

# CINNABAR

Santa Cruz

The Santa Cruz Mountains have arguably played a role in the evolution of California viticulture as important as that of Napa and Sonoma. Pioneers like Paul Masson and Martin Ray, with wines from their Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards and wineries, played fundamental roles in establishing the reputation of American fine wine (indeed the recognition of its very existence). A little later, Ridge Vineyards, operating from a Santa Cruz Mountain base and with talent from the intellectual wellsprings of Stanford University and its surrounding research institutions further, changed the world's perception of California wine.

The conjunction of a terrific microclimate for growing wine grapes with a repository of scientific expertise and adventurous experimentalism also define Tom Mudd and his Cinnabar vineyards. Bitten by the wine bug during his years at Stanford Research Institute, this trained engineer planted a small mountain vineyard in 1974 and in 1983 decided to make viticulture his new career. Twenty-two acres of vineyards were planted with Cabernet, Pinot and Chardonnay in the summers of 1984 and 1985, in a location high above Saratoga at the southern end of what Paul Masson had called the "Chaine d'Or" of Santa Cruz Mountain terroir.

Inspired by the almost alchemical process by which the naturally given and the grown combine for the magic of wine, he took the name "Cinnabar" from the metal thought in medieval times to have held the secret for transforming base metals into gold. "We practice the alchemy of turning rainwater into wine," says Tom. "Since we dry farm, it really is just rainwater we are transforming." Cinnabar's vineyards enjoy an extended growing season characteristic of high elevation sites and are sustainably dry farmed.

As the reputation and commercial reach of Cinnabar have grown, a host of



vinous projects under this label employing grapes from other from other California growing regions have emerged. Winemaker George Troquato, vineyard manger Ron Mosley and general manager Suzanne Frontz form the longstanding core of the Cinnabar team. This is a winery run with the attention to detail and collegiality that characterize a small family winery, even as work with contract fruit permits the production of year-round volumes of many affordable wines.

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Total acreage: 23

*Production is supplemented by purchased fruit (see below for details)*

Varieties: *Pinot noir, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and supplemental amounts of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.*

## **Chardonnay Santa Cruz Mtns.**

*These plantings just above the fog line trace a direct lineage to the Burgundy cuttings brought to California by Charles La Franc and passed on to his son-in-law and Saratoga wine grower Paul Masson. Tiny, intensely-flavored berries are the norm.*

## **Chardonnay Central Coast**

*Bien Nacido, Sleepy Hollow and Cinnabar estate vineyards. 2000: Nice fresh edge and citrus and apricot notes to go with the tropical fruits and malo.*

## **Mercury Rising**

*Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petite Verdot from various parts of California team up for a rich, beryish, spicy original.*

## **Merlot Paso Robles**

*With fruit from Eos, Loche, JanKris and other outstanding Paso vineyards, this is a Merlot of unusual richness for the price.*

## **Estate Pinot Noir**

*Planted in 1996, the estates Pinot Noir vineyard is being discouraged from producing more than a very light-sized crop, resulting in an intensely-flavored and texturally-nuanced mouthful of Pinot such as might have brought a smile to the lips of even that curmudgeonly California Pinot pioneer Martin Ray!*

## **Cabernet Sauvignon Santa Cruz Mtn.**

*On higher yet (thanks to its distance from the fog line) warmer ground, Cinnabar's estate Cabernet gains enormous character from its thin-soiled, mountainous environment and wide day-night temperature swings that build thick, intensely-flavorful grape skins.*