



At Six Sigma Ranch and Vineyards, the traditional art of winemaking combines with the science of data-driven principles to create extraordinary wines of consistent quality.

THE SIX SIGMA PHILOSOPHY of doing business is a data-driven, systematic approach based on the idea that processes can be measured, analyzed, improved, and controlled. This internationally recognized management model has been successfully applied in many different types of organizations because its primary objective is meeting customer needs. Kaj Ahlmann, who first became familiar with the Six Sigma method while working for General Electric in the early 1990s, felt that it held great potential for winemaking. In 2000, Kaj and his wife bought what was to become Six Sigma Ranch, and in 2006 celebrated the release of the first wines under the Six Sigma label.

“Not to take the romance out of the wine process, but it is a business at the end of the day,” says Kaj. “Customers want quality and consistency when they buy a bottle of wine. They don’t want a completely different product from bottle to bottle.”



Exclusive Offer!

TEMPRANILLO TEMPTATION. Our very special offer for *Cellar Fine Wines* readers is a 3 pack of our Tempranillo. Just visit sixsigmaranch.com/shop.cfm and click on “CFW Offer” to have our amazing Tempranillo sent to your door. You can also order our other wines at the same site.

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May-Britt and Denis Malbec, Six Sigma’s talented estate winemakers and co-owners of Malbec & Malbec, a wine consulting company, have been an integral part of the vineyard operation since 2005.

According to Kaj Ahlmann, the Malbecs’ winemaking philosophy fits perfectly into the Six Sigma model because of their detail-oriented approach and their commitment to the production of wines of extraordinary quality.

From soil, planting, farming, and harvesting to sorting, fermentation, and storage, there are innumerable variables possible in the making of wine. The Six Sigma method seeks to regulate the process by monitoring data and refining it at each stage. Soil, water, and climate are analyzed to determine the best possible vineyard site. Rootstocks are chosen based on their ability to thrive in a given vineyard. Vines are carefully pruned to allow optimum ripening. Chemical and sensory analysis is used to determine the ideal time to harvest grapes. Each step is focused on quality at the highest level: “We strive for a steep bell curve, so that we can hit the same point every time,” says Kaj.

But the most important consideration is the voice of the customer, whether he or she is a wine expert or a novice. Data is constantly being gathered about customers’ preferences and used for guidance in the winemaking process. According to Kaj, “Many people are intimidated when they are handed an extensive wine list in a restaurant. When people see the Six Sigma name on the bottle, they know that the wine is of the best quality. A true marriage of science and art.”

The Wines

2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Boasts an expressive nose of minerals and layers of ripe fruit flavors, followed by enticing aromas of espresso roast.

2005 TEMPRANILLO

Made from the “king of Spanish grapes,” this Tempranillo embodies elegance combined with power. Full-bodied and mouth-filling, it reveals intense flavors of dark chocolate, orange peel, spicy cinnamon, mocha, and licorice. Can be enjoyed now or cellared for many years.

2006 CUVÉE PIQUE-NIQUE

This Bordeaux-style blend is the perfect daily picnic and dinner wine. Opens with complex notes of blueberry, dark chocolate, and blackberry, followed by hints of licorice, cedar, coffee, and delicate lilac and violet.

2006 SAUVIGNON BLANC (ROOSTER VINEYARD)

A delicate, fruity, and crisp wine displaying the best of the Sauvignon Blanc variety. Ripe pink grapefruit, Meyer lemons, and herbal aromas mingle with peach, pear, and herb flavors.

2007 SAUVIGNON BLANC (MICHAEL’S VINEYARD)

This elegant wine showcases charming notes of roasted hazelnuts, vanilla, and honeysuckle. With a creamy yet round and rich mouthfeel, a delicate minerality, and hints of fresh button mushrooms.



SETTING THE STANDARD
The Six Sigma logo means reliably great wines. Opposite, from left: The vineyards are farmed using sustainable practices, yielding grapes of pristine quality while preserving the land for future generations; owner Kaj Ahlmann.

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—Owner Kaj Ahlmann

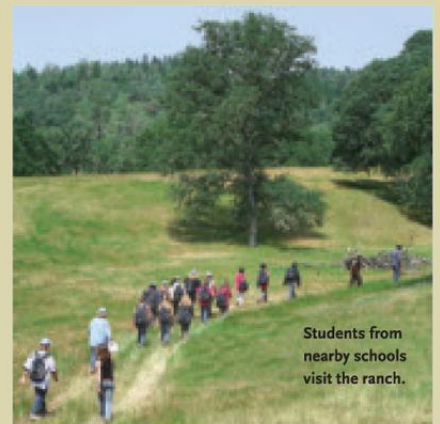
Safeguarding the Environment

When Kaj and Else Ahlmann acquired the 4,300-acre estate that would become Six Sigma Ranch, one of their primary concerns was maintaining the natural beauty of the land. Only 50 acres have been developed into vineyards, with the remainder of the property dedicated as a nature preserve through a conservation easement donated to the Golden State Land Conservancy. While development of the vineyards continues, total vineyard acreage will remain only a small fraction of the estate.

The Six Sigma Ranch is home to wildlife, including deer, bobcats, wild turkeys, wild pigs, and bears. In planning the vineyards, corridors were devised to allow the natural movement of these inhabitants with the least disturbance to their innate patterns.

The vineyards themselves have been integrated with native vegetation, so that the grapevines seem like a part of the existing landscape.

The Ahlmans’ commitment to the environment is further evident in their interest in the education of future generations. As participants in the “Acorn Soupe” program, they invite students from community schools to harvest acorns at Six Sigma, which are grown by a local nursery into oak trees and planted back on the ranch the following year.



Students from nearby schools visit the ranch.