



Winery & Vineyards

## 2003 Pinot Noir *Tri-Counties Cuvée*

### Winemaker's Notes:

In 1999 we created a special blend which incorporated our Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir into a product called Tri-Counties Cuvée. It was in response to the dismal yields in our estate vineyard that year. I took my tiny bit of very dark, rich wine, and used it as a building block in a final blend that covered our production needs. The wine came from three different appellations, and tasted great. I lowered the price a little bit, and everyone went bonkers. It really struck me when a number of my distributors suggested that I drop my Santa Barbara County Pinot program altogether, and "just make *Tri-Counties*." "It's got a ring to it," they would say. Well, this 2003 bottling is now our third vintage of Tri-Counties Cuvée, but to me, there is more than just the ring to it. To me, it delivers exactly what this wine market is looking for in Pinot Noir; great quality, reasonable price.

Moving forward with this project, I think it is interesting how Monterey County is really starting to have a significant impact. While you can sometimes find a few tons of good Pinot Noir flying under the radar in Santa Barbara or Sonoma Counties, what you find in Monterey County is an entire appellation flying under the radar. The world does not yet know how good Monterey's cool climate Pinot vineyards are. But with the mystique of the Santa Lucia Highlands (Monterey's hot new Pinot appellation), and with many of the vineyards now growing all the right clones, it is only a matter of time before Monterey Pinot Noir is synonymous with the notion of quality. Until then, I am procuring some wonderful cool climate grapes *at reasonable prices*. Currently, I am working with two vineyards owned by the Scheid Corporation. One is called Viento, and is located on the west side of the Salinas Valley just outside of the Santa Lucia Highlands. Good thing too, because if it were inside the Highlands, its high quality fruit would be too expensive for an \$18 wine. The other vineyard is called Riverview, which is on the other side of the Salinas Valley and is further north, just east of Soledad. Of the two vineyards, it has the coolest temperatures and is breezier. Within the entire vineyard known as Riverview there is a plateau, the soil on which is made up of decomposed granite, and is the inspiration for the name of this section, "Granite's Ghost".

The lion's share of the rest of the fruit came from our vineyard. I won't bore you with those details except to say that after 20 years, we are get'n a pretty good handle on Pinot Noir. There is also a smidge of fruit from San Luis Obispo County in this one. After all, it is a "Tri"-Counties Cuvée.

### Technical Notes:

#### VINEYARDS IN THE BLEND:

- 49% Babcock Estate - Santa Barbara County (Santa Rita Hills)
- 45% Viento & Granite's Ghost Vineyards - Monterey County (Salinas Valley)
- + 6% Carriage Vineyard - San Luis Obispo County (Templeton)
- 100% (Hey, it equals 100% this year!)

#### FINISHED WINE:

- Residual Sugar: Dry
- Titratable Acidity: 6.9 g/L
- PH: 3.66
- Alcohol by Volume: 13.5%

TIME IN BARRELS: 9 months; 25% New French Oak, 75% Seasoned French Oak

BOTTLING DATE: July, 2004

RELEASE DATE: Fall, 2005

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 3,134 cases - 12/750 ml