

Nearing 50, Calera Continues to Captivate

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In 1975, legendary vintner and pioneer Josh Jensen founded Calera (Spanish for “lime kiln”) high in the mountains of California’s majestic Central Coast. In the nearly five decades since, Calera has helped establish the Central Coast as one of the New World’s most exciting wine regions, while earning acclaim as one of California’s iconic wineries.



A pioneer in American Pinot Noir, Jensen took his cues from great Burgundy domaines where grapes have been grown in limestone soil for centuries. He sought the perfect California location to create wines that were unique, yet in the style of France’s greatest wines. He found it in the Gavilan Mountains. Today Calera wines, purchased by The Duckhorn Portfolio in 2017, still express Jensen’s pioneering spirit and are globally revered.

When The Duckhorn Portfolio acquired Calera, it ushered in a new chapter in the winery’s storied history. “I knew Duckhorn’s reputation was excellent, and I appreciated their wines,” says Calera winemaker Mike Waller, who has been with the label since 2007 when Jensen invited him to become the assistant winemaker. In 2009, he was made head winemaker. “So I was optimistic that they would preserve Calera’s legacy.”



Calera Winemaker Mike Waller

In the six years since the purchase, Waller has been excited by the changes that have been made and thankful for what remains the same. “They trust our vision and understand our style, which has been truly gratifying,” says Waller. They also brought new resources allowing us to make important upgrades.”

This includes a state-of-the-art irrigation system for Calera’s famed Mt. Harlan Estate vineyards (located 25 miles east of the Monterey Bay and one of the highest and coolest vineyard sites in California), and a dozen new three-ton fermentation tanks for handling their prized grapes. The purchase has also allowed the Calera team to be replanting select portions of Mt. Harlan, pairing their celebrated Calera Selection clone with the finest modern viticultural practices.



A Calera vineyard view. Photo by Steven Spanbauer

Waller and his team utilize non-interventionist winemaking techniques (with little to no pumping) allowing the wines to retain their purity and focus. They use native yeasts rather than inoculating, and prefer whole cluster fermentations whenever possible. “Our wines are aged with minimal racking because we feel that

every time you touch the wine you take more away from the grape, so minimal handling is ideal,” says Waller. All of these techniques help to retain a sense of place and connection to the origin of the grapes—their true essence of terroir.



While many wine lovers discover Calera through the Central Coast wines, the Mt. Harlan bottlings elevate Calera to global acclaim. Sample each at the winery in Hollister, CA where tastings include beautiful views of the Diablo Mountain Range. Take a peek at Calera’s hillside, its one-of-a-kind, seven level gravity flow winery, and learn about the Calera history.

Photos courtesy of Calera

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