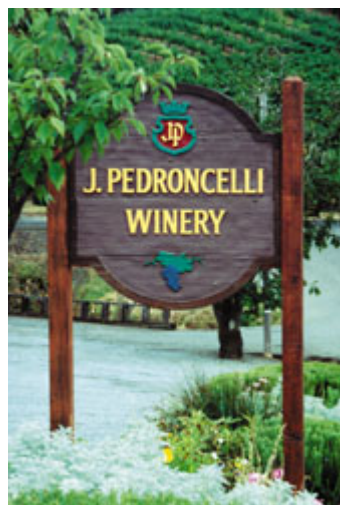


## Pedroncelli Winery & Vineyard

1220 Canyon Road  
Geyserville, California  
[www.pedroncelli.com](http://www.pedroncelli.com)

The Pedroncelli Family stakes its claim in wine country with four strong words: "Remarkable", "Approachable", "Memorable" and "Affordable". Road in the Dry Creek Valley of Sonoma County, the in the family since 1927. Their fourteen varietal wine intimate relationships that have developed over years neighboring vineyards. "Family Vineyards Petite Vineyard Sangiovese", "Morris Fay Vineyard Cabernet a few of the fine wines that are available under the

John Pedroncelli, Jr. is Dry Creek Valley's most maker. He was two years old when his father vineyard, and there were always chores for him to do. suckering the vines, and when prohibition ended and making wine, he cleaned the redwood tanks and cellar. After two years of military service, he entered College, where he studied chemistry and botany. He winemaking responsibilities from his father in 1948, but returned to college in the early 1950s to take enology courses at the University of California at Davis.



Located on Canyon vineyard has been offerings reflect the of working with Sirah", "Alto Sauvignon" are just Pedroncelli label.

experienced wine purchased the He started out with his father began assisted in the Santa Rosa Junior began assuming

After the retirement of John Pedroncelli, Sr. in 1963, he also became manager of the firm's 135 acres of vineyards. During his tenure, John has guided Pedroncelli through the tough transition from bulk wine producer to premium winery. He began producing varietal wine in 1948 with the Pedroncelli Zinfandel, creating California's first Zinfandel Rosé in 1954. Several labeled varietals followed in the 1950's, including Pinot Noir and Riesling. The winemaking facility was updated with modern equipment and small oak barrels in the 1960s and 1970s.

Today, he continues to innovate, creating vineyard-select wines and replanting the estate vineyards on advanced trellises to grape varieties carefully selected for each site. "I've always wanted Pedroncelli wines to be among the best made in Dry Creek Valley," he explains. That's why we continue to fine-tune our grape growing and winemaking; using our experience to achieve a balance of ripe fruit, oak complexity and approachable character that is both distinctive and a pleasure to drink." Lance Blakeley, the vineyard manager, works alongside John, planning for the future. The vines must be re-planted periodically, and newer plantings utilize modern trellises to enhance fruit quality.

## Importance of Place

With the oldest tasting room in Dry Creek Valley, the family's sense of place and community is an important part of the Pedroncelli marketing strategy. They were the first winery to use the "Sonoma County" appellation on their label. When Dry Creek Valley became an AVA, it was added, as well.

The concept of appellation is based on the French system of *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*, often abbreviated as AOC. France's AOC regulations define and protect geographically named wines, spirits and certain foods. AOC regulations for a particular wine stipulate the precise geographic area the grapes are grown, the grape varieties that may be used, the permissible yield, aspects of viticulture such as pruning and irrigation, the minimum alcohol strength of the wine plus aspects of how the wine can be made. For a given French wine to carry an appellation, it must document and meet all of the criteria set down in AOC laws. Beginning in the 1930's, most European wine producing countries have similar, fairly strict systems that define and govern the wines produced and marketed under an appellation.

In the United States, regulations defining the geographic regions are more recent. Here, an appellation or an AVA is more likely to specify only the region the grapes are grown, rarely stipulating details such as grape varieties, permissible yields or how the wine is made. An AVA is an American Viticultural Area, defined as "a delimited grape-growing region, distinguished by geographical features, the boundaries of which have been recognized and defined." In 1981, Sonoma Valley was named as the eighth AVA in the United States. Since then, 13 smaller AVA's within Sonoma County have been named, including Dry Creek Valley in 1983. Centered around Dry Creek, a tributary of the Russian River, it is approximately 16 miles (25.7 km) long and 2 miles (3.2 km) wide.



"Terroir" is another word that is used in defining certain characteristics of a region, and is especially important in winemaking. It is difficult to define with the English language, but it encompasses the interaction of soil characteristics, climate and grape varieties. It is essentially the reason that so many wineries in such a small area each produce wine with a distinctive look, smell and taste.

## Distribution

Vice president of Marketing Julie Pedroncelli says the winery is "at the big end of small" for their area. They produce about 65,000 cases of wine per year, depending on the production of the vines. Half of the grapes are produced on their own 105 acre estate, the other half acquired through contracts with 12 other vineyards within ten miles. 90% of their sales are through an extensive distributor network that covers the United States. 10% is sold through direct retail, either in the tasting room or through e-mail. They have a wine club that offers specials on wines and events.

## Challenges

While marketing for one of the oldest wineries in Sonoma County has its benefits, it also has its challenges. Julie says that in today's markets, restaurants and retailers are always looking for what is hot and new. Pedroncelli wines are so well established that they are usually familiar with the name. "I just have to let them get to know the wines, and see that they have their own personalities. The taste usually seals the deal".

### **Advice for Starting Up**

Julie, who is a third generation Pedroncelli, advises anyone starting a winery to “stay the course”. “There are a lot of ups and downs in this business, and you have to take the long look to get through those rough times. You really have to know your customer, what your style will be and what kinds of wine you want to produce, then stick with it,” offers Julie. “Our land – the estate – was all paid for before 1972, when the land prices began to climb. There are many more wineries now, too, but we are established and on an upswing. We are at just the right price point for the market.” Pedroncelli wines retail for \$10 - \$20. An amazing amount of information about each wine is available on the website, including the dates that the grapes were picked, information about each of the vineyards, technical information and tasting notes.

### **The Future**

For the Pedroncelli's, the future looks bright as the fourth generation is becoming active in the family business. They plan to stay the course, producing wines that showcase the distinct fruit of each varietal grown within a few miles of their estate in Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County, California.

*Written by Mary Swalla Holmes.*

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