



### Paul Clifton, Director of Winemaking



It seems that Paul Clifton and Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir were destined for each other.

A native of the Monterey Bay area, Paul grew up with a passion for this area—its beaches, its oceans and its cool-climate varietal wines. Considering Paul’s journey to his current position, it’s no wonder he’s working with world-class Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir today.

Like many, Paul’s love for winemaking began as a hobby. The spark ignited after Paul discovered winemaking equipment that his grandfather used to make wine during Prohibition. Paul started experimenting and learned from trial and error. The more wine he made, the greater his passion grew. In 1996, he decided to make a career change from firefighting to full-time winemaking.

Since the beginning, Paul has focused on Pinot Noir. He established a solid foundation at Bernardus Winery in Carmel Valley under the tutelage of the late Don Blackburn, who was considered one of California’s top Pinot Noir winemakers. Dan mentored Paul during his career’s early stages, teaching Paul the intricacies of this delicate grape and showing him how to craft world-class Pinot Noir. In his years at Bernardus, Paul worked his way up to cellar master before moving to another Pinot-focused producer in 1999, Byington Winery in the Santa Cruz Mountains, where he served as assistant winemaker and continued developing his passion for Pinot Noir.

Seeking to build his knowledge of the cool-climate varieties Paul had fallen in love with the Central Coast, but he craved a worldwide view of these varieties. This led him to New Zealand, where he earned a postgraduate degree in viticulture and enology from Lincoln University on the South Island of New Zealand. Though he was working harvests in New Zealand, Paul always planned to come back home to the Monterey Bay.

In 2003, Paul made the move to the United States and started working for Hahn Family Wines as its winemaker. His years of experience and hands-on approach to winemaking are apparent in each of Hahn’s luxury Pinot Noirs.

Paul is intimately familiar with the vineyards and can predict which lots will perform best in any given vintage. Paul’s philosophy hinges on combining all winemaking elements—yeast strains, barrel toasts, clones, type of oak, and more—to craft the final wine. To that end, once fruit is picked and sorted in the Hahn cellar, each vineyard block is fermented and aged separately. Like a chef relies on myriad ingredients to develop layered flavors and textures, Paul follows a similar pattern as he artfully blends the wine until it reflects the essence of the estate vineyard from which it came.

In the end, Paul simply wants Hahn’s luxury estate wines to shine and be enjoyed by anyone who opens a bottle from Hahn Family Wines.