



## RIVERBENCH VINEYARD & WINERY

From mines to wines, Riverbench Winery is the remarkable transformation of a mining company turned world-class winery with estate grown Pinots and Chardonnays rivaling topnotch releases from Santa Maria County's most coveted producers.



Santa Maria Valley's Riverbench Vineyard; Pinot Noir from grapes to glass; and a view of the newly constructed craftsman style tasting room.

Although the reputable 'Riverbench' name has been known in Santa Maria Valley since the 1970s (known for its excellent vineyard site and expressive, high demand fruit), the development of Riverbench Winery didn't come about until just recently, and the transformation is unlike any other in California history.

Originally planted in 1973 to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, the Riverbench Vineyard has been a fruit source for many of the most renowned wineries in Santa Barbara County for over 30 years. The rocky, gravelly soil of the old riverbed proved ideal for the Burgundian grape varieties and Riverbench became a prominent source in the county as the vineyard consistently turned out excellent fruit, year after year.

This alluvial soil also attracted a different crowd – miners – who saw the property as a potentially successful mining site. A group of local families who owned Union Asphalt (the biggest supplier of construction aggregates on the Central Coast at the time) purchased the Riverbench Vineyard site in 2004, and hired a vineyard manager by the name of Jim Stollberg to maintain and manage the thriving vineyard. Union Asphalt

continued to sell the highly coveted grapes to wineries in the immediate area.

Wine drinkers themselves, the Union Asphalt owners quickly became enamored with the wine industry and decided to start producing their own wine label using small quantities of their exceptional fruit – and Riverbench Winery was ultimately born.

“They decided the wine business was much more fun than the rock business and actually ended up selling Union Asphalt just last year to concentrate completely on the growing winery,” explained Riverbench General Manager Laura Boora Mohseni in a recent interview. “The wine industry was a totally new venture, but the families had a great business sense from their experience with Union Asphalt, so they hired the best winemaker and industry professionals they could to get the winery going.”

*“The wine business is much more fun than the rock business.”*

Local winemaker Chuck Ortman, who used to source grapes from Riverbench Vineyard for his wines at Meridian

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Views of the beautiful Riverbench Vineyard; consulting winemaker Chuck Ortman; and the charming, newly established tasting room facility.

## ABOUT THE VINEYARD



Riverbench Vineyard is situated on the southeastern edge of the Santa Maria Valley, an appellation known for its diverse microclimates and ideal conditions for growing Burgundian varietals. This distinct wine region is characterized by the valleys along the Pacific coastline, which run east to west instead of the more common north to south. Such a geographic peculiarity channels the cool ocean breezes inward, resulting in a mild and moderate climate where Pinot Noir and Chardonnay thrive.

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Winery (Paso Robles), knows the blocks, the climate, and basically all of the ‘ins and outs’ of the Santa Maria Valley vineyard. He was the logical choice when hiring a consulting winemaker, and holds the project very close to his heart.

The highly anticipated first release from Riverbench Winery came in 2006 with 2,500 cases produced (about an even split between Chardonnay and Pinot Noir). Met with immediate rave reviews, it was clear that the reputation of the vines would carry through to the new namesake winery and its limited production wines.

“It’s been very exciting seeing the response our wines are getting, and we really have to credit our amazing vineyard manager and winemaker,” Laura revealed. Laura, who was raised by a family dedicated to wine importing, distributing, and sales, also has a substantial retail background and experience in the local wine business and proves to be a real asset to the Riverbench team as well.

When asked about the most challenging project getting the winery started, Laura had to point to designing the limited wine portfolio. “With only two varietals to work with, we’re constantly working on how to branch out and distinguish the different wines we make. With 3 Chardonnays, 3 Pinot Noirs, and 1 Pinot Rose, all of the wines come from different blocks of the vineyard so each one has its own character and flavor profile.”

All of the wines are estate grown and come directly from the Riverbench Vineyard on the Santa Maria Valley site. A new sparkling wine was added during the 2008 harvest and new plantings of Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc may prove to help further expand the current wine profile as the winery develops over the coming years.

Riverbench Winery now produces 3,000 cases annually, but Laura doesn’t see that number growing any larger than 5,000 in the immediate future. “We always want to keep our concentration on the quality, not the quantity.”

With accolades including being named **One of the Top Wineries in the World** by the *Professional Wine Buyer’s Competition*, Riverbench Winery is quickly gaining ground as a top Pinot and Chardonnay producer on the Central Coast and we all eagerly await what’s yet to come.

Riverbench Vineyard was planted in 1973 as one of the Santa Maria Valley’s first vineyards and originally consisted of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir (today Pinot Gris and Viognier have also been added). For years, the fruit was sold to some of the most renowned wineries in Santa Barbara County, which helped establish the well-known Riverbench name.

Firmly committed to sustainable winegrowing practices, Riverbench is dedicated to conserving natural resources, protecting the environment, and maintaining long-term viability of the vineyard to continue producing the highest quality grapes possible.

# ABOUT THE WINEMAKER



Chuck Ortman is recognized as one of California's most respected winemakers, with a career extending over 40 years and a developed signature "Ortman style" of winemaking.

Ortman began his winemaking career in the cellar at Napa Valley's Heitz Cellars in 1968. He quickly worked his way up in the winemaking ranks, and by the mid-1970's he was consulting for some of Napa Valley's premium wineries, including Far Niente, Shafer, and Cain. Ortman is

also behind the founding of Meridian vineyards in Paso Robles, California, and the success at Meridian helped establish the Central Coast as one of California's most dynamic and prestigious winegrowing regions.

Ortman is now returning to his earlier days working at Riverbench Winery, as he used to source fruit from the vineyard for Meridian. Over three decades, he has watched the progression of the vineyard, and is proud to carefully handcraft stellar small lots of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the paramount sections of the Riverbench property.

# RIVERBENCH 2006 ESTATE PINOT NOIR

Named One of the Top Wineries in the World by the Professional Wine Buyers Competition, Riverbench Winery has been profiled as a world-class producer of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The 2006 Estate Pinot Noir is among the first releases from the winery, and an excellent precedent for what's yet to come. The vivid burgundy color intrigues as it splashes into the glass, while the lush aromas of red fruit are full of enticement. Sumptuous flavors of strawberries and mulberries coat the palate, but the wine remains light; it perfectly complements an herbed tomato pie or spicy Thai risotto with calamari.

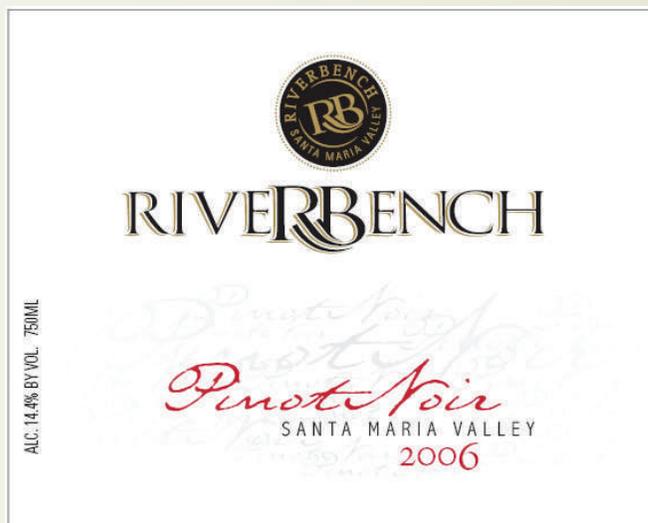
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### Thai Risotto with Calamari

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ½ cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 4-5 cups chicken broth, warmed
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon red curry paste
- 1 teaspoon fried rice seasoning
- 1 teaspoon red chili paste
- 1 teaspoon chopped lemongrass
- 1 teaspoon grated lime zest
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- ½ cup coconut milk
- ½ pound shrimp or diced calamari, (fresh or thawed)
- 1 cup green peas
- Salt and pepper

Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil until translucent and fragrant. Add rice and brown for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add chicken broth, ½ cup at a time, stirring frequently, until absorbed into the rice. When 2 cups have been added, stir in soy sauce, fish sauce, curry paste, seasoning, chili paste, lemongrass, lime zest and juice. Continue to stir in broth until rice is al dente.

Stir in seafood and heat through. Add green peas and coconut milk and continue stirring until warm and creamy. Season with salt and pepper.



### Riverbench's Famous Tomato Pie

- 2 frozen deep dish pie crusts
- 1 onion, chopped finely
- 1 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1 cup fresh thyme
- 1 cup fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 cups Monterey jack cheese
- 2 cups mayonnaise (for a lighter dish, light mayonnaise works well too!)
- 1-2 pounds ripe tomatoes, sliced
- Salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Prick the bottoms of two frozen pie crusts, and place on a baking sheet. Bake for 8 minutes until slightly golden. In the meantime, mix the cheeses, mayonnaise, salt and pepper in a medium bowl.

Remove the crusts from the oven, and reduce the temperature to 350 degrees. Cool the baked crusts slightly. Place one layer of tomatoes on the bottom of each crust. Top with ½ cup chopped onion, and sprinkle some of each of the fresh herbs on top. Cover with another layer of tomatoes, and repeat. Top last layer with one more layer of tomatoes.

Cover each filled crust with half of the cheese mixture. It should cover the whole tops of the pies. Keep the pies on the baking sheet and bake for 1 hour. You may have to cover the edges of the crust so they don't brown too much. Makes two pies. Enjoy!

*Find these recipes and all of your favorites online at [www.GoldMedalWine.com](http://www.GoldMedalWine.com).*

*From the Pinot Noir Series page, click on Winery Recipes and find delicious entrées to pair with your favorite wines.*



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