

# Pinot Noir Press



## VOLATUS WINE

An ex-fighter pilot follows his heart to Paso Robles wine country where he crafts an extremely limited profile of expressive, site-driven wines for his under-the-radar Volatus Wine company.



Founded in 2004 by TOPGUN pilot/instructor Hal "Bull" Schmitt, Volatus Wine is an up and coming garage producer based in the heart of Paso Robles wine country. The tiny winery crafts a range of red and white wines from top vineyards in the Central Coast region and has earned some impressive accolades along the way. But, just how does a serious Navy fighter pilot become a winemaker? The Volatus Wine story is definitely one worth telling.

Hal processed their first fruit together and forged a deep and lasting friendship. From there, Hal worked at Midnight Cellars as much as possible and to further his winemaking knowledge, purchased most of the winemaking texts from UC Davis. As long as he wasn't on deployment with the Navy, he was in Paso Robles learning and making wine with Rich.



It all began in the late 1990's when LT Hal Schmitt was based in Lemoore, California (King's County) and flying FA-18 Hornets for the Navy. Hal, a graduate of Notre Dame and a two-time TOPGUN instructor, had been stationed throughout the Far East and lived all over the world throughout his career. Now in Lemoore, Hal enjoyed frequenting California's wine country and embarking on wine tasting trips in his downtime, specifically to Paso Robles, which was a short drive away.

In 2004, Hal made his first vintage of Volatus wine, a 50/50 blend of Malbec and Syrah. *Volatus*, which means 'flight' in Latin, is a reference to his background as a Navy pilot. Hal wanted something aviation related, and the branding has worked out quite well. In 2007, Hal left the Navy and came to the Central Coast full time to make wine for his Volatus Wine company. He was also joined by his brother, Kevin Schmitt, a recent Fuqua School of Business graduate, who now oversees Volatus' quality control and sales. Kevin was also in the Navy for some time and shares his older brother's passion for wine and food.



On one particular trip in 1998, Hal was out wine tasting in the rugged hills of West Paso Robles and met local winemaker Rich Hartenburger of Midnight Cellars. Hal was blown away by Rich's wines and offered his assistance during the upcoming harvest. Just two weeks later, Rich and

From the beginning, the single focus at Volatus Wine has been to create wines of distinction that express the personalities and passions of the Schmitt brothers. They enjoy making big, bold wines from some of Paso Robles' best vineyards, including Caliza

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Vineyards and several from the Willow Creek, Adelaida, Templeton Gap, and El Pomar regions. Their total production is teeny tiny, releasing just 500 to 600 cases each year.

*What is it that Hal Schmitt loves about his winemaking region?* "To me, Paso Robles is still the wild west of winemaking; anything is possible. We are blessed with an incredible climate, great soils, and the best topography. With that said, the freedom we have to create and experiment in Paso is what I like the most. Where else could an ex-fighter pilot not blessed with millions of dollars step into the industry and make it happen?"

Hal Schmitt is certainly a welcome addition to the Paso Robles wine industry. Just as he was in the Navy, Hal thrives on meeting every challenge with nothing but complete dedication and a perfectionist spirit. It is with this spirit that he shares his passion for flying and wine by bringing us Volatus. We hope you enjoy this excellent release!

## VOLATUS 2015 PINOT NOIR

Adelaida District, Paso Robles

Produced from the Adelaida District in Paso Robles, the Volatus 2015 Pinot Noir is a wonderfully savory and satisfying wine with a wonderful balance of fruit and oak. Bright ruby in color, this Pinot Noir offers an enticing nose of earth, dark fruit, and deep ripe cherry. The full body is nicely balanced with flavors of cranberry, cherry, spice, dark fruit and cola and the finish is long and lingering with notes of ripe cherry and toasty oak. Aged 12 months in oak. 100% Pinot Noir. Enjoy now until 2023.

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