, the sole heir, decided he would rather dump his wine than submit to requests from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms that he cement his cellar floor. At least that is the story as I heard it from Charlie.

When Charlie passed in 1991, he left his properties to Lois Ortmann. Ten years ago, Lois recognized that vineyards would be a great way to use her land, and we were sure that good grapes could be grown there. By 2008 we had the first phase planted to cabernet sauvignon (3.9 acres), cabernet franc (2.5 acres), and petit verdot (1.2 acres).

This was followed in 2010 by the second phase of planting: chardonnay (5 acres), and more cabernet sauvignon (6 acres). This year, we are in the middle of planting the last phase: cabernet sauvignon (2.1 acres), and rootstock, to be budded to a Bordeaux varietal yet to be determined (2.3 acres). In 2015, we will plant another 3.9 acres of cabernet sauvignon.

Having a property that hadn't been planted to winegrapes for half a century presented us with a unique opportunity to do a little experimentation with clones. We love our La Cuesta clone of cabernet sauvignon, which we have used extensively in the newest replantings at our Torre Ranch, and we are excited about our newest/oldest cabernet sauvignon clone, Fountaingrove—the old vines planted in 1949, which we have cleaned of virus, and begun to plant. But there are a lot of other clones out in the world that we thought might add further complexity to our wines. With that in mind, we planted small blocks of several different clones of cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, and cabernet franc.

—David Gates, VP of Vineyard Operations

*Continued on page 2*

## FALL RELEASES

### 2011 Monte Bello

**Tasting Notes:** Saturated ruby/purple color. Marvelously-scented rich mountain bramble fruit, intense anise/fennel, ginger, cardamom, flint. Black currant/cassis entry, coffee, forest floor, crushed rock. Full body, elegant chalky tannins, refreshing acidity in a lengthy finish.



### 2012 Lytton Springs

**Tasting Notes:** Black cherry, vanilla, toasty oak and mint aromas. Complex flavors of raspberry, black olive, licorice with chalky tannins. Long finish with intriguing notes of pepper and spice.



### 2012 Pagani Ranch

**Tasting Notes:** Deep garnet color; ripe stone fruit aroma, with tart strawberry and oak spice; medium full entry, sweet-tart cherry fruit, multi-layered, mineral, earthy, coated tannins, firm acid, moderately long finish.



### 2012 Petite Sirah

**Tasting Notes:** Dark purple in color, toasty oak, pepper, fennel and mint on the nose; concentrated blackberry/plum fruit on the palate with a full tannic structure and notes of cocoa and mint on the finish.





## 2012 LYTTON SPRINGS 93+ points (from Vinous)



**RIDGE**  
VINEYARDS

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[www.ridgewine.com/wholesale](http://www.ridgewine.com/wholesale)

## CURRENT REVIEWS

Antonio Galloni  
presents  
**vinous** July 2014  
explore all things wine

### SPRING RELEASES

- 2012 Chardonnay Estate, 92 points
- 2012 East Bench Zinfandel, 91 points
- 2012 Geyserville, 93 points
- 2011 Merlot Estate, 92 points
- 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate, 92 points

### FALL RELEASES

- 2011 Monte Bello, 93 points
- 2012 Lytton Springs, 93+ points
- 2012 Petite Sirah Lytton Estate, 93 points
- 2012 Pagani Ranch Zinfandel, 91+ points

