

VINE HILL WINERY™

The Winery Team

Nick Guerrero

Nick is the General Partner for the winery. Nick holds a BS in Fermentation Science from UC Davis and an MBA/MPH from UC Berkeley. He has used both degrees during his career. He was a brewing supervisor for four years at the Anheuser-Busch Cos. after graduating from UC Davis. At the brewery he managed brewers in various departments including brewing, fermenting, lagering and finishing. Prior to beginning the winery in 2004, Nick and his wife Celeste had made award winning, non-commercial wines since 1992. After graduating from UC Berkeley in 1995, Nick worked as a healthcare consultant for Ernst & Young, Cap Gemini, and McKesson. In 2005 he retired from McKesson to pursue the winery venture full-time.

Nick's background makes him uniquely qualified to undertake the daily operations of the winery where he enjoys marketing and selling wine and working in the cellar and vineyard. The Guerrero's have three children, Nico, Andreas, and Mariana, who enjoy school, art, music and sports.

Salvador Godinez

Sal is our winemaker. Sal came to Vine Hill in 2005, bringing a degree in winemaking and vineyard management from Napa Valley Junior College and most importantly, 20 years of winemaking experience. He practiced his craft for 11 years at the internationally known Freemark Abbey where he learned the nuances of making world class Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. He left Freemark Abbey and joined the team at Saintsbury in 1996 where he fell in love with Pinot Noir, and most especially the Dijon clones that are recognized as the best Pinot Noir clones for making outstanding wine. After nine years at Saintsbury, under the mentoring of Byron Kosuge, Sal made a move to join his friend, Nick Guerrero at Vine Hill Winery. Sal joined Nick in August, 2005.

During the past four harvests Sal has built on his knowledge of the Santa Cruz Mountains fruit that becomes the wines of Vine Hill. His first impression has proved correct. The Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah grapes of the Santa Cruz Mountains are the basis for an incredibly complex varietal wine that requires little or no amendments during the fermentation process. The biggest, and most exciting challenge that Sal has found, is the "beauty contest" required each year to determine which fruit is to become our Cumbre, Vine Hill and Gatos Locos wines. Supporting Sal on the home front are his wife Lorena and their two children, Neidy and Jeff. Neidy studies architecture at the University of Southern California and Jeff attends St. Helena High School.

Rachel Ormes

Rachel is our vineyard manager. Rachel received her training and Bachelor of Arts degree from UC Santa Cruz's Agro-Ecology and Plant Biology program. Rachel joined the team full-time in April 2006. Rachel is focused on using organic and sustainable practices in the vineyard. She has also embraced many of the principles of biodynamic farming, although she wants to be a bit less dogmatic and a bit more pragmatic in her interpretation of some of these practices. The vineyard is planted primarily to Pinot Noir with a bit of Syrah thrown in for spice. Rachel and her team have accomplished much during the past two-plus years and we feel blessed to have her as our leader in the vineyard.

In addition to the vineyards, Rachel and team have transformed portions of the estate into romantic gardens. We are always impressed by how the landscape of the property compliments the vineyard and helps our visitors feel in touch with the mountains. Rachel and our winemaker, Sal Godinez, have cultivated a strong relationship, one of mutual respect and admiration, allowing Rachel to grow amazing grapes and Sal to make fabulous wines!

Lore James

Lore joined the Vine Hill team in 2008, and has been instrumental at many levels ever since her arrival. She brings a sense of warmth and sincerity to everything she does. Her creative mind and attention to detail has provided the winery with the ability to provide customers and wine club members and other guests with a truly memorable experience each time they visit. In recent years, her fondness of visiting wineries throughout California has led to her clearly defining the kind of winery experience she would like others to enjoy here at Vine Hill. This understanding has also helped Lore guide the winery to look deeper to its roots of more than 130 years and has shown us all where our hearts are.

Lore's degree in Horticulture provided her with a passion and understanding of plants and the environment, which has contributed to her keen sense of conservation. Freshly-cut flowers from our garden adorn tables in the tasting room . . . our paper products are made from recycled materials . . . we even recycle our old barrels into wood chips and planters . . . and you'll even find "green" cleaning products under the counter. By observing her actions here at the winery, we are always moved to conserve and respect the world we live in.

Jon Diaz

Jon's roots are in Davis, California where he attended Davis High School. He went on to American River Junior College, then transferring after two years to the University of Pacific in Stockton, where he graduated in 1996. Wine sales and related activities have been Jon's focus ever since, when he answered an ad at R.H. Phillips Winery, interviewed for, and ultimately accepted a position. Later this "small" winery grew to be quite large and became part of Constellation Brands. With sights on the benefits of working with smaller production wineries, Jon moved on with a small group of R.H. Phillips employees to form their dream

wine company named Crew Wine in 2006, with former R.H. Phillips owner, John Giguere at the helm. Now here at Vine Hill, Jon now focuses his efforts on building our unique set of three brands throughout the western United States, introducing his customers to our wines made from the celebrated Santa Cruz Mountains and other noted wine regions of California. Jon is excited to be "small again" as he was at the beginning of his career, and feels like he has come "back to his roots" at Vine Hill. He particularly looks forward to assisting us in reaching a level of recognition as a "boutique" winery that makes outstanding and unparalleled Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Darlene de la Cerna

Darlene has lived most of her life in Santa Cruz. Growing up she was involved in multiple sports and became an accomplished violinist. She graduated from California State University at San Jose, and prior to raising her family, Darlene pursued her passion in music and was concert mistress at De Anza Chamber Ensemble and other local symphonic groups. Darlene raised three children while working in the telecommunications industry for nearly 20 years. She has worked at Vine Hill Winery for the past two years and during this time Darlene has progressed from tasting room sales to direct sales for California. At the same time, her wine knowledge has been expanded exponentially through her extensive training at Cabrillo College.

Darlene brings cheerfulness and joy wherever she is. Her enthusiasm for her job makes Darlene a pleasure to work with and her customers genuinely look forward to her visits. Away from work Darlene contributes many hours to local charities. Through her efforts with Rotary she has been a leader in multiple large and financially successful charitable events. Darlene's zest for life and for wine has greatly contributed to the development of Vine Hill Winery. We are lucky that she is with us as she makes a most outstanding ambassador for Vine Hill.

Cumbre
of VINE HILL™

VINE HILL™

Gatos Locos
of VINE HILL™