



## Winemaker Profile:

# TERRY CULTON

## *Adelaida's Maverick Winemaker*

by Mark Storer

**T**he people that make wine and run wineries tend toward the eclectic in their interests, past careers and experiences. Of no one is this more true than Terry Culton of Adelaida cellars. This social worker, turned winemaker via his friends and family brings a wealth of experience with him – and not just a little serendipitous fortune.

His path to winemaking is now carved in legend. On a social work-related visit to a small town in Northern California called Philo, Culton happened upon an old friend, Bob Nye, at the famed sparkling-wine maker, Scharffenberger Cellars. The visit changed his life and the course of his career.

Culton's wife Kathleen was accepted at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo in 1991 to study graduate level bio-chemistry and so the pair moved to Paso Robles to be close to the campus. That same year, Culton worked the crush at Creston Manor and was subsequently hired by famed Central Coast winemaker and mentor, Ken Volk of Wild Horse. According to Culton, Volk was a generous and giving teacher and he was quickly



promoted to cellar master for Wild Horse. With solid wine-making and cellar master experience under his belt, the Culton's moved back to the North Coast where Terry became cellar master yet again with Edmeades Cellars and from there, he went on to work at Willamette Valley Vineyards which produced some 90,000 cases of wine annually. That experience was invaluable and it helped propel him back across the California border when he was offered the assistant winemaker position at Calera Cellars in San Benito County. The experiences with Wild Horse, Willamette and Calera made Culton something of an expert in limestone soil Pinot Noir, which remains a passion for him.

It wasn't until 2003 that Culton accepted the position with Adelaida as head wine-

maker. With a complex four-tier winemaking program, Culton began to carve out one of the more famous niches in Paso Robles wine making. Adelaida boasts a reserve label (prices range between \$35 and \$75 a bottle), a white label (\$20 to \$30 a bottle), the SLO label (\$15 to \$20 a bottle) and the Schoolhouse label (\$13 to \$15 a bottle). Each label represents a different set of vineyards and fruit levels used in the wines. This consumer-based structure is one of the reasons why Adelaida has garnered so much press attention. The wines are clearly labeled and there are no hidden agendas in any of the wines – just good, honest winemaking from some of the best fruit that Culton can find.

From the renown reserve label Cabernet Sauvignon to the more moderately priced yet delectable Schoolhouse Rousanne, Culton has fashioned Adelaida as a maverick in the Central Coast wine community. It's no wonder, of course, seeing as Culton is something of a maverick himself.

Adelaida Cellars is located at 3805 Adelaida Road in Paso Robles. The tasting room is open daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. for more information, call 1-800-676-1232.