

Pinot Noir Press



VARNER WINE

Twin brothers create a winemaking legacy with their critically acclaimed Burgundian-style wines from the Santa Cruz Mountains and Santa Barbara County appellations.



Owned by identical twin brothers, Bob and Jim Varner, Varner Wine is a boutique label that has long been associated with the Santa Cruz Mountains. Since the 1980's, the Varners have hand-farmed and hand-crafted specialty Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays from their own Spring Ridge Vineyard in Portola Valley. The vineyard is unique in that it is comprised of several separate blocks of vines - each with its own microclimate and soil difference - resulting in a range of totally distinct, terroir-driven wines that have captured the hearts of countless consumers, noted wine critics, and publications over the years. The Varner brothers have built an impressive winemaking legacy and continue to earn remarkable critical acclaim for their limited production wines.

Jim and Bob both went to UC Davis in the 1970's, where Jim studied enology and Bob studied biology with plans to become a geneticist. Jim was inspired by his professors Dr. Maynard Amerine and Ann Noble (renowned wine scientist and inventor of the Wine Aroma Wheel) and decided he wanted to make Burgundian style wines. After graduation, he spent time at Soverain in Napa Valley, but he knew he had to find a cool-climate location to produce the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir he yearned to make. Although Sonoma

County and Carneros regions were possibilities, he was especially drawn to the Santa Cruz Mountains, and in 1980 found an opportunity to plant vines in the Portola Valley of the mountainous appellation. His brother Bob also fell in love with the land and viticulture potential and ended up taking an academic leave from his graduate studies to help plant what is now Spring Ridge Vineyard. This marked the official beginning of the Varner brothers' winemaking legacy.

The Spring Ridge Vineyard has been organically farmed, dry-farmed, hand-hoed, and meticulously cared for since the get-go. The grapes are also strictly hand-harvested. This incredible care in the vineyard is definitely seen in the premium quality grapes and wines the Varner brothers produce from the site.

To help further learn the wine business, Bob and Jim planted vines and helped make wine at nearby Thomas Fogarty Winery & Vineyards in the 1980's. They also ran a wine import business, Park Wine Co., for several years, but eventually sold it in order to focus on developing their pristine vineyard.

In 1996, the Varner brothers finally released their first commercial vintage and Varner Wines became a reality with Bob Varner overseeing the winemaking

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and vineyard, and Jim Varner running the business side, overseeing sales and marketing. Their winemaking style is non-interventionist, treating the wine as naturally as possible and using indigenous yeast from the vineyard. The result? Some of the most beautiful, striking Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs consumers will come across from the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation.

Fast forward to 2014 when the Varner brothers decided to try something new - to leave the Santa Cruz Mountains behind and start a new project in Santa Barbara, specifically within the Los Alamos region. They saw the high potential of this lesser-known sub-region, just like they saw the potential of the Portola Valley in the 1980's. Their dedication to high quality winemaking remains and their first Santa Barbara County releases have (not surprisingly) been met with serious praise. We are happy to introduce Varner Wine to our *Pinot Noir Wine Club* members. Cheers!

VARNER 2013 PINOT NOIR

Picnic Block, Spring Ridge Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mtns.

The Varner 2013 'Picnic Block' Spring Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir is an elegant, vibrant wine from the Varners' home vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains. This is an especially big, ample, masculine-style Pinot Noir with notes of sweet dark cherry, dark spices, smoke, integrated oak, and forest floor and nicely structured tannins. Aged 12 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2021.

92 POINTS

– Antonio Galloni's
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