

# THE SOMM JOURNAL

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## Steve McIntyre

Steve McIntyre's 80-acre McIntyre Vineyards estate sits in one of the "sweet spots" of Santa Lucia Highlands—gentle slopes of sandy loam towards the AVA's center, not far from Garys' Vineyard.

McIntyre helped frame the significance of wind on Santa Lucia Highlands viticulture: "We used to think it was insane to live in a place as windy as this. High wind is a constant part of the terroir—you can count on it like clockwork. That's why our highest daytime temperatures are usually around 12 noon, whereas on most of the coast it's closer to 4 p.m."

Explaining the impact on the vines, McIntyre tells us, "Earlier in the season, the wind shuts down stomata, the leaf pores that transpire water. Photosynthesis requires water, and so high wind limits photosynthesis. This contributes to the length of our growing season.

"In respect to the consistency of the region's vintages, McIntyre explains: "The biggest physical factor is the rain shadow formed by the steep orographic lift of the Santa Lucia Range. On the other side of the mountain is the Big Sur. They don't call it that for nothing—it is the second highest coastal mountain in the Western Hemisphere, between Patagonia and Alaska. When clouds are forced upwards on the ocean side they can't hold their moisture, so all the rain gets dumped on Big Sur. By the time storms get here, they're usually pattered out."

"When we do get rain, we have winds to dry it out. We'll get the occasional botrytis, but mildew pressure is minimal, very controllable. In September/October we have more dynamic offshore flows, which gives us Indian summers. That's when fog disappears and there's less wind, which allows our grapes to finish their ripening. Esters and glucosides in Chardonnay; anthocyanins, turpines and flavonoids in Pinot Noir—all the things that contribute to flavor, steadily increased."