

# Sunrise Winery

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NO ONE EVER SAID STARTING a winery was easy, but there must have been several occasions when the owners of Sunrise Winery have wanted to call it quits! And who would have blamed them? No winery has ever had to endure the trials that they have, and somehow, they've managed to come through it all with a smile.

In 1976, Keith Hohlfeldt formed a partnership with Gene Lokey and together they rented the old Locatelli winery up Empire Grade. Every new venture goes through its share of growing pains and financial uncertainty, and Sunrise was no exception: a third partner came in; then Ron and Rolayne Stortz joined; and then Gene and the other partner left. Finally, just when Keith, Ron and Rolayne had gotten everything together—disaster struck! On April 4, 1978, with the winery's cellar filled to capacity with wines from both the 1976 and '77 harvests, fire destroyed most of the building. Many wines were lost, and several barrels were badly charred (though later tests would show the *insides*

of the barrels were intact; some of them are still in use). Wines that did survive suffered some damage—two years of work down the drain! Literally!

But Sunrise survived and, taking a deep breath, continued. The fire is but a (painful) memory and is three years in the past. The wines from '78 and '79 vintages are reaching the market and Sunrise, a brand-new winery that is only five years old, is receiving marked critical acclaim. (At the recent League of Women Voters tasting in La Selva Beach, the two wines offered by Sunrise were the cause of much discussion and enjoyment—see the tasting notes below.)

Keith is the winemaker at Sunrise, having worked previously at Paul Masson, where he went following his graduation from UCSC in 1973. Having majored in biochemistry, and worked as a microbiologist, Keith knows winemaking as well as any Oenologist from UC Davis and has in fact developed his own strain of yeast which he uses in fermenting most of the wines at Sunrise. The exceptions are wines he ferments on the naturally occurring wild yeast.

In its short history, Sunrise has made a wide variety of wines in attempting to discover which wines will be made a regular part of Sunrise. What they have settled upon is three wines—Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir—with a possibility each year of a fourth, which would depend on what



grapes are available. Sunrise has, at present, no vineyard of its own, and thus must buy all of their grapes.

The first wines were mainly produced from grapes grown in Monterey County, but Keith now tends toward grapes from farther north and south. Several recent wines have been produced from vineyards in Sonoma and Mendocino, while an excellent Chardonnay was made from grapes grown in the Edna Valley of San Luis Obispo County. A constant, however, has been a Cabernet from the Arata vineyard in Saratoga.

Eventual plans call for a production of at least 5,000 cases per year, an increase from the current level of 2,000. With a production that limited, almost all of Sunrise's wines are sold in northern California. They are available at several local stores and at the winery. Sunrise is open to the public two weekends a year, but otherwise by appointment only. You may call or write Sunrise at 16001 Empire Grade (next to Lockheed, but don't let that stop you), Santa Cruz, 95060; the

telephone number is 423-8226 or 286-1418.

## Tasting Notes:

**1979 Chardonnay, Edna Valley:** light pale straw in color, clean and brilliant; abundant fruit in the nose with a nice touch of oak; soft in the mouth, but not flabby; a mouth-filling, round texture; good varietal flavors in the mouth linger through the long finish.

**1978 Cabernet Sauvignon, Mendocino (Frey Vineyard):** medium-dark red color, clear and bright; very complex bouquet of Cabernet aroma and a rich, earthy, almost chocolatey quality; good tannins for aging, yet not overly astringent; well balanced, medium-full bodied; complex flavors in the mouth and finish. An excellent wine with a good future ahead.

**N.V. Zinfandel, Central Coast:** medium-light ruby, clear and bright; rich spice and fruit in the nose shows good Zinfandel character; light bodied, well balanced; young fruit and spice in the mouth, very flavorful, and in the medium finish. At \$4.00, it's an excellent value! ■