



Diamond Series



Jericho Canyon Vineyard

It took more than three years to locate, but the property near the upper end of Napa Valley, close to the foot of historic Mount St. Helena, turned out to be the perfect spot for Dale and Marla Bleecher to build their new vineyard in 1989. What's more, research into the property's history produced some rather interesting facts.

"It turned out that the property was originally developed late in the 19th Century by a Civil War veteran, a member of the New York 110th Infantry," informed Marla Bleecher during a recent interview. "He also planted the original stand of grapes that we found after we bought the property."

While the acreage changed hands in the ensuing years and later became a cattle ranch, it was the Bleechers' intention to return it to its former viticultural use from the time they first saw the property.

"Both Dale and I had been interested in wine since we were kids," Marla Bleecher explained. "I am of Italian heritage and my father used to make wine with my grandfather's equipment. I always had a choice of drinking watered wine or milk as a kid. Dale's father made dandelion wine. We were both hooked from the beginning."

The Bleechers chose the name Jericho Canyon Vineyard (after a creek on their property) for their enterprise and soon began producing some high caliber grapes for sale to wineries. Among their clients were the likes of Chateau Montelena, Sterling Vineyards and Clos du Val.

After a few years, some of their grapes became vineyard-designated wines.

"We saw how good the grapes were and decided to do our own thing," she continued. "Our vineyards are quite difficult to farm and we believe that actually helps their quality. Our grapes have to struggle to produce."

Jericho Canyon Vineyard is planted at an altitude of 200 to 900 feet, with vertical angles of

nearly 40 degrees. The soils are shallow but variable and provide excellent drainage for the vines.

"Most of our fruit comes in the form of tiny berries that make the flavors more intense. This also helps with the structure of the wines, providing layers upon layers of flavor. Our 40 acres are something akin to owning 40 different vineyards. The soil variances give us small blocks of vines that are all a bit different, but are wonderful to work with. Last year, we had 34 different fermentations from the 20 or so blocks we identified. All are processed separately and provide us with great flexibility when it comes to final blending," Marla Bleecher added.

From the original 500 cases of Jericho Canyon Vineyard released in 2001, the winery has grown to its present 2,000 to 2,500 case production level. It will remain at this mark for the foreseeable future.

"We'll hold steady for the next few years," Bleecher continued. "We prefer to stay small while we continue to develop the winery. Even though our vineyard could produce more, we have been replanting sections each year and we have not yet completed that part of the project."

Even though Marla Bleecher doesn't consider her winery completely developed, many industry insiders might not agree. Numerous Gold Medals and high scores and praise from wine periodicals have established Jericho Canyon Vineyard as a key player in the rarified air of Napa Valley's top wineries.

"We've been quite pleased with the public's reaction to our wines," Bleecher confided. "We knew we had something special when we first saw the property nearly twenty-five years ago. Back then we were young and innocent and were unaware of what it might take to succeed. Looking back, I don't think we would do it any differently."

The Jericho Canyon Vineyard label was Marla Bleecher's design with the help of a graphic artist.



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Marla & Dale Bleecher —
Founders



The featured tree is a giant oak located on the property that Bleecher thinks resembles a Bonsai tree. It makes a subtle statement that is emblematic of the winery's highly rated wines.

And, there is the additional fact that another generation of

Bleechers is already involved in the winery. Youngest son Nick, 25, is a UC Davis graduate in viticulture and enology that is already working at the winery. He also brings an economics background into the family's thriving business.

Tours of the Jericho Canyon Vineyard are available by appointment only and include a cave tasting that is something quite special. During the summer, a special Polaris event is also held to introduce the public to the enthralling vineyard.

Accolades and Tasting Notes

Jericho Canyon 2007 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon

94-Points + Cellar Selection + Gold Medal, *Beverage Testing Institute* — “Violet black color. Brooding aromas of cassis pie, toffee and Asian spices with satiny, dry-yet-fruity medium-to-full body and a long seamless, fine tannin finish. A superb table wine that will shine with filet mignon.”

92-Points, *James Suckling* — “Gorgeous nose of currants, blackberries and blueberries, with hints of mint. Full bodied, with velvety tannins and fruity, spice and mint finish. Hints of toasted oak too.”

Winemaker Aaron Pott's Notes — “From the exceptional 2007 vintage we have crafted a well-structured wine made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep, ripe fruit aromas of blueberries, blackberries and black currants with layered notes of cinnamon and vanilla bean. The complex palate has great depth and purity that will see this wine age gracefully for many years.”

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