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TWO SANTA MARIA VALLEY WINES RANKED AMONG WINE SPECTATOR'S TOP 100

Prestigious Magazine Identifies Top Bottlings from More Than 19,500 Wines Tasted in 2008

Santa Maria, California—The Santa Maria Valley's reputation for growing remarkable Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and other varietals continues to grow as the Wine Spectator has named two local wines among its prestigious Top 100 list for 2008.

The Wine Spectator's Top 100 list identifies the best wines from more than 19,500 international wines tasted by the magazine in 2008. The magazine's stated criteria for the list include quality (90 points or higher), value, availability, and "an X factor we call excitement."

The 2005 Chardonnay from Byron Vineyard was ranked 30th on the list, while the 2005 Pinot Noir from Dierberg Vineyard was ranked 49th. These were the only two wines on the list from the Central Coast, inclusive of Monterey County through Santa Barbara County.

"This is truly remarkable recognition for the Santa Maria Valley wine country," said Gina Keough, manager of the Santa Maria Valley Visitor & Convention Bureau. "It demonstrates why wine touring has become such a major visitor attraction in the valley. People are coming here to experience some of the finest wines in the world."

Santa Maria Valley wineries include Addamo Winery, Costa de Oro Winery, Byron Vineyard & Winery, Cambria Winery & Vineyard, Cottonwood Canyon Vineyard & Winery, Foxen Vineyard, Rancho Sisquoc Winery, William James Cellars, Riverbench Winery and Kenneth Volk Vineyards.

The Santa Maria Valley boasts a rare "transverse" geography, an east-to-west orientation that channels cool ocean air directly into the valley. The result is one of California's longest growing seasons, which in turn ensures the development of complex, flavorful and exquisitely balanced grapes. Pinot Noir, Syrah and Chardonnay are among the varietals that excel in the region.

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and Visitor & Convention Bureau offers visitors a complimentary booklet called *Santa Maria Valley Wine Country: A Guide to Local Wineries and Restaurants*, which includes profiles and contact information for local wineries and dining establishments. An accompanying map reveals the layout of the Santa Maria Valley wine country. The booklet is available for download at www.SantaMaria.com.

The Santa Maria Valley Wine Country Association also offers visitors extensive touring information and a downloadable map at www.santamariavalleywines.com.

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