

Dear Wine Lover,

As I sit here in the beginning of 2009, I am filled with the feeling of hope and opportunity. Recently, I have been looking back and reflecting on 2008 and sharing some of my experiences with others. There seems to be a universal agreement that 2008 was a year of challenges and perils such as our local wildfires, conflicts throughout the world, the economic meltdown, and our extremely tiny crop of Estate fruit. However, I am not one to dwell on the past beyond learning from it. The other thing that many folks seem to agree on is that 2009 will be a year of opportunity derived from hard work, and let's face it, we have our work cut out for us. It just so happens that according to the Chinese calendar, beginning on January 26th, this is the year of the Earth Ox - which heralds a year of challenging but steady progress, and the careful building of things meant to last. Where I stand now as an American and small business owner in the midst of my most significant expansion to date, the Earth Ox symbol resonates strongly. Despite the challenges that lie ahead, I feel a certain optimism that if we do the right things and work hard, we will make good things happen.



Here at Big Basin Vineyards, we have a number of initiatives supporting our success as well as the common good of all. In the winery and in the vineyard, we are continuing to focus on producing even better wines. We continue to farm our Estate vineyard organically despite the substantially higher costs because we believe the wine is better and the health of our land and watershed is improved. In the winery, we are sorting our fruit at the cluster and at the berry level to deliver an even more pure expression of the fruit. We are also using a number of other subtle and time intensive wine making techniques such as extended maceration and extended barrel ageing. Additionally, we are holding back the wines longer so that when they are released they are well on their way to achieving those wonderful alchemical transmutations that produce great wines. Holding the wines longer in barrel and bottle before releasing them is costly, but we think you will appreciate the sublime improvements that only time can bring.



A beautiful sunny morning as the fog clears over the Estate vineyards.

For much of Big Basin Vineyards' short history, our focus has been on our own Estate vineyards and our Rattlesnake Rock Syrah. We completed the task of reclaiming our historic vineyard site in 2005 and 2006 with new plantings that doubled the size of our Estate vineyard. These vineyards just started producing fruit this past year with our first Grenache harvest, and this coming year, we will hopefully have our first Roussanne harvest. For those of you who have been fans of our Rattlesnake Rock Syrah, we will have a number of wonderful surprises for you in the coming years as we release new wines made from these recent plantings. We make all our wine right here, and what I want to encourage in 2009 is for you to come and see what we do here at the winery and cast your own eyes on our hillside Estate vineyards.

While we believe our Estate vineyards offer an extraordinary combination of micro-climate and soils, we know that other special sites exist in our immediate mountainous coastal region including the Santa Cruz Mountains and parts of Monterey county. Our Fairview Ranch Syrah, sourced from the Santa Lucia Highlands near Monterey Bay, demonstrates that other excellent vineyards with their own signature characteristics exist close to home. Inspired by this example, I sought out and started

working with a number of new vineyards over the course of the past two years. One of my favorites is the Coastview Vineyard located at 2600 ft on a mountain top in the Gavilan Mountains overlooking Monterey Bay. The unique climate, decomposed granitic soils and organic farming produce the type of concentrated and expressive mountain Syrah that I love. And soon, we will have Grenache and Pinot Noir from this same site. I am also excited to be working with two Pinot Noir vineyards in the Corralitos area at the Southern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains next to Monterey Bay - the Alfaro Family Vineyard and the Woodruff Family Vineyard. The proximity to the bay and immaculate farming practices in both vineyards produce Pinot with structure, balance and an exuberant expression of fruit.



The mountain top Coastview Vineyard at 2600 ft in the Gavilan Mountains is one of our favorite new vineyard discoveries.

With each new wine, we discover a new expression of this mountainous coastal region. I have come to respect and appreciate that there is a ton (tons!) of good fruit being grown within 100 miles of here, and I am honored not only to be able to source that fruit, but, right here in this winery I designed and built, to be able to make memorable and expressive wines that consistently remind me what an incredible wine region this is. We look forward to sharing some these discoveries with you at the upcoming Release Celebration barrel tasting.

The Spring 2009 Offering

We are offering three wines this Spring from three vintages - the **2006 Rattlesnake Rock Syrah**, the **2007 Branciforte Ridge Pinot Noir**, and the **2008 Aura Rosé**. You will notice on the order form that we are rewarding those customers who purchase directly from the winery on a pre-release basis with reduced prices on the wines. In this era of tightening budgets, we want to be known for great wines and excellent value. All existing Friends of the Vineyard will automatically receive their wines at the pre-release prices.

Consider becoming a Friend of the Vineyard - a program where we reward your loyalty and continued support with guaranteed allocations of our most limited release wines, free shipping, free passes to our Release Parties and more. For each of our twice-yearly releases we will ship you a combination six pack of current release wines and you will also have the ongoing option to purchase additional wine. We try our best to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to purchase our wines. However, since we are releasing only three wines that were produced in limited quantities, we recommend that you order soon. We will do our best to fulfill the wishes of those who order by February 19th. **Order now online** using your User ID and Password that were emailed to you.

A Historical View of the Region

Santa Cruz was, really, America's first great wine region before Napa and before Sonoma. Back in the 19th century, Santa Cruz wines consistently won medals at various World Fairs and International competitions. But as the temperance movement gained momentum in the beginning of the 20th century, Santa Cruz was at the epicenter, and when Prohibition became the law of the land, winemaking in this region essentially ceased altogether. Think about that: for more than a decade, winemaking here just stopped, cold. And with the repeal of Prohibition in the 1930's, the difficult terrain and low yields prevented the Santa Cruz Mountains from attracting the same level of vineyard development as Napa, Sonoma, or even the Central Valley.

It's really only in my lifetime (I was born in the 60's) that Santa Cruz Mountains have re-emerged as a leading wine region. Pre-prohibition there were over 3000 acres of vines in these mountains and only recently have we exceeded 1200 acres (which by the way is tiny compared to most other appellations). What has fueled this recent growth are the same factors that discouraged the region's post-Prohibition revival: cool climate, lower yields, and mountain soils. These are the factors which contemporary winemakers are seeking out when striving to create Syrah, Grenache and Pinot Noir wines of character. It is this same quest for great vineyard sites that led to the planting of Coastview Vineyard on a nearly inaccessible mountaintop and the planting of vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands. And of course, it is wine aficionados such as yourself who have sought out these wines and made possible ventures such as Big Basin Vineyards. We are pleased to have you join us on this journey of making the Santa Cruz Mountains and its environs one of the most interesting and newly prominent wine regions in the world.

Spring Release Celebration - Saturday April 4th 12pm-5pm

You and your friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the beauty of Spring-time in the vineyards and mountains. Walk through the vineyards full of fresh green shoots, take in the mountain views, enjoy some great food and listen to our friends play live soulful music. This will be the best

opportunity to sample released wines as well as the wines still in barrel from the remarkable '07 and '08 vintages. There will be no charge for Friends of the Vineyard (up to two passes), \$10 per pass for customers picking up wines and \$20 for others, and everyone goes home with a souvenir Big Basin wine glass. See you there! We will also be at many more tastings this Spring throughout California. You can find a [full listing on our website](#).

Announcing Our Collaboration with Sommelier Christie Dufault...

One of my highlights last Summer was a dinner at Quince in San Francisco with some of my wine industry friends. We made the decision to entrust all wine pairing decisions to award-winning Sommelier Christie Dufault. Every wine Christie served us was absolutely stunning and an eye-opener. It was a memorable dinner and one that left me with a profound respect for Christie's palate and knowledge. When I shared my experience with my wife Samantha, she remarked "Christie was a student of mine on one of my yoga retreats." So, when Christie contacted us about collaborating with her Yoga in the Vineyard project, she was greeted with a resounding 'yes' and thus the circle had been completed. We have announced the first two dates on our website. Each will take place at our winery and yoga studio and include a yoga class with renowned teacher Samantha Shakti Brown, the wines of Big Basin, special food pairings, and Christie's extraordinary wine & food knowledge.

By purchasing Big Basin wines directly from the winery, you are the key to our continued success and our ability to bring you the best wines possible at reasonable prices. Thank you for your support in this year of the Earth Ox.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BAB', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bradley Brown
Proprietor and Winemaker

