

# 2004 WINERY OF THE YEAR TESTAROSSA VINEYARDS



Rob and Diana Jensen

## *Now Producing Some of the USA's Top Wines*

**Los Gatos, CA**—We are pleased to name Testarossa Vineyards the RESTAURANT WINE® 2004 Winery of the Year. In only a decade, this small Los Gatos winery has established a solid reputation for the consistent quality of its wines, which, to us, are among the best of their types (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah) now being produced in the USA.

*Testarossa's wines generally are clean (in the best sense), varietally distinct, finely balanced, intensely flavored, and conscientiously crafted so that they do not exhibit excesses of oak, alcohol, or simplistic fruitiness. In the six vintages that we have followed Testarossa wines, we have found them to be of very high quality across the board; wines expressing significant differences in personality from vineyard to vineyard and blend to blend, but always with a sense of style and character that makes them a real pleasure to taste and to drink.*

*What's more, we believe that changes underway in viticultural and winemaking practices, in staffing, and at the winery facility itself (with the opening of a tasting room and event center in November 2003), will yield very positive results that will only enhance wine quality in the years ahead.*

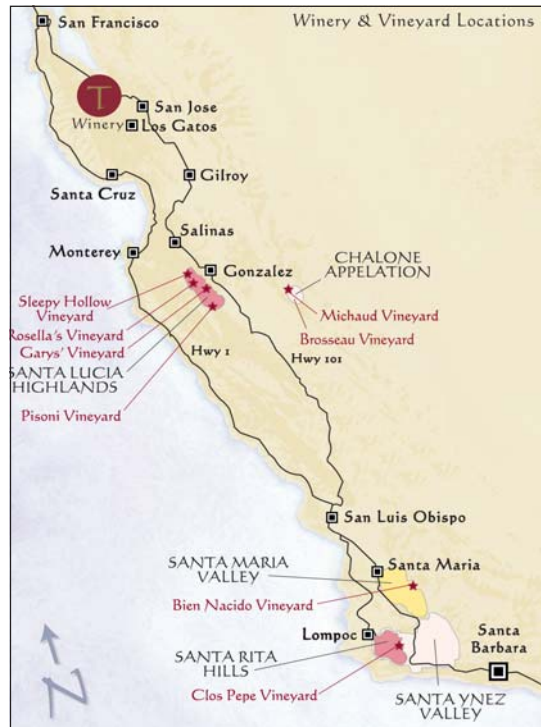
*One other note: In previous years, we have presented this award to individual winemakers. But in the case of Testarossa, where the winemaking is actually a household task, shared largely by co-owner Rob Jensen and winemaker Bill Brosseau (who joined the winery in 2000 and was promoted to winemaker in 2003), but aided not insignificantly by enologist Patrick Lorian and co-owner Diana Jensen, the award was expanded accordingly. Our congratulations to the entire Testarossa team.*

## Testarossa Timeline

- 1993** garage winery founded, 25 cases made
- 1994** commercial label launched, from custom crushed Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, 150 cases produced (nearly all Chardonnay), Diana leaves her job at Cypress Semiconductor, assistant winemaker hired
- 1995** first single vineyard wines produced (Bien Nacido, Michaud), both Chardonnays, 900 case total production
- 1996** first Signature Reserve Chardonnay released, production rises to 1,900 cases
- 1997** first Sleepy Hollow Chardonnay and Pinot Noir made, first Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noir, first Cuvee Niciare Pinot Noir, winery moves to Los Gatos Novitiate Winery, production rises to 4,000 cases (800 Pinot Noir)
- 1998** production rises to 4,500 cases
- 1999** production increases to 7,000 cases, first Testarossa Vineyards Chardonnay produced, Ed Kurtzman hired as first official winemaker
- 2000** production upped to 8,000 cases; first vintage of Castello Chardonnay & Palazzo Pinot Noir
- 2001** first unfiltered Chardonnays produced (Rosella's, Sleepy Hollow), first wines exported, production climbs to 8,500 cases (more than 50% Pinot Noir), Rob retires from Veritas Software
- 2002** second label Moorewood launched, production increased to 9,000 cases, 2/3 of it Pinot Noir
- 2003** promotes Bill Brosseau as winemaker, production rises to 9,800 cases (2/3 of it Pinot Noir), opens Tasting Room and Events Center
- 2004** RESTAURANT WINE® winery of the year

# Testarossa Vineyards

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Rob and Diana Jensen founded the winery (testarossa is Italian for “redhead”, the nickname Rob was given as a university student in Italy) in 1993, in their Sunnyvale garage. Both Silicon Valley engineers with a passion for wine, the couple produced all of 25 cases of Cabernet Sauvignon in that first vintage.

The wine was good enough to encourage them to launch the label commercially, which they did by arranging to have grapes custom-crushed for them at Cinnabar winery, in nearby Saratoga. Its winemaker, George Troquato, made the first three vintages of Testarossa wines at Cinnabar, and oversaw wines from the 1997 vintage, the first made in the winery’s new home, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jesuit-owned Novitiate Winery.

An assistant winemaker was hired in 1997 and the first full-time winemaker, Ed Kurtzman, in 1999. Rob Jensen was as involved in wine production as time permitted (he kept his day job at Veritas Software until 2001); Diana was the winery’s business manager. After Ed Kurtzman left in 2003, Bill Brosseau became Testarossa’s winemaker, in time for the 2003 harvest.

## Where Wine Quality Originates

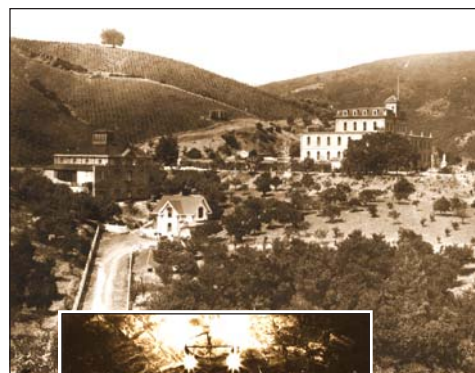
There are many contributing factors and circumstances to the impressive, consistent quality of Testarossa’s wines, among them:

### 1. The focus on top vineyards.

Unlike many other top wineries, Testarossa doesn’t own any vineyards. Nor does it make that much wine (10,000 cases). Rob Jensen says that his focus from the first has been “not to make good wine, but to make the best wine”. In order to do so, he began sourcing fruit from reputed growers in the Central Coast, such as Bien Nacido, and doggedly pursued other growers to secure fruit from them.

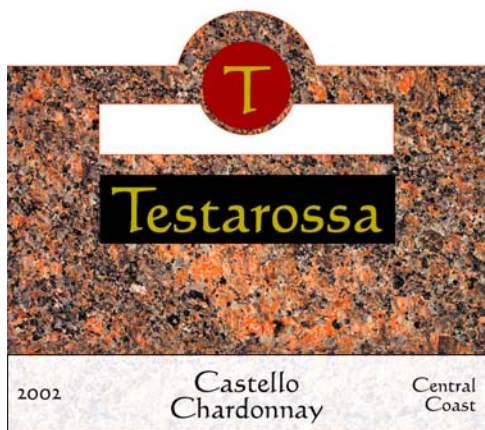
As Testarossa wines became better known and began receiving media acclaim, acquiring enough fruit to allow the winery to increase production at a conservative pace was not the challenge it could have been, in part because Jensen fortuitously found excellent growers—initially, from Pisoni and Sleepy Hollow Vineyards—in the emerging Santa Lucia Highlands region that agreed to sell him grapes.

As it happened, one vineyard led to another and another, so that now Jensen has enough top vineyard sources to supply the winery’s needs (two Russian River vineyards recently were added to the portfolio, one in 2003, one in 2004). Indeed, because Testarossa wines have been so good, some of his established growers have been offering him more fruit, while growers whose grapes did not meet his standards were dropped.



Testarossa leases space in the Novitiate Winery, which was founded in the 19th century.

<b>PRIMARY TESTAROSSA FRUIT SOURCES</b>			
<i>County</i>	<i>AVA</i>	<i>Varietal(s)</i>	<i>First Purchased</i>
<b>Monterey County</b>			
Brosseau Vineyard	Chalone	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay	2002
Michaud Vineyard	Chalone	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay	1995 Chardonnay 2001 Pinot Noir
Garys’ Vineyard	Santa Lucia Highlands	Pinot Noir, Syrah	1999
Rosella’s Vineyard	Santa Lucia Highlands	Chardonnay, Pinot Noir	1999 Chardonnay 2001 Pinot Noir
Sleepy Hollow Vineyard	Santa Lucia Highlands	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay	1997
Pisoni Vineyard	Santa Lucia Highlands	Pinot Noir	1997
<b>Santa Barbara County</b>			
Bien Nacido Vineyard	Santa Maria Valley	Chardonnay, Pinot Noir	1995 Chardonnay 1997 Pinot Noir
<b>Sonoma County</b>			
Graham Vineyard	Russian River Valley	Pinot Noir	2004
Fritschen Vineyard	Russian River Valley	Pinot Noir	2003



Winemaker, Bill Brosseau

## TESTAROSSA'S THREE TIERS

**Reserves**  
(together 300-400 cases/year)

Signature Reserve Chardonnay  
Cuvee NiClaire Pinot Noir

**Single Vineyard Designates**  
(altogether about 3,000 cases/year)

**Chardonnay:**  
Bien Nacido, Rosella's, Michaud,  
Sleepy Hollow

**Pinot Noir:**  
Bien Nacido, Sleepy Hollow, Michaud,  
Pisoni, Garys', Rosella's  
Syrah: Garys'

**Multiple Vineyard Blends**  
(together 5,000-6,000 cases/year)

Palazzo Pinot Noir  
Castello Chardonnay

## 2. An open exchange of information among growers and the vintners who purchase grapes from them.

Jensen says that one of his winery's major strengths is being able to benefit from the collective experience of wineries that purchase grapes from the same vineyards that Testarossa does.

"We are not just one winery working with one vineyard," he says. "All the vineyards we work with sell grapes to at least one other winery working with them, usually more. We do experiments in the vineyard and with the fruit, and we run our ideas and experiences off the other winemakers. That has allowed us to grow exponentially in the improvements [in cultural and winemaking practices]. We are constantly learning from and sharing our experience with the likes of Siduri, Patz & Hall, and Flowers and their staffs. The growers benefit, too: They don't just have one winemaker giving them feedback, but several."

## 3. The desire to harvest clean fruit at optimal ripeness, from balanced, healthy vines.

In its grape purchasing arrangements, Testarossa receives fruit from specific rows or blocks from its growers. In every instance, Jensen and his team provide direction and input on how they want those sections of the vineyard handled. Jensen says that his growers are happy to cooperate with him because they know he is striving to produce the highest quality wine from their grapes (and have scores of awards and reviews to support them).

In the past few years, effort has been placed on reducing botrytis in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, says winemaker Bill Brosseau, because botrytis can make winemaking difficult and limits the aging potential of wines made with it. He continues: "All our reds are unfiltered. But we are on a quest for unfiltered Chardonnays, and we find that to do this we need really clean, impeccable fruit. In 2003, we hand-sorted about 170 tons of fruit."

Testarossa's growers also make valuable suggestions of their own, Jensen says. "Gary Pisoni and Gary Franscioni, who provide some of our best Pinot Noir (from Pisoni and Garys' vineyards), suggested that we clip off the wings of the clusters (where ripening was about 1 degree Brix behind) in order to achieve ideal ripeness. Well, a lot of people would say, 'You're throwing good fruit on the ground.' But when you are striving for ultimate quality, those are the types of things you do."

Jensen says that the vineyard work is the critical part of Testarossa's winemaking efforts. "It's a cliché, but great wines only come from great vineyards. In the past few years, we've done a lot more analysis in our vineyards to make sure that the vines are healthy and have the nutrients they need so that the grapes have fewer problems with fermentation. We also are trying to get the right balance in each vineyard between the weather and ideal yields. We have found that lower yields are generally better than higher yields (we average about 2 to 3 tons an acre in our vineyards), but too low of yields panics the vines and promotes vegetative growth. The idea that stressed vines make great wine is a myth."

## 4. Pre-emptive winemaking.

Wine is produced at Testarossa truly to preserve the character of the grapes and the vineyards they come from. In winemaking terms, this means

minimizing elements and processes that diminish that character (some examples: too much lees stirring in Chardonnay, too much new oak, the presence of brettanomyces, fining in general, too much time in barrel, not enough free sulphide dioxide protecting the wine during barrel aging, poor cellar hygiene) while maximizing those that bring it out (pre-fermentation cold soak of Pinot Noir and Syrah, separating light and heavier press fractions).

And although there are similarities in how wines from different vineyards of the same variety are handled, each lot from each vineyard or block is given the attention it needs, as dictated by regular tasting. Says Brosseau: "Each lot is given meticulous attention. Many wineries separate their cellar care by price point. But here, we treat every barrel in this winery as though it will be a Signature Reserve Chardonnay or Cuvee Niclaire Pinot Noir. That's what's different about us. We don't have a formula. If a wine begins to taste tannic after fermentation, we take it off the skins. During barrel aging, we can creatively remove tannins through splash racking or using a specific oak to polymerize the tannins."

### 5. A slow-growth business model for the winery.

As the primary investors in Testarossa, the Jensens planned to grow their winery slowly but steadily, at a pace of roughly 1,000 cases or so a year. "It is a conservative business model, but one that has served us very well so far. We don't want to sacrifice quality. We don't want to go out and get high volume, cheap grapes or filler wine from the bulk market for our cuvees."

To that end, wines that did not make the "cut" (which both Jensen and the winemaking staff participate in) were sold off in bulk. When the bulk market collapsed in 2000, rather than sell their "leftovers" at a significant loss, they launched a second label, Moorewood, which today accounts for approximately 1,700 cases. Because much of Moorewood will now be sold at the tasting room and at meetings and dinners hosted at the new event center in the Novitiate Winery, that label will enhance the winery's profitability (since it will largely be sold at retail) and actually allow Jensen and company to be more rigorous in the selection process for wines bottled under the Testarossa label.

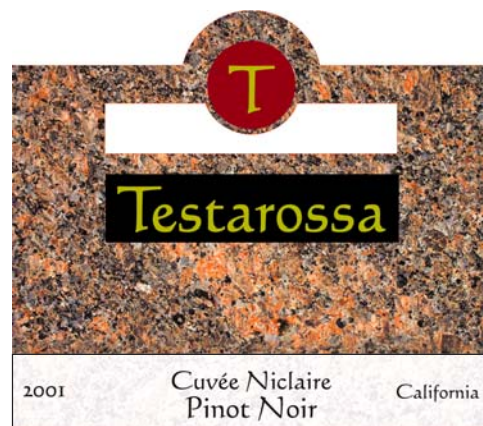
### Testarossa's Changing Product Line

The two most prominent changes to the Testarossa product line over the years have been:

- the shift from a Chardonnay-dominant winery to a Pinot Noir-dominant one, and
- the introduction of its multiple vineyard or "house" blends, Castello (Chardonnay) and Palazzo (Pinot Noir).

#### —The Shift To Red

According to Rob Jensen, the move from a white- to a red wine-oriented winery was in the plans from the beginning, based on personal interest. But the scarcity of top Pinot Noir vineyard sources and the winery's lack of a proven Pinot Noir track record made that transition a slow one. "We had to wait several years to buy fruit from some vineyards. One grower



TESTAROSSA WINES	
<b>2002 case production (9-liter)</b>	
<b>Chardonnay</b>	
Castello	1,989 cases
Bien Nacido Vineyard	427 cases
Rosella's Vineyard	97 cases
Michaud Vineyard	274 cases
Sleepy Hollow Vineyard	233 cases
Signature Reserve	173 cases
<b>Pinot Noir</b>	
Palazzo	2,840 cases
Bien Nacido Vineyard	386 cases
Garys' Vineyard	372 cases.
Sleepy Hollow Vineyard	224 cases
Michaud Vineyard	74 cases
Rosella's Vineyard	101 cases
Pisoni Vineyard	299 cases
Cuvee Niclaire	125 cases
<b>Syrah</b>	
Garys' Vineyard	331 cases
<b>Moorewood</b> (second label, primarily winery sales)	
<b>Chardonnay      2002 production</b>	
Central Coast	124 cases
<b>Syrah      2001 production</b>	
Monterey	589 cases
<b>Pinot Noir      2001 production</b>	
Central Coast	1,120 cases



Overview of the Novitiate Winery property.

told me I would have to be in his will before I would get fruit from him.”

As Testarossa Pinot Noirs began acquiring a critical following, more Pinot Noir became available. In 2003, the winery produced about 6,500 cases of Pinot Noir (2/3 of the total) and 2,900 cases of Chardonnay. By comparison, in 1996, Testarossa made about 1,700 cases of Chardonnay (85% of total production) and only 300 cases of Pinot Noir (15% of the mix). Syrah, which was first introduced in 1999, is Rob Jensen’s “pet project”; a wine he greatly enjoys, but that will not grow much beyond its current level (300 cases) unless top Syrah vineyards are found to supply grapes.



The Niclaire Room in the Testarossa event center at the Novitiate Winery.

### The Introduction of Multiple Vineyard or “House Blends”

Until the 1999 vintage at Testarossa, only two tiers of wines were produced, vineyard designated and reserve wines. But when production leapt in 1999 from 4,500 cases to 7,000 cases in one year, Jensen found that certain Chardonnay lots not included in the other wines were superior in their own right. A blend of the best of these (from Bien Nacido, Michaud, and Sleepy Hollow vineyards) yielded a Chardonnay of excellent quality that would sell at a lower bottle price than the vineyard designated Chardonnays.

That wine, named Testarossa Vineyards, although positively received, implied that the winery owned its own vineyards. So with the release of the 2000 multiple vineyard blend, the name was changed to “Castello” (the Italian equivalent of a castle, chateau, or nobleman’s house). Its Pinot Noir counterpart, named “Palazzio” (Italian for palace) was also first produced from the 2000 vintage.

What is important to realize about the Castello and Palazzio wines, though, is that they are created to be Testarossa “entry level” wines, which are lower priced and more widely available than others, much like the non-vintage Brut from a top Champagne house. Indeed, since creating this tier at Testarossa Jensen and the winemaking staff have channeled between 30% and 40% of the total production of the single vineyard wines into these blends. “These two wines are our flagship blends. They are symphonic wines; not soloists. Different vineyards allow us to produce wines that are much rounder, more complete, and more harmonic than using one vineyard on its own.”

### What’s Ahead

Jensen and company don’t expect many outward changes in their company in the years ahead. They believe (as we do) that quality will continue to improve, as viticultural and winemaking practices continue to be fine-tuned, and that the company’s growth will largely be fueled by Castello and Palazzio. Two Russian River Valley Pinot Noir vineyards have been added to the portfolio, which Jensen has high hopes for. But ever the conscientious wine professional will wait and see what level of quality of wine those vineyards deliver before talking about Testarossa vineyard designate status for those wines. ♪

Testarossa Wines Reviewed This Issue	
<b>Chardonnay</b>	
- 2002 Castello	★★★★
- 2002 Bien Nacido	★★★★+
- 2001 Signature Reserve	★★★★★
<b>Pinot Noir</b>	
- 2002 Palazzio	★★★★
- 2002 Bien Nacido	★★★★+
- 2002 Garys’	★★★★★
- 2001 Pisoni	★★★★★
- 2001 Cuvee Niclaire	★★★★+
<b>Syrah</b>	
- 2001 Garys’	★★★★

# TASTING NOTES

## CHARDONNAY

**TESTAROSSA, 2002 CASTELLO, CENTRAL COAST, ★★★★★**  
**\$240 (\$30)**

Excellent: a full bodied, moderately intense Chardonnay, with excellent flavor (apple, peach, pineapple, toast, vanilla, and tobacco) and fine balance. Very long, harmonious finish. Great value. 1,989 cases. [2005-2007] 408.354.6150

### TESTAROSSA

- **2002 BIEN NACIDO VYD., SANTA MARIA VALLEY, ★★★★★+**  
**\$320 (\$40)**
- **2001 SIGNATURE RESERVE, CALIFORNIA, ★★★★★**  
**\$208/6 (\$52)**

These are splendid Chardonnays. The Bien Nacido is one of the finest we have tasted from that vineyard: supple and medium rich, with excellent flavor and length. It tastes of pineapple, toast, peach, roasted nut, honey, and spicy oak. 427 cases. The Reserve is fleshy and rich, with excellent depth and balance. Very long finish. It tastes of roasted nut, vanilla, tropical fruit, and spicy oak. 173 cases. [2005-2007] 408.354.6150

## PINOT NOIR

**TESTAROSSA, 2002 PALAZZIO, CENTRAL COAST, ★★★★★**  
**\$260 (\$32.50)**

Extremely well balanced, this is fine blend, with spicy, fruity, toasty aromas/flavors, and a very long finish. Best version yet of this wine. 2,840 cases. [2005-2007] 408.354.6150

### TESTAROSSA

- **2002 BIEN NACIDO VYD., SANTA MARIA VALLEY, ★★★★★+**  
**\$424 (\$53)**
- **2001 PISONI VYD., SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS, ★★★★★**  
**\$424 (\$53)**
- **2002 GARYS' VYD., SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS, ★★★★★**  
**\$424 (\$53)**

Three stunning Pinot Noirs. The '02 Bien Nacido is fine and very complex in character; an aromatic wine, which is full bodied, very well balanced, and very long on the finish. In flavor, it tastes of black peppercorn, toast, tobacco, plum, and red currant. 386 cases. The '01 Pisoni is rich and powerful, with good depth of flavor, and modest tannins on the finish. It tastes of tobacco, pepper, plum, and roasted nut. 343 cases. The '02 Garys' is superb: fleshy, full bodied, and quite intensely flavored; a Pinot Noir with light tannins and a very long finish. It tastes of blueberry, plum, tobacco, and black peppercorn. 372 cases. [2005-2007] 408.354.6150

**TESTAROSSA, 2001 CUVÉE NICLAIRE, ★★★★★+**  
**CALIFORNIA, \$312/6 (\$78)**

Wonderful wine: supple, rich, and very well balanced, combining intensity and complexity. Long, persistent finish. It tastes of baked cherry, plum, pepper, toast, and tobacco. 175 cases. [2005-2007] 408.354.6150

## SYRAH

**TESTAROSSA, 2001 GARYS' VYD., SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS, ★★★★★**  
**\$184/6 (\$46)**

Fine Syrah, in a rich, supple style. It is quite peppery and toasty in aroma/flavor, with boysenberry, plum, and tobacco overtones. Very long finish. 331 cases. [2005-2007] 408.354.6150

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## ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

RONN WIEGAND, the first person in the world to hold both the Master of Wine & Master Sommelier titles, had the distinction of passing both exams on his first attempt and receiving exclusive awards (Tim Derouet, Krug Cup) for top scores in each.

He is an active wine consultant and wine marketing specialist, who has worked in restaurants and hotels in the U.S. and Europe in many capacities (dish-washer, busser, server, banquet waiter, captain, maitre d'hotel, room service captain, sommelier, restaurant assistant manager). Mr. Wiegand regularly conducts trade workshops and private consultation on the theme, "Maximizing Your Wine Program", in cities throughout North America.

From 1986-1991, Wiegand was wine columnist for The San Francisco Examiner and, from 1994-1999 penned the wine column for Nation's Restaurant News (New York). In mid-1996, Wiegand also launched TasteTour® Publications & Seminars, which publishes TasteTour WineGuides and TasteTour® WineCharts, concise, artistic, practical "short courses" on the world's major varietal wines. They are used for training in hundreds of restaurants, wineries, and wine distributorships throughout North America.

## CREDITS & SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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The Full Service Guide to On Sale Beverage Profits

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