



**PAUL SOBON UTILIZING ORGANIC COMPOST  
LIVING AN ECO LIFESTYLE - EVERYDAY**

## **THE SOBON FAMILY FEATURED WINERY OF THE MONTH**

**The Sobon history...** Shenandoah Vineyards was founded in 1977 by Shirley and Leon Sobon. They moved from Los Altos, California, where Leon was a Senior Scientist with Lockheed Research Lab. The selection of a winery site was well researched and the Shenandoah Valley of Amador County, California, was selected. They and their six children moved to the old Steiner Ranch, planted a vineyard, and converted the old stone garage to a winery.

The winemaking and business aspects have continued to be a family affair. Two sons and one son-in-law currently work full time for the business: Tom Quinn in Sales and Marketing, Paul Sobon as the Assistant Winemaker and Vineyard Manager, and Robert Sobon as Coordinator of Computer and Business Systems. Shirley and Leon continue to be involved full time.

**Shenandoah Vineyards...** From the first offering of 1200 cases, the winery has continued to thrive, adjusting the portfolio of wines over the years, and is now producing about 30,000 cases per year. Demand has been created because of skilled winemaking garnering multiple awards and strong family commitments to quality and service. Only their own organically grown grapes are used.

**Sobon Estate...** The Sobon Estate winery started in 1989 when Leon and Shirley Sobon bought each other a second winery for their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary present. They purchased the historic



D'Agostini Winery, one of the oldest in the state. This site was chosen not only for its historical winery, but also for its vineyards and vineyard land. The old vine Zinfandel has been retained, and the other vineyards have been replanted with the best varieties and the best clones. The Sobon Estate label launched the estate line of wines for the Sobon Family, the best from their own grapes. These included the Rhone varieties, the vineyard designated Zinfandels, and the tasting room only dessert wines.

### **Sobon's Organic Farming Practices**

In 1989, the Sobon family made the decision to start farming organically. After a winter of intensive research, the following spring was the start of their new endeavor. They have never stopped learning. In 1994, they registered with Amador County Agriculture Commissioner and the State of California as Organic Growers of grapes and walnuts. They now farm 125 acres without herbicides, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers. During 2002, they received the CCOF Certification (California Certified Organic Farmers). The Sobon family uses low-yield viticulture and minimum intervention wine making techniques, a continuation of their 28-year commitment to producing the best possible wines. Sobon award-winning wines

are made with estate grown CCOF certified organic grapes, and reflect the unique Shenandoah Valley terroir, resulting in a richness and intensity rarely seen elsewhere.

Composting is a vital way to nourish the soil. They use 600 to 800 tons of compost every year. It is all made from

grape skins, seeds, and stems; the perfect balance of nutrients to return to the soil.

Their wines, both at Shenandoah Vineyards and Sobon Estate, are made by conventional means using a minimum of sulfites to preserve freshness and color. At bottling, their wine contains between 15-20 parts per million free sulfites, which diminish after several months in the bottle. They believe that the small amounts of sulfites they use are necessary to maintain the freshness, stability, ability to age, and enjoyment of their wines.



# EcoVine EcoEsprit™

## Words of Wine

**Acidity:** The natural crispness of a wine. Grapes have two primary acids: tartic and malic. Citric, lactic and succinic acids are usually also present in small amounts of grapes.

**Appellation:** Designated, controlled, geographical wine growing region.

**Barrel Aging:** The process of holding wine in oak containers to allow flavor and aromatic compound to mature and change beneficially.

**pH:** An important winemaking measure in juice and wine of the strength of acidity which can also affect color and ageing potential. Water

has a pH of 7, wine is usually about 3.5.

**Sulfites:** Sulfur-based compounds used to protect wine from oxidation and bacterial activity.

**Sulfur Dioxide:** Traditionally used to protect wine from oxidation and microbial activity during aging.

**Terrior:** The intricate physical properties of an area and how it relates to the local climate and the macroclimate a region. This includes for example how quickly a patch of land drains, whether it reflects sunlight or absorbs the heat, its elevation, its degree of slope, its orientation to the sun, and whether it is close to a cooling forest or warming lake or river.

## Enhance Your Wine with Temperature

The best temperature for serving wine varies based on the type of wine. Most people in the United States tend to drink their white wines too cold and their red wines too warm. In general, people have heard that red wines should be served at room temperature, but that really refers to cellar temperature. Cellar temperature is usually about 55 degrees which is perfect for storing wine.

The reason that red wines are best enjoyed at slight reduced temperatures is that alcohol will produce an unpleasant bite on the palate when served at normal room temperature. For the most enhanced flavor, drink red wines including Cabernet Sauvignon, Barbera, Merlot, Bordeaux, Zinfandel, Rhones and Syrah/Shiraz

at about 60° F. Full bodied, high quality white wines and light red wines should be consumed at 50° F. Most white wines and “everyday” Chardonnay’s should be served at 45° F. If they are served colder, the aromas and flavors will be minimized and you will not get full enjoyment of the wine.

## What’s Up With Screw Tops?

**Sabon Estate** continues to lead their industry by being among the first family winemakers in the Shenandoah Valley to implement screw cap technology on their award winning wines. Their first six screw cap-sealed vintages have been released.



“Today’s advanced screw cap technology totally eliminates the possibility of ‘cork taint’ in wines,” explains Vintner Paul Sobon. “This change assures our customers a more consistent wine experience. We have always put the best wine possible in the bottle. Now it is going to stay that way.”



Cork taint has been the bane of the wine industry world-wide. Even high quality cork can develop ‘taint’, which adversely affects the flavor of the wine. Today’s screw caps are air tight, and have been proven to keep wine clean and untainted while allowing it to develop and age.

“We have received near unanimous endorsement from sommeliers and industry wine buyers”, says Tom Quinn, West Coast Marketing Representative for Sobon Estate. “The industry is ready for it.”

Consumers seem to be open to it as well. He adds, “Reaction in our tasting rooms has been overwhelmingly positive. Some wine lovers are reaching the point where they are trading the romantic idea of uncorking a bottle, for the assurance of having a bottle that is clean and untainted.”

*Vicky Lorelli* Founder 