

This is our third vintage from this stellar 240-acre vineyard, which is mostly planted to the Burgundian varieties of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The vineyard was planted in 1998 and is sub-divided into thirty-five distinctly different blocks – each with a rootstock, varietal and clone that has been painstakingly matched to the soil and aspect of the site. As is typical in Santa Rita Hills, the vineyard is shrouded each morning by ocean fog, which burns off mid-morning and is followed by cooling sea breezes from the Pacific Ocean. A paradise for Pinot!



With the 2004 vintage, we were thrilled to be able to obtain fruit from a block that was newly “online” – that is, 2004 was the first year that fruit was harvested from these plantings. Block 16 is in a very interesting hillside bowl, with a south/southeast orientation, great drainage and interesting soils interlaced with limestone. The block is planted to clone 667, which is known as one of the “Dijon” clones. We harvested the fruit once it started to show those “spicy” notes, which tell us that the fruit is physiologically ripe, and all components in balance. Because of a heat wave in early September, we harvested in the cooler hours of the very early morning.

The grapes were then trucked down to Flying Goat Grand Central in the “Lompoc Wine Ghetto”, where we de-stemmed the grapes into 1.5T open top fermenters. After a few days of a cool-soak, the wine was inoculated with cultured yeast to begin fermentation. We then carefully mixed the skins back into the fermenting juice by “punching down” 2-3 times each day, which allowed us to control the temperature of the fermentation and extract all the lovely color, flavors and tannin from the skins. Upon completion of primary fermentation, the new wine was gravity racked into French oak barrels, of which 20% were new. Malolactic fermentation occurred in the barrel, and the wine aged for ten months. A light filtration followed racking, and the wine was bottled in August of 2005.

Classic Pinot Noir aromas abound, with blueberry notes predominant, followed by caramel and a smokiness typical of Rancho Santa Rosa. The blueberry notes are echoed on the palate and joined by dark cherry, black plum and spice notes of white pepper and wild sage. The layered complexity of this wine then adds some cedar notes, leather and a mineral earthiness. The texture is silky and seductive, and the finish lingering with nuances of bittersweet chocolate and lovely, soft tannins tempting your palate for just one more taste. Great structure, nice balance and a “prettiness” on the palate make this a wine that is surely enjoyable now, but will age well over the next 5-8 years. Only 229 cases produced.