

Diamond Series



Corté Riva Winery

Of all the spectacular success stories to be found in the California wine business, none is more compelling or worthwhile than that of Corté Riva Vineyards located in Napa Valley's picturesque town of St. Helena.

Corté Riva is the culmination of a long time dream of Nieves and Lawrence Cortez and Nieves' cousin Romel Rivera. All are originally from Luzon in the Northern Province of the Philippine Islands. They came to the United States in the late 1970s and found work in the vineyards around Calistoga in northern Napa County.

At one point, Nieves and Lawrence were married. Through hard work and great sacrifice, both Lawrence and Romel gradually climbed their way through the layers of opportunity and became members of the distinguished Pride Mountain Vineyards of St. Helena. Romel Rivera became winemaker and Lawrence Cortez served as cellar master.

In 1996, Nieves Cortez began the task of convincing her husband and cousin that they should attempt to produce wines under their own label. "Our next door neighbor in Calistoga, Placido Garcia (now mayor of Calistoga), had some second growth grapes that he allowed Lawrence to use," recalled Nieves. "We only made small amounts of wine for family and friends. Everyone loved the wines and it was then that I started dreaming of making our own wines under our own label."

For a time, Lawrence and Romel fought off the notion of trying to compete with the 3,000-plus wineries that populate the California wine industry. But Nieves Cortez was unrelenting and the pair finally gave in bolstered by

the high marks and general acceptance of Pride Mountain's excellent portfolio of wines. When the Pride family itself was apprised of the prospect of a wine made by two of its key employees, they encouraged Cortez and Rivera to go for it.

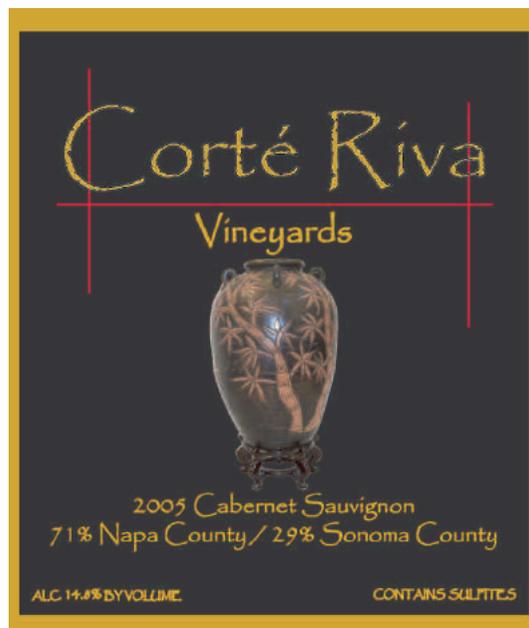
The rest can be found in the great storybook that has become Napa Valley. With very little money to start with, the first 350 cases of Corté Riva (a combination of Cortez and Rivera) made its appearance in 2003.

"It was most certainly a dream come true," added Nieves Cortez. "Everyone helped us get started. It's like that when you have little money to begin a project."

The wines literally took the wine industry and its periodicals by storm. A number of wines received mid-90s ratings and the public suddenly was keenly aware of the tiny entity of Corté Riva Vineyards. What made things more inimitable was the fact that Corté Riva Vineyards was the first winery owned by Philipino-Americans (a second has recently come into existence). Also, the vineyard selection utilized in Corté Riva's success was somewhat unique to the Napa wine community.

Whereas many wineries tend to enter into long-term grape contracts, Corté Riva chose instead to go out and find the best grapes in each year's vintage. Almost thirty years of vineyard experience was behind the somewhat uncertain selection process.

"Both Lawrence and Romel believe in their years of experience," commented Nieves Cortez. "And, with the fact that we make relatively small amounts of our wines, we feel it is more practical to find the best grapes from each harvest and



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Romel Rivera, Nieves Cortez and
Lawrence Cortez

not be tied down to certain vineyards who might or might not have really good grapes.”

No one can argue with success, and Corté Riva Vineyards has certainly enjoyed its fair share of that. Production has risen to around 4,000 cases this year; a level that Nieves Cortez says is the plateau for the small winery.

“We cannot control our quality if we get any larger,” she explained. “And quality is more important to all of us than quantity is.”

What remains for Corté Riva is the expansion to a tasting facility that was in the planning stages until the current recession put the plans on hold.

“We still have one dream left,” Cortez finalized. “That is to be able to have a tasting facility built to give our business some real exposure to Napa Valley visitors. We were ready to go some time ago, but the business downturn has affected everything in the Valley. We thank God that he didn’t allow us to go ahead with the tasting room.”

God is definitely on the side of Corté Riva Vineyards. Its superb wines are becoming harder to get while the great reviews and marks keep coming on the newer releases. It’s a union made in heaven, by way of the Philippine Islands and St. Helena.

Accolades and Tasting Notes



93+ Points, Robert Parker — “The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (a Napa and Sonoma blend) boasts a deep ruby/purple hue along with aromas of tobacco leaf, creosote, crème de cassis, black tea, incense, and new oak. Muscular, fleshy, full-bodied, and dense with sweet tannins and a long finish, it is accessible, but promises to be even better with 3-4 years of bottle age.”

Winemaker Notes — This wine has an opaque bluish purple color and a sweet nose of dark chocolate, blackberry, and cassis with a hint of fresh earth in the background. It has an outstanding fruit character, and a ripe, dense, full body with massive richness, soft tannins and enormous earth.

Reorder

Corté Riva is among Napa Valley’s most impressive winery newcomers and their 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon is the latest highly sought-after release. It is a superb blend of Napa and Sonoma fruit, with undeniable complexity and rich harmonious fruit flavors...an excellent wine and simply irresistible.

Winery Direct: \$65.00

Diamond Series Price:

2-Bottle members.....\$55.00 / bottle

4-Bottle Members &

Multi-Series Members...\$52.00 / bottle

(Plus shipping)

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