

Pinot Noir Press



RAM'S GATE WINERY

Perched at the 'gate' of California wine country, Ram's Gate Winery has long been recognized for its architectural beauty, inspiring setting, and its unwavering commitment to producing expressive, premium quality wines.



When a group of savvy, wine industry connected investors got together more than a decade ago, the entity now known as Ram's Gate Winery emerged from their collective efforts.

The site chosen for the new winery was a perfect choice. Located on a rolling hillside near the junction of Highways 121 and 37 in the Carneros AVA, Ram's Gate Winery is the first winery any visitors from the South (San Francisco) and East (Sacramento) encounter in the prolific quality environs of Sonoma County.

"We are the compass rose of Sonoma County and the gateway to wine country," explained Taylr Benham Cuneo, General Manager of Ram's Gate Winery who started with the winery early in its existence as a sous chef. The California native has progressed to her present level of General Manager. "Our estate vineyard is where the Sonoma Valley AVA ends on the south-side, the Sonoma Coast AVA is to the east, and where the Carneros AVA begins to the west. It's an amazing locale and produces some incredible fruit that makes our estate selections really special," she asserted.

The four investors that founded Ram's Gate Winery include Managing Owner Michael John (wine collector and private equity investor), Jeff

O'Neill (owner of O'Neill Vintners and former Chair of the Wine Institute), Paul Violich (agribusiness leader), and Peter Mullin (winegrower who also owns an Italian estate in Umbria).

The initial offering of Ram's Gate Winery occurred in 2011, a healthy number of around 9,000 cases. In its first decade, the winery has grown slowly and presently produces around 12,000 cases, making it just over the boutique-winery levels. Its name pays tribute to its location in Sonoma county - Carneros means 'rams' in Spanish and the Gate refers to the fact that it's the first winery you see when entering wine country.

"We are completely happy with our production level," remarked Taylr Benham Cuneo. "We have carefully studied the needs of our business and the overall sourcing of our fruit. We want to concentrate on single-vineyard production and give due attention to terroir and also to land stewardship. Our five-year plan shows us some growth, but only to the 15 to 17,000 case level. We want to remain a small winery that produces extremely high quality wines."

To that end, Ram's Gate Winery has already ascended to the upper level of Sonoma County wine entities. A

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bevy of high scores and awards form a resolute fan base has vaulted Ram's Gate Winery to the level of top producers in the state.

The actual acreage for the winery is just over 100 acres, of which 22 are under vine. "We source some of our grapes from a number of vineyards around the state," added Taylr Benham Cuneo. "We are very exacting in what we expect from our growers and our best vineyards are under long-term contracts."

A new director of winemaking joined the Ram's Gate Winery team in 2018. Joe Nielsen spent ten years as winemaker for the well-respected Donelan Family Wines operation in nearby Santa Rosa before taking the reins at Ram's Gate Winery. Nielsen is completely enamoured with the estate and expresses himself thusly. "Coming to Ram's Gate, I feel like I've been given a pile of gold and silver and they're asking me to make jewelry. I have everything I need to make great wines that are complete, complex and compelling.

Ram's Gate Winery is well on its way to ultimate success. Competent ownership and excellent management have seen Ram's Gate Winery continue its successful rise to the top echelon of Sonoma County wineries. We are delighted to introduce our Pinot Noir Wine Club members to this remarkable winery. Enjoy!

RAM'S GATE 2017 PINOT NOIR El Diablo Vineyard, Russian River Valley

The Ram's Gate 2017 Pinot Noir comes from El Diablo Vineyard, tucked away on a steep north-facing ridge along Eastside Road in Sonoma's Russian River Valley. This powerful, dynamic bottling shows captivating aromas of rose petal, spice and framboise while the palate is broad and delicious with focused yet polished tannins and flavors of red fruit with a touch of clove and cola. Aged 18 months in oak. Enjoy!

91 POINTS
– *Wine Spectator*



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