



# SOUTH COAST WINERY RESORT & SPA

## A Sparkling New Venture

By David Ross

**W**ant something bubbly, like champagne, yet with a deep red color and fruity taste that will go extraordinarily well with grilled meats this summer—yet will also be perfect for your holiday guests in a few more months?

Try South Coast Winery's Ruby Cuvée sparkling wine, named after owner Jim Carter's aunt. It is just as bubbly and sparkling as this lady, now in her 90s, was reputed to have been when she was younger.

She was the young Mr. Carter's babysitter and had a big influence on his life. He wanted to honor her with her own wine.

South Coast Winery Resort & Spa is one of Temecula's premier wineries. Nearly 100% of the grapes used in South Coast's wines are estate grown.

The wine was developed using that estate's syrah grape by master winemaker John McPherson, a Texas native, whose father helped pioneer that state's wine industry at his Llano Estacado Winery in Lubbock.

He moved to California in the 1980s and specialized in sparkling wine.

He started his career at another local winery which, under his leadership, earned the title "America's Most Honored Sparkling Wine" producer.

McPherson has been at South Coast for five years—and was in fact hired to make still wines. But he soon convinced Carter to start manufacturing a new line of sparkling wines.

Although this variation on champagne is not



Winemaker John McPherson and owner Jim Carter.

universally known in the U.S., it is a holiday tradition in Australia, home of the sparkling shiraz.

McPherson started with a brut and added an extra dry before venturing into the sparkling cuvée.

Trained in the *méthode champenoise*, which

allows the wine to form in the bottle in the traditional way, McPherson has come to appreciate the *charmat* process of fermentation in a vat maintained at six atmospheres of pressure—often for as long as 12 months.

The *charmat* process is, yes, cheaper, but McPherson became a convert because it allowed him to create wines that would be much harder otherwise.

This process allows the creation of wines such as the Ruby Cuvée, whose rich sweetness would be difficult to craft in the old way. "Capturing the varietal character of the grapes would be hard with the *méthode*," he says.

"I call this liquid cranberry sauce," says McPherson of the cuvee's flavors. The wine is made from the Syrah grape, known for its berry flavors. The tannins are softened in this wine, mainly because the grapes are allowed to ripen a little longer to emphasize their sweetness.

South Coast has been producing the Ruby Cuvée for the last two years and the current bottling is the third in the series. So far it has outsold all of the winery's sparkling wines, according to Carter. The win-

***"...when you are able to control every aspect, it makes a big difference."***

ery produces 3,000 cases a year.

"I think this one is the best Ruby we've done," said McPherson, patting one of the new bottles. "Being able to do it here makes it a much better product. When you are able to control every aspect it makes a big difference."

South Coast's other master winemaker is Javier Flores. He oversees the production of the estate's still wines.

Jim Carter recently spent about \$1.5 million to bring this process home after sending his sparkling wines north to the Weibel Winery in Lodi's sparkling wine facility. "We were able to take control of the quality," he explained of the facility that just opened at the winery.

"We feel that because we have such control of the process that we can produce a wine of as good a quality as by the *méth-*

*ode champenoise*," says Carter.

"This is the high season for this wine," says McPherson. "This is the wine if you are grilling steaks or chicken. It also makes a great holiday sparkler bar any. You can't not have this with turkey or crown roast. I'm serious when I say it's liquid cranberry sauce! Actually I don't think there's a bad time for it. It's absolutely versatile."

Although he made sparkling reds out of the pinot noir grape previously, when he arrived at South Coast, it was harder to acquire that grape—on the other hand there was a large quantity of the syrah grapes available.

Out of that necessity grew one of the winery's most successful offerings. And this is the perfect time of year for it. Just serve it chilled after resting the bottle in an ice bucket for a few minutes.

The other wines offered by South Coast include:



Muscat Canelli, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Roussanne, Viognier, Cabernet Rose, Merlot Rose, Reserve Chardonnay, Merlot, Barrel Select Reference Chardonnay, Chardonnay Sans Chêne, Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Tempranillo, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Late Harvest Zinfandel, Brut Sparkling, Extra Dry Sparkling, Ruby Cuvée Sparkling, Moscato Spumante Sparkling, Sweet Maggie Muscat Port and Black Jack Port. Try them all!

For more information visit South Coast Winery & Resort's Web site at [www.wineresort.com](http://www.wineresort.com), call them at 951-587-9463 or visit them at 34843 Rancho California Road Temecula, California.

