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## Press Information

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*“I want Vina Robles to express a unique balance of European heritage and American opportunity. As individuals, we are rooted in the Old World. As viticulturists and winemakers, we are empowered by the New World. But both worlds bring value to what we do, and we endeavor to capture this distinction in our wines.”*

*-Owner Hans Nef*

## OUR VISION

Vina Robles is the result of a unique personal trajectory, one that led winery founder Hans Nef from a rural village outside Zurich to the rugged terrain of California’s Central Coast, from the science of engineering to the art of winemaking.

As a child in Switzerland, Nef learned to appreciate his rural surroundings and the blessings of agriculture. Trained in civil engineering, Nef later founded a successful civil engineering firm specializing in major public projects in Zurich. In the early 1990s, he expanded his interests into agricultural land in the southern United States. At the same time, Nef also leveraged his passion for collecting fine Bordeaux wines into a wine importation business, furthering his appreciation for California wines.

Nef discovered Paso Robles in the mid 1990s and quickly became enamored with this emergent wine country. Here, where the Pacific coastline unfolds into rugged ranchlands and cowboy ambiance, a new generation of California winemakers was turning Paso Robles into one of the world’s most dynamic winegrowing regions.

Soon, Nef was inspired to embark on his own idea for a Paso Robles winery, one that would honor his European roots while embracing the flavors and spirit of the Central Coast. In 1997, Nef planted the first of what would become four estate vineyards in Paso Robles, and soon thereafter Vina Robles was born.

In 1996 Nef selected longtime friend and business associate Hans-R. Michel, a Swiss expatriate, as managing partner. He enlisted Swiss native Matthias Gubler as first winemaker for Vina Robles in 1999. He also selected Marc Laderriere, a native of France and a Central Coast wine industry veteran to lead the winery’s sales and marketing activities. Sukhy Sran joined the team in 2003 as viticulturist and vineyard manager.

In 2007, Nef achieved another goal with the opening of the Vina Robles Hospitality Center, a 14,000-square-foot facility that combines classic California Mission-style design with modern European elegance. The center features a tasting room as well as several venues for public and private events.

Despite the multitude of languages and accents floating around the winery, the Vina Robles crew is united in a singular vision to offer distinctive wines reflecting the adventurous spirit of Paso Robles as well as the graceful touch of European winemaking.

*European Inspiration – California Character*

**Summary**     *European Inspiration – California Character*     We craft wines that represent a stylistic bridge between the Old and New worlds, capturing the finesse associated with European wines while celebrating the bold natural flavors of our estate vineyards in Paso Robles. Here, proprietor Hans Nef and managing partner Hans – R. Michel bring their Swiss heritage to California’s Central Coast, where they aim to unite the best of both experiences. We specialize in varieties that excel in the complex soils and nuanced microclimates of Paso Robles, and we also embrace unconventional blends as an opportunity to create wines of distinctive quality and character.

**Owner**     Hans Nef

**Managing Partner**     Hans – R. Michel

**Winemaker**     Nick de Luca

**Varietals**     Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Tannat, Touriga, Sauvignon Blanc, Verdelho, Viognier and others, a total of 20.

**Production**     30,000 cases per year

**Vineyards**     Huerhuero Vineyard (Estate); Jardine Vineyard (Estate); Pleasant Valley Vineyard (Estate); Creston Valley Vineyard (Estate); Adelaida Springs Ranch (Farmed as Estate); Ryan Road (Farmed as Estate)

**Tasting**     The tasting room is located at the Vina Robles Hospitality Center in Paso Robles. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (summer) or 5 p.m. (winter)  
3700 Mill Road off Highway 46 East     (805) 227-4812, option 1

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- Vina Robles®
- Huerhuero®
- Jardine Vineyard®
- Roseum®
- Syrée®
- Suendero®

Hans Nef is an entrepreneur, engineer & developer — but his greatest passion is found in wine.

Growing up in a rural village outside Zurich, Switzerland, Nef gained an appreciation for agriculture, one that would act as a seed for later business interests. As a young man, he studied civil engineering, and eventually founded his own civil engineering consultancy firm. Nef's firm has guided several challenging public projects in the Zurich area, including a combined road-rail bridge and tram station on the Limmat River in the heart of the city. Nef also founded a real estate development company that constructs and manages numerous apartment buildings in Switzerland.

In the early 1990s, Nef took his interests to an international level with the acquisition of two prime agricultural properties in Arkansas. There, he worked closely with friend and business partner Hans-R. Michel, owner of Zürich-based Agriworld, an international agricultural consultancy and management firm.

During this time, Nef became a collector of fine Bordeaux wines, and ultimately branched out into the wine importation business, importing select wines from California and elsewhere to Switzerland. As his interest in California wines intensified, he dreamed of establishing a New World winery dedicated to the production of distinctive estate-crafted wines. That dream was realized after he acquired prime viticultural land in Paso Robles on California's Central Coast and established Vina Robles winery in 1996.

Nef planted four estate vineyards to serve Vina Robles – Huerhuero, Jardine, Creston Valley Vineyards and Pleasant Valley. He selected Michel to develop the vineyards and oversee the winery operations, and together they also created an independent vineyard management company, Viticultural Management, Inc. (VMI), which serves Vina Robles as well as other wineries and winegrowers across the Central Coast. The considerable expertise and experience of the VMI team ensures that Vina Robles' grapes are grown according to the finest standards.

Hans Nef and his two daughters reside near Zürich, Switzerland.

Nicholas “Nick” de Luca is a versatile winemaker who has gained extensive experience working with a number of notable wineries and vineyards in California and New Zealand.

Having studied International Law at the Université de Poitiers in France and later graduating from the University of California at Santa Cruz, he fished around in New York City for a little over a year, working as a bicycle messenger and ambivalently drifting towards further education in law. A mid-April snow storm that dumped a record amount of snow upon Manhattan convinced him to move back to California, where he serendipitously took a job at Cline Cellars in Sonoma as a forklift driver. Being multilingual and the only native English speaker on the team aside from the winemakers, de Luca instantly took on the job of translating between the production crew and the technical staff. This offered him the unique opportunity to learn in a practical environment from true professionals.

De Luca has worked harvests for several wineries among them Byington Vineyard & Winery in in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Williams Selyem Winery in Healdsburg, CA, Fisher Vineyards in Santa Rosa, CA, Highfield Estate in Marlborough, New Zealand, and Cline Cellars in Sonoma, CA. Prior to joining Vina Robles, de Luca spent seven vintages as Director of Vineyards and Winemaking at Dierberg & Star Lane Vineyards in Santa Ynez, CA.

In 2011, Nick was hired to lead the winemaking program at Vina Robles. “I aim to make wines that force you to reconsider your preconceptions about fine wine,” he says. “For me that means crafting a wine that is inventive, distinctive, and true to its terroir. The real trick is to never believe in your own voodoo so much that you can’t change your mind.”

Nick is known for his attention to detail in the cellar as well as in the vineyard. He is not only a winemaker but also a viticulturist at heart, and therefore spends considerable time in our estate vineyards. Together with our vineyard team, he employs sustainable techniques to achieve the highest quality possible. Nick knows how his wines will taste simply based upon how he feels things are evolving in the vineyard. Nick’s goal is to grow wines that completely translate the Paso Robles terroir into the bottle and let the true fruit qualities shine through in the wine. For this reason, barrels are carefully selected from cooperages that are known for subtlety, and only low and medium toast levels are employed. Winemaking techniques, likewise, are subtle and discrete, intended to never mask the true character of our vineyards.

Hans – Rudolf ("Hans") Michel has spent all his life in the business of farming and is intimately familiar with most aspects relating to it. Having grown up and worked on a diversified family farm near Zürich, Switzerland, he graduated from the Technical College of Agriculture in Bern, Switzerland with a degree in Agricultural Economics, having already gained diplomas in Commerce and Agriculture.

From 1975 to 1981, he was a consultant and educator at the Swiss Agricultural Extension Center in Lindau near Zürich, where he organized and taught the development of planning methods and data resources to agricultural specialists and farmers as part of a continuing education program.

In 1982, he left Switzerland and took up a position in Tennessee with a farm management company and was responsible for the management of large row crop farms located in the Mississippi Delta region, growing rice, cotton, and soybeans. In late 1983, his employer transferred him to Fresno, CA where he helped establish a local branch office managing permanent crops throughout the Central Valley. It is here where he became involved in California viticulture. After several years in the Western United States, he moved back to Tennessee and became the CEO for a large farm management firm, in charge of seven offices managing over 375,000 acres of farmland.

In 1992, Michel founded his own company called Agriworld (Agriglobe in California) with offices in Zürich, Switzerland, Greenville, MS and Fresno, CA. During the nineties, Michel focused on international agricultural consulting and project management. His work brought him to many countries in Europe, Northern Africa and America.

Hans Michel met Hans Nef in the early nineties as his client, managing Nef's Rice and Soybean farms in Arkansas. After Nef had decided to invest in viticulture and then developed his ambitious growth plans, Michel decided to focus on Vina Robles and the two became business partners. Paso Robles, CA was selected as it provided the ideal location to implement Nef's plans. Vineyard development and planting started in 1996 and continued in several phases until 2005. As a direct result of the need for high level management in their own vineyards, Viticultural Management Inc., a full service management firm, was established. This was a logical and easy progression for Michel to make.

Michel developed a diversified business plan for Vina Robles that would take advantage of the excellent opportunities Paso Robles and the Central Coast have to offer. The central part of that plan is to establish Vina Robles as a medium sized winery focusing on ultra premium wines with distribution in the US and worldwide. Michel wants Vina Robles to be known for the high and consistent quality of its wines and the genuine wine country experience by providing excellent service to the guests visiting the Hospitality Center.

Hans Michel is now based in Paso Robles.

Sukhy Sran grew up on his family's farm in the San Joaquin Valley, where he helped grow almonds, raisins and wine grapes. Ever since he was a child, he has been actively involved in farming.

After high school, Sran attended California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, where he majored in Agricultural Business with a concentration in Farm and Ranch Management.

While attending college, he was introduced to the quality and diversity of the Central Coast winegrowing experience. His studies added to his technical expertise, but he ultimately credits his work on his family's farm for giving him the leadership and management skills required to run large viticultural operations.

In 1999, after earning his degree, Sran joined a Modesto-based vineyard management company, which was contracted to plant vineyards along the Central Coast from Monterey to Santa Barbara County. Over the ensuing four years, Sran honed his viticultural skills, working with a wide spectrum of varieties, locations, layouts, irrigation systems and vineyard management methods.

In 2003, Sran joined Viticultural Management, Inc. (VMI) as a vineyard manager. Two years later, he was promoted to the position of Vice President and General Manager of Vineyard Operations.

For Sran, the client's needs come first, and he is always keeping an eye on the bottom line to ensure a positive return on investment. He ascertains the specific plans and goals of each client, and manages their vineyards accordingly.

Sran lives in Paso Robles with his wife and children.

## **APPELLATION**

Paso Robles is located approximately halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco in northern San Luis Obispo County. Here, the growing season is distinguished by a reciprocating climate of warm inland afternoons and cool marine-moderated evenings. To the west, the Santa Lucia Mountains border the coast and insulate the Paso Robles region, trapping heat during the daytime. Toward evening, however, coastal air billows inland through the Templeton Gap, a notch in the mountains, as well southward from the Salinas Valley. Temperature swings of 50 degrees are not unusual during the summer months. Such conditions are optimal for Rhône and Bordeaux varietals, with ample solar energy to develop fully defined flavors and sufficient natural cooling to maintain excellent acid structure and overall balance.

Following is a brief description of our main estate vineyards:

### **JARDINE VINEYARD**

Jardine Vineyard lies several miles northeast of Huerhuero Vineyard, at the corner of Jardine and Tower roads north of Highway 46 East. Here, the growing conditions are slightly warmer, appealing particularly to Petite Sirah and Sauvignon Blanc. The soil is composed primarily of alluvial sandy loam, with contributions of gravelly loam and clay loam, ultimately ensuring excellent drainage for low vine vigor and assertive flavor development.

### **HUERHUERO VINEYARD**

Huerhuero Vineyard occupies a rolling terrain on the southeast border of Paso Robles, with largely south-facing slopes that reach a maximum elevation of 1,030 feet. This location is a crossroads for marine air entering the region from both the Templeton Gap and Salinas Valley. The soils are shallow, shifting from clay loam to sandy loam, with rocky calcareous subsoils—a well-drained composition that naturally tames vine vigor. The main soil types are the Nacimiento - Los Osos and the Arbuckle - Positas complex. A tight vine spacing of 6 by 4 feet in several blocks creates root competition and also controls vigor. The result is smaller vines, with balanced canopies and small, intensely flavored grapes.

### **CRESTON VALLEY VINEYARD**

Creston Valley Vineyard is located near the small town of Creston, about 12 miles southeast of the city of Paso Robles. Here, the vines are planted on rolling hills, surrounded by pristine ranch land. The climate in Creston tends to be a bit cooler than the areas to the north, which allows for added hang time and flavor development in the fruit. The soils are shallow, shifting from clay loam to sandy loam, with rocky calcareous subsoils—a well-drained composition that naturally tames vine vigor. The main soil types are the Nacimiento - Los Osos and the Arbuckle - Positas complex.

## **ADELAIDA SPRINGS RANCH**

The vineyards of Adelaida Springs Ranch are planted at an elevation of 1,550 to 1,750 feet in the rugged coastal mountains just 12 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Here, winegrower Laird Foshay presides over 50 acres of hillside vines that yield fruit of extraordinary balance and character. At the moment, 14.7 of those acres are dedicated to Vina Robles.

Our relationship with Laird dates back to 2005. At that time, we were looking for a high-elevation, hillside site to incorporate into our winemaking program. We knew that such a site could add a unique dimension to our lineup of distinctive red blends.

The vines are planted on steep hillsides composed of rocky, limestone-rich soils—conditions that are optimal for limiting vine vigor and producing fruit with natural flavor intensity.

## **VITICULTURE**

Under the leadership of vineyard manager Sukhy Sran, the Vina Robles vineyard team takes care of our vineyards, targeting only the finest blocks from each site for the production of Vina Robles wines. Sustainable viticultural methods include cover crops for erosion control, owl boxes for rodent control, native oak tree retention for ecosystem balance and advanced irrigation systems for water conservation. Irrigation management plays a big role in the vineyard management program. Under the estate conditions of low annual rainfall and well-draining soils, vine and fruit growth can be precisely guided by timely irrigation. Shoot and crop thinning are also actively employed to create a balanced fruiting zone.

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**CUVÉE COLLECTION**

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**PROPRIETARY BLENDS**

The Cuvée Collection encompasses a limited-edition of red variety blends that represent the crown of the Vina Robles portfolio, reflecting our belief that the finest quality is achieved through a harmonious union of distinctive grapes. This belief is rooted in our European winemaking heritage, as well as our freedom in California to take more creative paths in the pursuit of synergy and complexity. Each of our Cuvée Collection wines ultimately expresses the special character of some of the finest vineyards in Paso Robles, as interpreted by Winemaker Nick de Luca's art of blending. Only the most expressive and extraordinary lots are selected for the Cuvée Collection, and each is barrel aged for a minimum of 18 months prior to bottling.

**Suendero** *Suen-de ro [swen-dé-ro] n. derived from "Sueño Sendero" or the "Dream Path"*

Suendero is a Meritage bottling of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. The name Suendero signifies "The Dream Path," celebrating the wine's origins amid the magical terrain of Adelaida Springs Ranch in the rugged coastal mountains west of Paso Robles. Here, at an elevation of 1,550 to 1,750 feet and just 12 miles from the Pacific Ocean, the ranch's small vineyard unfolds along steep calcareous soils composed of ancient sea beds. These hillside soils, combined with reliable marine breezes, create a nuanced wine that mirrors the evenness and elegance of timeless blends.

**Signature** *Sig-na ture [sig-nuh-cher] n. a distinctive characteristic that denotes one's identity*

Signature is a rare showcase for Petit Verdot along with a cast of complementary varieties from our estate and other notable vineyards in Paso Robles. The Petit Verdot component comes from our Huerhuero Vineyard along the east border of Paso Robles, where the rolling oak-studded terrain reaches an elevation 1,030 feet. Here, the microclimate is moderated by cool marine air that squeezes through the Templeton Gap, coaxing remarkable color and intensity from the Petit Verdot grape. Each vintage, the ideal blending varieties are selected from our best Petite Sirah, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon barrels adding dimension, complexity and balance.

**Syrée** *Sy-rée [se-rey] n. derived from Syrah and "cuvée" (blend)*

Syrée is a distinctive cuvée that showcases Syrah's synergistic versatility with other varieties such as Petite Sirah. The Syrah component comes from Ryan Road Vineyard, a cooler site in eastern Paso Robles that yields aromatic fruit with deep color and ripe, silky flavors. Petite Sirah contributes tannin structure and overall backbone. The result is a distinctive wine with a spicy complexity that is both multidimensional and harmonious.

## ESTATE WINES

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Our Estate wines hail from our four vineyards, with individual lots chosen for their harmonious and complementary flavors. The diversity and versatility of Paso Robles are celebrated in these wines.

### ***Petite Sirah – Jardine***

The Jardine Petite Sirah was our first vineyard to be planted. It contributes dense, dark fruit with great tannin structure, offering a spicy, plum fruit palate.

### ***Cabernet Sauvignon – Huerhuero***

The fruit for our Cabernet Sauvignon is selected from Huerhuero Vineyard, which is planted on the premium clones 337, 6 and 15. The fruit is picked in small lots during the cool of the night or early morning to ensure perfect quality and ripeness.

### ***Red<sup>4</sup> - Huerhuero***

A fresh young blend of four varieties. The Power of 4 – this Paso blend is more delicious than the sum of its parts. It combines grapes from various blocks in our estate Huerhuero Vineyard located in the rolling hills of Paso Robles.

### ***Chardonnay – Monterey***

Vina Robles Chardonnay is sourced near Gonzales in Monterey County, where the Pacific breezes create the perfect environment for this grape which prefers a more moderate climate.

### ***Sauvignon Blanc – Jardine***

Paso Robles is known to produce mostly red wines. However, we have found that Sauvignon Blanc grows exceptionally well in our Jardine Vineyard.

### ***White<sup>4</sup> - Huerhuero***

A harmoniously eclectic blend of four varieties. The Power of 4 – this Paso blend is more delicious than the sum of its parts. A uniquely flavorful and refreshing wine. It combines grapes from our estate Huerhuero and Jardine Vineyards located in Paso Robles.

The 14,000-square-foot Vina Robles Hospitality Center opened in 2007. Set amid 30 acres with sweeping views of the surrounding wine country and Hunter Ranch Golf Course along Highway 46 East in Paso Robles, the hospitality center combines classic California Mission-style design with modern European elegance.

### **Tasting Room**

The Tasting Room is the heart of the hospitality center, featuring vaulted ceilings, a wood-burning fireplace and a large picture window. An adjacent marketplace features artisan foods, gourmet gifts and fine imported Swiss products.

Visitors to the tasting room can taste three featured wines at no charge. The “Estate Tasting” includes Vina Robles’ main estate wines for \$7 and the souvenir logo-glass. The “Reserve Tasting - Cuvée Collection” features the winery’s limited-production wines for a fee of \$10, logo-glass included. These same wines can be enjoyed with fine artisan cheeses for an additional fee of \$5.

### **Public Events**

The Vina Robles Hospitality Center hosts many special events throughout the year, including a monthly concert series from May through October, wine appreciation seminars and even ballroom dancing lessons. Visit [www.VinaRobles.com](http://www.VinaRobles.com) for a calendar of upcoming of events.

### **Private Events**

The Vina Robles Hospitality Center is a versatile venue for events of all sizes and styles, including weddings, parties and business functions. Here, guests enjoy an unparalleled synthesis of soaring interiors, outdoor luxury and wine country views. Following are brief descriptions of the five main event venues at our hospitality center:

- *Jardine Court:* A circular outdoor courtyard that is ideal for receptions, intimate concerts, picnics and other social gatherings. Up to 100 guests.
- *Signature Room:* A large indoor venue with picture windows and cutting-edge audiovisual technology, making it an ideal location for conferences, seminars, receptions and parties. Up to 270 guests.
- *Petite Terrace:* A serene outdoor patio that appeals to private luncheons, outdoor dinners or other intimate gatherings. Up to 80 guests.
- *Event Lawn:* A secluded expanse that is ideal for large outdoor functions, including weddings, concerts and barbecues. Up to 300+ guests.
- *Tasting Room:* A stylish tasting bar anchors a large room that can accommodate intimate dinners and large gatherings alike. Up to 150 guests.

### **About the Oak Tree**

The oak tree depicted on the Vina Robles label is a rendering of a grand Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) located on the Jardine estate. It is symbolic of the vineyard's landscape and individuality. Paso Robles—Spanish for “Pass of the Oaks”—is celebrated for its majestic, oak-studded terrain. The Vina Robles oak tree is 135 – 145 years old.

### **Vina, not Viña?**

Yes we must confess to being a California winery with Swiss roots that Americanized the Spanish word for vineyard. With no disrespect intended to the Spanish language, we chose to remove the symbol (known as a *tilde*) over the “n” in Vina to simplify the pronunciation and spelling of our winery name here in the United States. This enables us to still honor the Spanish and Mexican heritage of Paso Robles while keeping things simple for our customers, as well as to avoid potential confusion with Spanish and South American wineries. It is also one more example of how Vina Robles represents a blend of both old and new worlds.

### **How the Swiss Conquered Cowboy Country**

Vina Robles brings a unique Swiss lineage to the Paso Robles experience. Like winery founder Hans Nef, managing partner Hans – R. Michel is also a native of Switzerland. Sales and Marketing Director Marc Laderriere hails from France.

### **The Unconfirmed Celestial Significance of the Nef Family Crest**

Owner Hans Nef was able to trace the Nef family tree back to 1417—but he was unable to verify the significance of the moon and star in the Nef family crest, which is seen on our wine labels and elsewhere. He does have a pretty good theory, however. He says that he and his family members tend to be night owls, and he suspects that his ancestors might have spent a lot of time in the company of the moon and stars as well.

### **Wine World Travelers**

Prior to joining Vina Robles, Winemaker Nick de Luca's experience included harvests at wineries in New Zealand, Northern, as well as Central California. Assistant Winemaker Julie Holme has worked in New Zealand, Australia, Chile, South Africa, and California, while Assistant Winemaker Craig Holme brings experience from the Bordeaux region of France, Australia, California, and South Africa.

### **Where Petite Means “Big”**

Petite Sirah has emerged as one of Vina Robles’ signature varieties, producing a big, peppery, intensely flavored wine that is a testament to the character of Paso Robles and our Jardine and Creston Vineyards. Petite Sirah also contributes to various Vina Robles blends such as the Signature, the Syrée and the Red<sup>4</sup>.

### **Oh, Where, Oh Where is Huerhuero?**

Vina Robles owns four estate vineyards—Huerhuero (pronounced Where-WHERE-oh), located along the southeastern border of Paso Robles, Jardine (pronounced Jar-DEEN), Pleasant Valley located in the warmer climates northeast of Paso Robles and Creston Valley Vineyards. Huerhuero Vineyard takes its name from adjacent Huerhuero Creek, a seasonal waterway flowing from Black Mountain to the Salinas River. Huerhuero is a Native American word that, despite ongoing research, defies translation—but likely refers to the coarse blonde sand of the creek bed.

### **From Deer to Wild Turkeys**

While located just a few miles from downtown Paso Robles, Huerhuero Vineyard occupies a stunning, rugged terrain populated by native animals, including wild turkeys, deer, coyotes and red tail hawks. The vineyard is part of an 863-acre ranch that spans rolling hills and oak-crowned pastures. The elevation reaches 1,030 feet, and the climate is shaped by the Templeton Gap, a notch in the coastal mountains that invites cool Pacific air.

**Physical Address:** *(use for courier shipments)*

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 Tel: 805 227 4812  
 Fax: 805 227 4816

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**Bonded Winery #:** CA-W-6973

**The Team:**

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