



2004 Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County

Cases Produced: 425

Harvest Date: 8/31/2004

Numbers @ Harvest: Brix 22.6

Wine Numbers: 12.7% Alc. 3.68 pH No R.S.

I am happy to say that I am making a non-vineyard designate Pinot Noir again. Some of you may remember when I used to have the Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir available. The price of Pinot Noir grapes became so expensive that I could no longer produce that wine. I have now found a wonderful source of good Pinot Noir from a vineyard called White Hills in the Los Alamos area just south of Santa Maria. Since they are not in one of the small, highly defined appellations, I was able to get the grapes at a better price. The extra fun part is that they are managed by my old friend and vineyard manager extroidnair, Dale Hampton. Dale let me pick my own spot in the vineyard and my favorite clones too. I chose block 23-2 and clone 666 on Freedom rootstock. I picked 8 tons for this first release. I gently crushed (100% destemmed) into 4' by 4' by 4' open top fermenter bins, avoiding the harsh wood tannins from stems. The juice was fermented with Aussmanhausen yeast to retain the fruity components. Punch down routines were performed to maximize the delicate flavors and subtle, elegant nuances of the Pinot Noir grape without extracting the more coarse, alcohol soluble components. The wine spent about 11 months in Francois Frere French oak barrels. I used about 35% new wood to obtain a trace taste of smoke without overshadowing the fruit. I added a drop of Syrah to firm up the center and add color (an old Burgandy trick). The wine is unfined and gently filtered for clarity. It will naturally throw some sediment over time.

Since this is my first vintage of my Santa Barbara Co. Pinot, I am still a bit unsure how to describe it. While fermenting, it had wonderful smells of fresh crunchy red fruit tied in with earth and spice overtones. It shows a bit more oak than my other wines, which I know will please many of you out there.

This year's Pinot Noirs, in general, will initially taste on the lean side to those people used to the previous years wines. I personally think young Pinot Noir should taste this way. The lower alcohol and more delicate fruit structure will ensure a fabulous wine for aging and a lovely drinking wine.

Back Label: To Dale Hampton-A picking bin full of Hugs & Thanks to You, would not be enough...