

Exclusive: Kosta Browne Buys Cerise Vineyards

California Pinot Noir producer acquires 60 acres of vineyards in Anderson Valley



Photo by: Courtesy of Kosta Browne
Vineyard acquisition has become a new priority for Kosta Browne.

Kosta Browne may soon have a few more single-vineyard Pinot Noirs in its stable. *Wine Spectator* has learned that the Sebastopol, Calif.–based winery has acquired Anderson Valley's Cerise Vineyards and its 60 acres planted mostly to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. This is Kosta Browne's first foray into Mendocino County. Terms of the sale have not been disclosed.

Kosta Browne's Sonoma Coast, Russian River Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands Pinots are some of the most highly coveted in California; its 2009 Sonoma Coast bottling was named *Wine Spectator's 2011 Wine of the Year*. The winery acquired its first vineyard, **a 20-acre parcel of Keefer Ranch in Russian River Valley**, in 2013; it also has a long-term lease on 37 acres of Gap's Crown Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast appellation.

"This is an extraordinarily exciting next step for us as we approach our 20th vintage," said Kosta Browne cofounder Michael Browne in a statement. "[It] marks a significant expansion of our estate holdings, giving us the opportunity to apply our winemaking approach to a distinctive and highly regarded *terroir* outside of Sonoma County."

Scott Becker, president and CEO of Kosta Browne, told *Wine Spectator* the decision to purchase Cerise Vineyards was less about the zip code and more about the pedigree of quality. "What excited us was the energy of the place," he said. "It checked all of our boxes for making wines that reflect the place they come from, from the extremely cool climate to the soil, elevation and southwest-facing exposure—it offers us something distinct."

In addition to its namesake vineyard, which has been the source of **outstanding Pinot Noirs from both Littorai and Saintsbury**, Cerise Vineyards also includes Demuth and Knez vineyards. Situated above the town of Boonville in Anderson Valley, the vineyards range in elevation from 700 to 1,700 feet.

The purchase is the first major move for Kosta Browne since **a majority stake in the winery was acquired by Boston-based equity firm J.W. Childs Associates last year**. Becker said that, as they look to the future, owning land and farming their

own vineyards are the next steps for the winery, which makes about 20,000 cases of Pinot Noir annually. “At our size, we thought the one thing we were short on was owning our own vineyards,” he said, noting Pinot Noir’s growth in popularity, and increasing challenges to gaining access to quality grapes, “Fine wine is fundamentally a land game and you must have the best sites.”

Kosta Browne will oversee this coming harvest at Cerise Vineyards, and will honor the existing contracts with winemakers who source its grapes. In terms of creating new labels, Becker said they’ll let Mother Nature tell them whether to use each site for a vineyard-designated wine. “Of all the tastings we’ve done, we’ve noticed there is some differentiation and diversity between the three sites, but we’ll wait and see how it all tastes after this year.”