

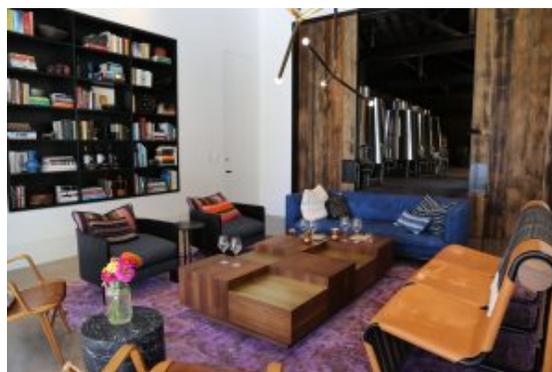


Sinegal Estate

Review by [Dave](#) — [4 Comments](#)

Sinegal Estate was founded in 2013 with the first release of wines under the Sinegal label from their 30 acre Inglewood estate in St Helena (not to be confused with the Inglenook Estate in Rutherford). This is not a new property by any means – it was part of an original land grant in this part of the valley and its more modern day history dates back to 1879 when owner Alton Williams purchased the property and planted the first vines in 1881.

The property has changed owners a number of times over the decades – at one point the well respected long time Napa family the Jaegers’ owned the estate – Bill Jaeger and his wife Lila lived here – these Napa Valley winery pioneers were in part responsible for helping establish Freemark Abbey and Rutherford Hill. Layla was also a keen gardener and established some beautiful gardens on the property.



Today a lawn grows where the first vineyard was planted in 1881- old photos show vines growing right up to the steps of the historic home which was built 24 years later in 1906. A massive Douglas fir tree stands on the estate – one of the largest trees of this kind we have seen anywhere – its trunk resembling more a Sequoia's girth.

Owners (father and son), David and James Sinegal purchased the property in 2013. James was the co-founder of Costco and one-time CEO; David worked at Costco for 21 years.

After the purchase, David soon set out to make his mark in the vineyards – dividing each of their vineyards into smaller blocks, picking selectively (30 times in 2013) rather than all at once, and adding technology to the vineyards so they have up to the date reports on a number of data points including temperatures, soil moisture and various barometric pressures. If they want to selectively water, say vine #67 in row number three, they can do so with their irrigation system.



Nine acres of vines are planted to various red varietals including Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot. They have some of the older Cabernet Franc vines in the valley – at 30+ years old. The soils here are diverse and can vary even within small geographic ranges on the property. Some of their vineyards are planted on the valley floor – while their upper vineyards are hillside, on the edges of the Mayacamas Mountains. The Napa Land Trust borders the upper reaches of their property – a natural wooded hillside environment that will be preserved as is with no development taking place within its borders.

The landscape is interesting in this part of the Mayacamas mountains. Visually it appears drier than other parts of this mountain range and the vegetation reflects that – with grey pine, and more open natural vegetation rather than the thicker wooded vegetation more commonly associated with parts of Spring and Diamond Mountains to the north.

After purchasing the property – David created an ambitious plan and laid out his vision to create a world-class boutique wine making operation. Many wineries in the Napa Valley can take years before they come to fruition – not so here. After only about 10 months – the existing winery was significantly remodeled, 6,500 feet of caves were expanded and drilled into the hillside behind the winery – and a new intimate hospitality center was built. The hospitality center ties in very well with the winery – from the small tasting room, large doors open revealing the tanks.

A vegetable garden slightly under an acre in size grows just south of the winery building – vegetables from this garden are sold to nearby restaurants.

A skeleton key graces the labels of their wine and is prominently displayed on the outside of their winery building. This has historical significance – the original key opens the front door to

the historic home on site and is displayed in the tasting room. With respect to the history of this property, this one key has already become iconic to the brand.

“ David is proud of the work that he is personally overseeing on the property, and rightly so. He has both preserved the estate's unique heritage yet introduced state of the art facilities and wine making equipment to the property as well as set about micro managing the vineyards – all while building a lifestyle for himself and at the same time ultimately creating a beautiful environment for visiting guests.

One needs to look no further then the inside of the winery to see that their wine making team is focused on quality. Each of the small lot tanks have built in pumps which can be controlled and programmed to do pump-overs anytime of the day or night (built in pumps certainly are a time saver for employees). In addition, these tanks have multiple points at which the temperature can be controlled. These tanks do not necessarily handle all their fermentation's – they also ferment small lots in puncheons and barrels as needed. Control across the board is the key here – and it is the control of the details in wine making that is so integral from when the fruit first arrives through to when it is bottled.



2013 was their inaugural release. The focus is currently on two primary varietals – Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2013 Sauvignon Blanc was sourced from the estate – but then it was determined it was growing in an area better suited for red varietals so it was removed and new plantings were made in the back of the property. While not far from these original plantings – the new home for their Sauvignon Blanc features different soils and is growing in a cooler part of the property.

The wine making team has been experimenting with the style of this varietal since 2013 with subsequent vintages seeing more oak – especially using the slightly longer ‘cigar’ shaped barrels (valuing the extra surface area for maximizing complexities including textural feel imparted from aging the wine on the lees in these particular barrels). The 2014 Sauvignon Blanc shows aromas of lemon lime, gooseberry, citrus blossom and tantalizing nuances of both of freshly mowed and dried grass (think of these aromas on a warm dry summer's day). This wine is balanced on the palate with flavors of melon and citrus; it is lively, flavorful and shows very good acidity perhaps tempered slightly by the additional oak in this vintage (vs the 2013). Texturally it is soft and rounded on the palate – almost velvety.

Phenolics (color, tannins and mouth feel) are very important in their wine making program – both in the vineyard and in the winery. Maceration on the red wines is often 8-10 days – with sometimes up to 20 days. The 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (at this level of wine making is priced reasonably – and was sold out at the time of our tasting). It shows very dark in the glass and is aromatically powerful with rich fruit (blackberry & raspberry) complemented by toasted cedar, darker chocolate and vanilla. The wine is plush on the palate and is well balanced for being so young.



The 2013 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon is a bigger and a more opulent wine – and is introduced to different oak during its aging then the primary Cabernet Sauvignon but visually it is just as dark. Aromatically it shows darker fruit including black currant and blackberry framed by prominent toasted oak aromas. While initially velvet on the palate, it quickly gains in complexity with good depth of flavor. For a big wine it holds a nice balance of fruit, acidity and structure.

Certain extras complement this inaugural Reserve wine. It is packaged in a premium walnut box and each bottle is individually numbered.

Note the number '1403' on the bottles. With the help of several entities, David counted

every single step to making wine at Sinegal Estate – from vineyard, to winery to consumer. He enlisted the help of various mapping and other data collecting software to arrive at this auspicious number! While this number is a good assessment of the steps needed for Sinegal Estate – there is plenty of room for both art and science in a number such as this – and it of course would vary from winery to winery.

Interested buyers and collectors can join their estate list – three tiers are appropriately named after historic dates relating to the estate. Tier 2013, named in honor of when the Sinegal's purchased the property, Tier 1965 in honor of when the Jaeger's purchased the property and Tier 1881 paying tribute to when vines were first planted on site and the age of the yellow Victorian home.

Much of their sales are conducted direct to onsite visitors or through the Estate List – however they do selectively distribute in California, Florida, New York and Washington. For more information or to request an appointment, visit: www.sinegalestate.com



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Comments

Jack Rohrbach says
September 15, 2015 at 4:25 am



Dave, How do I get on your list to purchase Sinegal wines? I am interested as a wine lover, but also related to my long association with Costco as a supplier. Many, many years ago I supplied holiday gift wrap and more recently nutritional products in the form of snack bars and protein powders. I retired on 12/31/14 and last Fall I made one last West Coast trip and visited Costco, Starbucks and Clif Bars in CA on consecutive days. All these companies employ incredibly successful business models, but also have deeply ingrained values and a culture that always influences their practices. The trip was unbelievably stimulating from a coffee tasting at Starbucks of their proposed 2015 Christmas blend to wonderful conversations that went beyond product and price and touched on relationships and trust. Sorry, I got a little wound up. At any rate I found this same sense of purpose in the Sinegal Estate's write up and I would like to be part of the story. Thanks for your consideration, Jack Rohrbach

Reply



Dave says

September 15, 2015 at 9:21 am

Jack – I've forwarded your email on to David – I'm looking forward to the release of their first wines and when they finish the construction on the property 😊

Reply



Eddie says

September 18, 2015 at 3:43 pm

Hi Jack (and Dave),

Great comment. Always appreciate hearing stories like this.

We would love to have you join our mailing list. Here's the direct link:

<https://members.sinegalestate.com/register>

Thank you. Call us if you have any questions.

Eddie

707-244-1187 | info@sinegalestate.com

Reply



Dave says

September 18, 2015 at 8:04 pm

Eddie – good to “meet” someone else at Sinegal – I’ve only been communicating with David a few times. I look forward to staying updated the progress at the property 😊

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Quick Info

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St. Helena

www.sinegalestate.com



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