

Gabe Saglie's Blog

Ambassador in a Bottle: Santa Barbara Wine Becomes Important Marketing Tool During Awards Season

by Gabe Saglie, Senior Editor, [Travelzoo](#)
 photos courtesy of [Visit Santa Barbara](#)
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As TV and movie stars mingled and schmoozed during a slew of events leading up to Sunday's Golden Globes, one particular bottle of Santa Barbara wine caught their eye.

“We were the only vendor serving wine, or any other beverage, in the gifting suite, and that made us very popular,” says Shelby Sim, executive director of Visit Santa Ynez Valley. The suite he’s referring to, produced by Secret Room Events, is one of the many VIP opportunities afforded Hollywood A-listers during awards season. Mr. Sim was part of a tourism contingency that traveled to Hollywood over the weekend to promote travel to Santa Barbara County to Tinsel Town’s elite.

“Our presence - but also the wine - went along way to encourage a repeat or first time visit to our area,” adds Mr. Sim.

While others filled swag bags with face creams and gadgets, Santa Barbara’s tourism leaders handed out a bottle of a 2013 pinot noir dubbed, appropriately, Red Carper Red. The wine was made by Peter Work of Amapelos Cellars, and it had been bottled just the week before. But any wine aficionado will tell you: this wine, sourced in the lucrative Sta. Rita Hills region near Lompoc and crafted by what is the country’s first-ever winery designated organic, biodynamic and sustainable, was definitely meant to impress.



“The goal was to make a wine that would be the perfect cocktail wine for an actor hanging out an award reception, looking for a ‘wow’ wine,” says Mr. Work. Red Carpet Red “shows the signature of Sta. Rita Hills with cherry cola, warm earthy notes and layers and complexity. As we say at Ampelos, it has the perfect handshake: what the nose promises, the palate delivers.”

Sure, Santa Barbara’s knack for world-class pinot noir is well-known. But a pinot from

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2016 (2)
 - ▼ January (2)
 - [Ambassador in a Bottle: Santa Barbara Wine Becomes...](#)
 - ["SOMM: Into the Bottle": Pre-Launch Screenings Inc...](#)
- ▶ 2015 (49)
- ▶ 2014 (50)
- ▶ 2013 (13)
- ▶ 2012 (28)
- ▶ 2011 (14)

About Me

Gabe Saglie
 Follow 18

Welcome to the online home of Gabe Saglie. Gabe is Senior Editor for Travelzoo and a respected travel contributor for dozens of TV news programs and national shows. Gabe is also a longtime wine and food writer based in Santa Barbara, California, where he lives with his wife, two boys and daughter.

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Winemaker Peter Work

Ampelos adds an extra layer of Hollywood mystique. Mr. Work is the winemaker behind actor Kurt Russell's personal wine project, GoGi, and actress Kate Hudson's label, Hudson Bellamy, both of which have received plenty of both consumer and industry acclaim. Ampelos' own pinot noirs retail for \$35 to \$45 a bottle.

This commemorative wine was the brainchild of Visit Santa Barbara, whose mission is to promote travel to Santa Barbara, both city and county, and which works closely with regional tourism groups like Visit SYV. "We wanted to give celebrities something unique, high-end and special, and this wine fits the bill," says Karna Hughes, Director of Communications at Visit SB. After all, "wine tourism is a big part of our region."

The wine, which features a label by L.A.-based artist Eric Junker that looks a lot like a vintage travel poster, was meant to pique Hollywood's interest in Santa Barbara. "Many

guests told us they'd been, and some said they hadn't," says Ms. Hughes. "But they were all very excited to hear that there are 36 tasting rooms in the city of Santa Barbara alone, and more than 200 wineries in the county."

Guests also received gift certificates to a slew of local tasting rooms.

"Most of the stars had been to Santa Barbara, but were unfamiliar with our wine region just a few miles north in the Santa Ynez Valley," adds Mr. Sim, who hobnobbed with the likes of The Incredible Hulk TV icon Lou Ferrigno, The Deer Hunter actor John Savage and La Bamba star Lou Diamond Phillips. "The foreign press was actually more familiar with Solvang than Santa Barbara."



Visit SYV's Shelby Sim and Visit SB's Jennifer Walker rubbing shoulders with actor Lou Ferrigno, 2016 Golden Globes



Visit SB's Jennifer Walker, left, and Noelle Buben mingling with actor John Savage, 2016 Golden Globes



Sim with "Blackish" star Anthony Anderson (a Shelby selfie)



Sim with Lou Diamond Phillips & family (a Shelby selfie)

There isn't all that much of Red Carpet Red to go around: only two barrels were produced, which equates to about 600 bottles. But the public will still get a chance to sip like a celeb and try this special offering next month, and only for a limited time: February 3rd through the 13th. Coinciding with this year's Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Visit Santa Barbara's "Film Feast" promotion, which aims to encourage film goers to stay, eat and play locally, will see several local businesses sharing Red Carpet Red with consumers. Eateries like Opal Restaurant and C'est Cheese, for example, will pour it by the glass. And the Santa Barbara Hotel Group, which runs properties like the Brisas del Mar and Lavender Inn by the Sea, will feature packages that include a bottle with every stay. For information, check out SBFilmFeast.com and SantaBarbaraCA.com.

A genuine taste of Santa Barbara? Yes, by design. "In the tasting notes for the wine, we compare it to quintessential Santa Barbara," adds Ms. Hughes. "Down to earth and sophisticated."

For a glimpse at some of the star-studded action that Red Carpet Red inspired at the Golden Globes, [check out this 30-second video](#).

For a peek at Visit Santa Barbara's promo for the upcoming Film Feast, [watch this 30-second video](#).

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