

# Diamond Series



## Audelssa Estate Winery

There is always a long running argument amongst Sonoma and Napa growers as to the fruit quality of mountain-grown or valley floor grapes. Since the mountain grapes must work harder than their lower counterparts in finding water and are often in less than ideal soils, the general consensus generally favors mountainside grapes even though their yields are appreciably lower than the valley floor cousins.

For Dan Schaefer, 44, owner of the emerging Audelssa Estate Winery in Sonoma, it's easily apparent as to why he has become the champion for mountainside grape growing. His Mountain Terrace Vineyards dominate a section of the western face of the Mayacamas Mountains at Mount Veeder as few vineyards do, and have produced some of the finest grapes ever seen in the region.

"My dad, Dan Sr., bought the first 40-acre tract in late 1989," Schaefer began. "Then my wife Gloria and I bought a second tract that was connected to the first. In 2005, we acquired a third parcel that finished off the place at just about 80 acres and set about the task of making a name for ourselves in the ultra competitive wine industry."

Audelssa Estate Winery (derived from parts of the Schaefer's three daughter's names, Audrey, Chelsea and Alyssa) is located from 600 to 1800 feet and was initially considered as a possible retirement location for the family. When the first grapes reached fruition, iconic Sonoma vintner Dick Arrowood (Arrowood Vineyards) took one look and wanted to buy the entire production. He also made the Schaefer's an interesting proposition. Knowing the value of the grapes, Arrowood suggested the Schaefer's allow

him to make a wine under their own label and sell it as an estate-produced wine.

The first three vintages of Audelssa were made at Arrowood and received great reviews. By then, Dan Schaefer realized it was necessary to build his own artisan winery in order to control the fate of his fledgling project. Work was begun on a winery and the first estate releases occurred in 2003.

"Not many people realize what a challenge growing grapes on a steep mountainside can be," Schaefer continued. "It almost seems like a never ending saga. We get what we call sideways rain up here, rain that can almost knock you off the road. And the wind, well in 2002, some extreme gusts actually blew the clusters off the vines. Yet, with all that, the vines somehow seem to flourish. The roots must go deep to find any water and the fruit they produce is extremely concentrated and complex."

Schaefer also points to two extraordinary factors that make his terraces unique. One is the fact that the vines have a perfect southwestern exposure to the afternoon and early evening sun (not to mention an almost faultless view of San Francisco in the distance) and secondly, a distinctive dichotomy of soil types, one white and one red. The white is full of

rhyolite and the red is mostly basalt, and each has its own effect on the grapes grown.

"We have been amazed at the difference in identical varietals grown in the different soils. Each has its own distinctive character and provides us with the basis for making some really great wines."



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Dan and Gloria Schaefer



Production at Audelssa has grown to between 2,000 to 3,000 cases and will never exceed 7,000. Dan Schaefer believes “it feels right” at the 7,000-case level and his ability to easily manage the operation makes the project fun and not a real chore.

“If we were any larger, we would need additional facilities and additional personnel,” he added. “We set out to make big, elegant wines that could compete on the worldwide market. Our business plan calls for minimalist winemaking efforts with almost total concentration on the fruit. At present we are able to control the farming and I feel that is 90% of the job. I know it has become a cliché in the business, but Audelssa’s portfolio of wines is here to prove that the soil truly affects the flavors of the wines.”

With a host of accolades under its belt and an ever-increasing fan base, Audelssa Estate Winery seems destined to accomplish its stated goal. The winery is an absolute must stop for wine lovers to Sonoma who will not be dissuaded by the winding dirt road leading up to the winery.

Dan and Gloria Schaefer’s excellent wines make an exciting *Diamond Series Selection*.

We hope you enjoy.

## Accolades and Tasting Notes



**93-Points**, *Robert Parker Jr.’s The Wine Advocate* — “The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve is made from their mountain terrace vineyards in Sonoma. Composed of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, it reveals classic notes of toasty oak interwoven with generous amounts of crème de cassis, charcoal, smoke, and scorched earth. Full-bodied with superb ripeness and density as well as a long finish, it should age easily for 15 – 20 years.”

**Winemaker’s Notes** “The grapes that produced this wine are from a variety of blocks within Audelssa’s own Mountain Terraces Vineyard. Each year we pick our favorite barrels of Estate Cab and attempt to come up with a blend that displays opulent texture and broad structure with layers of fruit, spice and earth that we believe represents the highest potential of Cabernet Sauvignon from Sonoma.”

## Reorder

Handcrafted by hotshot winemaker Erich Bradley, the Audelssa 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon represents the extraordinary potential of ‘extreme viticulture’ on mountain vineyards. Through an incredible confluence of concentrated flavors, structure and complexity, Audelssa succeeds in mastering an exceptional Cabernet with their 2005 vintage from this severe, yet surprisingly desirable location.

Winery Direct: \$90.00 / bottle

**Diamond Series Price:**

2-Bottle members.....\$75.00 / bottle

4-Bottle Members &

Multi-Series Members...\$72.00 / bottle

(Plus shipping)

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