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## Santa Maria Valley Wine Trail Expands to Nine Wineries

Santa Maria Valley, CA – With the addition of new tasting rooms, including Addamo Estate Vineyards, Kenneth Volk Vineyards and Costa De Oro Winery and Gold Coast Market Place, the Santa Maria Valley Wine Country Trail now boasts nine thriving tasting rooms. This esteemed coastal appellation has grown steadily, albeit slowly over the years. The pace of growth is intentional; the winegrowing community of Santa Maria Valley is protective of its history, character and potential. Each new producer has added merit to the entire valley, and this, according to local winegrowers, is as it should be. Other producers have been making wines in Santa Maria Valley for years, and will not consider moving on from their beloved valley. Ken Volk, for example, has been making **Santa** Barbara and Central Coast wines for more than a quarter century. Perhaps best known as the founder of Wild Horse Winery, Ken has earned a reputation for crafting world-class wines, particularly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and he is proud to call Santa Maria Valley his enological home.

Though some are much larger in scope than others, all of the wineries and tasting rooms in Santa Maria Valley are family owned. This is a rarity in the wine business, where corporate take-overs and consolidation is second-nature. Even the larger Kendall Jackson owned properties, Cambria and Byron, remain family-owned. This lends an intimate and loyal tone to the valley; it is hard not to feel as though neighbors look out for each other in this particular winegrowing community.

Santa Maria Valley Wine Country has found its enological identity in recent years, and is now recognized the world over, for their Pinot Noirs, Chardonnays and cool-climate Syrahs. Ironically, though, even Merlot thrives in this maritime appellation. Bien Nacido Vineyards, the iconic vineyard located on the Santa Maria Bench, has successfully grown Merlot that ripens to full maturity. The Nielson Vineyard, the oldest commercial vineyard in Santa Barbara County, is partially dedicated to Grenache, another variety growing in popularity, not only in Santa Maria Valley, but also through out the Golden State.

Visitors to Santa Maria Valley often stop at the Addamo Estate Vineyards tasting room before heading into the heart of the valley, the gateway of which is Betteravia Road. The Addamo Estate Vineyards tasting room is located in the charmingly sleepy town of Old Orcutt, an old-fashioned suburb of great Santa Maria. There, visitors may enjoy award winning Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. On the way to the Betteravia gateway visitors can enjoy an eclectic mixture of wine and art at the McKeon Phillips Tasting room on Skyway Drive. Another favorite stop for visitors is the Costa De Oro tasting room.

Located just off of highway 101, this tasting room also doubles as a market place for fresh, local, sustainably grown produce and fruit. Owner Gary Burk, also produces critically successful Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays.

More established vineyards like Rancho Sisquoc, Cambria and Foxen offer visitors a rare dose of local charm. Foxen, long recognized for its stand-out wines, also houses one of the more unique tasting rooms in the county, complete with a tin shack, an “altar to wine” and a terrier who greets guests with a stick, eager to play fetch. Rancho Sisquoc offers sweeping vistas of the San Gabriel Mountain range. Nestled in a wooded canyon, this lovely little winery offers a diverse portfolio of wines. Cambria has long been acknowledged as a producer of fine Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays.

Byron and Cottonwood Canyon round out the list, each with their own blend of appealing wines, aesthetically pleasing grounds and solid customer service. Cottonwood Canyon Winery boasts the only wine caves in Santa Maria Valley, and visitors are invited to explore them while wine tasting.

The Santa Maria Valley, once known only for its row crops and cattle ranches, has joined other California appellations, like Russian River, the Santa Lucia Highlands and Carneros in producing world class wines of distinction and a sense of place.

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