



Diamond Wine Club

SULLIVAN RUTHERFORD ESTATE

Napa Valley

Sometimes, the sale of an established winery and winery property can be fraught with problems of one sort or another that the new owners must face in order to succeed.

Not so in the case of Napa Valley's Sullivan Vineyards that changed hands in 2018 and has since become known as Sullivan Rutherford Estate.

The new ownership is headed by Juan Pablo Torres-Padilla, a Mexico City native who spent a great deal of time in France. He was formerly the CEO of an artificial intelligence company in France. He credits this European time with aiding him in his quest to continue his new venture as a major Napa producer and bring its production to even greater levels of achievement.

"I learned a lot about fine wine while in France," he declared during a recent interview. "I managed to study the premier wine growing areas in great detail. I realized what was necessary to achieve greatness in winemaking and how difficult it was to make a world-class wine. When my partner and I decided to invest in a California property, I knew exactly what to look for."

The property turned out to be the Sullivan family's exquisite estate in Rutherford, in the heart of Napa Valley. It is also part of the famed Rutherford Bench, arguably the finest bottom land in Napa for growing superior fruit. The historic acreage included a wonderful chateau as well as 22+ acres of planted vines.

The new venture's initial release came shortly after the changeover, a total of around 2,000 cases. It is a production level that Torres-Padilla feels good about.

"We are not really interested in expanding at this point," he explained further. "What we are interested in doing is expanding our quality even further. We feel our wines can always be better and for that we are going back to our roots."

For the record, the property is part of one of

the original land grants that occurred way back in 1841, under the name of Rancho Carne Humana. Napa pioneer James Sullivan acquired the estate in the early 1970's and began making high-caliber estate wines. His passion for the almighty grape lasted for nearly five decades until the current sale materialized.

Juan Pablo Torres-Padilla's inspiration and dedication are evident in his plan for Sullivan Rutherford Estate. His company is a family enterprise and has already acquired two small parcels to help increase his company's ability to produce world-class wines.

"While we are a family-driven company, our model reflects the course of a corporate-driven entity that reflects the personality of its owners. We intend to continue reflecting the greatness our founder, James Sullivan, achieved while inserting some fresh ideas our top-rung staff has come up with."

To that end, plans have already been submitted to build and staff an ultra-quality facility that will appeal to wine consumers at the industry's highest levels. "This will not be a generic tasting facility," Torres-Padilla explained. "It will cater to private customers who take the art of wine very seriously. The new building will contain several private tasting areas to enhance the tasting experience and will be unique to Napa Valley."

To accomplish this aim, Juan Pablo Torres-Padilla has assembled an incredibly talented winery team to ensure the legacy and tradition of Sullivan Vineyards continues unabated. The industry veterans that include holdovers from the former Sullivan staff, including Winemaker Jeff Cole, provide the basis for the new owner's positivity.

"We believe that low volume (for our winery) and higher quality will take Sullivan Rutherford Estate to the level we are seeking. We want to be competitive with the greatest

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JUAN PABLO TORRES PADILLA,
MANAGING PARTNER

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Bordeaux châteaux and that’s no easy feat to achieve,” added Torres-Padilla.

The new entity has also taken to new labeling for their venture. However, they have ensured the history and legacy of Sullivan Vineyards have been retained. Their new wines are called Coeur de Vigne, that relates to the place’s location in the very heart of Napa Valley.

It is certain that James O’Neil Sullivan is quite pleased with the progression of his former estate. Ground-breaking for the new buildings is expected toward the end of this year, as soon as Napa Valley authorities approve the final plans.

All this is great news for real wine aficionados. Another formidable winery among existing prodigious wineries is always a welcome addition, and Sullivan Rutherford Estate will be just that.

We are delighted to feature this remarkable winery and its 2018 *Coeur de Vigne Cabernet Sauvignon* for our Diamond Wine Club members. It’s one you won’t soon forget. Enjoy!

Sullivan 2018 ‘Coeur de Vigne’ Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

95 POINTS — *Anthony Dias Blue*

“Deeply colored, smooth, rich, with plum, blackberry, lush style, with hints of vanilla.”

94 POINTS — *Wine Enthusiast*

“This is a sanguine and effusively perfumed red wine, soft and rounded in texture, with underlying grip. Richness prevails in the form of dark cherry, cassis, and dark chocolate, with ancillary notes of dried herb, cedar and sweet tobacco. This is an impressive wine from the appellation, full-bodied and well-integrated.”

93 POINTS — *James Suckling*

“Aromas of ripe berries, vanilla, licorice, and pine needles. Some blue flowers and chocolate, too. Full-bodied, rich and intense palate with plush tannins and succulent berries and spiced oak. Long, firm finish.”



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This month’s Diamond *Plus!* Featured Wine:

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