

Scheid, Blackstone off 101

Both wineries feature tasting rooms and special events

By **JANICE AUSTIN**
For South County Life

A drive down Highway 101 through south county offers two easy opportunities to visit winery tasting rooms without making a detour to River Road, where many other tasting rooms also beckon to the traveler.

Both Blackstone Winery and Scheid Vineyards are visible from the highway and offer an array of wines as well as gifts. Blackstone also boasts an art gallery with varying exhibitions.

Blackstone Winery produces Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Zinfandel and Sauvignon Blanc.

Its grounds are replete with a lake, picnic tables, ducks and geese. The tasting room boasts a horseshoe-shaped bar with 25 wines available to taste.

"Everyone knows us for our California Merlot, but unless you come to the tasting room, you don't realize how many small lots of unusual wines we make," said Deborah Canepa, tasting room manager.

The gift shop sports artistic items that are environmentally and socially conscious.

"We're not the average tasting room gift shop," Canepa said. "We purchase things that are fair trade and benefit small communities in the U.S. and around the world."

"Our art gallery is the best kept secret in south county," she said. "Every four months we feature a different artist. We've featured museum collections as well as local artists."

Blackstone, owned by New York-based Constellation Brands Inc., the largest wine company in the world, participates in events such as the Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association's Passport Weekend in February and Great Wine Escape in November. It also holds a spring open house, a harvest party and a holiday



RICHARD GREEN/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE FILE PHOTO

Scheid Vineyards holds the grand opening and dedication of its 42,000-square-foot winery in July 2005.



SCOTT MACDONALD/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE FILE PHOTO

Hugh Reimers, general manager of Blackstone Winery in Gonzales, speaks at the dedication of the winery's new crush facility in August 2006.

open house in December.

Group tours are available by appointment.

"One of the nicest things about our tasting room and the Salinas Valley tasting rooms in general, is that everyone is friendly and knowledgeable," Canepa said. "We don't have a snobby attitude. It's relaxed and friendly. We want to educate people about wine, and we're glad to

share our wines with people."

An independent producer of premium wine grapes and bulk wine, Scheid Vineyards Inc. in Greenfield grows 5,700 acres of winegrapes. The winery has approximately 18,000 tons of processing capability and produces bulk wine, as well as a small amount of ultra premium wine under its own label.

Pamela and Steve Storr have been the consulting winemak-

IF YOU GO

■ **WHAT:** Blackstone Winery

■ **WHERE:** 850 S. Alta St., Gonzales.

■ **PHONE:** 831.675.5341

■ **WEB SITE:**
www.blackstonewinery.com

■ **HOURS:** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

■ **WHAT:** Scheid Vineyards

■ **WHERE:** 1972 Hobson Ave., Greenfield.

■ **PHONE:** 386-0316

■ **WEB SITE:** www.scheidvineyards.com

■ **HOURS:** 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

ers at Scheid since 1989. Both are graduates of the University of California, Davis, with degrees in enology, the study of winemaking.

Special events at Scheid include the Passport Weekend, a spring open house in May, a summer concert in the vineyard in July, an annual Winemakers' Celebration in August, the Great Wine Escape, a holiday open house in December and events throughout the year for Scheid Wine Club members.