



# The Wine Press

Medal Winning Wines from California's Best Family-Owned Wineries.

*Alma Rosa Winery and Vineyard  
Sta. Rita Hills AVA - Santa Barbara County*





## ALMA ROSA 2014 PINOT NOIR SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

1,172 Cases Produced

Mostly sourced from vineyards in the Santa Maria Valley, this vibrant Pinot Noir is a product of the third year of drought in California. Soils were well-drained, devigorating ancient sand dunes that dominate the area. Bright ruby red in color, this Pinot Noir opens with fresh raspberry, black cherry and strawberry aromas filling the nose. On the palate, the strawberry comes to the forefront and is complimented with light cocoa overtones. This 2014 Pinot Noir is medium-bodied with powder-fine tannins and a bright, lively acidity.

Pair with a poached salmon, charcuterie, ham and other cold meats. Especially good with patés, terrines, most goat cheeses and chocolate-covered strawberries. Aged 12 months in neutral French and American Oak. Drink now until 2020.

**GOLD MEDAL** - *Monterey Wine Competition*

**SILVER MEDAL** - *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*



## ALMA ROSA 2014 PINOT GRIS SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

1,293 Cases Produced

The Pinot Gris grape has grown in popularity of late and is particularly attractive to those who love Pinot Noir. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Pinot Gris originates from the Burgundian area of France and has also been recognized as a genetic mutation of Pinot Noir.

Using grapes from three different vineyards (Sierra Madre, Lucas & Lewellen and La Encantada) within Santa Barbara County, this 2014 Pinot Gris is graced with fresh aromas and a lively palate. On the nose you can find predominating notes of lime pith, honeyed apricot and struck flint. On the palate, the wine is crisp with vibrant acidity and alluring flavors of lime and wet stone. Pair with lightly sauced white fish or soft goat's milk cheese. 97% Pinot Gris, 3% Pinot Blanc. Drink now until 2020.

**95 POINTS, GOLD MEDAL & BEST OF CLASS OF REGION**

- *California State Fair Wine Competition*

HOW WE CHOOSE OUR WINES: Gold Medal Wine Club showcases two wines each month from only the best small wineries of California. Featured wines include those which have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by a respected national wine publication (see [goldmedalwineclub.com/resources/wine-ratings](http://goldmedalwineclub.com/resources/wine-ratings)). On occasion, we feature a pair of wines which are newly released by the winery and which medals and reviews are forthcoming. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with very limited distribution. There are over 3,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



# Alma Rosa Winery



The lasting legacy of Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards is rooted in its founder's dedication to quality and the belief that this part of the Central Coast was the near perfect setting for growing and making great Burgundian varietals.

In January of 2014, a Houston-based investor named Robert Zorich became the owner of Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards out of a Chapter 11 re-organization of the company. The arrangement brought to an end the ownership of Alma Rosa founders, Richard and Thekla Sanford, who had begun the project some five years into the new millennium.



Richard and Thekla Sanford have dedicated over 30 years to producing high-quality wines using sustainable farming methods.

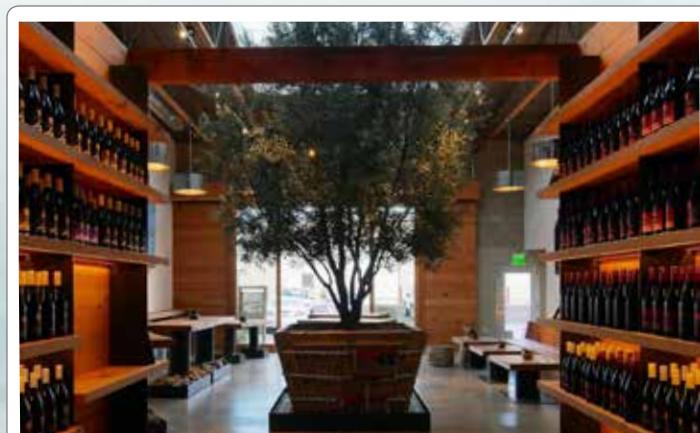
The name Alma Rosa is Spanish for 'Soul of the Rose' and has great sentimental value to the Sanfords. "Our ranch is a portion of the original Rancho Santa Rosa, an original California Mexican land grant. The old timers of our area refer to the hills on the south edge of our ranch, the Santa Rosa Hills, as "The Rosa". Thus, the wines that come from our home reflect the soul of

the Rosa, or the "Alma" of the Rosa." Although the winery is now in the capable hands of Robert Zorich, the Sanfords remain fully engaged in the winery and the initial vision and quality of wine remains an integral part of the operation today.

Zorich was not a stranger to the area, having graduated from the University of California Santa Barbara with a BA in Economics in 1971. Zorich was then the head of EnCap Investments LP, a highly successful partnership and a leading player in the petroleum exploration and development segment of the oil business. It was quite fortunate that Zorich just happened to be very familiar with Alma Rosa and Richard Sanford.

"I really wanted to do something with Richard Sanford. He has been creating great Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay, with integrity and class, for nearly 40 years in Santa Barbara County. I'm basically a business guy who enjoys wine, and it was important for me to partner with someone like Richard, whom I greatly respect and admire. In private equity we back highly experienced management teams and give them the tools to create value. This is a very similar situation," Zorich stated at the time.

The infusion of money is exactly what the doctor ordered for Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards who had been founded in 2005 and who had suffered greatly from the terrible recession that literally raked hundreds of good California wineries over the proverbial coals. Even the fact that Alma Rosa was located at the gateway to the rising (in stature) Sta. Rita Hills AVA wasn't enough to pull the winery through the particularly hard times. A Chapter 11 re-organization followed in 2012 and Robert Zorich became a player in 2013.



Alma Rosa's Tasting Room is located in Buellton, California, right off of Highway 101. Their rustic, inviting and elegant design coincides with the natural elements of the vineyards and the graceful quality of their wines.

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## Nick de Luca, WINEMAKER

His resume would occupy a page in Who’s Who in Wineries if such a book actually existed. Nick de Luca, hired as winemaker more than two years ago at Alma Rosa Winery, was on his way to a career in Law when he was bitten by the wine bug and switched callings.

He started at Sonoma’s Cline Cellars and swiftly moved through stints at Williams Selyem Winery, Fisher Vineyards and Byington Vineyard & Winery in Santa Cruz. In 2004, he became winemaker at Star Lane Vineyard and Dierberg Vineyard where he was first exposed to the Santa Ynez Valley. More than a decade later, de Luca assumed his present post as winemaker at Alma Rosa Winery and Vineyard.

*What about the Central Coast?* His answer was unequivocal.

“It doesn’t rain here. It dawned on me a few days ago that this place is paradise. The wines reflect that exuberant, outdoor sunny attitude,” he said, and he can’t help but get excited about them. His successes in competitions and in periodicals bear testament to his prowess in winemaking.

## ALMA ROSA WINERY

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The winery has remained basically the same as it was under Richard Sanford’s ownership — with one glaring exception. The business now has sufficient capital to assure continued quality in its wines and the management team to insure its continued financial success.

Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards has also continued its access to the organically-farmed vineyards of El Jabalí and La Encantada, both designed and planted by Richard Sanford. This arrangement assures the winery of an incredible source of top caliber fruit, so necessary for its continued success.

Alma Rosa produces around 15,000 cases per annum, with a majority of the wines coming from the Sta. Rita Hills AVA.

This is a tribute to Richard Sanford, the area’s iconic pioneer of planting and the very first person to recognize and plant Burgundian varietals on the cool climate setting.





# Food pairings from Alma Rosa Winery



## SAUTÉED SAND DAB FILLETS

PAIR WITH THE ALMA ROSA 2014 PINOT GRIS

5 (or more) sand dabs, per serving,  
clean and dry  
Equal parts flour and panko  
Salt and pepper  
¼ cup (or more) butter

Olive oil  
Fresh lemon, quartered  
Minced parsley  
Minced fresh chives  
¾ cup Alma Rosa Pinot Gris

In a deep dish, blend together flour and panko; season with salt and pepper. Dredge fish fillets through seasoned flour and place on a baking rack.

Melt butter in a large skillet, adding olive oil so it doesn't burn. When hot, slide fillets into the skillet over medium to medium-high flame and sauté quickly, about two minutes each side, until crispy and golden. You may need to do several batches; if so, remove cooked fillets to a platter as you go on.

When all of the fish is cooked, splash a little wine into the pan, squeeze the juice of half a lemon and swirl the pan over low heat to integrate the sauce. Pour sauce over fish, garnish with parsley and chives, and serve with your choice of vegetables and roasted potatoes or rice pilaf.



## FETTUCCHINE WITH MUSHROOMS & BACON

PAIR WITH THE ALMA ROSA 2014 PINOT NOIR

4 main-dish servings  
1 tbsp olive oil  
2 ounces small diced bacon  
(smoked bacon works best)  
4 cups assorted mushrooms,  
cleaned & stemmed  
2 tbsp chopped shallots  
1 tbsp chopped garlic

Creole seasoning  
¼ cup chopped green onion  
2 cups heavy cream  
1 tbsp butter  
1 pound fettuccine  
½ cup grated Parmigiano  
Reggiano cheese  
1 tbsp parsley, finely chopped

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. In a large sauté pan, over medium heat, add the olive oil. When the oil is hot add the bacon and sauté for 1 minute. Add the mushrooms and continue to sauté for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the shallots and garlic and season with Creole seasoning. Stir in the green onions. Add the cream and bring the liquid to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for about 5 minutes or until the sauce coats the back of a spoon. Season with Creole seasoning. Cook the fettuccine in the boiling water for about 3 to 4 minutes or until cooked al dente. (Use spinach fettuccine for some added color!)

Drain the pasta and toss with olive oil. Season the pasta with salt and pepper. Mound the pasta in the center of each plate for serving. Spoon the mushroom mixture over the top of the pasta. Sprinkle each plate with cheese and garnish with parsley.





## Richard Sanford, IN THE SPOTLIGHT

He’s been called the ‘Visionary Vintner’ and ‘the poster child of Pinot Noir’, and has already been enshrined in the Vintner’s Hall of Fame, but Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards’ Wine Director, Richard Sanford feels his work in the wine industry isn’t completed as of yet.

The son of a naval officer, Sanford was also a naval officer during the Vietnam War before turning his sights to the wine industry. It was 1971 and Richard Sanford decided that a cool weather stretch of land on California’s Central Coast was the ideal place (see Region Section) for planting Pinot Noir grapes — at a time when the now prized varietal was a postscript by most industry veterans.

His theories proved correct and the Sta. Rita Hills AVA has become one of the top producing regions for the fickle and cantankerous grape from Burgundy.

Sanford has always related that he made extensive comparisons to the weather in Burgundy itself before committing to the area in the Santa Ynez Valley. The temperature readings and amounts of rainfall of both locales were eerily similar so he made the decision to go forward and plant the first vineyard.

His first winery operation was Sanford & Benedict in 1971 that created huge waves in the world of Chardonnay. Around 1980, Sanford left the partnership and founded Sanford Winery a year later. In 1983, Richard and his wife Thekla turned a Buellton warehouse into a winery to showcase his prized Pinot Noirs that were grown from his home vineyard, Rancho El Jabali. A strict adherent of organic farming, Richard Sanford saw his dreams of owning and operating a successful winery reaching fruition when his winery reached the 50,000 case production levels.

Disaster came in the form of a \$10 million price tag for the new winery of his dreams. Originally estimated at \$4 million, the project put the Sanford’s in a hole from which they

would never recover. An agreement with a Chicago importer and distributor went south quickly and Richard Sanford vacated the dream world he had conjured up after four years.

Undaunted by the events, Richard and Thekla settled into the establishment of Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards. Another Buellton warehouse was located and the couple went about making their new winery a success. Things were going along quite well until the Great Recession of December 2007 saw the partial devastation of the high flying California wine industry. Even though the Sanford’s did everything within their power to survive, by 2012 Richard Sanford decided a Chapter 11 re-organization was necessary.

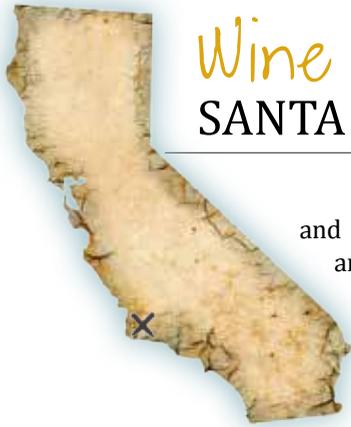
Their prayers were answered in the form of Houston-based investor Robert Zorich (see Main Story). Today, Richard and Thekla Sanford continue to live at Alma Rosa and help promote the winery.

“It’s become more and more important to be out repping the product,” he continued. “There’s a lot more competition and that’s only likely to increase. The Sta. Rita Hills has room to grow and there is a demand for new vineyards. I’ve been at this for more than 44 years, and I have always been a pioneer. I finally decided to recognize that fact and enjoy that.”

There are few individuals within the wine spectrum that can compare to Richard Sanford. He is a man of principles and is blessed with the fortitude it takes to get back up off the canvass when knocked down.

Anyone who enjoys Pinot Noir (or Chardonnay) should pay homage to Richard Sanford, truly a man for the ages.





## Wine Region: SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



Santa Barbara County AVA and its myriad of superior growing areas is arguably the best location in California for plantings of the most difficult Burgundian varietal: Pinot Noir. The actual growing zones are huge in size, running from Santa Maria in the north to the City of Santa Barbara in the south. Santa Barbara County AVA is also home to more than a hundred wineries of all shapes and sizes.

There are six official American Viticultural Areas within the Santa Barbara County (Santa Ynez Valley AVA, Santa Maria Valley AVA, Sta. Rita Hills AVA, Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara AVA, Ballard Canyon AVA and Los Olivos District AVA) and due to their unique terrains and distinctive micro-climates, each of these regions can rightfully boast about having their own identity and specific growing patterns. Not only does this apply to the sub

regions as a whole, but diving in further, individual vineyards within these sub regions can rightfully claim originality when it comes to their land. This has to do with the natural topography of the Pacific coastline. Not only does the coast lie to the south (rather than west like most of the California coastline) but the influences from the Santa Ynez and San Rafael Mountain ranges also play a major role in the variety of micro-climates and soils which, in turn, allow for an array of grape varietals to thrive.

The major players in the Santa Barbara County AVA are Chardonnay and Pinot Noir followed by Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc, Grenache and Cabernet Sauvignon. However, due to its overall ideal growing characteristics, this region has been producing first-class wines from the over fifty different varietals planted.

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Retail Price at the Winery: \$25.00



# Wine Winyard: TEST YOUR WINEIQ!



## Are Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris varietals related?

If you said 'yes', you'd be right! The Pinot Noir varietal is a well-known Burgundian grape but what is lesser-known is that Pinot Noir is one of the ancient grape varietals theorized to be only one or two generations away from its native, wild ancestor. Over the centuries natural mutations of the vine lead to the Pinot Gris (also known as Pinot Grigio), Pinot Blanc and Meunier varietals. It's hard to know for sure which mutation came first, but through DNA testing it is proven that the three are direct descendants.

## How many AVA's (American Viticulture Areas) makes up Santa Barbara County? Can you name all of them?

This is somewhat of a trick question. The official answer is six AVA's: Santa Maria Valley AVA, Santa Ynez Valley AVA, Sta. Rita Hills AVA, Ballard Canyon AVA, Los Olivos District AVA and Happy Canyon AVA. Technically, Santa Barbara County is broken down into two viticulture areas: Santa Maria Valley AVA and Santa Ynez Valley AVA. However, the Santa Ynez Valley AVA is further dissected into the Sta. Rita Hills, Ballard Canyon, Los Olivos District and Happy Canyon distinctions. Although there are six officially recognized AVA's today, this may change in the future as more vintners push for their region to have its own AVA which acknowledges the unique characteristics of the terroir and wines produced there.

## Why does a Pinot Noir or Pinot Gris bottle shape differ from a Cabernet Sauvignon or Sauvignon Blanc bottle shape?

The answer is more simple than you may think. It has to do with the region from which the varietal originates. For example, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay are presented in a Burgundy shaped bottle with less pronounced shoulders that slope downward. On the other hand, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot, for example, are presented in a Bordeaux shaped bottle which has distinct, high shoulders and a deep punt on the bottom of the bottle.



## The Gold Medal Wine Store

Instant! Membership Rewards saves you 16% to 36% off Alma Rosa wines!

| ALMA ROSA                                | Retail Price<br>at Winery |                   | Gold Medal Membership Rewards Pricing* |          |           |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|--|----------|-----------|
|  |                           |                   | 2+ btls.                               | 6+ btls. | 12+ btls. |
| 2014 Pinot Noir,<br>Santa Barbara County | <del>\$28.00/btl.</del>   | 2-Bottle Members: | \$23.00                                | \$21.33  | \$20.50   |
|  |                           | 4-Bottle Members: | \$23.00                                | \$20.50  | \$19.25   |
| 2014 Pinot Gris,<br>Santa Barbara County | <del>\$19.00/btl.</del>   | 2-Bottle Members: | \$16.00                                | \$14.33  | \$13.50   |
|  |                           | 4-Bottle Members: | \$16.00                                | \$13.50  | \$12.25   |

\*Effective per bottle prices after Membership Rewards discount is applied at checkout.

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