

Dan Martin

owner and winemaker, Martin Ranch Winery, Gilroy, CA



“*Wine Business Monthly* has been a solid tool in all aspects of our business, and myself, my wife and all our staff regularly read its contents. The integrity of the *Wine Business Monthly* is a true testament to how a company can stay in publication in a digital age.

“Several years back when acacia wood was just starting to be recognized in the states, *Wine Business Monthly* did an article that caught my attention. That is when we incorporated that wood into my wife’s brand, Thérèse Vineyards. She was making Viognier, Chardonnay and Grenache Blanc. The magazine’s features on micro-oxygenation and alternative wood products reaffirmed our decisions to implement these processes and products into our existing brands. I have also used the classified ads when looking for equipment, and that has been successful for us.”

NAME AND TITLE: Dan Martin, owner and winemaker

WINERY NAME AND LOCATION: Martin Ranch Winery, Gilroy, CA
We are located 10 miles NW of Gilroy in the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation.

ANNUAL CASE PRODUCTION: 7,500

PLANTED ACRES: 14 acres

CAREER BACKGROUND: I studied agriculture in college so have had a desire to be in agriculture for many years. I started a produce company in the 1970s, and that transitioned into a small grocery store chain in the Corralitos and Soquel areas. That is where my wine interest began. As we grew in the grocery business, the wine industry also started growing. The jug wine era transitioned to varietal selling, and I developed specialty wine sections within my stores.

After the 1989 earthquake, we had extensive damage to one of our stores, and I really began to re-evaluate the direction I wanted to go. I purchased the property where I lived in 1972, which bordered Bates Ranch, a popular Santa Cruz Mountains vineyard. Jack Bates, the owner, shared with me all aspects of how the vineyard was working for him, so I became intrigued with the idea of planting grapes on my 17 acres. Since it was in the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation, I began to further investigate the options.

In 1992 I married my wife Thérèse, and we decided, together, to plant the vineyard on our property. I attended UC Davis and exhausted every educational resource I could get my hands on. In 1993 we planted 8,800 vines and officially became growers. We sold our fruit to several Santa Cruz Mountain wineries for several years until starting our own brand and small winery in 2002. Today, we still sell grapes to a handful of wineries but also focus on our three brands: J.D. Hurley, Thérèse Vineyards and Soulmate.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE? Our biggest challenges come with marketing and selling the product. As a winemaker, you tend to strictly focus on making wine. As a small winery, it’s important to understand how vital a well-rounded team is and admit that selling wine may not be your specialty. Luckily, we realized early on how important a great team of people is in achieving all business goals.

VARIETALS THAT YOUR WINERY IS KNOWN FOR: We are known for our Cabernet Sauvignon; but because of our passionate addiction and joy of winemaking, we make 15 other varieties.