

Stuhlmuller Vineyard

Stuhlmuller's History

The rich history of the Stuhlmuller property goes all the way back to 1800's mountain-man and rancher, Cyrus Alexander, for whom the Alexander Valley is named. Part of Alexander's original 9000-acre ranch, today's Stuhlmuller Vineyard has undergone many incarnations. Although grapes were likely planted on the property before 1900, Prohibition wiped out nearly all of the valley's vineyards and by the 1930s it was dotted with orchards and cattle pastures. In 1982, Roger and Carmen Stuhlmuller purchased a 150-acre property located at the southwestern edge of the Alexander Valley. Impressed by the quality of the 90-acres of original 1970's vine plantings, the Stuhlmullers realized the remarkable viticultural potential of the land. Bordered to the east by the Russian River, the vineyard is situated on a unique geological site that is part river bench and part hillside. There, the vines benefit from gravel, clay, and volcanic soils, formed during thousands of years of alluvial fan movement and flooding, as well as from rocky, uplifted benchland soils that comprise the hillside sections of the vineyard. These ancient soils combined with the area's climatic conditions, including clockwork fog and cool nighttime temperatures, yield fruit with a signature mineral quality, good acidity and complex flavors.

Over the years, Roger and Carmen, along with their son Fritz, have meticulously developed the vineyard into 150 acres of prized Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel. The Stuhlmullers quickly established a reputation as growers of world-class grapes, supplying such notable wineries as Chateau Souverain, Cronin, and Page Mill with fruit for highly praised single vineyard wines. Fritz was so inspired by the complex, expressive wines being made from his family's vineyard that in 1996, he established a small, artisan winery bearing the Stuhlmuller name. By 2000, working alongside original winemaker Kerry Damskey, Fritz had achieved his goal of turning Stuhlmuller Vineyards into an estate winery by converting an historic barn on the property into a winemaking facility designed specifically for the fermentation of small lots of fruit.

While many wineries claim to be vineyard focused, as grape growers, this belief is a way of life for the Stuhlmullers.

Committed to crafting superior wines from the finest blocks in the vineyard, the Stuhlmullers work side-by-side with their talented winemaking team. In 2004, Stuhlmuller Vineyards promoted Danish born Leo Hansen from assistant winemaker to winemaker. Combining his classic European training as a sommelier, with his hands-on experience at such wineries as Clos du Bois, Chateau Souverain and Bowen Estate in Australia, Leo is dedicated to capturing the rich, expressive character of the vineyard. Rounding out the team are Kerry Damskey, who continues at Stuhlmuller in a consulting role, and vineyard director, Dave Collin.

Today, the Stuhlmuller family enjoys a dual reputation as first-class grape growers and as proprietors of a respected, vineyard-driven winery. Stuhlmuller Vineyards produces roughly 9000 cases of Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon annually, with the recent addition of extremely small allotments of estate Zinfandel. The wines of Stuhlmuller Vineyards are available in top wine shops and restaurants throughout California and in select markets around the country.

Stuhlmuller Vineyard

Vineyard

The Chardonnay plantings are divided into five blocks on well-drained, gravelly benchland adjacent to the Russian River. Approximately 80 percent of the vines are planted with budwood believed to be an old Wente clone of Chardonnay sourced from the famed Gauer Upper Barn Vineyard. The remaining 20 percent is divided evenly between the hand-selected 4 and 15 clones of Chardonnay. These clones produce small clusters and berries with complex character. The area's fog, breezes, and cool nighttime temperatures give the Chardonnay grapes a reprieve from the afternoon heat and allow them time to develop elegant tropical flavors and crisp acidity. The soil itself imparts a distinctive mineral quality to the fruit, one of the Stuhlmuller Chardonnay's signature characteristics..

The Cabernet Sauvignon is divided into eleven benchland and hillside blocks. The sloping sections of the vineyard are comprised of alluvial and uplifted benchland soil, sandy loam, gravel, and rocks. The soil is thin in some sections of the vineyard, which reduces vine vigor and produces low yields of small, intensely flavored berries. The fruit exhibits subtle notes of herb and olive, along with the rich cherry, black fruit, and cocoa characteristics that personify the Alexander Valley terroir.

Finally, two small blocks of the Stuhlmuller Vineyard are devoted to Zinfandel and a small amount of Petite Sirah. Both varieties are head pruned in the traditional fashion to maximize flavors and minimize vine crop load. Tom Maple's famous benchland vineyard in nearby Dry Creek Valley was the source of the budwood. The vines have clearly taken to the Alexander Valley soil. The first estate Zinfandel bottling from the 2001 vintage was a great success, and the subsequent two harvests have confirmed that the future looks very bright for the Stuhlmuller Zinfandel program.

Under the guidance of Ranch Manager John Gorman, every block of Stuhlmuller Vineyard receives extensive personal attention. Farmed with an eye towards the individual needs of each varietal and every block, John implements tailor trellising and pruning methods based on an overall understanding of each site on the vineyard. A firm believer in terroir-inspired wines, winemaker Leo Hansen works closely with John to produce fruit with balance and concentration. To achieve this, the Stuhlmuller team limits yields through vine training, pruning, thinning and fruit drops.

In addition to its hand-on in-house team, Stuhlmuller Vineyards has also worked closely with the vineyard-consulting firm, Beville Vineyard Management, for three years. This combination of Stuhlmuller's own artisan vineyard management, backed by access to state-of-the-art viticultural science and analysis has proven ideal, helping the vineyard to grow consistently excellent fruit year after year. Currently, renowned vineyard consultant Duff Beville of Beville Vineyard Management visits the vineyard regularly, working with John and Leo to establish the most beneficial practices in a wide range of areas including: vine training, pruning, canopy management, crop balancing, water management, chemical analysis and an overall minimization of the use of chemicals on the property. This ongoing commitment to quality and sustainability has helped to establish Stuhlmuller Vineyards as one of the area's premier producers of estate fruit.

Fritz Stuhlmuller PROPRIETOR



Fritz Stuhlmuller's introduction to wine occurred years before the wine business became his passion and profession. As a teen, Fritz spent weekends, vacations, and summers at his family's vineyard property in the Alexander Valley, where he was exposed to the challenges and excitement of viticulture. Working amongst the vines, Fritz gained an early appreciation for the hands-on commitment required to produce superior wine grapes.

Fritz graduated from the University of Southern California in 1994 and returned to the San Francisco Bay Area with a degree in business administration. Though he enjoyed success in his first career, commercial real estate, he was interested in pursuing other opportunities. During this same period, Fritz found his love of fine wine steadily growing. Inspired by his early experience working in the family vineyard, Fritz began exploring California's great wines with an eye towards the unique character imparted by varying appellations. In the course of his exploration, Fritz tasted several Stuhlmuller vineyard-designated wines produced by other wineries. He was impressed with the complex, expressive, terroir-driven wines being made from the fruit of the 150-acre Stuhlmuller vineyard property. Sensing an ideal opportunity to combine his family's reputation as top grape growers with his own passion for fine wine, Fritz established an estate winery bearing the Stuhlmuller name.

Working with winemaker Leo Hansen, Fritz has brought the same hands-on, artisan approach to Stuhlmuller Vineyards winemaking that his family has always applied to grape growing. In addition to his active role in both the vineyards and the winery, Fritz oversees all sales and marketing, including the managing and distribution of 12,000 cases throughout California and 20 other states.

Leo Hansen

WINEMAKER



Born and raised in Denmark, Leo Hansen has been passionate about food and wine all his life. The son of a chef and hotelier, Leo grew up in the service industry, helping in his father's kitchen from the age of 12. In 1992, after completing a degree in business sales and marketing at Denmark's Grenna College, Leo began studying at the Kolding Hotel and Restaurant School. During a rigorous four-year apprenticeship, Leo worked with Orla Farmann, renowned European sommelier and national champion for the Danish Sommelier World Cup Team. Under the tutelage of Farmann, Leo's palate and love of wine developed, and he began studying wine in earnest.

In 1997, after extensive study and travels throughout the great winegrowing regions of Europe, including Loire, Alsace, Champagne, Burgundy, Spain and Italy, Leo received his certification as a European sommelier. That year, he became wine director at the famed Kong Hans restaurant, Copenhagen's first one star Michelin guide restaurant. After a trip to

California to scout out new selections for Kong Hans's 400-wine list, Leo was inspired to take the next step in his wine education.

Impressed by the freedom and quality of California's vibrant wine scene, Leo moved to Sonoma County and took an apprenticeship at Clos du Bois to study winemaking firsthand. There, he worked in the vineyards and the cellar before being moved to the laboratory to begin doing enology. In 2000, Leo accepted a position at Chateau Souverain, and also began taking courses in chemistry, viticulture and winemaking at Santa Rosa Junior College. After a three-month stint in 2001 working for Bowen Estate winery in Coonawarra, Australia, Leo returned to Chateau Souverain where he continued refining his scientific skills in the lab.

Having worked with Stuhlmuller's excellent single vineyard fruit at both Clos du Bois and Chateau Souverain, Leo was thrilled when offered the position of cellar master at Stuhlmuller Vineyards in 2002. Showing an aptitude in all areas of viticulture and winemaking, Leo quickly made himself indispensable working alongside winemaker Kerry Damskey. In January of 2003, Leo was officially made assistant winemaker and began overseeing day-to-day operations. Thriving in the hands-on environment of a family-run winery, Leo showed a gift for blending his classically trained European palate, with his understanding of the depth and character of Stuhlmuller's vineyard-focused wines.

In 2004, Leo was appointed winemaker for Stuhlmuller Vineyards. Taught to appreciate the relationship between wine, food and people, Leo works to craft authentic and engaging wines. "I love the intimacy of working in a small winery," says Leo. "You get to discover the charm and subtleties of each vineyard block. This is an amazing vineyard. As a winemaker, I try to show it respect with a gentle approach that focuses more on natural yeasts and less on oak. The goal isn't to speak for the vineyard, it's to let the vineyard speak for itself."



Stuhlmüller Vineyards

2015 Alexander Valley Estate Chardonnay

Proprietor	Fritz Stuhlmüller	Winemaker	Leo Hansen
Vineyards	Stuhlmüller Vineyards is located at the southern edge of the Alexander Valley, where it converges with two other highly regarded Sonoma County appellations, Chalk Hill and the Russian River Valley. On its eastern edge, the 150-acre vineyard borders the Russian River. Situated in a unique location that is part river benchlands and part hillside, the vineyard benefits from its alluvial gravel soils and the more rocky soils that comprise the hillside.		
The Clones	Five blocks of Chardonnay are planted in the well-drained, benchland soils. The famous Gauer Upper Barn clone, one of California's most sought-after Chardonnay selections, comprises 80 percent of these vines. The 2015 Estate Chardonnay is crafted primarily from a mix of Gauer, Robert Young and clone 4 fruit. From the Gauer clone, the Chardonnay derives flavors of Asian pear, spice and a natural nuttiness, the Robert Young grapes add lovely acidity and the clone 4 grapes contribute mild tropical flavors.		
The Vintage	Though 2015 delivered the earliest harvest in our history, and very low yields, the quality and concentration of the grapes was exceptional. A warm winter and spring led to early budbreak, flowering and veraison. High temperatures in August further accelerated the pace of harvest, but with yields down by as much as 20 to 30%, everything was able to ripen beautifully, delivering lovely intensity. We began picking our Chardonnay in mid-August and were done by September, with average Brix of 21.5 to 22.0°.		
Winemaking	For complexity and texture, we did a traditional pigeage for two to three hours, and allowed one-third skin contact. To accentuate the signature fruit and natural nuttiness of our estate grapes, we also fermented this wine with 100% indigenous yeast. Aging occurred in both barrels (80%) and larger casks (20%), all of which were French oak (5% new). The wine was fermented sur lie for 8 months and underwent 80% indigenous malolactic fermentation.		
The Wine	One of our finest vintages of Estate Chardonnay ever, this wine displays alluring aromas of green pineapple, white tea, ginger, Meyer lemon and honeysuckle. On the palate, flavors of ripe pear are supported by lovely weight and a creamy texture. Good natural acidity and a hint of wet stone minerality add poise and precision, carrying notes of pineapple candy, anise and lemon to a fresh, focused finish.		
Technical Notes	Alcohol:	13.9%	
	pH:	3.46	
	Total Acidity:	6.0 g/l	
	Production:	6,200 cases	
	Release Date:	Spring 2017	
	Bottled:	July 2016	



Stuhlmuller Vineyards

2014 Alexander Valley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon

Proprietor	Fritz Stuhlmuller	Winemaker	Leo Hansen
Vineyards	Stuhlmuller Vineyards is located at the southern edge of the Alexander Valley, where it converges with two other highly regarded Sonoma County appellations, Chalk Hill and the Russian River Valley. On its eastern edge, the 150-acre vineyard borders the Russian River. Situated in a location that is part river benchlands and part hillside, the vineyard benefits from its alluvial gravel soils and the more rocky soils of the hillside sections.		
The Clones	The fruit for this Cabernet emphasizes three clones, from seven separate blocks, with vines ranging in age from approximately 10 to more than 25 years old. From the river benchland we use our clone 337 for its fruit-forward black cherry flavors. Hillside clone 7 fruit adds floral layers and classic Cabernet cassis and cherry elements. Our oldest plantings, a field selection from the Belle Terre Vineyard, provide tannic concentration and blue fruit notes. The final wine reflects the diversity of our vineyard.		
The Vintage	In 2014, a very mild winter and spring resulted in early budbreak and bloom. While drought conditions continued in 2014, some extremely well-timed spring rains helped achieve a good moisture profile in our estate soils, and contributed to exceptional quality fruit. While everything happened earlier in 2014, a good size crop slowed the overall pace of ripening, ultimately providing approximately the same amount of hangtime as a normal year, but with the fruit coming into the winery well in advance of any fall rains.		
Winemaking	8 individual fermentations were done, using a mix of open-top tanks, and closed-top tanks where the must was pumped over. The closed-top tanks added to palate texture, while the open-top tanks retained fruit intensity. The wine was racked to 40 percent new French oak and underwent native malolactic fermentation. Each lot was fermented and aged separately for 10 months before blending, with barrel aging for a total of 18 months.		
The Wine	With its layers of crème de cassis, black cherry, olive tapenade, violets and moist earth, there is a lovely classic quality to this Cabernet. On the palate, firm tannins and an inviting freshness frame the dark berry flavors beautifully, with more savory and herbal hints adding nuance and intrigue.		
Technical Notes	Alcohol:	14.4%	
	Composition:	94.0% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6.0% Petit Verdot	
	pH:	3.72	
	Total Acidity:	6.5 g/l	
	Production:	2,550 cases	
	Release Date:	Fall 2016	
	Bottled:	May 2016	



Stuhlmuller Vineyards

2014 Stuhlmuller Vineyards Alexander Valley Estate Zinfandel

Proprietor Fritz Stuhlmuller
Winemaker Leo Hansen

Vineyards Stuhlmuller Vineyards is located at the southern edge of the Alexander Valley, where it converges with two other highly regarded Sonoma County appellations, Chalk Hill and the Russian River Valley. On its eastern edge, the 150-acre vineyard borders the Russian River. Situated in a unique location that is part river benchlands and part hillside, the vineyard benefits from its alluvial gravel soils and the more rocky soils that comprise the hillside sections of the vineyard.

The Clones At Stuhlmuller, two special blocks have been set aside for growing small amounts of exceptional Zinfandel and Petite Sirah. These vines are head pruned to augment the natural intensity of the hillside fruit. The budwood for this Zinfandel came from the prized 115-year-old Teldeschi clone, a legendary selection from Dry Creek Valley.

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Winemaking Our Zinfandel and Petite Sirah were co-fermented as 100% whole berries in open-top tanks, where they spent 15 days on the skins. Aging was done in a mixture of French (50%) and American (50%) oak barrels, with 25% new oak overall. The wine was racked twice and spent 16 months in barrel.

The Wine From its lush, brambly character to its alluring layers of black cherry, boysenberry and dark plum, this is a classic expression of Zinfandel. On the palate, the vibrant fruit flavors are underscored by notes of vanilla, spice and sweet tobacco leaf. While the texture is supple and creamy, good acidity keeps the flavors lively, while carrying the wine to long, bright finish.

Technical Notes

Alcohol:	14.2%
pH:	3.71
Composition:	82% Zinfandel, 18% Petite Sirah
Total Acidity:	6.4 g/l
Production:	505 cases
Release Date:	Fall 2016
Bottled:	January 2016