

ALHONA

VINEYARDS

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Alhona Vineyards Optimistically Looking Forward to Harvest In their Cachagua (“ca-SHAU-wah”) Valley Vineyard

Carmel Valley, CA – Tucked away in western Monterey County’s hills, Alhona Vineyard is definitely off the beaten path. If you’ve ever driven along scenic Carmel Valley Road, which winds from Highway 1 on the Pacific Coast past the little village of Carmel Valley and inland to King City in the Salinas Valley, you’ve traversed the northern edge of Carmel Valley. This is one of nine AVAs within Monterey County. There are some vineyards along the road, but most of them are located above 1,000 feet in the Santa Lucia Mountains, to the south and west, including Alhona Vineyards.

Cachagua Valley is a high valley that doesn’t yet have its own AVA status. The name is said to be derived from a Native Indian transmutation of the French “cacher” (to hide) and the Spanish “agua” (water), referring to the underground springs that allow many vintners to dry-farm their grapes.

After experiencing the flowing air currents of the Monterey County Big Sur fires this past July, winemaker and grapegrower Rick Alhona is still optimistically looking toward this year’s harvest.

"With all fires extinguished, the danger for this year seems to have passed, at least for this forest – at this time. Now the question being asked is, ‘what effect will the constant smoke and ash have upon this year's vintage?’ At this moment, no one knows. There have been some suggestions that all the vineyards will require being washed with high-pressure water hoses. This proposal is not taken very seriously by any winemaker I know. First, it's impractical to wash many thousands of acres of vines; secondly, the Central Coast of California is suffering from a major draught; and lastly, no winemaker would intentionally spray water on maturing grapevines in summer heat, as this could cause mold in the bunches.

“The answer is time; our harvest in Carmel Valley takes place in later September and as far as mid to late October for reds. [We once picked our crop on Halloween day.] At present our skies are blue once again, instead of the gray from the clouds of smoke that obscured them. And, for the first time in over a month, our night skies are complete with millions of stars. The only impact that I believe the fire will have on our vintage in 2008 is if we will be able to ripen on time.”

Alhona Vineyards Merlot wine is age-worthy, and will improve in a climate-controlled cellar. Available only on their Website www.alhonavineyards.com; please visit for more details.

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