

## THE VINA ROBLES STORY

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.

In 1996, Nef acquired prime viticultural land in the emerging wine country of Paso Robles, California. 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.

Inspired by Paso Robles' potential and driven by his own personal love of wine, Nef planted three estate vineyards and founded Vina Robles, a small premium winery specializing in varietals that excel in the region, specifically Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, Syrah and Zinfandel.

Nef enlisted Swiss native Matthias Gubler as winemaker for Vina Robles. He also selected longtime friend and business partner Hans – R. Michel, another Swiss expatriate, as winery president. Marc Laderriere, a native of France and a Central Coast wine industry veteran, was selected to lead the winery's sales and marketing activities.

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 that embody the adventurous spirit of Paso Robles.

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

**Summary** Vina Robles is a premium California winery with a unique Swiss lineage and a vision for estate-crafted wines that express both the excellence and individuality of their noble terroir. Under the guidance of owner Hans Nef and Winemaker Matthias Gubler, Vina Robles specializes in varietals that excel amid the amenable growing conditions of Paso Robles. Selecting fruit from only the finest blocks at three estate vineyards—Huerhuero, Jardine and Pleasant Valley—Vina Robles maintains consistently high quality from vintage to vintage, with distinctive red wines that embody the Central Coast’s adventurous spirit and world-class viticulture.

**Owner** Hans Nef

**Winemaker** Matthias Gubler

**Varietals** Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Grenache, Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Tannat, Touriga, Zinfandel and others

**Production** 20,000 cases per year

**Vineyards** Huerhuero Vineyard (Estate)  
Jardine Vineyard (Estate)  
Pleasant Valley Vineyard (Estate, office location)

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- Jardine Vineyard®
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Hans Nef is an entrepreneur, engineer, developer and restaurateur—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 three estate vineyards to serve Vina Robles – Huerhuero, Jardine 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.

Today, Nef is focused on Vina Robles and markets his wines through his own distributing company, Nef Weine AG and his three restaurants in Switzerland. He resides in Switzerland with his two daughters.

Matthias Gubler is a versatile winemaker who brings European experience and Swiss perfectionism to the Vina Robles winemaking program.

Born in northwestern Switzerland, in the town of Sissach, Gubler grew up amid his family's Pinot Noir vineyard. Early in his career, he worked as a lab technician for two years, gaining a firm grounding in chemistry and biology. It was not long before he once again felt the pull of the wine industry.

In 1994, Gubler traveled to Northern California and worked the harvest at Brutocao Cellars in Hopland. There, he worked alongside Nancy Walker, who later became winemaker at Fetzer. He then went to the Valais, the viticultural heartland of Switzerland, where he spent a year at St. Martinskellerei, working in all phases of the cellar and vineyards, as well as in sales and marketing.

Gubler next enrolled in the enology program at the College of Wädenswil near Zurich, which is renowned for its viticultural research station and educational program. During his three years at Wädenswil, he worked harvests for Domaine de Cabasse in the Cotes du Rhône, as well as for two Italian producers in Tuscany, in the heart of Chianti.

In 1999, Gubler was hired by Hans Nef to lead the winemaking program at Vina Robles, Nef's new winery in Paso Robles, California. Nef was impressed with Gubler's grasp of both New World and European winemaking, a balance that he sought in his own winery.

At Vina Robles, Gubler is passionate about the winemaking benefits that can be gained through prudent and sensitive viticultural practices, a lesson learned over his many years of tending vines. Consequently, he works closely with the Vina Robles vineyard team to grow and select the best fruit possible.

Gubler also continues to experiment in the field with irrigation management, vineyard spacing, pruning, leaf-thinning and fruit yield reduction. His fastidious approach and constant quest for improvement are also evident in the cellar, where he guides each wine with a combination of modern and traditional methods, and where he blends vineyards and varietals, to craft wines of complexity and distinction. Gubler lives in San Luis Obispo.

## **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 varieties, with ample solar energy to develop fully defined flavors and sufficient natural cooling to maintain excellent acid structure and overall balance.

## **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 1,200 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.

## **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.

## **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.

## CUVEE COLLECTION

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### PROPRIETARY BLENDS

The Cuvée Collection encompasses a limited-edition of red varietal 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 Matthias Gubler'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 1,500 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, enable Winemaker Matthias Gubler to craft 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 varietals 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 1,230 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 varietals 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 an unconventional cuvée that showcases Syrah's synergistic versatility with other varietals such as Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon. 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 from Penman Springs Vineyard contributes tannin structure and overall backbone, while Cabernet Sauvignon from Adelaida Springs Vineyard rounds out the blend with spicy complexity. The result is a distinctive wine that is both multidimensional and harmonious.

## ESTATE WINES

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

### ***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.

### ***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.

### ***Zinfandel***

Our Zinfandel comes from the Lock Vineyard, a small vineyard on Paso Robles' Westside. The fruit is hand picked in the cool of the morning and sorted for quality.

### ***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 our Huerhuero and other selected vineyards located in the rolling hills of Paso Robles.

### ***Roseum – Huerhuero***

A dry Rhône-style rosé. Our Roseum is inspired by the refreshing, dry rosés of southern France. With its sun-soaked slopes and coastal ambience, Paso Robles boasts an ideal terroir for echoing the flavors and spirit of these popular Mediterranean wines.

### ***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.

### ***Chardonnay – Edna Ranch***

Vina Robles Chardonnay is sourced from the Edna Valley where the Pacific breezes create the perfect environment for this cool climate grape.

### **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 and winemaker Matthias Gubler, winery president 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 Traveler**

Prior to joining Vina Robles, Winemaker Matthias Gubler's experience included harvests at wineries in Switzerland, the Rhône Valley, Chianti and Northern California. He graduated from the College of Wädenswil in Zurich, which is renowned for its viticulture research station.

### **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 both Paso Robles and Jardine Vineyard. Petite Sirah—along with Petit Verdot and Syrah—also contributes to the winery's Signature red blend, a powerful yet elegant wine that captures the essence of Vina Robles' Estate Vineyard.

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

Vina Robles owns three estate vineyards—Huerhuero (pronounced Where-WHERE-oh), located along the southeastern border of Paso Robles, Jardine (pronounced Jar-DEEN), and Pleasant Valley located in the warmer climates northeast of Paso Robles. 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 blond 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 1,230 feet, and the climate is shaped by the Templeton Gap, a notch in the coastal mountains that invites cool Pacific air.

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(courier services)

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