

HESTER CREEK



Hester Creek Estate Winery: Background Information

While Hester Creek Estate Winery has a long place in BC wine history, the experience found at the winery today is completely new. Located approximately 5 km south of Oliver and 16 km north of Osoyoos, the winery was purchased in 2004 by Curt Garland, who became enamored with the property during a visit from Prince George. Since this acquisition, the vineyard has undergone some major transformations. New varieties including Shiraz, Malbec and Petit Verdot have been planted. A drip irrigation system has been installed that uses 40% less water than the original overhead sprinkler system, and allows for more precise management of the vines' water requirements. The winery also has new state-of-the-art equipment, including ganimede fermenters – the only ones in BC with these gentle fermenters. A six suite guest villa and a new 23,000 square foot winery building complete with cellars, tasting room and retail area has risen on the site.

The first vineyards were planted on the site in 1968 and were one of the earliest plantings of European grape varieties in the South Okanagan Valley. Land owner Joe Busnardo had brought dozens of varieties to try, including some from his native Italy. One of the original varieties planted by Busnardo, Trebbiano vines are now over 40 years old and remain to this day, unique to Hester Creek in the South Okanagan Valley. Trebbiano is one of the most prolific varieties being grown in the world and is mainly used for blending and as a base for cognac and brandy. Californians may better know Trebbiano by its alter ego, Saint Emilion.

The original winemaking facility called Divino Estate Winery was built in the early 1980s. Busnardo, who had a colourful reputation and kept government officials on their toes, sold the winery in 1996 and moved Divino Estate Winery to the Cowichan Valley, where it remains today.

A new group of owners took possession and renamed the winery Hester Creek, after the creek that borders the south side of the property. The vineyards were improved and a charming wine boutique was built next to the old winemaking centre.



The vineyards at Hester Creek Estate Winery

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Background Information cont.

When Curt Garland purchased the winery in 2004 he was new to the wine industry. He quickly assessed the property's needs and set out to refurbish the vineyards and transform the brand "Hester Creek." To aid him in managing his new acquisition, Curt called upon long-time family friends Robin and Lee Ann Openshaw to oversee sales and marketing and hospitality respectively for Hester Creek. The gregarious couple welcomed the chance to leap out of retirement and take on the challenges of learning a new industry.

A major change was the arrival of winemaker Rob Summers from Niagara. A seasoned industry professional with experience at some of the best known wineries in Ontario, Summers quickly set about putting his mark on the wine style which places an emphasis on fresh fruit flavours and the gentle use of oak.

Curt's vision for the property and his inspiration for its purchase came from his recognition that the "Golden Mile" was indeed a unique terroir. The Golden Mile Bench reminded him of articles and stories of the Mediterranean with its dry grasslands, olive trees, orchards and vineyards.

The second major change to the property was the addition of "The Villa", six luxury guest suites at the western edge of the property. A road was cut into the mountain side to create a site with a majestic view of the vineyards and valley floor. Since opening in 2007, the luxury villa has quickly garnered a reputation for offering a world-class guest experience.



The winery at Hester Creek

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The 35,000 case capacity winery is partially buried in the hill to take advantage of the natural temperature control of the earth. The winery also employs geothermal heating and cooling thereby reducing the need for energy. The cellar room is completely underground and the site's natural vegetation has been restored on the top of the building.

In fall 2009, the wine-shop staff moved from their quaint little space to a new 4,000 square foot guest centre complete with a large tasting bar, retail area, wine library, demonstration kitchen, executive lounge and barrel room. While this building is four times the size of the previous guest centre, the charm and cozy feeling has been maintained. A covered piazza faces east and offers both a spectacular valley view and a shaded place to soak up the atmosphere while savouring Hester Creek's wine offerings.

Hester Creek has made a significant step in its quest to be a noted premium wine producer in the South Okanagan Valley, with a state-of-the-art winery, warm and inviting customer service and an experienced and accomplished winemaker. In addition to these attributes, luxury guest suites, exciting food and beverage programs including special events and cooking classes and new projects in the works, they are certainly achieving their goals.

With the inspiring, arid mountain and vineyard settings and lake view backdrops, the new Hester Creek winery experience rivals the very best the Okanagan Valley has to offer.