

The Wine Press

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

*J. Wilkes Wines
Central Coast*





J. Wilkes 2017 “Kent’s Red” Blend

Paso Robles Highlands District, California

1,000 Cases Produced

The J. Wilkes 2017 “Kent’s Red” is a blend of 90% Barbera and 10% Lagrein from the renowned Paso Robles Highlands District on California’s Central Coast. This District, which is the most southeast sub appellation within the Paso Robles AVA, is an absolutely *fantastic* place to grow wine grapes, partly due to its average 55 degree temperature swing from day to night (the highest diurnal temperature swing in the United States!), and also in part to its combination of sandy and clay soils that promote very vigorous vines. The high temperature swing, by the way, slows the ripening rate of the fruit on the vine and allows flavors to develop, which is especially important when crafting bold, complex red blends like the J. Wilkes 2017 “Kent’s Red.” This wine opens with incredibly seductive aromas of blackberry, huckleberry, and freshly berry pie. The palate is dry, but very fruity with dark berry flavors and just the right balance of bright, deep, and elegant nuances. Suggested food pairings for the J. Wilkes 2017 “Kent’s Red” include barbecued steak, pork, or beef stew. Aged in oak. Enjoy now until 2027.

Gold Medal Special Selection



J. Wilkes 2016 Chardonnay

Paso Robles Highlands District, California

1,000 Cases Produced

J. Wilkes’ 2016 Chardonnay also comes from the esteemed Paso Robles Highlands District, a region that may be dominated by red wine grapes, but the Chardonnay grown here is well-respected and offers some incredibly savory yet ripe flavors in the finished wines. Light golden in color with brilliant clarity, the J. Wilkes 2016 Chardonnay opens with dominating aromas of ripe pear, green apple and lime zest. Deeper exploration shows hints of lemon-lime soda, touches of French oak and fresh minerality. The palate is broad, savory and delicious and begs to be paired with pastas dressed with butter and lightly grated Parmesan, seafood with butter/cream sauces, fish and chips, or fried shrimp. The J. Wilkes 2016 Chardonnay is a definite crowd-pleaser and complex in an understated way. Aged in French oak. 100% Chardonnay. Enjoy now until 2021.

Gold Medal Special Selection

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). 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.



J. Wilkes Wines



A tribute to one man's legendary grape-growing and winemaking legacy, J. Wilkes Wines produces award-winning, small-lot 'wines of place' from the best AVA's and vineyards on California's Central Coast.



Winery founder Jeff(erson) Wilkes was a winegrower, winemaker, and wine grape salesman who helped bring stardom to the Central Coast winegrowing region, and specifically the Santa Maria Valley and Paso Robles Highlands AVA's. His namesake label continues to honor his legacy and unwavering passion for these wine regions.

The story is one that Hollywood would quickly embrace.

The hero, a fellow named Jeff(erson) Wilkes, works as a grape grower and salesman in the Santa Maria Valley, a bit north of Los Angeles. He is a tireless worker and his efforts literally bear (great) fruit. He takes three vineyards, Bien Nacido and Solomon Hills in the Santa Maria Valley, and French Camp in the Paso Robles Highlands, into wine stratosphere as far as quality and reputation. He is at the

top of his game and he decides to try it on his own.

In 2001, Jeff Wilkes introduces the J. Wilkes Wines label and produces around a thousand cases for sale. His efforts are rewarded and the wine sells out quickly. Jeff Wilkes is definitely on his way to establishing his brand as a boutique winery.

For almost the next decade, J. Wilkes Wines continues to grow and produces numerous medals and accolades along the way.

Then, in 2010, at age 57, Jeff Wilkes suddenly passes away. Production of J. Wilkes Wines comes to a halt for nearly the next two years. A small production occurs in 2011, but the brand is all but dormant.

A year later, the prestigious Miller Family of Central Coast winegrowing and winery fame buys J. Wilkes Wines from Jeff Wilkes' estate. The Millers were friends of Wilkes and made the decision to continue the legacy that Wilkes had started more than a decade before.

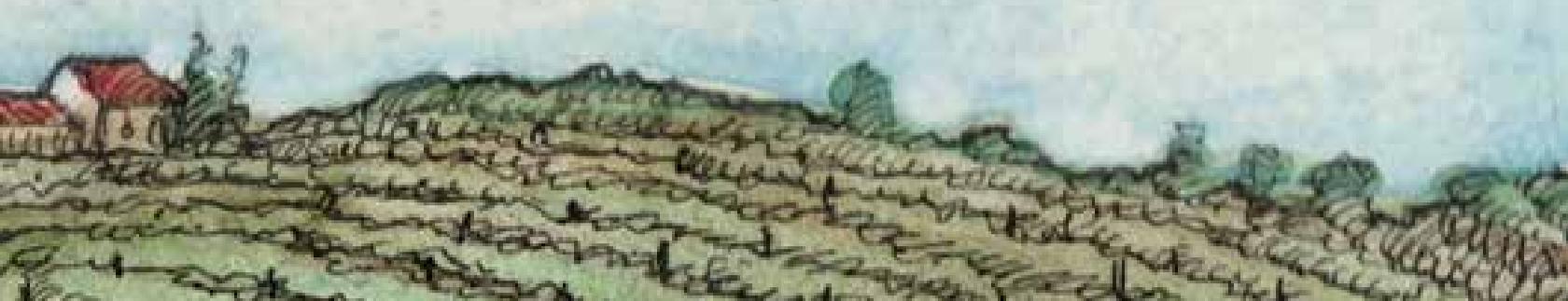
"Jeff was something of a visionary," Miller Family spokesman Nicholas Miller related. "It was his idea to produce wines using certain AVA's (American Viticultural Area) that would clearly define the origin and varietal without having to pay the price for vineyard-designated wines. It was very insightful and was meant to introduce consumers into specific flavors and tastes."

A year later, the Millers hired Wes Hagen to come aboard J. Wilkes Wines both as winemaker, spokesman, and brand ambassador. The family gave Hagen free reign to bring the winery's production up to a level they considered acceptable.



Inspired by Jeff Wilkes' vision and moved by their friendship, the Miller family decided to continue the J. Wilkes label as a tribute to Jeff's passion and dedication to the Santa Maria Valley and Paso Robles wine regions. The Miller family is a widely respected fifth-generation California farming family who also owns Bien Nacido, Solomon Hills, and French Camp vineyards.

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Wes Hagen, Winemaker

Winemaker Wes Hagen brings an analytical and thoughtful approach to winemaking. A former English teacher, Wes received his viticultural and winemaking degree from the iconic University of California at Davis and has since been an award-winning winemaker on California's Central Coast. His small-lot wines have earned him many 90+ scores from *Wine Spectator*, *Robert Parker*, and *Decanter* magazine, in addition to an incredible array of medals from local and national wine competitions. In 2013, Michael Cervin (of *Wall Street Journal* and *Decanter*) rated Wes Hagen as **One of the 100 Most Influential Winemakers in the United States**.

Wes describes his winemaking style as clean and balanced, showing the place and the vintage. For J. Wilkes Wines, an AVA-based brand, Wes is able to source fruit from the best vineyards on the Central Coast (Santa Maria Valley, Sta. Rita Hills, and Paso Robles Highlands District AVA's) to make wines that represent the place, the terroir, and at an amazing value.

Wes Hagen's experience over the past twenty-five years, including past roles as winemaker, viticulturist, vineyard manager, wine educator, and AVA consultant (also the leading figure behind establishing the Sta. Rita Hills AVA) makes him uniquely qualified to oversee the production of J. Wilkes wines.

J. Wilkes Wines

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In the ensuing four years, J. Wilkes Wines has grown to an impressive 7,000-case level with an eye to significantly increase that number. "We hope to grow J. Wilkes Wines to between 30 and 50 thousand cases in another ten years," Nicholas Miller confided. "And, we intend to remain true to Jeff Wilkes' original viewpoint on how the wines would be developed."

J. Wilkes Wines has also recently opened a tasting facility in Los Olivos that is open from Thursday through Monday each week that has greatly increased its exposure.

"People really identify with Jeff's story," Miller concluded. "He was really a wonderful person and would be

extremely gratified that so many are happy with his concept."

A Hollywood ending to the story, to be sure.





Food pairings from J. Wilkes Wines



Flank Steak with Chimichurri

Pair with the J. Wilkes 2017 "Kent's Red" Blend, Paso Robles Highlands District

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 1/2 lbs trimmed flank steak | 1 1/2 cups fresh flat-leaf parsley |
| 1 1/2 tsp kosher salt | 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar |
| 1/2 tsp ground cumin | 1/3 cup olive oil |
| 1/2 tsp ground coriander | 1/4 tsp cayenne |
| 1/4 tsp black pepper | |
| 1 large garlic clove | |
| 1 1/2 cups fresh cilantro | |

Preheat broiler.

Pat steak dry. Stir together 1 tsp salt, cumin, coriander, and pepper in a small bowl and rub mixture onto both sides of steak. Broil steak on a broiler pan about 4 inches from heat, 6 minutes per side for medium-rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let stand 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, with motor running, add garlic to a food processor and finely chop. Add cilantro, parsley, vinegar, oil, cayenne, and remaining 1/2 tsp salt, then pulse until herbs are finely chopped.

Holding a knife at a 45-degree angle, thinly slice steak and serve with sauce. *Recipe sourced from www.epicurious.com.*



Grilled Halibut with Tarragon Beurre Blanc

Pair with the J. Wilkes 2016 Chardonnay, Paso Robles Highlands District

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2/3 cup dry white wine | 1/4 tsp kosher salt |
| 1/4 cup chopped shallots | 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper |
| 1/2 tsp whole black peppercorns | Cooking spray |
| 2 large tarragon sprigs | |
| 3 Tbs butter, cut into small pieces | |
| 1 tsp chopped fresh tarragon | |
| 4 (6-oz.) halibut fillets | |

Combine the first 4 ingredients in a small heavy saucepan over medium-high heat; bring to a boil. Cook until liquid is reduced to 2 Tbs (about 9 minutes). Remove from heat; strain through a fine sieve over a measuring cup, pressing mixture to release liquid. Discard solids. Return liquid to pan. Add butter, 1 piece at a time, stirring with a whisk until butter is incorporated. Stir in tarragon.

Sprinkle fish evenly with salt and ground pepper. Heat a large grill pan over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add fish to pan; cook 5 minutes on each side or until desired degree of doneness. Serve with sauce, and rosemary-garlic roasted potatoes and asparagus. *Recipe sourced from www.myrecipes.com.*





Wes Hagen, In The Spotlight

He enjoys a dual title, ambassador and winemaker, but Wes Hagen means just about everything to J. Wilkes Wines.

The Los Angeles native never expected to become part of the wine industry and graduated from the University of Redlands (located in a suburb of northeastern Los Angeles) with a dual English/Education degree. He eventually became interested in wine and held the winemaker position at boutique winery Clos Pepe located in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA.

Hagen utilized his composition skills and was the leading figure that eventually produced the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. He later succeeded in having two additional AVA's recognized, Happy Canyon in 2011 and Ballard Canyon in 2014. He is



Wes Hagen strives to highlight the flavor profiles of the Central Coast AVA's with his J. Wilkes wines. Right now, the list of AVA's under the J. Wilkes spotlight are the Santa Maria Valley (Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, and Chardonnay), Sta. Rita Hills (Pinot Noir), and Paso Robles Highlands District (Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, and Chardonnay). Rather than focusing on vineyard-designate wines, Hagen hopes to show the best overall representation of each AVA - it was the philosophy founder Jeff Wilkes followed, and one that Hagen proudly upholds.

currently working on a fourth appellation, but will not reveal its identity.

“The Millers (owners of J. Wilkes Wines) wanted someone familiar with the legalese involved with appellations and a person who was also a winemaker. I fit the bill and the family gave me an incredible opportunity to run J. Wilkes Wines,” Hagen recently commented. “They wanted to make J. Wilkes Wines into a formidable winery and still remain true to the winery’s founder, Jeff Wilkes.”

Hagen feels it is his job to bring an understanding of the different flavors included in the AVA's that make up J. Wilkes Wines’ portfolio. “I want to ride the waves that nature provides in a way that truly respects the sense of place that is the Santa Maria Valley where our core wines originate,” he added. Wilkes also produces wines from the famed Paso Robles Highlands District and the Sta. Rita Hills.

Hagen feels that the fruit originating within these regions is on par with “the greatest coastal areas in our country.” He is also keenly aware of the price/value relationship that exists in today’s retail wine market. “There is no reason for the consumer to pay extra for vineyard designation if a wine is really well made. It’s like taking a “selfie” with the bottle. An AVA-blended model produces the same great quality, but at a much lesser price.”

He also understands his role as ambassador for J. Wilkes Wines thusly, “Our founder’s vision is as important, or *more* important, than my being the face of the winery.”

Prudent words from a erudite person.





Wine Region: Central Coast

Of all the wine producing regions in California, none has enjoyed the rise in popularity more than the Santa Maria Valley AVA. It is joined by Sta. Rita Hills AVA and the Paso Robles AVA (Highlands District) to produce fruit for J. Wilkes Wines.

Even though it can claim longevity (Santa Maria Valley AVA was the first AVA designated along with Napa Valley AVA in 1981) as a production region, the area came into its own over 25 years ago. Since then, fruit from the area has become as prized as any in California. There are a number of reasons for this amazing rise in popularity. Geographically, the Santa Maria Valley is a natural funnel-shaped valley opening west to the Pacific Ocean. Because the valley opens to the ocean, there is no opposition to the sea fog that moves in overnight. This fog engulfs lower lying vineyards, and often lingers into mid-day. This uncommon phenomenon entails a rare transverse geography that runs east to west and encourages the influx of cool marine breezes. The valley features a long growing season and very little rainfall, meaning grapes have extensive time to build flavor on the vine.



The Santa Rita Hills AVA has sandy soils and similar east-west winds as the Santa Maria Valley AVA. Vines produce tiny berries with dense color and amazing acid structure. This combination of factors makes for big, bold wines and allows for excellent aging potential. Its AVA status was approved in 2001 and it has become a favorite of many Northern California wineries who use it to blend with fruit grown in their respective locations. More than 2,700 acres comprise this appellation and around 60 wineries call it home.

The Paso Robles AVA is comprised of eleven sub-AVA's, of which the Highlands District is considered the highest elevation of the entire area. Extremely hot days and cold nights (the average diurnal temperature swing shifts some 55 degrees from day to night) allow the vines to develop flavor and intensity. Paso Robles' AVA contains younger soils than the two aforementioned zones. The vineyards that comprise this AVA are located south-southeast of the city of Paso Robles and are bounded by San Juan Creek AVA and Creston District AVA.

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Gold Medal - *Harvest Challenge*
336 Cases Produced

Retail Price at the Winery: \$28.00



Wine Winyard: Test Your Wine IQ!



From where do the varietals, Barbera and Lagrein (of this month's J. Wilkes "Kent's Red" Blend) originate?

Lagrein (pronounced *lah-grine*) is an ancient grape variety native to the small wine region of Sudtiroi-Alto Adige, which is located at the very northern tip of Italy on the border of Austria and at the base of the Dolomites. The varietal is related to Syrah and Pinot Noir and produces wines that are surprisingly dark, bold and plummy, but also lighter on the palate than its inky color implies. Like most Italian wines, Lagrein is high in acidity and minerality, which keeps the wine vibrant, fresh, and excellent with food. Lagrein's typical flavor profile is of blackberries and black cherries with hints of wild herbs and river stones. There are currently only a handful of Lagrein plantings in California. Also from Northern Italy, Barbera originated in Piedmont and it is suspected that the varietal dates as far back as the 7th century (making it nearly 1,000 years older than Cabernet Sauvignon!). Barbera is the third most planted grape in all of Italy and produces some of the juiciest, most food-friendly wines. It can range in style from fresh and light to full-bodied and elegant with incredible age-ability. Barbera was reportedly first brought to California in the 1880's, and it has since earned many devotees among California wine connoisseurs.

What is a diurnal temperature swing and how does it affect Paso Robles' grapes?

Paso Robles has always been known for its heat; average temperatures during the summer growing season can push 105 degrees during the day, but did you know the nighttime temperatures in the region can drop by 40-55 degrees? This is what experts refer to as a *diurnal shift*, and Paso Robles has one of the highest diurnal shifts - if not *the* highest - of *any* AVA in the United States. This is what makes Paso Robles unique. The grapes are thus allowed to achieve power and full ripeness (with the high daytime heat), but the ripening rate is slowed with the colder nighttime temperatures, which allows flavors to slowly develop while also maintaining high acidity levels - more simply, it allows big, bold wines to also have balance and finesse that cannot be attained in unrelentingly hot areas like the Central Valley.

The Gold Medal Wine Store



Instant! Membership Rewards saves you 23% to 39% off J. Wilkes wines!

J. WILKES	Retail Price at Winery		Gold Medal Membership Rewards Pricing*		
			2+ btls.	6+ btls.	12+ btls.
2017 "Kent's Red" Blend	\$30.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$23.00	\$21.33	\$20.50
Paso Robles Highlands District		4-Bottle Members:	\$23.00	\$20.50	\$19.25
2016 Chardonnay	\$25.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$19.00	\$17.33	\$16.50
Paso Robles Highlands District		4-Bottle Members:	\$19.00	\$16.50	\$15.25

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