



## Lodi Rules 2005 Certified Vineyards

### Sutter Home Winery/Trinchero Family Estates Robert Abercrombie

Robert Abercrombie has been managing vineyards for the last 28 years and began farming winegrapes for Sutter Home Family Vineyards nearly 17 years ago. Over the years, the Sutter Home vineyard team has focused their farming style on leaving the land better than when they started farming it. Robert explains, "we focus our farming on environmentally friendly winegrowing that never depletes or degrades the environment." This thinking has continued to evolve and soon they realized that their farming philosophy paralleled the concept of sustainable viticulture.

It has been a natural progression for Sutter Home and Robert to enroll 21.7 acres of Zinfandel at their West Side Ranch just west of Lodi into the Lodi Rules Program. Robert says that they wanted to pilot test the program for the first year to see how feasible it was for their operation. Based on their success, Sutter Home and Robert plan to enroll additional acreage next season. Robert isn't worried about the task of enrolling more vineyards into the program because he says that the sustainable practices they use like "cover crops, owl boxes, compost, and hedgerows are used on all of our vineyards."

The Zinfandel from the West Side Ranch goes into Sutter Home's Trinity Oaks wine label. It was planted in 1997 in sandy loam soil and in 2005, Robert only applied 55 gallons of water per vine. Robert says that "you know you have a special site when you don't have to irrigate much, you have very few pest problems and the fruit is of the highest quality."

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### Lobo Loco Wines Joe Dexter

As a retired commercial airline pilot, Joe Dexter hasn't been a winegrower for very long; he planted his first vineyard in 2000. But, it hasn't taken him long to figure out how to farm his Syrah vineyards sustainably and produce a delicious bottle of wine. In 2004, Joe joined the Lodi Biologically Integrated Farming System (BIFS) program and as he explains "I wanted to gain incite into a better way to grow winegrapes." This additional knowledge paid off when he was able to certify his two Syrah vineyards as sustainable under the Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing program.

His two vineyards totaling about 7 acres are located north of Lodi and are planted into a very rocky red clay loam soil. This poor soil along with a planted cover crop of Blando brome and proper irrigation management keep his vines well balanced ensuring his fruit is of the highest quality. He makes an estate Syrah and a Syrah Port from these grapes under his Lobo Loco Wines label.

Joe joined the Lodi Rules program because he wanted to show that he was “a good steward of the land.” Joe says “I was originally interested in organic certification, but after researching the two programs I was far more intrigued by the Lodi Rules program because I feel it is a better way to protect the environment.”

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### **Mohr-Fry Ranches Jerry and Bruce Fry**

Mohr-Fry Ranches, owned and operated by Jerry and his son Bruce Fry, have certified 172 acres of their prized old vine Zinfandel vineyards with the Lodi Rules program. These vineyards are found on 2 separate ranches known as West Lane Ranch and Devries Road Ranch. The vineyards at the West Lane Ranch were planted from 1901-1945 and from 1947-1966 at the Devries Road ranch. Most vines are on their own root in Tokay fine sandy loam soil and are head-trained.

Jerry explains that “what we as winegrowers are doing with the Lodi Rules program is something that we’ve been doing for years, but it has never been recognized. By going through this program and getting our vineyard certified, we gain credibility.” In other words “Lodi growers are walking the talk.” Bruce says “I see the Lodi Rules program as another way to market grapes by creating an incentive for wineries to buy our product.’

There are nine wineries that buy Mohr-Fry Old Vine Zinfandel, five of which make vineyard designated wines from the grapes. These wineries include St. Amant, Valhalla Cellars, Chouinard, Joel Gott, and Eola Hills.

The agricultural history of the Mohr's and Fry's extends back to the 1850's when Bruce Fry's great-grandfather on Jerry's mother's side, Cornelius Mohr left his job on a whaling ship in the port of San Francisco and began a farming operation on a Spanish land grant near what later became Hayward. Jerry's dad, Jeryl Fry, met and married Marian Mohr while both were attending the University of California, Berkeley. In 1955, they extended the farming operation to a 600-acre ranch north of Lodi. Today, Mohr-Fry Ranches consist of approximately 2,000 acres of vineyards, orchards, and diversified row crops.

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### **Colligere Farm Management Robert Pirie**

Robert Pirie and his staff, Brian Anderson and Jeff Brandstad, at Colligere Farm Management, certified 220 vineyard acres in the Lodi Rules program. These vineyards include 60 acres of Zinfandel at the J and D ranch northwest of Lodi and 160 acres at the Clay Station Ranch in the Borden Ranch area northeast of Lodi. Not only is the J and D vineyard certified sustainable, but the vineyard has also been a part of the Lodi Biologically Integrated Farming System (BIFS) program for the past 8 years.

The grapes from the Clay Station vineyards are made into wines for Delicato Vineyards' wine label called "Clay Station". Additionally, Delicato recently began producing a new brand called "337", which is made from the 337 Cabernet Sauvignon clone grown at the Clay Station Ranch. Additional wines made from Lodi Rules certified vineyards at Clay Station are Merlot, Sangiovese, Viognier, and Syrah. "Clay Station" 2003 Viognier made its mark in 2005, winning a Double Gold Medal with 98 Points and being judged the Best of Class Lodi Appellations at the California State Fair Wine Competition.

Robert Pirie has been farming since he graduated from Fresno State University in 1978 and proclaims that the Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing Program "is the future. It's something that is good for the community, looks good for the area, and is the right thing to do". He goes on to say that going through the certification process really "made me re-examine the things I was taking for granted and ultimately made me a better grower." Strong words for someone who has been winegrowing for 27 years.

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#### **Vino Farms**

##### **John Ledbetter and Kim Ledbetter-Bronson**

Lead by John Ledbetter and daughter Kim Ledbetter-Bronson, Vino Farms has set the bar very high by enrolling 959 acres of winegrapes on four ranches, each significant in size and together make up the largest amount of acres enrolled into the program. To introduce the Lodi Rules program to his foremen, John challenged each to try certifying one of the several ranches they manage.

The vineyards are scattered throughout the district, with 222 acres near Peltier and Elliot Roads, 350 acres on Grantline Road near the Cosumnes River, 207 acres in the Borden Ranch area, and 175 acres west of Interstate 5 on Lambert Road. Varieties are equally diverse and include Pinot Grigio, Zinfandel, Chardonnay, Syrah, Viognier, Merlot, Semillon, and Cabernet Sauvignon. These grapes contribute to wines made at Mondavi Woodbridge Winery, Domain Chandon, and Fetzer Winery.

John states that the Lodi Rules program is “a natural extension for what we started here in Lodi in the early 1990’s. We started out focused on IPM and this concept evolved into an idea of sustainability. Sustainability has now become one of our companies guiding philosophies and the Lodi Rules program will help us provide a product that wineries are beginning to demand. The Lodi Rules program is a long term part of our business model.”

John saw a direct benefit during this past growing season when it was time to take care of a pest problem. Before making any decision, the Pesticide Environmental Impact Model (PEAS) was referenced and they would repeatedly alter sprays to ones with reduced environmental impact.

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**K and S Watts Vineyards  
Keith Watts**

Although Keith Watts had considered joining the Lodi Rules program, it wasn’t until he was asked by Peter Stern, winemaker Baron Herzog Wine Cellars, to join the program that Keith signed up. Keith explains “the program forced me to study and evaluate my everyday practices so that in the end I became a better farmer.”

For years Peter Stern, had been asking growers to assess the sustainability of their vineyards annually using the Lodi Winegrower’s Workbook. The idea of certifying vineyards as sustainable according to the Lodi Rules was a natural progression and was very exciting to Peter Stern.

Keith enrolled 4 Zinfandel vineyards, three of which are owned by his mother Janet Watts, into the Lodi Rules program. Two vineyards are old vine Zinfandel that vary in age from 35 to 65 years old and two are white Zinfandel vineyards. The vines are located to the east and west of Lodi and are planted in Tokay fine sandy loam soil. Keith says “I now have a better idea of my weed and vertebrate pest problems and the sustainable tools to deal with them.”

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