

# LAY of the LAND

Adelaida Cellars



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here is one undeniable point upon which all winemakers agree: great wine starts in the vineyard. They may debate single versus multi-vineyard. They might covet their own theories of new oak or old, how much barrels should be toasted, what country they should be from, if not even which forest. True cork, synthetic, or screw tops. Filtered or unfiltered: the variables and nuances are seemingly endless. But in the balance, fine wine begins and ends with this one component: the fruit.

Which means it's all about the *vines*. And the soil in which they *grow*.



Some winemakers are fortunate with the vineyards at their disposal. If they picked the ideal place to plant, and selected just the right clones, they have a good chance of getting the quality of fruit they are striving for. The alternative is to purchase established vineyards that have proven their capacity to produce grapes precisely to the winemaker's specification. Or, maybe a combination of both.

In 1963, Dr. Stanley Hoffman, a viticultural pioneer, planted the first Pinot Noir grapes in the southern Central Coast. In the '70s, Pinot made from Dr. Hoffman's grapes began gaining acclaim: the Paso Robles wine region was on the threshold of its celebrated reputation to come.

Hoffman Mountain Ranch (HMR) in the Adelaida district sits at a 1700-foot elevation at the southern end of the Santa Lucia Mountains, where it experiences the hot days, warm afternoons, and dropping overnight temperatures that result in essential grape acidity

and ideal ripeness. Planted on steep rolling ridges in rocky calcareous soil, the vines endure the extra stress that results in lower yields but produces more intensely flavored fruit.

Enter Adelaida Cellars, purchased by the Van Steenwyk family in 1991, who subsequently acquired a 400-acre portion of HMR, including all of the original Pinot Noir planting. After an investment in talented viticulturists to restore the vineyard's production, these old vines with their deep roots again generated exceptional Pinot Noir.

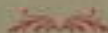
Meanwhile, the Van Steenwyk's team began developing their plans to capitalize on the unique shallow, well-drained soil over underlying limestone, which was destined to produce red and white wine with noticeable mineral characteristics that are rare in California wines. First came Viking Estate Vineyard; at the same elevation as HMR, but warmer due to the protection of two adjoining ridges, Viking consists of 15 acres producing "serious"



Tom Fundaro, Executive Chef at Villa Creek Restaurant, offers this recipe to prepare and pair with Adelaide Cellars Rhône White 2004 (Roussanne & Grenache Blanc)

### Cumin-Dusted Mano de Leon Scallop with Rhône White Beurre Blanc & Baby Mâche

- 1 Tbsp cumin seeds, toasted
- 4 black peppercorns
- 3 c Adelaide Rhône White
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ Lb butter cut into 1 inch cubes
- 4 large diver scallops, Mano de Leon if possible (see your fishmonger)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 4 bunches baby mâche

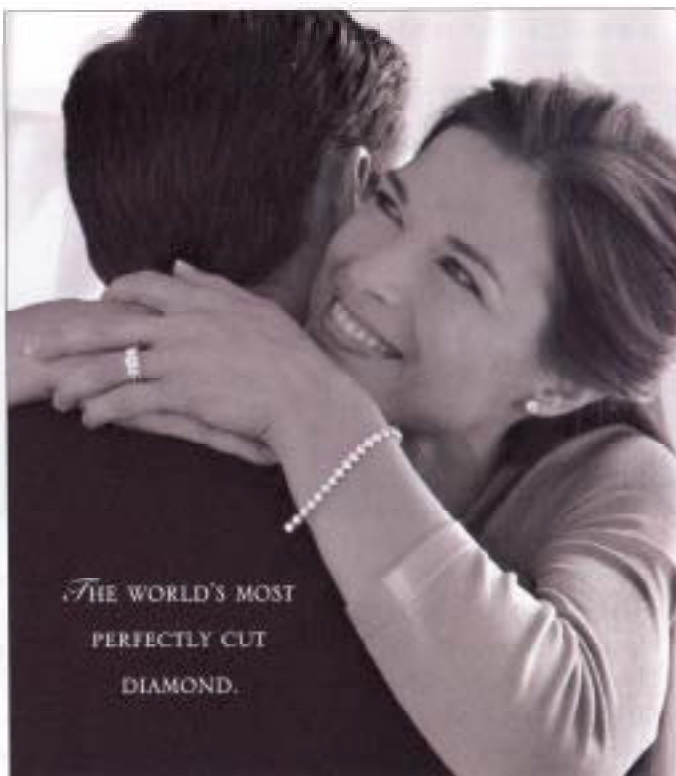


In a spice grinder, coarsely grind the cumin and black peppercorns. Set aside. Put wine in small saucepot and reduce to a quarter cup, over a very low heat. When reduced, add mustard. Keeping the pan on the heat, slowly whisk in the cubes of butter 1 at a time until all the butter is incorporated and the sauce is thickened, making sure that the sauce stays between 140 and 160 degrees during the process.

After removing the tough connective tissue from the scallops, season with salt and pepper and let sit for three to five minutes. Heat a nonstick sauté pan or skillet to medium high heat. Add 1 Tablespoon of oil to pan. One at a time, dip salted scallops flat side down into cumin dust (one side only) then immediately put in pan cumin side down. Sear until crust is golden. Then turn over and cook for about 2 minutes or until scallops are medium rare. Remove from pan and set on a warm plate.

To serve, place 1 ounce of sauce in the center of each of 4 small plates. Lay a small bed of clipped baby mâche on sauce, then place scallop on mâche, cumin side up. Garnish with a grind of pepper.

*pairing*



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Winemaker Terry Culton, Elizabeth Van Steenwyk, and Sales Manager Paul Sowerby

Cabernet Sauvignon. The quest to plant more perfect vineyards continued with Bobcat Crossing, dedicated to Portuguese varietals such as Touriga Nacional, Tinto Cao, and Souzao. This year the winemaking team will work toward producing an estate Port.

In 2002 a joint venture between Cal Poly and Adelaida resulted in 18 acres of Syrah: students conducted studies to identify soil types helped select clone-rootstock combinations that best suited the findings. Higher up on the ridge are five acres of Rhone varietals – Grenache, Mourvedre, plus a small amount of Petite Sirah. And adjacent to the HMR vineyards are 18 acres of Zinfandel to be harvested in 2008.

So, from where does all this energy and ardor for vines emanate? In part, from the family that owns Adelaida Cellars. “The stewardship of the owners, the passion of the winemaker, and the devotion of the viticulturists who tend the vines is in each bottle of wine that we offer,” says Elizabeth Van Steenwyk.

The winemaker to whom she refers is an enthusiastic man of seemingly ceaseless energy and talent by the name of Terry Culton. His career has taken him from Wild Horse Winery, where he first experienced the fruit from HMR vineyard, to Mendocino County, to Willamette Valley Vineyards in Oregon, to Calera Wine Company, where he honed his skill working with Pinot Noir grown in limestone soil.

When he joined Adelaida in 2003, he brought his inherent understanding of Pinot Noir, his commitment for making world class wines regardless the varietal, and vision for the endless potential of the land to fruition in the bottle. Of all the strategies that winemakers employ, Culton has conviction about his techniques – sustainable farming, gentle handling, native yeasts, specific combinations of oak – but at Adelaida the wine still all comes down to the lay of this special land and the fruit that grows on the vine.

