



TECHNICAL SPOTLIGHT

Sinegal Estate Winery

Owners refurbish and expand winemaking facility at historic Napa Valley property

By Paul Franson

Sinegal Estate is one of Napa Valley's newest wineries, but it inherits a long tradition at the St. Helena property it now inhabits. In a similar fashion, owners David and Shelley Sinegal are new to winemaking, but he comes from an extensive background in supervising wine, beer and spirits sales at the wholesale giant Costco.

KEY POINTS

A former Costco executive and his wife bought Napa Valley's storied Inglewood Estate in 2013, including 9.5 acres of vines.

Having completed expansion of the cellar and caves, they hope to finish the hospitality areas soon.

Using top professionals and new equipment, Sinegal has already achieved outstanding wine reviews.

The Sinegals reportedly paid \$17 million in 2013 for the 30-acre property historically known as Inglewood Estate, most recently the home of Wolf Family Vineyards. They invested \$8 million to refurbish the property, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, including revamping hospitality spaces, expanding and re-equipping the production area and digging much larger caves for wine storage.

They hired a high-profile vineyard consultant for their 9.5 acres of red and white Bordeaux grape varieties, and both a winemaker and wine consultant with great experience from Napa Valley wineries including Plumpjack and Joseph Phelps.

Then they supplied their talent with major pieces of new equipment for crush and fermentation from Bucher-Vaslin, Santa Rosa Stainless Steel, Burgstahler Machine Works and other suppliers.



Wine production returned to the Sinegal property for the 2014 harvest.

Making the wines

The winery came with a permit for 13,200 gallons annual production, but Sinegal Estate has recently received permission to process 60,000 gallons (25,000 cases). The first Sinegal vintage of 1,500 cases in 2013 was produced at Hourglass, where winemaker Tony Biagi made the wines, as the Sinegal winery wasn't ready.

In 2014, however, wine production came back to the property, while other construction and renovation continued, shooting for a public opening later this year. The earlier caves on the property were cut and cover cellars, but the new caves are 6,000 square feet dug into the hill behind the winery.

Bucher Vaslin supplied the hoppers, sorting table, crusher/destemmer and presses. Santa Rosa Stainless Steel made the

tanks, while Burgstahler Machine Works supplied the must pump and other pumps. Hoses, clamps and other fittings came from Alta Laval and Key Industries.

Yeasts are supplied by Enartis and Laffort, while the additions, enzymes and nutrients are from Scott Laboratories Inc. and Lallemend. The malolactic bacteria are supplied by Gusmer Enterprises.

Sinegal uses barrels made by Sylvain, Orion, Taransaud, Nadalie and Darnajou, while the barrel-washing equipment came from Carlsen & Associates.

The vineyard

Since Sinegal only bought the property in mid-2013, the Sinegal winemaking history is short, but its vineyard manager and winemaker bring exceptional experience to the process.



The expanded caves at Sinegal Estate offer more space for wine storage.

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Jim Barbour, who manages Sinegal's estate vineyards as well as many other properties, is a respected and experienced name in wine country.

At least at present, all wines are estate-grown. The property lies on the south side of the town of St. Helena and at the western edge of the valley, where benchland meets more rugged hills. It includes 9.5 acres of diverse vineyards planted to Cabernet Sauvignon (4.5 acres planted in 1997 using clones 337 and 7), Cabernet Franc planted in the 1970s, Petite Verdot, Malbec, Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Sauvignon Musqué grapes. Some are new or replanted.

The vineyards are certified by CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers); the estate also keeps chickens on the property along with culinary and ornamental gardens, and it is getting some goats to help with weeding.

"We're trying to restore the vineyards to what they were—or what they could be," said David Sinegal. He may plant additional

vineyards and eventually source other grapes, too, as he intends to increase production over time.

The property has two irrigation lines running along each row for flexibility in giving different amounts of water to different vines. A 25-acre lake on the property is a reservoir that collects surface water, but Sinegal also has wells to draw from if needed. Winery wastewater is treated and used for frost protection and irrigation.

Winemakers

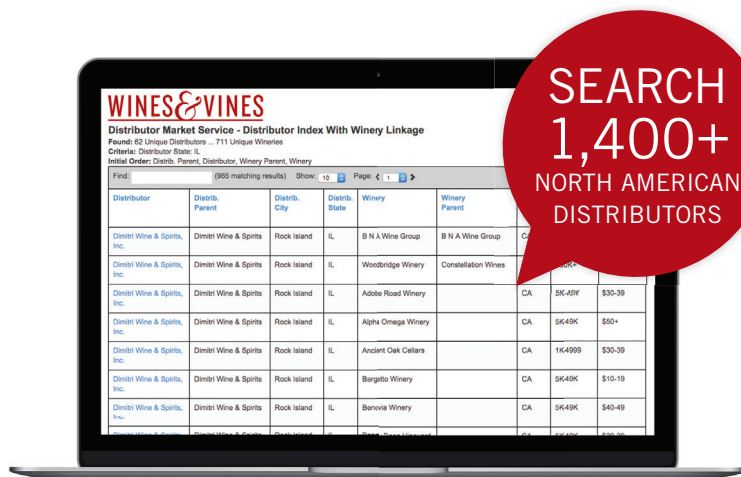
Like vineyard manager Barbour, Sinegal's winemaker Tony Biagi has extensive experience. He long made wine for Napa Valley's PlumpJack Vineyards in Oakville and Cade Estate on Howell Mountain, as well as overseeing the rebirth of what is now Odette Winery in the Stags Leap District. He became winemaker at Hourglass in 2012 and continues in that role.

Craig Williams, the long-time winemaker at Joseph Phelps, serves as a blending consultant. His specialty has been Bordeaux-



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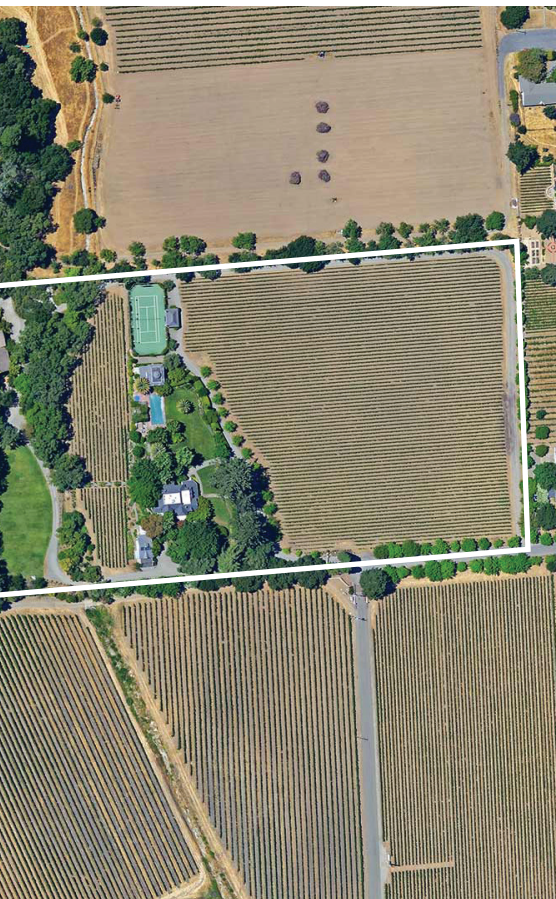


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style wines, including Phelps Insignia, and Sinegal is also producing this type of wine.

"I was always interested in the (Sinegal) property," Biagi said. "Vineyards along the western edge of the valley tend to produce intense wines."

He worked collaboratively with David Sinegal on the first vintage made at Hourglass, then crushed the first grapes onsite in 2014. "It was a great harvest," he told *Wines & Vines*.

"We crushed 20% to 30% of the berries, but it was mostly whole grapes. We kept it warm, even hot at first, to make sure of complete extraction."

The grapes were divided into 2-ton lots from specific blocks, so they could be harvested at optimum conditions.

Biagi is a big believer in monitoring phenolics to help guide picking decisions and winemaking choices. His team collected grapes for ETS Laboratories to analyze, intensifying that program once harvest began.

Biagi thinks that the ability to monitor phenolics during growing and winemaking has ushered in a new era of winemaking. "We can gather good information that allows us to optimize the process," he said.

Assistant winemaker Ryan Knoth, who just joined the winery, formerly worked with Scott

David Sinegal



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Sinegal Estate Winery

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VINEYARD ACREAGE

9.5

DTC SALES (%)

90%

YEAR BONDED

2013

AVA

St. Helena

OWNER

David Sinegal

WINEMAKER

Tony Biagi

ASSISTANT WINEMAKER

Ryan Knoth

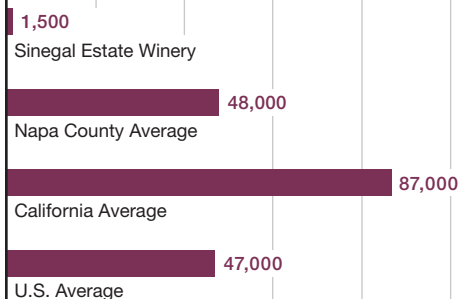
CELLARMASTER

Phil Martin

VINEYARD MANAGER

Jim Barbour

WINERY CASE PRODUCTION



Source: Wines Vines Analytics

WINERY AVERAGE BOTTLE PRICE



Source: Wines Vines Analytics

The Technical Spotlight is a regular feature highlighting wineries in North America that have recently opened or undergone major renovations and improvements. *Wines & Vines* seeks to report how facility design and winemaking equipment is used to achieve a particular winemaking style while also exploring new trends and techniques being used in the industry. If you think your winery would be a good candidate for the feature, contact us at edit@winesandvines.com.

BUILDING THE WINERY

Architect	Signum Architecture , signumarchitecture.com
Excavation	Cave Co. , thecavecompany.com
General contractor	Cello & Maudru , cello-maudru.com
Interior design	Katie Martinez Design , katiemartinezdesign.com
Landscape design/architect	Blasen Landscape Architecture , blasengardens.com
Concrete	Cello & Maudru
HVAC	Cello & Maudru
Plumbing	Steve Silva , stevesilvapumbing.com
Catwalk/metalwork	Ogletree's Inc. , ogletreecorp.com ; Burgstahler Machine Works , (707) 967-0553; Santa Rosa Stainless Steel , srss.com

WINERY SERVICES

Laboratory services	ETS Laboratories , etslabs.com
Case goods storage	Copper Peak Logistics , copperpeaklogistics.com
Regulatory compliance	ShipCompliant , shipcompliant.com ; DH Wine Compliance , dhwinecompliance.com
Marketing and PR	Cross Marketing , crossmarketingpr.com
Distribution	California: Kimberly Jones Selections
Web sales/POS/inventory software	VineSpring , vinespring.com
DtC/wine shipments	Copper Peak Logistics ; ShipCompliant ; DH Wine Compliance

GROWING THE GRAPES

Varieties	Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon (2015), Sauvignon Musque (2015).
Rootstock	Schwartzman, 110R, 114

MAKING THE WINE

Sorting table	Bucher Vaslin , bvnorthamerica.com
Crusher/destemmer	Bucher Vaslin
Must pump/other pumps	Burgstahler Machine Works , (707) 967-0553
Tanks and/or fermentation vessels	Santa Rosa Stainless Steel , srss.com
Yeasts	Enartis Vinquiry , enartisvinquiry.com ; Laffort USA , laffortusa.com
Additions, enzymes and nutrients	Scott Laboratories Inc. , scottlab.com ; Lallemand , lallemandwine.com
Presses	Bucher Vaslin , bvnorthamerica.com
Barrels	Tonnellerie Sylvain , tonnellerie-sylvain.fr ; Tonnellerie Orion , tonnellerieorion.com ; Tonnellerie Taransaud , knoxbarrels.com ; Nadalie USA , nadalie.com ; Tonnellerie Vincent Darnajou , morletselection.com
Barrel-washing equipment	Carlsen & Associates , carlsenassociates.com
Hoses, clamps and other fittings	Alfa Laval , alfalaval.us ; Key Industrial , keyindustrial.com
Malolactic bacteria	Gusmer Enterprises , gusmerenterprises.com

PACKAGING

Bottles	Saverglass , saverglass.com ; Saxco , saxco.com
Corks	Amorim , amorimca.com
Label design	CF Napa Brand Design , cfnapa.com
Label printing	CCL Label , ccllabel.com
Capsules	Ramondin USA , ramondin.com

McLeod, a leader in using phenolic measurements in winemaking at McLeod's consulting company Wine X Ray.

The winery also has automated pumpover systems that allow the winemaker to program short pumpovers five or six times per day for best extraction and to keep the cap wet.

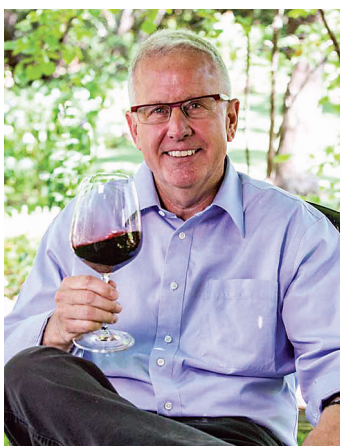
"In the past," Biagi admits, "many winemakers pushed wine-making too far. You can go too far in the vineyard and end up with raisin flavors. Now we can get a much better look at the grapes, not just sugar, acid and pH." He added, "We'll never get away from alcohols of 14% to 15%, but we won't see that in the 15% or 16%."s."

Biagi follows the Bordeaux model of concentrating on a few coopers and likes medium-toast houses. He concentrates on Sylvain, Orion, Taransaud, Nadalie and Darnajou.

He also compliments his boss. "David (Sinegal) wants to do the right thing. It's very different working with a proprietor who lives on the property. If I have a question, I can just go knock on the door.

Sinegal, 50, has taken courses in viticulture and winemaking, and he is deeply involved in both processes. In fact, he has compiled a list of 1,403 steps taken or decisions made during the whole winemaking process. "He stopped at 1,403 because it was getting unwieldy," Biagi noted.

The son of James Sinegal, co-founder of Costco, David Sinegal supervised the beverage alcohol operation at the company. Since leaving Costco, he has consulted



Craig Williams

Tony Biagi



with consumer products companies. The winery is his major focus now.

Results so far

Three 2013 wines from the winery's first vintage received ratings higher than 95 on wine critic Robert Parker's 100-point scale. The bottles cost between \$90 and \$195. "The '14s are even better," Sinegal claims.

The winery is now updating its tasting facilities and completing its caves to welcome visitors, which Sinegal hopes will start in October. It will be able to host up to 21 visitors per day by appointment as well as a few larger events.

David Sinegal admits that it's been an adjustment to move from Seattle (Costco headquarters are in nearby Issaquah, Wash.) to the rural environment of his new wine venture. But, he said, "I love it. We're committed to the community and life here." Sinegal's wife Shelley Sinegal has franchised a Pure Barre dance studio in Napa.

The Sinegals live in the main home, a 19th-century restored Victorian of approximately 6,000 square feet. The property also included a large two-bedroom guest house, pool, tennis court, sports field, a carriage house that had been turned into an exercise studio, an olive orchard, culinary and ornamental gardens, the stone

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Sinegal enlisted Craig Williams to consult on Bordeaux-style wine blends.

winery with tasting room and a 25-acre lake shared with Flora Springs Winery.

The property also contains a stream, oak grove and other wild areas. Sinegal promises to never develop the oak grove—even though he says that it is the best land on the property, not that the rest is lacking.

The Inglewood Estate began when Alton Williams bought the property in 1879 for \$7,500. It was first planted with vines in 1881, and Inglewood Estate's first harvest was in 1884. Williams planted 25 acres and built a 24-by-60-foot frame wine cellar with a stone foundation that could produce 20,000 gallons annually.

More recent owners of the property were William and Lila Jaeger, who were co-founders of Freemark Abbey and founders of

Rutherford Hill wineries, who bought it in 1965. Doug and Jane Wolf bought the property in 1996. The Wolfs began producing wine under the Wolf Family Vineyards label in 1997.

"If I have a question, I can just go knock on the door."

—Tony Biagi, winemaker

When Sinegal took over the estate, he turned to its front door for its logo. The original lock and skeleton key inspired the drawing on every bottle. 🗝️



The Sinegals live in a renovated 19th century Victorian home on the property.