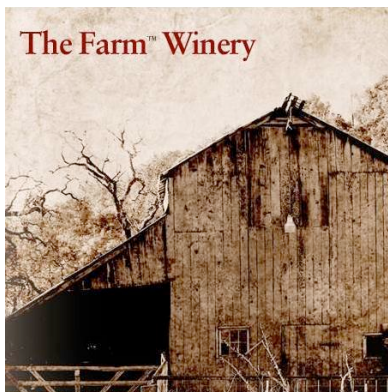


The International Wine Review

The Farm Winery: Achaval Ferrer's New Venture in Paso Robles



The Farm Winery is one of a growing number of new boutique wineries in the Paso Robles AVA that are producing small quantities of outstanding hand-crafted wines. Located in the Westside hills of Paso Robles, The Farm Winery is owned and operated by old friends and Stanford Business School alumni Jim Madsen, originally from San Diego and renowned Argentine winemaker Santiago Achaval.

Santiago Achaval is known through out the world for crafting some of the very finest Malbecs in Argentina today. His eponymous winery, Achaval Ferrer, is located in Lujan de Cuyo (Mendoza), where Santiago produces old vines and single vineyard Malbecs from meticulously managed low-yielding vineyards. His wines exhibit ripe and complex flavors that are in great demand and gaining cult status among knowledgeable consumers. Knowing Santiago from our work in Argentina over the years, we are delighted that his winemaking knowledge and experience are now being used in Paso Robles.

Jim and Azmina Madsen and Santiago and Mercedes Achaval launched operations of The Farm Winery in 2009. After a long search, they ended up negotiating long term-leases of several vineyards situated in the Westside hills of Paso Robles Adelaida Spring Ranch and Old Bailey Vineyard for Cabernet Sauvignon, Terra Bella Vineyard on Adelaida Road for Syrah, and L'Aventure Vineyard for a 1/2 acre of Petite Syrah. These vineyards are mainly situated on calcareous soils at an average altitude of between 1700 and 1900 feet. and are exposed to cool ocean winds and diurnal climate variation ideally suited for grape growing. The vines are severely thinned and the employment of green harvesting has kept yields very low, at around 1.5 tons per acre. These yields are among the lowest in Paso and are reflected in the wines.

The Farm Winery recently released its first trilogy of wines: **Cardinal**, a single vineyard hillside Cabernet Sauvignon from old vines, The **Big Game**, a Bordeaux/Rhone blend, and **Touchy-Feely**, a Grenache-Syrah -based blend. Stylistically these are big flavored, and refined wines, ripe and mouth filling. They reveal purity of fruit, excellent acidity and balance, and firm tannins. The Grenache Syrah blend is clearly more feminine than the other wines and is equal to some of the Grenache-based blends we have tasted from Paso. In fact all the wines in the trio are drinkable now but will be even better after an additional year in the cellar. If you drink them now, be sure to decant them or give them plenty of aeration before serving.

Combining rigorous vineyard management and low yields (mainly the work of Jim Madsen) with world class winemaking by Achaval Ferrer (the wines are currently made at Thacher Winery) The Farm Winery is already off to an excellent start and has a bright future. As we noted in our recently released **Report #33: The Wines of Paso Robles**, "*Paso Robles is on the cusp of the national and world recognition that will solidify its status among the premier wine growing regions of the country.*" Indeed, all the elements appear to be in place at The Farm Winery for great success in the near future.

<http://www.thefarmwinery.com>



Santiago Achaval and Jim Madsen

Tasting Notes and Ratings

The Farm Winery 2010 Touchy-Feely Paso Robles (\$60) 90+

The Touch-Feely is a Rhone blend of 75% Grenache and 25% Syrah. It boasts very ripe aromas of huckleberry and plum with an earth/stem component. Full and lush on the palate, it is nicely structured and flavorful with lots of ripe plum fruit with hint of loam and cocoa powder. Aged in new French oak for 24 months, it is still young with firm ripe tannins, lots of alcohol with light bitterness (15% alc) and a persistent finish. A delicious wine that could use an additional 12 months of bottle aging.

The Farm Winery 2009 The Big Game Paso Robles (\$75) 93

A blend of 52% Syrah, 42% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Cabernet Franc, The Big Game displays an opaque ruby color and aromas of violets, plum and black raspberry on the nose. Aged in 100% new French oak for 24 months, it is full-bodied and lush on the palate with ripe and layered flavors of black raspberry extract and a hint of chocolate. It has a velvet texture, is rich in alcohol (15 alc), and has a ripe, lengthy and flavorful finish.

The Farm Winery 2009 Cardinal Paso Robles (\$90) 92

The Cardinal is a 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Opaque ruby in color, the wine is rich tasting and port-like in character offering dark berry, and cassis with hints of dark chocolate. Full and lush on the palate, it is firmly textured with lots of fruit density and very firm ripe tannins on the finish. The grapes are sourced from 48+year-old low-yielding vines (.7 tons/acre) of the Old Bailey Vineyard. Aged for 24 months in New French Oak it is both youthful and age worthy.

Mike Potashnik and Don Winkler
December 21, 2012