

EcoVine EcoEsprit™



Bradford Mountain Winery

100 YEAR OLD ORGANIC VINEYARDS

Good vineyards are as valuable as gold to a winery,” says Hambrecht Family Wines owner, Bill Hambrecht. So, how did this successful investment banker end up in the wine business with such a profound vision? In the 1960’s, Bill and his late partner, George Quist, saw a demand for a strong regional investment in the high-tech industry of Silicon Valley. The firm was hugely successful and in 1979, Hambrecht made an investment that would alter his life dramatically.



It began as a personal investment to help his friend and tennis partner, Peter Friedman, open a new winery. Peter ran the winery while Hambrecht’s fascination of this emerging industry led him to seek other wine-related ventures. In 1982, he formed a partnership with Fred Peterson and began buying up prime vineyard land. What appealed to him was producing quality wine, doing as his wine team does well, and sparing no expense on production. Their unique combination of vineyards, winery, and skill gives them an advantage in bringing consistent quality to the consumer.”

Bradford Mountain wines were born out of the Hambrecht

family’s belief that there was something beguilingly distinct about the fruit from their Dry Creek Valley vineyards. Planted on a hilltop plateau 1000 feet above the valley floor, the vines produce a low-yielding crop of intensely flavored grapes with an irresistible wild, brambly flair. Once sold to some of California’s most celebrated wineries, the fruit deserved to be bottled independently, and given the opportunity to tell the story of this terroir.

In 1998, ground was broken to build the Bradford Mountain Winery. A small, simple building was erected. Money was spared on architecture, and spent prudently on the best equipment available for small-scale winemaking. The first fruit was crushed in 1998. Their viticulture team had experimented widely with **vinification** and **viticulture** to best augment the uniqueness of the site. The very essence of the wines from Bradford Mountain is merely a reflection of the health and vigor of the vineyards. Thus they have developed an organic viticulture program to produce the finest fruit possible. After much tasting and a careful culling, the first vintage of wines produced two Zinfandel wines and a Cabernet Sauvignon. The winery continues to evolve and develop small lots of artisan wines with a focus on Zinfandel and Syrah.

The location of Bradford Mountain the Dry Creek Valley provides the wines with the characteristics that are the mark of this famous California **appellation**: sweet herbs, tar, plums and aromatic, Asian-like spice. However, due to the elevation from the valley floor, Bradford Mountain is definitely host to its own **mesoclimate**, often seeing weather patterns very different from those in the valley below, thus creating a much lower yielding yet intensely flavorful crop.





Bradford Mountain was home to an Italian family in the late 1800s. Their 100+ year-old, dry-farmed Zinfandel vines still make up part of the Grist Vineyard.

There is both a detectable mountain influence, as well as a tempering effect from the Pacific Ocean only 15 miles to the west of the vineyards giving the area an unusually long growing season. The volcanic, red hillside soil, called “Boomer soil,” is thought by many to be geologically and visually reminiscent of Tuscany’s terra rosa, perhaps a hint as to why the early Italians settle this area. Two mountainside vineyards, Grist and Tarman, overlook the Dry Creek Valley are planted entirely in red grapes.

Interestingly, many early vintages from this site never found their way to the bottle, as Prohibition forced winemakers to dump barrel after barrel into the nearby stream. That stream still runs through the property and now bears the name Wine Creek.

Organic Viticulture Practices

Bill Hambrecht believes that the heart of any wine lies in the vineyard from which it came, and everything that is put into that vineyard shapes and comes through in the finished wine (*the terroir*). The first step taken at Bradford Mountain to produce what the viticulture team believed was the finest quality fruit possible was to reevaluate their farming practices. They could see that the very essence of the wines they were creating was merely a reflection of the health and vigor of their vineyards. It was a logical step from that realization to develop any organic viticulture program.

The primary factor that differentiates an organic from a non-organic vineyard is the use of

chemicals. Despite the large variety of chemicals utilized in general farming practices, most fit into three main categories:

Fungicides: used to control harmful fungal growth such as molds and mildews.

Pesticides: used to control harmful insect populations such as leafhoppers and mites, which left unchecked could decimate entire vineyards.

Herbicides: used to control the growth of weeds and flora that interfere with the growth of the vines.

A surprising fact for many people about the use of chemicals for agricultural application is that it is a very recent development. Chemical sprays were developed for agricultural use in the mid 1940’s as an alternative use for the chemical surplus left over from World War II. Prior to this, all farming was “organic”! While the use of chemicals has been proven to serve a purpose in farming applications, it has also been proven that the use of chemicals can harm and/or destroy part of the beneficial nutrients that exist with the soil. Hambrecht still has vineyards that have yet gone organic but the goal is to unlearn the farming practices that could possibly harm the soils and become reacquainted with the agricultural techniques of our viticultural forefathers.

WINE TERMS

Appellation: a designated growing area governed by rules and regulations established by its federal governments and local governing body. Such rules vary from country to country but are somewhat similar in their attempt to stimulate the production of quality wines. The regulations in the United States are established by the American Viticulture Area (AVA).

Dry-farmed: a soil tillage technique, considered the art of working the soil. Starting as early in the year as possible when there is a lot of moisture in the soil and creating a sponge-like environment so that water comes from down below, up into the sponge.

Mesoclimate: the climate of a small patch of land such as a vineyard (microclimate of a single vine).

Vinification: the process of making wines.

Viticulture: the cultivation of grapevines, or the study or sciences of grapes and their culture.