

Vine Hill Winery Receives Coveted CCOF Organic Certification

by Fred Gillaspay

When vineyard manager, Rachel Ormes first arrived at Vine Hill Winery, located in the very heart of the Santa Cruz Mountains overlooking Monterey Bay, she immediately saw the organic potential that the winery's property possessed to contribute to ecosystem health. So began the extensive process and dedicated effort that has now reaped the prestigious reward of receiving organic certification for the winery and its estate vineyards by the highly regarded agency, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF).



In her focused organic management program at Vine Hill, Rachel integrates a number of non-eco-threatening practices, including integration of an intensive cover-cropping and green manure program that increases the fertility of the soil; a pest program where insect populations are brought into balance by providing beneficial insect habitat in and around the vineyard; and use of compost teas and bio-fungicides to help deal with the ever-present fungal pressure that typically prevails with canopy management in coastal vineyards like those at Vine Hill. She does have some concerns about some people's perceptions of organic

winemaking. "Some wine drinkers associate organic wine with being bad wine . . . and this simply isn't true. Most folks aren't aware of the fact that the only difference between 'organic wine' and 'wines made from organic grapes' is the addition of sulfur dioxide as a preservative. Without the addition of sulfur dioxide, wine readily oxidizes and this is what makes wines go "bad."

Rachel also feels strongly about the significance of organic farming practices and how some consumers perceive the concept of organic farming in general. "There are a number of

misconceptions about the differences between organic, sustainable, biodynamic and conventional farming practices. I think it's important for the organic consumer to understand that there is sustainable farming – and then there is organic farming – and they are not always the same thing," she points out.

What does this all mean to wine drinkers? The 2010 vintage of Vine Hill's Pinot Noir and Syrah will be their first estate wines labeled "made from organic grapes." And aside from being a powerful acknowledgement of Vine Hill's commitment to the practice of organic farming and its dedication to ecological stewardship, as well as an increasing awareness and acceptance of the benefits of organically grown products, it's also an assurance that the wine is made under the highest level of quality standards. And that means that there's something very special to look forward to from Vine Hill when the winery's first releases of organically grown estate Pinot Noir and Syrah are released in late 2012!



RACHEL ORMES

Vine Hill Winery is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains at 2300 Jarvis Road, Santa Cruz. The tasting room is open to the public on the third weekend of each month from noon to 5pm and for special events and selected holidays. Tastings, winery and vineyard tours by appointment for groups of 10 or more are also available. For more information and directions, visit vinehillwinery.com or call (831) 427-0436.





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