

Ampelos Cellars

An estate committed to the environment

You can depend on Ampelos wine to present the essence of each varietal in its purest form. Our winemaking processes are minimalist, meaning no added yeast, no artificial tannins, no artificial malolactic bacteria, and no artificial coloring. Every sip evokes cool ocean breezes and sunny afternoons wondering at the beauty of the rolling Sta. Rita Hills.

We experiment with both old and new winemaking processes, with eyes always fixed on eco-friendly, natural winemaking. With respect to longstanding winemaking traditions coupled with flexibility, we believe our results will be improvements to the cellar resulting in intriguing and complex wines.

Our approach is influenced by ten years of experience as well as the influence of our son Don Schroeder (winemaker at Seasmoke). Our processes include:

- Harvesting grapes when evaluation by our eyes, hands, noses, and tongue tell us they are ready
- Grape storage in nearly freezing temperatures in our cold room to avoid environmentally damaging dry ice
- Gentle de-stemming and no crushing for Pinot Noir
- Fermentation in small, 1.25 ton fermenting bins
- Gentle juice extraction with hand punch-downs twice a day
- Moving toward primarily wild (indigenous) yeast fermentation
- Extended maceration for Pinot Noir, where the skins remain on the wine during fermentation for addition tannin and flavor extraction
- Keeping lots separate during fermentation in order to find the best blends—this includes separating by clone as well as type of yeast
- As little racking between barrels as possible
- Oak as a balanced part of the flavor profile rather than a scene-stealer
- Bottle aging—releasing the wine once it is perfectly aged for drinking so it is ready to share as soon as you bring it home
- Green viticulture



Chances are, you are careful about what you put into your body. You want something that will nourish your system and help cells regenerate to keep you alive and thriving day after day. We believe our vineyard deserves that same level of care to yield an enduring and delicious harvest year after year. Every year, we take grapes away from mother nature, and every year we make sure to replenish the soil to create a functional “body” that does the bulk of the work producing high quality wines.

Everyone is looking for the best quality wine for their hard-earned dollar. But where does “quality” really come from? We believe that you will get the absolute best quality wine from the absolute best quality grapes. That is why we have immersed ourselves in research and work in order to earn three green certifications: **Organic**, **Biodynamic**, and **Sustainability in Practice (SIP)**.

Organic - This certification is straightforward. When you drink wine from our vineyard, you can rest assured that the grapes were not touched by artificial fertilizers and poisonous pesticides.

For 20 years, the Rodale Institute’s Farming Systems Trial has compared organic and conventional methods of growing corn and soybeans. Recent analysis revealed organic farming produced 30 percent more corn during droughts.

This means the grapes from the Ampelos vineyard, grown organically, can more dependably withstand potentially disastrous weather conditions. In 2008 we had the worst frost in 35 years, and many of our neighbors lost 40-60 % of their crop. We didn’t lose a thing. When not inhibited by extra chemical processes, plants and fruit are able to endure and fight against the slings and arrows thrown by Mother Nature. Why should we stand in their way?

Biodynamic – describes the treatment of the vineyard as a living ecosystem--we care for the land the way we try to care for our own bodies.

Biodynamics is the longstanding practice that birthed the organic movement. Rudolf Steiner established the process in 1924 to respond

“We did not inherit this land from our fathers– we are borrowing it from our children”
—Amish Proverb

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to decreasing soil quality brought on around the time farming became industrialized.

Our certification comes from an international biodynamic certifying board called Demeter, and we received official certification in 2009 along with our organic certification from the USDA.

Some examples of our biodynamic processes:

- Growing grapes and making wine is a CO2 footprint negative process – we absorb more CO2 than we produced.
- Our compost is based on manure from our horses and green cuttings from our ranch. Rather than using antibiotics on the soil, this acts as a probiotic that keeps the vineyard's system clean and happy.
- We plant fava beans and sweet peas as part of our cover crop in the vineyard which improves the soil and provides an insect sanctuary.
- We spray our leaves and clusters with quartz crystals to maximize the photosynthetic process. Think of it as covering the grapes with glass in order to multiply the sunlight.

Sustainability In Practice – describes how the vineyard gives back by protecting both natural and human resources, while still growing as a business.

Truly beautiful wines--both in the glass and on your palate--come from vineyards where the farmers allow their land's unique character to shine. Just like a sculptor looks at a block of marble and knows that his or her job is to reveal the art within, we believe it is the farmer's job to reveal the unique character of the land through the fruit it produces. That's why in addition to our careful farming processes, we practice low-intervention winemaking.

The Sustainability in Practice certification focuses on three elements: environmental stewardship, social and economic equity, and economic profitability. The major goals of this approach are to develop economically viable ecosystems and to enhance the quality of the environment, so that farmlands remain productive indefinitely.

Some examples of how we meet the SIP certification:

- We have eliminated purchasing bottled water after learning that it takes approximately 1,000 years for the bottle to decompose in the landfill. Instead we provide our workers and visitors with reusable water containers and bring in water from a service company.
- Some of the barrels we purchase are from Seguin Moreau which is offering the world's first CarbonNeutral® accredited barrels.
- We use natural corks. A new life-cycle analysis of wine closures concludes that natural cork leads screwcaps and plastic closures in six of seven key environmental indicators, according to an independent study conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers.
- We use 100% recycled newspaper pulp for our shipping box inserts. The jury is still out on Styrofoam, some camps believe it will sit in a landfill indefinitely.