

PLATINUM SERIES

Select, Ultra Premium, Collectable Wines from California's Best Winemakers

People who know Jim Dierberg are aware that he seldom puts off the things in which he really believes. Jim asked his wife Mary to marry him on their first date. Later on, the St. Louis native and his wife went to a wine festival in the small town of Hermann, Missouri. The Dierbergs enjoyed themselves immensely and two days later, Dierberg bought the bank in the town. One thing led to another and an old brewery/winery that had been closed since Prohibition came to the couple's attention. It was called Hermannhof and in 1974, the Dierbergs bought the property. It took them two years of renovations before the winery again began producing wines that have continued to attract visitors to this day.

While Jim Dierberg continued his adventuresome career in private banking, he also became enamored with the wines of California and eventually set about to find a location to continue his efforts in the wine industry. In 1996, after checking out Napa Valley (much too crowded) and Sonoma County (a little less so), Dierberg visited the Santa Ynez Valley and found the exact conditions he had been searching for.

"The property was located in the eastern end of the Santa Ynez Valley and is touched by the San Rafael Mountains that loom above it, Dierberg related. "The land is the highest in the appellation and also the warmest. Once I saw it and realized the possibilities, I immediately bought it and started plans to develop it."

The vast property consists of around 4,000 acres, of which a modest 236 are currently under vine. The area is actually called Happy Canyon and who can ask for any place with a better name for growing? The newly completed winery actually hosts a pair of wineries, Dierberg Estate and Star Lane Vineyard. In our case, it is the latter that prompts the most attention.

Star Lane Vineyard is named after a famous old ranch that sat on the property for many years and whose name was intended to set it apart from Dierberg Estate that produces Burgundian varieties.

At Star Lane Vineyard, it is the Bordeaux varieties that receive top billing, an ambitious project in an area that isn't exactly known for its Cabernets and other Bordeaux grapes.



"I really believe that some of the original farmers failed to go far enough east into the mountains," Dierberg further explained. "The heat increases as you get farther away from the coast and as the elevation also increases. Our Bordeaux blocks are where the most heat is concentrated and where the soils seem most suited."

If the initial results are anything to judge by, it would seem that Dierberg is most correct about his assessment. Star Lane Vineyard has already captured significant scores and awards with its initial releases and seems poised for many more in the future.

With its incredible new winery completed, Star Lane Vineyard becomes the jewel of the Santa Ynez Valley wine colony. The place is a page from Bordeaux, and is carved into the sandstone at the base of a 1500-foot-high ridge. It is also modeled on a Bordelaise design built around a classically conceived courtyard framed by stone windows and arches.

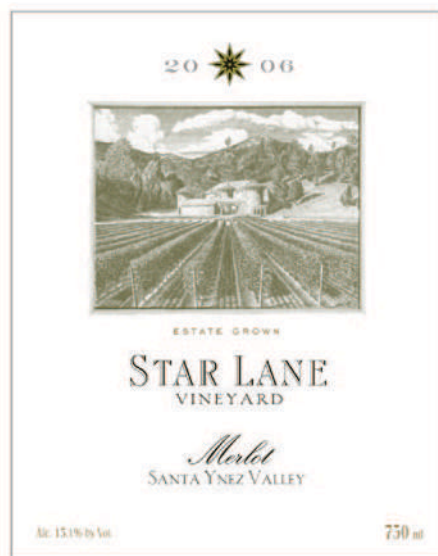
Inside, 26,000 square feet of caves extend deep into the hillside and contain no wood (except for the barrels) and are encased in concrete for maximum temperature and humidity control. The crush pad is three stories above, which allows all juice to be moved by gravity that ensures the gentlest handling possible.

Star Lane Vineyard's initial release of 7900 cases came in October of 2007. The winery will produce around the same amount this year and for the immediate future. Every drop is estate bottled, a fact that Jim Dierberg is extremely proud of.

"We don't buy a single grape from anyone," he revealed. "Besides, there aren't many Bordeaux varieties grown around here anyway. I guess we are the real pioneers when it comes to growing Cabernet Sauvignon and the like."

Dierberg is content with the accolades his wines have garnered but admits that he still has a number of goals to achieve. "You are always correcting and adjusting," he concluded. "That's the only way to make even better wines."

Jim Dierberg is also extremely proud of the achievements that his daughter-in-law, Jaimin Dierberg, has achieved. She has successfully marketed their wines in Singapore, China, Taiwan and Japan and will work on other markets in the future.



The road to great wine begins at your door.

TASTING NOTES



STAR LANE VINEYARD

Dear *Platinum Series* Members,

It is with great pride that we share with you our inaugural vintage of Star Lane Merlot, the result of our decades old dream to produce a Bordeaux-style wine that could compete with the finest in the world.

Mary and I had been looking around Napa and Bordeaux for a vineyard property early on. But Napa and the Old World were getting a little crowded. We wanted open space and big sky. Really, we found Star Lane almost by accident. During a business trip to Santa Barbara, Mary and I took a quick detour to the Santa Ynez Valley to look at a ranch that had recently come up for sale. Within a couple hundred yards inside the gate, Mary turned and said, "Can you think of any reason why we wouldn't buy it?" The only answer I could come up with was, "No. I can't." It was everything that we had been looking for – and more.

Over the years, the terroir of Star Lane has proved itself more than capable of producing wines of great distinction. Everyone involved is very proud of what we've accomplished in such a short period, and the quality of this wine is a testament to them, to this very special place, and to an unwavering faith in our dream. Although, we did not start out with the mindset to produce a Merlot to be bottled as a single varietal, we felt that the quality and integrity of the fruit begged to stand on its own. With just 650 cases produced, this wine truly shows off the Happy Canyon AVA to its most beautiful potential.

Sincerely,

Jim Dierberg

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TASTING NOTES

650 Cases Produced

The 2006 Star Lane Merlot was produced from the Star Lane Vineyard, located at the far eastern end of the Santa Ynez Valley, both the warmest and the highest elevation vineyard in the appellation. The site provides ideal growing conditions for Bordeaux-style varietals and is home to some of Santa Barbara County's most desirable fruit. Star Lane's Merlot incorporates small percentages of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, creating an incredible sense of depth and taking the complexity and rich fruit flavors of the wine to the next level.

Wine Enthusiast rates the 2006 Star Lane Merlot **92 Points** and raves, "Merlot and Santa Ynez Valley are a great match, and Star Lane's '06 shows how well the variety thrives in that Santa Barbara County region. The wine is dry, rich and full-bodied, with beautifully ripe tannins framing black and red currant, tobacco, mocha and herb flavors." Star Lane's Merlot is very concentrated, while retaining that sense of suppleness and freshness found so desirable in the varietal's best examples. Aromas and flavors of chocolate covered cherries and freshly roasted coffee beans are complimented by a satiny texture, and soft yet firm tannins on the finish. 88% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Franc, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged 18 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2013.

REORDERS

The 2006 Star Lane Merlot is yet another step forward in the winery's Bordeaux varietal program. Although a notoriously difficult grape to grow, Merlot has found a true home in Star Lane Vineyard and the vines are producing increasingly exciting fruit with each successive vintage. Enjoy Star Lane's latest achievement – offered to you at an incredible value, while supplies last!

The Star Lane 2006 Merlot retails winery-direct for \$36.00 per bottle. As a *Platinum Series* member your very special pricing is as follows:

2-Bottle Members..... \$29.00 /bottle*
4-Bottle Members &
Multi-Series Members.....\$27.00 /bottle*
*2 bottle min. order [Plus shipping]

Call: I-800-266-8888
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