



**DAVE GUFFY, Director of Winemaking,
The Hess Collection Winery**

Dave Guffy is in the vineyards year-round, from pruning through leaf removal, cutting the crop loads and deciding just when to pick the grapes to ensure the best expression of a particular vineyard.

“In the 90’s, winemakers woke up and realized that the best wines always start in the vineyards,” he said. “I learned very early that I have to walk the vines,” says Dave. During the weeks leading up to the vintage and during harvest, Guffy spends at least half his time in the vineyards. “It isn’t just the grapes. I need to see the health of the vineyards and what shape everything is in,” he said. “Then during harvest, I continually taste the grapes to keep an eye on the maturity of flavors and tannins.”

Sampling a variety of wines while working in restaurants as a Food Science student at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo first sparked Dave’s interest in wine. To learn more, he worked a harvest at a small Santa Cruz Mountain winery and decided to shift to the enology and viticulture program at Fresno State.

In 1990, Kendall-Jackson was building its Cambria winery and Guffy was hired as assistant winemaker. In 1992, Guffy was named winemaker, producing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, plus some Syrah.

In 1999, Donald Hess was looking for someone to oversee all winemaking for The Hess Collection. “As a student I loved Cabernet, especially from the Napa Valley and it inspired me to go into winemaking. Now, I’m literally on top of Napa, making mountain Cabernets. Mountain fruit is different from valley floor fruit— and so are the wines. They are structured, complex, rich wines, with distinctive tannins, ageability, and concentrated fruit.

The ongoing lure for Guffy is the combination of farming and food science. A California native who grew up in San Jose, he spent summers with his grandparents on a 500-acre Kansas farm and Guffy has kept a strong attraction to the earth. “The farming aspect of wine has a primal challenge about it and the same with winemaking -- you can never know everything. Every year the challenge is to do it better than the year before.”