

DONUM

The Gift of the Land

When our Russian River Vineyard was planted in 1997 by Anne Moller-Racke and Joe Nugent, 11 acres were planted to Dijon clones 115 and 667. In 2008 we decided to plant 5 more acres on an adjacent plot, this time to Pommard clone. The idea was that in these slightly more gravelly soils, the Pommard clone would thrive and produce an elegant, perfumed wine to play off of the rich, powerful dark fruit flavors produced by the Dijon clones. We named this block of Pommard clone "10 Oaks" after the ten majestic trees that border it on two sides.

FRUIT: 100% Pommard clone Pinot Noir from the 10 Oaks block

NEW OAK: 40%

HARVEST DATE: October 1, 2012

ALCOHOL: 13.5%

BOTTLING DATE: August 14, 2012

PH: 3.6

CASES PRODUCED: 122 cases

TA: 5.7 g/L

FERMENTATION DETAILS

Early on the morning of October 1st we hand harvested 2.6 tons of Pinot from our 5 acre block, and brought it to the winery for hand sorting. Since this was our first year working with this fruit, we decided to experiment a bit and make this wine in the style of "natural" winemaking: no additions of any kind, including sulfur, allowing the wine to ferment with native yeast. The cap was punched-down 2 times per day, with the temperature manipulation accomplished by moving the bins into the sun for heat, or into the cellar where it is cooler. At dryness the free run wine was put to barrel, with the press wine kept separate.

AGEING DETAILS

Malolactic fermentation began naturally in barrel, and finished after about a month. At this point we did make a small sulfur addition to preserve the wine, the only addition that this wine saw during its life until another small sulfur addition before bottling. In June we tasted this wine to decide where to blend it, and were so blown away by its elegance and finesse that we decided it deserved to be bottled on its own as a block designate. It was bottled in August of 2012, with no fining or filtration.

WEATHER ATTRIBUTES

There is no doubt that 2011 was an unusual year in California weather-wise, with cool temperatures and lots of precipitation being the key factors. After a warm, sunny start to the year, temperatures dropped steadily, with daytime highs rarely breaking 80F and plenty of rain all the way through the end of June. Budbreak occurred about three weeks later than usual, thanks to the cold weather, and flowering was somewhat disrupted by the rain, resulting in a crop size 10-30% lower than average depending on the block.

Once the rain stopped, temperatures remained below normal throughout the summer, further slowing the ripening process. In some ways this was a good thing, as it allowed the fruit to ripen slowly, developing flavor without a huge jump in sugar levels. Everyone kept saying that this could lead to an exceptional harvest, barring rain in early October. As it turned out, the rain decided not to wait until October, with a massive storm dropping over an inch of rain on September 30 and October 1.

Fortunately, our Russian River fruit was ready to go, and seeing the rain in the forecast we began picking on September 27, picking the entire 11 acres in 3 days and getting the last bins to the winery just as the first drops of rain started to fall. The resulting fruit was beautiful, with all of the ripeness we look for in a warm year, but with more acidity and lower sugar.

2011 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY TEN OAKS PINOT NOIR

The 2011 "10 Oaks" Pinot Noir is ruby in color, with a slight cloudiness due to being bottled without fining or filtration. The nose begins with bright cherry and cranberry aromas, followed by a tantalizing mix of forest floor, dried herb, rose-petal and raspberry. The palate is remarkably lively, with vibrant Bing cherry, raspberry, and watermelon accompanied by floral and spice notes. Elegant and light on its feet, this wine still has considerable presence on the palate, and will continue to develop for many years in the cellar

-Dan Fishman

