



**VINA ROBLES**  
VINEYARDS & WINERY

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# **PRESS INFORMATION**

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Vina Robles is the result of a unique personal trajectory, one that led winery founder Hans Nef from a rural village outside Zurich, Switzerland to the rugged terrain of California's Central Coast.

As a child in Switzerland, Nef learned to appreciate his rural surroundings and the blessings of agriculture. It was this special appreciation that led him to expand his interests into agricultural land in the southern United States in the early 1990s. At the same time, he leveraged his passion for fine wine into his own wine import business, furthering his appreciation for California wines.

Each time Nef traveled to the U.S., he brought with him the desires to not only be true to nature but also to grow his own wine. This is when he discovered Paso Robles in the mid-1990s and quickly became enamored with the emergent wine country. Here, where the Pacific coastline unfolds into rugged ranchlands and cowboy ambiance, a new generation of California winemakers was turning Paso Robles into one of the world's most dynamic winegrowing regions.

Soon, Nef was inspired to embark on his own idea for a Paso Robles winery, one that would honor his European roots while embracing the unique growing region in order to pursue his dream of producing world-class wines.

***“I want Vina Robles to express a unique balance of European heritage and American opportunity. As individuals, we are rooted in the Old World. As viticulturists and winemakers, we are empowered by the New World.”***

***– Founder Hans Nef***

In 1996 Nef selected longtime friend and business associate Hans – R. Michel, a Swiss expatriate, as managing partner. A year later, the duo planted the first of what would later become six vineyards in Paso Robles, and soon thereafter Vina Robles was born. Winemaker Kevin Willenborg joined the team in 2012.

In 2007, Nef achieved another goal with the opening of the Vina Robles Hospitality Center, a 14,000-square-foot facility that combines classic California Mission-style design with modern European elegance. The center features a tasting room as well as several venues for public and private events. In summer of 2013, the Vina Robles Amphitheatre celebrated its grand opening and now hosts around 30 world-class artists April through October each year. Nef's ultimate goal was realized in 2019 with the opening of the state-of-the-art Vina Robles Winery, built to take the wines to the next level and beyond.

<b>Summary</b>	Growers and makers of expressive, approachable estate wines from Paso Robles, California, Vina Robles owns and farms six estate SIP® Certified Sustainable vineyards in five sub-districts in the region. First class hospitality service is offered by way of unique, memorable experiences with wine, food and music at their core. The vineyards & winery are owned and managed by two Swiss families who have been farming winegrapes in Paso Robles for more than 20 years.	
<b>Owners</b>	Owned and operated by two families Jürg Nüesch-Nef – Nef Family Representative Hans – R. Michel, Co-Owner (Swiss family, lives in Paso Robles)	
<b>Founder</b>	Hans Nef (1944-2019)	
<b>Founded</b>	1997	
<b>Vineyards</b>	Six sustainably farmed estate vineyards, each is SIP Certified:	
	◆ Jardine	◆ Huerhuero
	◆ Pleasant Valley	◆ Terra Bella
		◆ Creston Valley
		◆ Mistral
<b>Winemaker</b>	Kevin Willenborg	
<b>Production</b>	40,000± cases / year	
<b>Wines</b>	<u><i>Vina Robles Estate Series</i></u>	<u><i>Vina Robles Limited Estate Collection</i></u>
	◆ Sauvignon Blanc, Jardine Vyd	◆ Cabernet Sauvignon, Creston Vly Vyd
	◆ Chardonnay, Mistral Vyd, Monterey	◆ Cabernet Sauvignon, Mtn Rd Reserve
	◆ Albariño, Huerhuero Vyd	◆ Grenache, Terra Bella Vyd
	◆ Viognier, Huerhuero Vyd	◆ Petite Sirah, Creston Valley Vyd
	◆ Vermentino, Huerhuero Vyd	◆ Signature
	◆ Verdejo, Huerhuero Vyd	◆ Suendero
	◆ Rosé, Huerhuero Vyd	◆ Syrah, Terra Bella Vyd
	◆ The Arborist	
	◆ Cabernet Sauvignon	
	◆ Petit Verdot	
	◆ Petite Sirah	
	◆ Tannat	
	◆ Zinfandel	
<b>Tasting</b>	Vina Robles Hospitality Center   3700 Mill Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446 For information regarding tasting experiences, bistro and hours, visit <a href="http://VinaRobles.com">VinaRobles.com</a> .	
<b>Concerts</b>	Vina Robles Amphitheatre	<i>Opened 2012</i>
	For concert and ticket information, visit <a href="http://VinaRoblesAmphitheatre.com">VinaRoblesAmphitheatre.com</a> .	

Hans Nef was an entrepreneur, engineer, developer, and restaurateur — but his two greatest passions were wine and his family.

Growing up in a rural village outside Zurich, Switzerland, he gained an early appreciation for agriculture. Having studied civil engineering, Hans eventually founded his own civil engineering consultancy firm. He later became a collector of fine Bordeaux wines, and ultimately branched out into the wine importation business. As his interest in California wines intensified, he began an extensive search for the perfect place to plant winegrapes and make wine. This brought him to Paso Robles where he planted his first vineyard in 1997, and established Vina Robles in 1998. The Nef family home remained in Switzerland, but the patriarch visited Paso Robles often, bringing groups of friends, and his entire family along whenever possible.

We lost Mr. Nef in a tragic swimming accident off the coast of Africa on the Cape Verde Islands in November 2019. While members of his family have continued to move his legacy of Vina Robles forward, he is sorely missed by all.

Hans – Rudolf ("Hans") Michel has spent all his life in the business of farming and is intimately familiar with most aspects relating to it. Having grown up and worked on a diversified family farm near Zürich, Switzerland, he graduated from the Technical College of Agriculture in Bern, Switzerland with a degree in Agricultural Economics, having already gained diplomas in Commerce and Agriculture.

From 1975 to 1981, he was a consultant and educator at the Swiss Agricultural Extension Center in Lindau near Zürich, where he organized and taught the development of planning methods and data resources to agricultural specialists and farmers as part of a continuing education program.

In 1982, he left Switzerland and took up a position in Tennessee with a farm management company and was responsible for the management of large row crop farms located in the Mississippi Delta region, growing rice, cotton, and soybeans. In late 1983, his employer transferred him to Fresno, CA where he helped establish a local branch office managing permanent crops throughout the Central Valley. It is here where he became involved in California viticulture. After several years in the Western United States, he moved back to Tennessee and became the CEO for a large farm management firm, in charge of seven offices managing over 375,000 acres of farmland.

In 1992, Michel founded his own company called Agriworld (Agriglobe in California) with offices in Zürich, Switzerland, Greenville, MS and Fresno, CA. During the nineties, Michel focused on international agricultural consulting and project management. His work brought him to many countries in Europe, Northern Africa and America.

Hans – R. Michel met Hans Nef in the early nineties as his client, managing Nef's rice and soybean farms in Arkansas. After Nef decided to invest in viticulture and then developed his ambitious growth plans, Michel decided to focus on Vina Robles and the two became business partners. Paso Robles, CA was selected as it provided the ideal location to implement Nef's plans. Vineyard development and planting started in 1996 and continued in several phases until 2005. As a direct result of the need for high level management in their own vineyards, Viticultural Management Inc. (VMI), a full service management firm, was established. This was a logical and easy progression for Michel to make.

Michel developed a diversified business plan for Vina Robles that would take advantage of the excellent opportunities Paso Robles and the Central Coast have to offer. The central part of that plan is to establish Vina Robles as a medium sized winery focusing on ultra-premium wines with distribution in the US and worldwide. Michel wants Vina Robles to be known for the high and consistent quality of its wines and the genuine wine country experience by providing excellent service to the guests visiting the Hospitality Center.

Hans Michel lives in Paso Robles.

Kevin Willenborg is a versatile winemaker with over 28 years of extensive experience, covering a wide section of the industry's key regions including Bordeaux, Napa Valley, Sonoma, British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, as well as California's Central Coast. Throughout his travels, Willenborg has garnered numerous reputable accolades by producing fine wines of distinction.

Having studied Fermentation Science at the University of California at Davis, Willenborg's fast paced career started in 1984 while interning at Chateau Petrus. Here, he not only learned the key elements of shaping a world class wine from ground to glass but also received a great introduction into the industry's traditions and philosophy.

Thereafter, Willenborg held key winemaking roles at Louis M. Martini in St. Helena, CA and Cedar Creek Estate in Kelowna, Canada, where he was successful with the challenging grape growing environment of the Okanagan Valley and designing the layout for their new winery facility. Later on, Willenborg lead the winemaking program at Firestone Vineyard in Los Olivos, CA, overseeing over 500 acres of estate vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley. Prior to joining Vina Robles, he spent two years as associate winemaker at Rubicon Estate in Rutherford, CA where he was in charge of managing all vineyard and winemaking operations.

In spring 2012, Willenborg was hired to lead the winemaking program at Vina Robles. "Each wine has its own life. That life begins with the planting and development of the vines. It is then transferred from the earth through the vine as the grapes are harvested, crushed, fermented into wine and eventually bottled," he explains. "The role of the winemaker is to respectfully steward this life with care and attention to detail." Willenborg's winemaking philosophy is in line with the Vina Robles vision. His team approach to "winegrowing" and passion in working with the vines allows him to craft elegant wines that truly express the terroir.

*"Each wine has its own life. It begins with the planting and is transferred from the earth through the vines into the finished wine by respectfully stewarding this life with care and attention to detail. This is expressed by the term winegrowing, the ultimate goal to grow wines that completely translate the Paso Robles terroir into the bottle."*

*– Winemaker Kevin Willenborg*

To say that viticulture runs in the blood of Carter Collins is an understatement. The son of a grape grower, Carter grew up on a vineyard that his family planted in 1997 adjacent to our tasting room property!

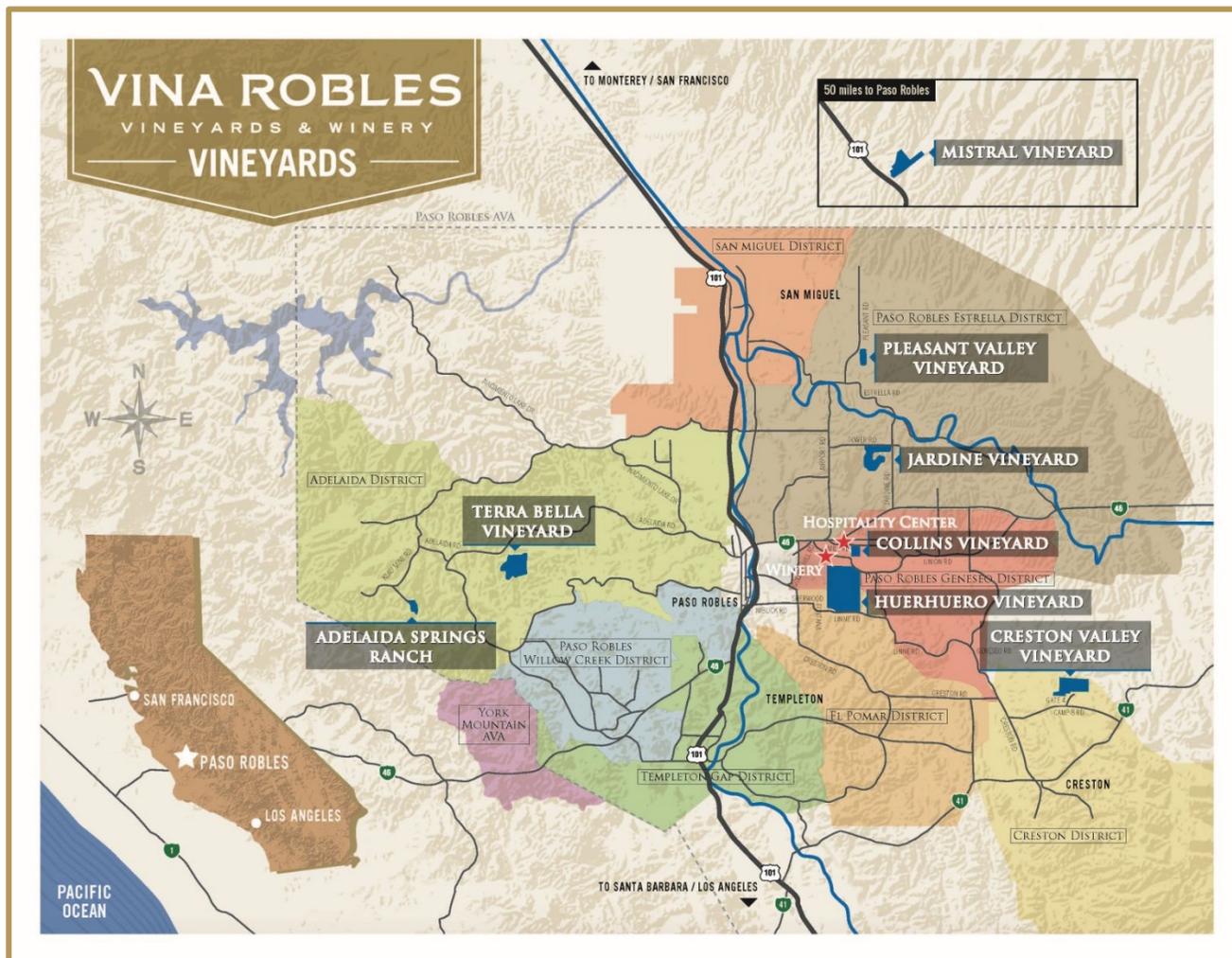
After graduating from Mission College Prep in San Luis Obispo, Carter attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he earned his wine and viticulture degree with a concentration in viticulture. His college internship with Vina Robles would prove to be pivotal. “It took longer to get through school while I worked as an intern, especially during harvest,” Carter says. “But I was happy to have the hands-on, real world experience.”

Today, Carter manages our day-to-day vineyard activities and oversees all fruit that comes into the winery, all with a passionate focus on sustainable winegrowing. When he’s not at work Carter enjoys golfing, hunting and spending time with his wife, Cheyenne, and their two dogs Addie and Bela. “I love being out in the vineyard,” Carter says. “It’s a chance to experience something new every day.”

Under the leadership of viticulturist Carter Collins, the Vina Robles vineyard team farms a total of 1,500 vineyard acres located in five different Paso Robles sub-AVAs. Only the finest blocks from each site, 15% of the total acreage, are targeted for the production of Vina Robles wins.

Since 2012, all estate vineyards are Sustainability In Practice (SIP) certified. Sustainable viticultural methods include cover crops for erosion control, owl boxes for rodent control, native oak tree retention for ecosystem balance, planting to drought resistant rootstock, and advanced irrigation systems for water conservation. Irrigation management plays a big role in the vineyard management program. Under the estate conditions of low annual rainfall and well-draining soils, vine and fruit growth can be precisely guided by timely irrigation. Shoot and crop thinning are also actively employed to create a balanced fruiting zone.

From the soaring, fog-kissed coastal mountains west of Paso Robles to the dry, rugged slopes east of the Salinas River, Vina Robles' vineyards reflect the wondrous diversity of the Paso Robles appellation, ultimately enabling the winery to capture a wide range of nuance and complexity in the wines.



## **APPELLATION**

Paso Robles is located approximately halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco in northern San Luis Obispo County. Here, the growing season is distinguished by a reciprocating climate of warm inland afternoons and cool marine-moderated evenings. To the west, the Santa Lucia Mountains border the coast and insulate the Paso Robles region, trapping heat during the daytime. Toward evening, however, coastal air billows inland through the Templeton Gap, a notch in the mountains, as well southward from the Salinas Valley. Temperature swings of 50 degrees are not unusual during the summer months. Such conditions are optimal for Bordeaux and Rhône varieties, with ample solar energy to develop fully defined flavors and sufficient natural cooling to maintain excellent acid structure and overall balance.

Following is a brief description of the main vineyards from which the grapes for the Vina Robles wines are sourced from.

### **JARDINE VINEYARD**

Jardine Vineyard lies several miles northeast of Huerhuero Vineyard, at the corner of Jardine and Tower roads north of Highway 46 East. Here, the growing conditions are slightly warmer. The soil is composed primarily of alluvial sandy loam, some gravelly loam and clay loam, for excellent drainage, low vine vigor and assertive flavor development. The Jardine Vineyard property was purchased in 1996 – the first Vina Robles vineyard.

### **PLEASANT VALLEY VINEYARD**

Pleasant Valley Vineyard lies several miles north of Highway 46 East near San Miguel. Here, the working vineyard is also home to our Vina Robles Guesthouse – an event venue for weddings, corporate functions and other celebrations. The soil is composed primarily of terraced alluvial plateau with chalky and well drained sandy loam components. The Pleasant Valley Vineyard property was purchased in 1998.

### **HUERHUERO VINEYARD**

Huerhuero Vineyard – adjacent to Huerhuero Creek just southeast of Paso Robles – occupies both the El Pomar and Geneseo sub-AVA. The vineyard is planted in the transitional hilly terrain at an elevation between 830 – 1,030 feet, where marine air enters the region from both the Templeton Gap and Salinas Valley. With mostly south-facing slopes, the soils are shallow, shifting from clay loam to sandy loam, with rocky calcareous subsoils. A tight vine spacing of 6 by 4 feet (6'x4') in several blocks creates root competition and also controls vigor. The climate and limiting soils yield balanced structured wines with varietally expressive, intensely flavored fruit. The Huerhuero Vineyard property was purchased in 1998.

### **CRESTON VALLEY VINEYARD**

Creston Valley Vineyard is located a few miles from Huerhuero Vineyard near the small town of Creston, about 12 miles southeast of Paso Robles. Here, the vines are planted on rolling hills, surrounded by pristine ranch land. The climate in Creston tends to be a bit cooler than Paso Robles area, which allows for added hang time and flavor development in the fruit. The soils are shallow, shifting from clay loam to sandy loam, with rocky calcareous subsoils – a well-drained composition that naturally tames vine vigor. The Creston Valley Vineyard property was purchased in 2000.

### **TERRA BELLA VINEYARD**

Terra Bella Vineyard is located in the Adelaida District west of Paso Robles. Here, the vines are planted at high elevations in the rugged coastal Santa Lucia Mountains just 12 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The moderate marine climate and rocky, limestone-rich soils are optimal conditions for limiting vine vigor, promoting balanced ripening, and producing dark fruit with natural flavor intensity. Terra Bella Vineyard was purchased in 2016.

### **MISTRAL VINEYARD**

Mistral Vineyard is planted in the Monterey AVA, about 10 miles south of the Arroyo Seco sub-AVA in the sandy Salinas Valley foothills just outside of King City. This site is known for blustery afternoon winds similar to the legendary “mistrals” that blow through the Rhône Valley in the south of France, hence the name. A classic cool-climate vineyard, Mistral lies about three-quarters of the way down the Monterey AVA corridor. The soil structure is primarily Rincon clay loam, consisting of deep, well-drained soils that help push the vines to produce stellar Chardonnay winegrapes each vintage. Mistral Vineyard was purchased in 2013.

The 14,000-square-foot Vina Robles Hospitality Center opened in July 2007. Set amid 30 acres with sweeping views of the surrounding wine country along Highway 46 East in Paso Robles, it combines classic California Mission-style design with modern European elegance.

### **Tasting Room**

The Tasting Room is the heart of the Hospitality Center, featuring vaulted ceilings, a wood-burning fireplace and a large picture window overlooking the surrounding wine country. An adjacent marketplace features artisan foods, gourmet gifts and fine imported Swiss products.

Visiting the Vina Robles Tasting Room is the ideal way to experience Paso Robles wine country. Here, they offer several opportunities to savor and enjoy their estate wines in a warm and elegant setting. Guests are invited to take a seat for a private wine and cheese experience, relax with a gourmet lunch tasting on the patio or simply taste a selection of Vina Roble's current releases at their triangle bar. For a full list of current tasting offerings, visit [VinaRobles.com](http://VinaRobles.com).

### **The Bistro at Vina Robles**

The Bistro at Vina Robles offers a variety of seasonal dishes made with locally grown ingredients. Lunch is served al fresco on the beautiful Jardine Court. For menu and reservations, visit [VinaRobles.com](http://VinaRobles.com).

Welcome to the Vina Robles Amphitheatre, where two of California's great compositions meet, as exceptional wine and intimate live music are paired to create an unforgettable experience in Paso Robles wine country.

The 3,300 seat boutique outdoor Amphitheatre is nestled on a picturesque, oak-dotted hillside in Paso Robles on California's Central Coast. Featuring a style reminiscent of the California missions, guests are able to immerse themselves in a unique concert adventure as they enjoy modern amenities and first class hospitality. Top tier acts from around the world in all genres take the stage each year from April through November.

For Swiss-owned Vina Robles Winery, melding the arts with wine and food has always been a classic pairing. Since the opening of their Hospitality Center in 2007, Vina Robles has hosted various cultural activities ranging from social dance lessons to chamber music, live bands and fine art exhibitions. The Amphitheatre was the next step that provided them with the opportunity to expand their offerings and showcase an even broader selection of artists from around the world.

Vina Robles Amphitheatre's history began in late 2009 when the winery recognized the potential of the natural bowl in the landscape behind its event lawn, who then played host to their summer concert series. By January 2010, the project was underway.

The Vina Robles Amphitheatre celebrated its grand opening in July 2013 and featured 60 world class shows during its first three seasons, including acts such as Tony Bennett, Darius Rucker, Bonnie Raitt, Sammy Hagar, John Fogerty, Chicago, Crosby, Stills & Nash, The Band Perry, Colbie Callait, Ray LaMontagne, and Jeff Dunham.

With a wide variety of performing artists in all genres, modern amenities, various seating options, wine country cuisine, and first class hospitality, the venue not only appeals to local and regional communities but tourists alike.

The Vina Robles family looks forward to sharing their love of wine and the arts with you soon. For more information and a list of upcoming events, visit [VinaRoblesAmphitheatre.com](http://VinaRoblesAmphitheatre.com).

### **About the Oak Tree**

The oak tree depicted in the Vina Robles logo is a rendering of a grand Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) located on the Jardine estate. It is symbolic of the vineyard's landscape and individuality. Paso Robles—Spanish for “Pass of the Oaks”—is celebrated for its majestic, oak-studded terrain. The Vina Robles oak tree is about 150 years old.

### **Vina, not Viña?**

Vina Robles confesses to being a California winery with Swiss roots that Americanized the Spanish word for vineyard. With no disrespect intended to the Spanish language, Vina Robles chose to remove the symbol (known as a *tilde*) over the “n” in Vina to simplify the pronunciation and spelling of their winery name here in the United States. This enables them to honor the Spanish and Mexican heritage of Paso Robles while keeping things simple for their customers, as well as to avoid potential confusion with Spanish and South American wineries. It is also one more example of how Vina Robles (pronounced Veena Robe-less) represents a blend of both old and new worlds.

### **The Unconfirmed Celestial Significance of the Nef Family Crest**

Founder Hans Nef was able to trace the Nef family tree back to 1417—but he was unable to verify the significance of the moon and star in the Nef family crest, which is seen on Vina Robles' wine labels and elsewhere. He had a pretty good theory, however. He used to say that he and his family members were night owls, and he suspected that his ancestors might have spent a lot of time in the company of the moon and stars as well.

### **Wine World Traveler**

Prior to joining Vina Robles, Winemaker Kevin Willenborg's experience included harvests at wineries in the Bordeaux region of France, Canada's Okanagan Valley, Northern California, as well as the Central Coast region of California.

### **Where Petite Means “Big”**

Petite Sirah has emerged as one of Vina Robles' signature varieties, producing a big, peppery, intensely flavored wine that is a testament to the character of Paso Robles and the winery's Jardine and Creston Valley Vineyards. Petite Sirah also contributes to various Vina Robles blends such as Signature and The Arborist.

### **Oh, Where, Oh Where is Huerhuero?**

One of six Vina Robles estate vineyards, Huerhuero (pronounced Where-WHERE-oh) Vineyard is located along the southeastern border of Paso Robles. It is named for the adjacent Huerhuero Creek, a seasonal waterway flowing from Black Mountain to the Salinas River. Huerhuero is a Native American word that, despite ongoing research, defies translation—but likely refers to the coarse blonde sand of the creek bed.

### **From Deer to Wild Turkeys**

While located just a few miles from downtown Paso Robles, Huerhuero Vineyard occupies a stunning, rugged terrain populated by native animals, including wild turkeys, deer, coyotes and red tail hawks. The vineyard is part of an 863-acre ranch that spans rolling hills and oak-crowned pastures. The elevation reaches 1,030 feet, and the climate is shaped by the Templeton Gap, a notch in the coastal mountains that invites cool Pacific air.

**Hospitality Center Address**

Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery  
3700 Mill Road  
Paso Robles, CA 93446  
Tel: 805-227-4812  
Fax: 805-227-4816

**Winery Address**

Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery  
1200 Priska Drive  
Paso Robles, CA 93447  
*Winery Business Only – No Public Tastings*

**Bonded Winery #** CA-W-6973

**Owners**

Jürg Nüesch-Nef	Nef Family Representative		
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**Online** [VinaRobles.com](http://VinaRobles.com)

