



Stephan: The Man Behind “ L ’ Aventure ” Stephan Asseo has been in the wine industry for nearly three decades. After he graduated oenology college in the Burgundy region of France in 1982, the Asseo family purchased their first property, Domaine de Courteillac, on the Right Bank of Bordeaux. Later, the family purchased additional properties: Chateau Robin and Chateau Fleur Cardinale (Saint-Emilion Grand Cru). With a unique style, Stephan raised those properties to a level of quality that brought him continuous accolades from the European press, travel guides and the Wine Spectator. Soon, well established wineries like Chateau Guillot Clauzel in Pomerol and Chateau Corbin were asking Stephan to manage their properties as well. When Stephan announced his desire to create a vineyard and winery in America, most of his friends and customers were surprised...Why would he leave an established, comfortable situation in Europe to take a chance in the new world? For Stephan, who wanted to expand his expertise while gaining more freedom in viticulture and vinification, it was the beginning of L ’ Aventure (“ the adventure ” in French). He began searching California for land, including Napa/Sonoma and Santa Barbara counties. It was after this tour that he was most impressed with the quality of the terroir of California wine country ’ s newest rising star: Paso Robles. Our Terroir: Paso Robles West Side The site for the vineyard was selected after an extensive study of the area that matched Stephan ’ s experience as a vigneron. He immediately favored the west side of Paso Robles for its sloping hills and authentic quality terroir. The one hundred twenty seven acre property he chose is comprised of multiple hills of various elevation, complex soils and excellent water drainage. He finds the aspects of this terroir to be fundamental in obtaining the high quality fruit necessary to create the wines he had envisioned for L ’ Aventure. Because of its close proximity to the ocean, the vineyard is characterized by warm clear days with nighttime temperatures which can drop by approximately 40 degrees. This dramatic diurnal temperature variation increases the time of the grapes maturation cycle providing fruit that creates a more complex and balanced wine. With clear, sunny days typically lasting well into November, our fruit has the chance to stay on the vine longer to develop mature polyphenols, while the cool nights help retain acids, resulting in the ideal combination of maturity and balance. The rolling hills that define the vineyard provide multiple facings on which Stephan strategically planted vines with carefully chosen grafted rootstocks. The thin layer of topsoil on these hills covers a succession of siliceous and calcareous shale which consists of old marine bones, shells, diatoms and plankton slowly deposited on the sea bed over millions of years, only to be lifted up through tectonic activity. The combination of these base soils with clay, metals and quartz contribute to the complexity of the fruit in multiple ways. This soil locks up nutrients coaxing the vines to create small, thick skinned berries to ensure protection of its precious seeds. The shale also acts like a sponge, storing water during the rainy season and redistributing it back to the roots in the dry season. This assures a perfect feeding for the vines, giving them a balanced water source from which they regulate themselves, as opposed to the bingeing characteristics typically developed with irrigation. The shale also coaxes the vines to send roots deeper to collect water as the surface dries, rather than staying close to the surface and collecting from the drip system. Stephan ’ s choice of this lean terroir provides him with the fruit necessary to create wine with a good balance between alcohol and acidity. The resulting wines are full and rich yet well balanced with finesse and elegance. Our Vineyard Stephan chose to install a vertical trellis system in the vineyard. The foliage is brought back up between the wires allowing significant sun exposure and greater maturity of the polyphenols (Tanin/Antocyan). This also provides a better balance of the sugar / phenolic acid combination at harvest. The foliage is a very important element as it is the “ maturity ” factory of the vine. This is why our volume of foliage is large: more than four feet, allowing a huge amount of leaf growth. We systematically trim the canopy to ensure optimum sunlight penetration to maximize photosynthesis. The pruning method is the classic “ Guillot Double ” with a very low double cane or low classical double cordon. The choice of rootstock was made to take full advantage of the terroir. Stephan selected only those with a long, slow maturation, and a deep root system. To further contribute to this slow maturing deep rooted concept, planting was done with a very high density of 2100 plants per acre. The irrigation system was designed specifically with the ability to irrigate each row individually. Irrigation is not systematically used, only when a little extra push is needed during flowering and veraison. This allows Stephan to create an optimum balance in the vineyard, pairing...