



THE BUIN ESTATE NEW BEGINNINGS

The 1990's witnessed a technological revolution in vineyard and winery practices, and the Cousiño family seized the opportunity to develop new vineyards and make a grand leap into the future. In May, 1996, the Cousiño family bought 300 hectares of land in Buin. This new estate was selected because of its calcareous, rocky soil and the ideal climate of the Alto-Maipo part of the Maipo Valley, where overall potential is best to grow the highest quality wine grapes. Designed to push quality to the limit and to secure Cousiño-Macul's position as Chile's leading family-owned winery, the Buin Estate became the new home of Cousiño-Macul wine in January, 2003.

The search for the ideal vineyard location began in 1994, after the Cousiño family decided to develop a new estate vineyard. With no restrictions on location or price, they investigated every potential area in Chile where vineyards might flourish. The Cousiños visited and evaluated every possible region over a three-year period. After extensive studies, they concluded that certain parts of the Alto-Maipo benefited from the best type of soil, climate, and exposure. In 1995, they narrowed the search to Buin, an agriculturally rich area 32 kms southeast of Santiago. This Alto-Maipo site sits just below the Andes Mountains.

The new winery is being built in several stages. By the January, 2003 vintage, most of the essential construction was done and the winery was fully operational. Completion of the landscaping and supplemental buildings will be ready for the 150th Anniversary of Cousiño-Macul in 2006.

A WINERY MAKING A DIFFERENCE

While there is truth in the cliché that great wine begins in the vineyard, what enables one producer to make a better wine than another is often a combination of differences in technique and in equipment. In the case of Cousiño-Macul's new winery, brilliant engineering and major investment made unlimited achievement possible.

Just as the Cousiño family searched the world to build their Santiago winery in the 19th century, they have again travelled far and wide to find the best equipment available for their new 21st century winery in Buin. The new Cousiño-Macul winery is outfitted with technologically advanced machinery and equipment from France, Germany, Italy and the U.S. No expense has been spared to create this sophisticated new facility.

The Buin Estate (continued)

States Arturo Cousino: “When the goal is to create world-class wine, it all comes down to having the best talent and equipment plus paying strict attention to detail at every stage.” Following are some of the differences that make the Buin winery more effective for making quality wines.

Central location: The Buin facility is strategically located in the centre of the vineyards allowing ripe fruit to be quickly moved to the crushers.

Innovative Fermentation: Buin’s vinification section is made up of six individually isolated temperature-controlled fermentation rooms with a system to evacuate the carbonic gas from the fermentation process out of the rooms without having to open doors.

Custom Tanks: The stainless steel tanks were custom-designed by the winemaking team. They are sized to be an equal height to diameter relationship because this contributes significantly to an optimal maceration. The standard design of their cooling jacket was modified to guarantee an even temperature distribution.

Portable Equipment: Another unusual design feature is that all presses and equipment are moveable. This enables winemakers to press physically next to the fermentation tanks. Says Head Winemaker, Matias Rivera: “Whenever you can avoid moving a wine or find ways to handle it minimally, it is always better for the wine.”

Improving the Reds

With the focus on red wines, one of the key decisions made by the Cousiño family for this new facility was to invest in a surplus of tanks to allow maceration periods of 30 days or longer. Knowing that there is wide availability of tanks, the winemaker will not be forced to move wine out of tanks because of pressure to make room for new wines or new macerations. At Buin, the post fermentation maceration is a key winemaking tool to amplify aromas and flavours, and can be done at any desired temperature using portable cooling and heating equipment.

Improving the Whites

With its portable equipment and deliberate excess tank capacity, the Buin winery also provides greater winemaking flexibility for its white wine programs. Being able to accommodate as many as 60 separate wine lots each vintage allows the winemakers to adjust to the conditions of each vintage with regard to pre-fermentation skin contact time for the Reservas Chardonnay, with post-fermentation “sur lies” aging for both Chardonnay and Sauvignon, and with different yeast strains.