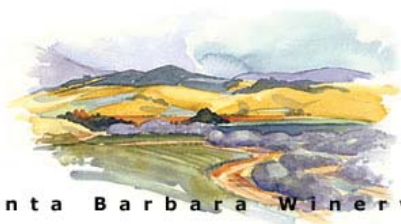


About Us



Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards



Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards

History in Brief

1962 Pierre Lafond opens the first winery in Santa Barbara County since prohibition. It would be more than ten years before a second winery opens, today, there are over 100.

1964 Santa Barbara Winery moves to its present location in downtown Santa Barbara at Yanonali and Anacapa streets two blocks from the beach.

1965 Demattei and Nielson plant the first vineyard in the county since prohibition, 100 acres. Today there are over 20,000 acres.

1971 Lafond Vineyards 65 acres are planted in the Santa Rita Hills at the western tip of the Santa Ynez Valley.

1981 Bruce McGuire becomes Winemaker.

1996 Lafond Vineyards purchases additional property across the river and plants 30 acres of Pinot Noir and Syrah.

1998 Construction begins of the new Lafond Winery. David Lafond is the General Contractor and Pierre Lafond the Architect.

2000 First harvest at the new Lafond Winery.

2001 Spring: The Lafond Winery is open to visitors.

2001 Summer: Santa Rita Hills at the western end of the Santa Ynez Valley is recognized by the BATF (part of the Treasury Department which controls appellations) as a separate and distinct viticultural area. Distinct in climate and geography permitting wines grown in this cool and unique growing area to be identified as Santa Rita Hills.

2002 Spring: Lafond Winery releases its SRH wines made exclusively from grapes grown in the Santa Rita Hills appellation. These 3 wines, Pinot Noir, Syrah and Chardonnay receive 10 medals between them.

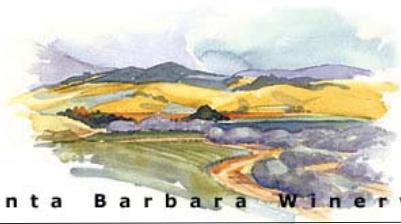
2003 January: Lafond Winery and Vineyards sends its first Wine Club shipment to almost 100 members.

2005 Winter: The release of the movie Sideways raises awareness of Pinot Noir and the Santa Ynez Valley.

2009 Spring: Lafond Vineyards leases 37 acres from Burning Creek Ranch, adjoining the Lafond Vineyard, and begins planting Pinot Noir from 8 selected clones.

2013 Spring: Santa Barbara Winery - a new Pinot Noir label is being readied from Burning Creek grapes to be released in the fall.





Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards

Santa Barbara Magazine

In 1962, at the age of thirty-two, Pierre Lafond founded the first post-prohibition commercial winery in Santa Barbara County. Two years later, he located a winery facility on Anacapa Street, just two blocks from the Pacific Ocean.



Santa Barbara Winery has become an extremely visible and successful wine concern, winning many medals for an array of wines. Lafond is now in the midst of a significant expansion in order to meet the desires of the consuming public.

Lafond was originally a retailer, and his wine and cheese shop was a meeting place for many of Santa Barbara's wine aficionados. He decided to go into wine production for two reasons: he enjoyed fine wines, primarily French, and it would be a good business venture.



PHOTOS BY KIRK S. IRWIN

Winemaker Bruce McGuire and Pierre Lafond, founder of Santa Barbara Winery. Top: the vineyards on Santa Rosa Road.

Initially Lafond used grapes from outside the county, notably zinfandel from Bill York's vineyards in Templeton. York Winery, later York Mountain Winery, had its own historic allure: it was the oldest winery in San Luis Obispo County, and it had vinified grapes for the famous Polish statesman and virtuoso pianist Ignace Paderewski.

The primary reason Lafond went north for grapes was that there were none available in Santa Barbara County at the time. It was not until 1964 that Uriel Nielsen and his friend Bill DeMattei, both UC Davis viticultural graduates, planted the famous Nielsen vineyard, the first commercial vineyard in Santa Barbara County and now part of the Byron Vineyard and Winery operation in the Santa Maria Valley. By the late 1960s Lafond was using some Santa Barbara County grapes.

Unfortunately, his source was also supplying grapes to a large Napa Valley winery, which because of increased public interest and consumption began taking every grape. When Lafond's supply was cut off, he decided to plant his own vineyard, purchasing 105 acres in the Santa Ynez Valley west of Buellton. In 1972 with the assistance of viticulturist Bill Collins, He planted 65 of those acres to cabernet sauvignon, chenin blanc, riesling and chardonnay. Today Lafond Grows about half the grapes needed to satisfy his own production.





Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards

Santa Barbara Magazine

The initial crop for the new vineyard was 1975, and Lafond was pleased with the grapes and the wine he made from them. However, his part-time winemaker could not devote the attention needed to produce first class varietal wines, Lafond's hiring of winemaker Bruce McGuire in November 1981 solved that challenge and set the course for the stellar reputation Santa Barbara Winery has achieved today. "We were a very amateur operation until Bruce came," Lafond admits.

McGuire had been working in the Napa Valley but heard of some exceptional chardonnay and pinot noir being produced in Santa Barbara County, the latter by Sanford and Benedict. One of his first suggestions to Lafond was to plant some pinot noir.

The next step was to upgrade the winery facility to include the next generation of stemmer necessary equipment. Not much wine was being produced at the time, perhaps 7,000 cases annually; but plans for the future were ready to be implemented.

Lafond's Santa Ynez Valley property is in the heart of pinot noir country, with soil and microclimates exceedingly favorable to that fickle grape variety. Richard Sanford and Michael Benedict had proved that point with their stellar wines in the late 1960s. The area is also excellent locale for syrah, and McGuire convinced Lafond to plant that luscious Rhone varietal as well.

Santa Barbara Winery is currently building a new facility at its vineyard on Santa Rosa Road that will more than double the winery's total production, from a current 20,000 to 44,000 cases. The additional 24,000 cases will be pinot noir and syrah, with the Santa Barbara facility being reserved for white wine production.

McGuire also enjoys experimenting with small lots of lesser-known varietals such as carignan and the Italian varietals nebbiolo and sangiovese, as well as viognier, which is lately becoming much more visible in Santa Barbara County.

Young Pierre Lafond took a chance, well ahead of the times, on the viability of Santa Barbara County for the propagation of premium varietal grapes that could be vinified into world-class varietal wines. Santa Barbara Winery has achieved a prominent position in the area it so greatly assisted in creating, and that position is certain to grow.

We are indebted to Archie McLaren and Santa Barbara Magazine for this marvellous article which appeared in the winter 2000 edition.

The new Lafond Winery has been completed and had its first 'crush' in the fall of 2000 and the visitor area opened in the spring of 2001.





Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards

Sta. Rita Hills AVA

What makes our growing region (AVA) unique?

Lafond Vineyard is planted in the acclaimed Sta. Rita Hills AVA (American Viticultural Area). In 2001, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) approved this designated area as its own unique appellation within the larger Santa Ynez AVA. Today there are four federally approved appellations in Santa Barbara County - Sta. Rita Hills, Happy Canyon, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Maria Valley.



AVA designations are put in place to provide consumers with clear information in regards to the area that the wine was grown. Climatic and geographical influences are considered as well as slope and soil type. These factors are all very important components that influence the wine.

The appeal to create a distinct AVA for the Sta. Rita Hills was put in place for these reasons - the distinct geological uniqueness of the area, combination of slope, climate (maritime), soil (sandy alluvial), and a desire to distinguish the western edge of Santa Ynez. Our winemaker Bruce has said that it is not uncommon for temperature to drop one degree per mile as you drive closer to the ocean.

Our vineyard is flanked by two east-west mountain ranges (Purisima Hills in the north and Santa Rosa Hills in the south) that funnel cool morning fog into the valley, thereby extending our growing season and creating wines of intense concentration and excellent acidity. Burgundian varietals, such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, flourish in this climate.

The Sta. Rita Hills AVA begins about 5 miles west of Buellton stretching west to Lompoc. The unusual occurrence of east-west rolling hills on the north and south are the other borders. Lafond Vineyard was one of the first vineyards planted in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA in 1972. The first commercial vineyard was planted in 1971.





Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards

Staff Bios

Bruce McGuire

Winemaker Lafond Winery and Santa Barbara Winery.
President of Santa Barbara Winery.



After graduating from the University of New Hampshire with a degree in enology, Bruce spent several years working for wineries in Northern California before coming to Santa Barbara Winery in 1981 as winemaker.

In that time his wines have received numerous awards and his abilities national recognition. Bruce was one of the pioneers in the development of Pinot Noir and Syrah in Santa Barbara County and in California.

When Bruce first arrived at the winery he asked that we plant Pinot Noir in our Lafond Vineyard, which we did. Pinot Noir, largely ignored in most of California, has found its true home in Santa Barbara County.

As winemaker Bruce controls the total process, from the selection of varieties and clones to plant in the vineyard, to farming practices, cultivation, pruning and when to pick. Accordingly the wines reflect his style and philosophy of winemaking. Bruce lives in Santa Barbara.

David Lafond

General Manager Lafond Winery and Vineyards

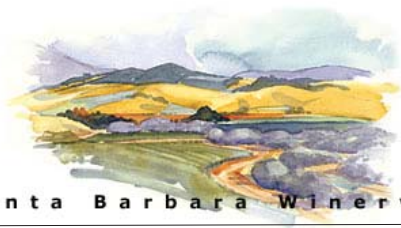


David, a native of Santa Barbara, has for many years been a General Contractor. He was, in fact, the general contractor for the new Lafond Winery overseeing the construction and installation of equipment for more than a year.

David has been involved with the winery since childhood and will now manage the operations of both the vineyard and the Lafond Winery.

David has two sons, Hayden and Mason.





Staff Bios

Pierre Lafond

Founder and Chairman



Pierre graduated in architecture from McGill University in Montreal. He has lived in Santa Barbara since 1957. After practicing architecture for several years he became interested in business.

He started Santa Barbara Winery in 1962, the first winery in Santa Barbara County since prohibition.

Pierre and his wife, Wendy Foster, operate several businesses in Santa Barbara including clothing stores, gourmet markets and a gift store.

Enrique Solozano

Lafond Vineyards Foreman



Enrique, a native of Mexico, has been with the Lafond Vineyards since 1990. He works closely with David Lafond as well as our vineyard consultants. His responsibility now extends to over 150 acres of grapes.

Enrique manages a full time crew of 10 to 12 which increases at harvest to over 18. His knowledge of all aspects of vineyard care has contributed greatly to the success of the Lafond Vineyards.

Enrique lives with his wife, two daughters and a son at the vineyard.

Michelle Lafond

Marketing Director Santa Barbara Winery/Lafond Winery

Michelle is a native of Santa Barbara. From an early age she worked in the family business. She began working in our Montecito Market, was buyer/manager for Wendy Foster's downtown Clothing Store - travelled extensively to New York and Los Angeles. Her range of experience include Food, Fashion and Wine.

She will now focus on sales, nationally and internationally, for the Santa Barbara Winery and Lafond Winery. Michelle has two children Madeleine and Ben.





Santa Barbara Winery Lafond Winery & Vineyards

Winemaking in Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara had the good fortune of being the site of one of the numerous California Missions built by the Franciscan Brothers in the late 18th century. The good brothers needed altar wine and a source of reliable drink. Wells and stored water had a habit of becoming contaminated.



Whether by choice or necessity they used a variety, now known as Mission, a variety of uncertain origin, but hardy and productive. It produced a very rough wine, suitable for the altar, but it must have made the more worldly members of the Order long for the wines of Europe.

In the late 19th century Santa Barbara became an important producer for the San Francisco Market. Santa Cruz Island, 20 miles off the coast at Santa Barbara, was the home of one of the principal suppliers. They grew, made and shipped their wine by boat to San Francisco. This economic model was probably doomed to fail once other vineyards were established closer to

the city and in the early 20th century production declined and was finally killed off by prohibition.

There were other wineries, smaller wineries that satisfied the local market. One of these was the Packard winery whose building, although abandoned, survived until the late 1950s when it was replaced by a gas station. The gas station has suffered a similar fate but has not engendered the same nostalgia.

The modern era began in 1962 with the establishment of Santa Barbara Winery. At that time there were no vineyards in Santa Barbara County. Grapes needed to be shipped from a county to the north, over 100 miles away. Two Bakersfield expatriates planted the first new vineyard in the county in 1965.



Experienced growers, they benefited handsomely from the wine boom of the late 60s, and the rest is history. There are now over 100 wineries and 20,000 acres of grapes in the county.

Santa Barbara with its three appellations, or districts, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Rita Hills and Santa Maria is now a very big player. The climate ranges from the very cool to the very warm, allowing for a wide selection of grapes.

One of these, Pinot Noir, a cool climate variety, was the principal beneficiary of the movie *Sideways*, a movie that put Pinot Noir from Santa Barbara on the map. More information about the California Missions and Santa Cruz Island can be found on Wikipedia. Photos courtesy of Santa Barbara Historical Society.

