

# BLACK HILLS ESTATE WINERY

## **Milestones: Nota Bene @ Black Hills Estate Winery** *Key steps in our continual quality evolution*

- 1996: Abandoned 34 acre Vineyard purchased on Black Sage Road by 2 couples and planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and other varietals. To ensure diversity and an array of flavour profiles, 4 different clones of Cabernet Sauvignon, 4 different clones of Merlot and 2 different clones of Cabernet Franc are planted. Original site given the name “Sharp Rock Vineyard”.
- 1998: First crop of grapes from vineyard are sold to various B.C. Wineries
- 1999: First vintage of Nota Bene made from a small % of grapes produced on Vineyard. The rest of the grapes continue to be sold to other wineries. The name Nota Bene is a tip-of-the-hat to one of the owner’s Latin teacher, meaning “Note Well”. Rusty Figgins from the Washington State Figgins family of Leonetti fame is original winemaker for the first three vintages. 1600 cases produced that first year.
- 2001: Quonset hut winery opens on Black Sage Road to sell first vintage of Nota Bene wine.
- 2002: Senka Tennant takes over as winemaker.
- 2003: Critical Reviews of Nota Bene start to take off. Loyal following develops. To meet demand, the quantity of estate grapes sold to other wineries starts to decrease and the amount going to Nota Bene production increases.
- 2006: New Winery opens to replace Quonset hut winery. Significant improvements in wine making technology. New winery earns Lieutenant Governors Award for Architectural Excellence. Winery is now able to pick, ferment and barrel age each clone of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc separately. They are then racked together after barrel aging which enhances the depth and complexity.
- 2007: Winery sold to Vinequest Wine Partners Limited Partnership, headed by Glenn Fawcett. Partnership is comprised primarily of long-term customers who have been buying Nota Bene for years. Vinequest acknowledges that “what ain’t broke don’t need fixing” and pledges to honor the legacy of the terroir and the stylistic direction of the wine. Further it commits to avail the operation of additional capital and resources to continue to grow better quality fruit in the vineyard and to produce more exacting wine in the winery. This is known internally as the “continual quality evolution” that has been ingrained in the winery mindset since 1999.
- 2007: Annual production of Nota Bene at that time is 3,900 cases.
- 2008: Graham Pierce is mentored by Senka Tennant and is the co-winemaker on the 2007 Vintage with her. Graham then takes over as Winemaker for the 2008 vintage.
- 2008: Entire vineyard is upgraded to drip line irrigation to further improve ripening of grapes and to significantly reduce water consumption.

- 2009: Significant capital investments made into winemaking equipment. Over \$340,000 is invested on a new Press, Destemmer, Berry sorting line, Conveyor and pumps to enable Graham's passion for "gentle fruit handling" as well as working with cleaner fruit.
- 2010: Commence managing neighbour Gloria Martin's vineyard. Decision made to cap annual production of Nota Bene at approx. 3,300 cases.
- 2010: Commence barrel selections whereby culled out wine is no longer assimilated into Nota Bene blend, but put into a lower tier wine. Creation of Cellarhand second label which is the destination for the culled out wine.
- 2011: Purchase of Gloria Martin property, renamed "Double Black Vineyard". It is given this name for two reasons: 1) it is located at the intersection of Black Sage Road and Black Hills Road and 2) our Winemaker and Winegrower are both extreme skiing fanatics! Vineyard was originally planted in the same year as the Sharprock Vineyard with the same clones and rootstock. Vineyard upgrades take place, including retrofit to drip-line irrigation.
- 2012: Completion of a \$1.0 million 4,000 sq. ft. expansion to winery and an additional 2,000 sq. ft. of covered Crush Pad working space. Within this is a "boutique fermentation room" with an array of smaller fermentation tanks to enable higher quality batch fermentations for selective lots of the Bordeaux grapes. Further, two massive 150 hectolitre blending tanks are purchased to ensure that a 100% homogenous blend is crafted for the Nota Bene production.
- 2012: Release of "Cellar Hand" second label from culled-out barrels of Nota Bene & Syrah
- 2012: Initiate Blending Trials for the first time. With an equivalent of about 5,100 cases of Estate Bordeaux varietals now growing on the two vineyards; the winery is able to "cull out" close to 2,000 cases from the Nota Bene production. This now enables the winemaking team to work with only the best fruit, select only the best barrels and then fine tune the varietal blend components to suit each individual vintage. The balance of the culled out wine then becomes the backbone of the Cellarhand red blend. This also enables the winemaking team to make vintage-specific decisions on the varietal components that go into each year's blend.
- 2012: Opening of new \$1.0 million wine shop and tasting room, called the "Wine Experience Center" on Black Sage Road. Offers sit-down wine tastings in varietally specific Riedel glasses while being guided by a personal wine educator, or "Wine Evangelist".
- 2014: 16<sup>th</sup> vintage of Nota Bene produced. As with every other vintage of Nota Bene crafted, 100% of the grapes come from the Black Hills vineyards on Black Sage Road. 3300 cases produced.