

## TAZ VINEYARDS NORTH CANYON

In a secluded canyon less than twenty miles from the Pacific Ocean, beyond the famed Bien Nacido Vineyard along the Santa Maria Bench, down a narrow cut framed by rocky cliffs with the Cuyama River running through it, "Taz" Steinhauer aims to prove a point.

Here, in one of the most beautiful places on Earth, where mountain ranges running northwest by southeast differ from most of the Central Coast, temperatures are often five degrees warmer at the far reaches. Some four miles beyond a non-descript metal gate **MERLOT** has been planted in blocks as small as 1.73 acres using clones 3 and 181. And then there's the **SYRAH**. Just ask winemakers in the neighborhood, where producers such as Qupe source from just around the canyon wall.

On hillside blocks stretching toward the sun, **PINOT NOIR** of great character is possible here, where the growing season is mild and extended, often starting early and staying later while fruit matures to a brightness and character immediately recognizable as Santa Barbara. VSP trellis allows vineyard workers to position shoots to gain maximum exposure to the sun. Yields are less than two tons per acre, making every berry precious. Soils in the North Canyon make vines struggle and fight to gain flavor, consisting primarily of clay loam and some shale, though each TAZ block varies.

"Taz" Steinhauer walks Jon Priest high along a ridge gazing down on vineyard blocks planted as long ago as 1972. "This is good," he says.

### *Varietals Planted*

Pinot Noir, Syrah, Merlot

### *Rootstocks*

5BB, 5C, 101-14,  
1103P, 140RU

### *Clones*

Merlot 3, 181  
Syrah;  
Estrella, Syrah Noir,  
174, 383, 887  
Pinot Noir 115, 667, 777

### *Appellation*

Santa Maria Valley

