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Ampelos Wines' biodynamic brilliance Part 1

January 26, 2015

3:02 PM MST



Ampelos Cellars crafts cool climate wines that are electric and alive.

Patricia Decker

Cool climate elegance, intoxicating aromas and pure, concentrated fruit and spice, [Ampelos Cellars](#) wines are simply stunning. From [Pinot Noir](#) to [Viognier](#), these wines are electric, alive in their varietal expression, exquisite in their balance and finesse. Channeling their wild yeasts, cold fermentation, and green winemaking, Ampelos Cellars has crafted intriguing wines of complexity.

Owners and winemakers [Peter and Rebecca Work](#) conceived of Ampelos as a retirement project, purchasing land in the late 1990's in the then up and coming Sta. Rita Hills appellation of California. But world events accelerated their dreams of winemaking, ignited by the tragedy of 9/11. A stroke of fate canceled Peter's appointment in the World Trade Center that morning, and deciding to live someday today, he and Rebecca retreated from their corporate jobs to their windswept vineyard land to begin their alchemy of [wine](#). With help from their winemaker son, Don, the triad of terroir, viticulture, and winemaking became the crucible of change.



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The valleys of the [Sta. Rita Hills](#) have a unique east-west orientation, The kiss of morning fog that blankets the valley floor daily is swept away by the Pacific Ocean's afternoon breezes, slowly ripening the grapes while preserving their acids and fruit esters. The Works farm organically, avoiding traditional fertilizers and pesticides. They employ [biodynamic](#) viticulture, treating the vineyards as a living ecosystem, nurturing the soil with a manure "tea", planting cover crops, and spraying quartz crystals on clusters and leaves, to name a few of the practices, all in conjunction with the phases of the moon. According to their website, Ampelos Cellars is the first in the US to be certified organic, biodynamic, and sustainable in practice (SIP). It highlights the axiom of less is more, intensely flavorful varietals, nursed naturally, that produce very tasty wines.

The Works' affinity for Greece is carried throughout the cellar, starting with the name, Ampelos being the Greek word for vine. [Ampelos Cellars' lineup](#) of Pinot Noir, Syrah, Grenache, and Viognier are named after Greek letters, Lambda, Delta, Rho, Gamma, Epsilon, Phi, Upsilon, all signifying wines of mythic proportions. Gentle handling of the grapes during harvest brings out the best of each varietal. A touch of oak caresses the Pinots, Syrah, and Grenache, stainless steel preserves the intense fruit of the Viognier, and all are bottled according to the moon cycles for maximum mystical accents.

Continued in [Part 2](#)

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