

CALERA WINE COMPANY

Wine & Spirits 2009 WINERY OF THE YEAR!

You wouldn't know it driving down the two-lane road through the backcountry of the Gavilan Mountains, but you're essentially winding your way along a vein of limestone that some would consider a viticultural gold mine in California. In the early 1970's, Josh Jensen scoured the state



hoping to plant pinot noir. The limestone deposits drew him to these mountains in San Benito County, although he also had to consider elevation because of the warm climate. Eventually, he settled on an old quarry at around 2,000 feet on Mount Harlan, where he planted vines in 1975.

Jensen's wines often seem austere in their youth, a reflection of their high-altitude growing conditions and resultant high acidity, as well as his preference for indigenous yeasts, whole clusters and gentle handling techniques like gravity flow and minimal racking.

The '06 Mills Vineyard is a good example of Calera's style, with brisk red fruit flavors and a firm, yet energetic structure. Jensen planted Mills in 1984 during a second wave of planting on the Calera estate (the first vineyards,

Selleck, Reed and Jensen, were all planted in the mid-70's). Mills is planted on its own roots — a rarity in this post-phylloxera age — from cuttings that Jensen took from his older vineyards. Those vines produce a complex, long-aging pinot noir that combines the elegance of Burgundy with the rugged

heartiness of a California mountain wine.

The '06 Selleck is just as tightly bound in its youth, its tannin structure pulled from the rocky soils where the 34-year-old vineyard is planted. Built for the cellar, this will grow more defined and elegant with time — a future predicted by wines like the '97 Selleck, which is drinking beautifully, with lively fruit and savory notes held seamlessly together by silky tannins and brisk acidity.

By contrast, Reed, a site that's adjacent to Selleck, is often one of Jensen's more forward Mount Harlan wines. The '06 Reed is aromatic and lifted, with notes of wild herb and ripe strawberry. It feels generous and long with a balance of sweetness and acidity that suggests decanting a bottle for seared duck breast while you wait for the Selleck to mature. — *W.M.W.*

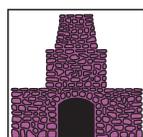
Founded: 1975

Winemaker/Owner: Josh Jensen

Viticulturist: Jim Ryan

Acres owned: 83.6 acres planted

Annual production: 40,496 cases



CALERA

Estate grown: 40%

Known for: Age-worthy pinot noir grown on mountainside vineyards

Location: Hollister, CA

Website: calerawine.com