

Davis Family Vineyards

2003 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley

The pursuit of creating the perfect Pinot Noir is like the pursuit of the Holy Grail; a few of us believe it exists and we wake up at dawn every day to move one step closer in our quest!

To quote from the Oscar winning screenplay *Sideways*:

MAYA: *Why are you so into Pinot? It's like a thing with you.*

MILES: *I don't know. It's a hard grape to grow. It's thin-skinned, temperamental, and ripens early. It's not a survivor like Cabernet that can grow anywhere and thrive even when neglected. Pinot needs constant care and attention and in fact can only grow in specific little tucked-away corners of the world. And only the most patient and nurturing growers can do it really, can tap into Pinot's most fragile, delicate qualities. Only when someone has taken the time to truly understand its potential can Pinot be coaxed into its fullest expression. And when that happens, its flavors are the most haunting and brilliant and subtle and thrilling and ancient on the planet.*

Miles sums it up pretty well. In this discussion I am not talking about just making Pinot Noir, I am talking about creating great Pinot Noir. What is the difference between good Pinot Noir and great Pinot Noir? Balance and complexity!

The balance of rich, dark, full bodied aromas and flavors like black cherries, chocolate, coffee and forest floor mixed with the elegant, sensual perfume of raspberries, brown spices and sweet cherry blossoms...textures that are full and mouthcoating yet silky and lasting...pairing with any dish or perfect on its own!

When true harmony exists, the sensual layers seem to unfold forever! The bigger question lies in how to make not just good, but great Pinot Noir. Simple: everything matters! There are literally hundreds of small steps, none the answer by themselves but all important in the final product...risking oversimplification these are my top 5 rules to keep on course toward greatness.

1) Only grow on sites destined for greatness; hillsides planted with north/south row direction, close proximity to the coast to help lengthen the growing season as long as possible to maximize those complex flavors, matching the exact rootstocks and a variation of clones specific to the soils and location.

2) Precision viticulture; I do not farm 7 acres, I farm 9274 vines - my philosophy is for every vine to get at least 12 touches during the growing season from pruning to harvest,...things like thinning the crop to boost concentration, positioning shoots to expose clusters to maximum sunlight and airflow, then at the end of the season perhaps positioning them to shade the fruit and protect it from shrivel in the harsh August sun; "field sorting"-cutting off any clusters not exactly perfect, meaning raisins or bird damaged, or any grapes not on exact ripening pace with the others, etc.

3) Pick on the right &*\$#@* day!! There is a day that is exactly the day; as ripe and supple as possible without crossing that very fine line of overripe - Pinot will show it if you pick too early or too late, it takes an obsessive, focused, fanatical instinct to hit that day!

4) Work meticulously smelling, tasting, and talking to the wines each week to be able to handle the wine as little as possible, every action will show and perhaps reduce the prized complexity - never pump the wine - use only gravity or inert gas to gently move the wine.

5) Be an expert at blending - know what true greatness is, through trial and experience use only techniques that work seamlessly with your vineyards, keep each section of the vineyard separate, then through accurate yet artistic trial - assemble the final magical blend that expresses the vintage, that

special vineyard location, and the lust of the Pinot Goddess! Perfect Pinot may be elusive but when discovered and embraced, it is truly heaven.

This 2003 Pinot Noir has already received several scores over 90 points from various publications including a score of "Superb 95 - 100" from Gerald Boyd of the San Francisco *Chronicle* and Wine Review On-line in his review of over 20 Russian River Pinot Noirs but we want you to be the judge!

I purposely sent this wine in November because Pinot Noir is the perfect wine for Thanksgiving! It is not too overpowering for the turkey, it has a wonderful spicy note that matches with stuffing and sweet potatoes, creates an outstanding pairing to the cranberries and that velvety texture and balance seem to set the mood just right for the times of Family and good Friends that make this time of year so special! --- PS--A glass of this Pinot Noir with a turkey sandwich, layered with the extras... Oh yeah!!

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