

Las Jaras Wines

2022 MENDOCINO RIDGE PINOT NOIR

Mariah Vineyards | Mendocino Ridge

We have a deep love of Burgundy and new world pinot noir made with a focus on freshness and balance. When we decided to make a Pinot Noir in 2018, we first looked for a site in Mendocino Ridge appellation, but ultimately turned to Oregon when we could not find a good, organic fruit source. In 2019 we found a great source of Pinot Noir in the appellation on the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean. This appellation is also known as Islands in the Sky because the vineyards sit on high elevation ridges above the fog line. There are great sites on the first ridge, but it is often too cold to get consistent results unless you are making sparkling wine. We are also of the mind that Pinot Noir needs to achieve a bit of ripeness (but not too much) so the wine is not green tasting.

We love high elevation vineyards because the nighttime temperatures are relatively warmer and the low diurnal shift creates Pinot Noir with beautiful balance. It allows us to pick the grapes earlier to preserve freshness and create a wine that shows restraint. The 2022 vintage was marked by a very late season at the vineyard which really put us on high alert when we got some high temperatures over 115F. We were able to get the grapes into the winery before a rain came that would have destroyed the crop. This wine has a ruby color but with medium light intensity. The nose shows subtle red plum, savory spice, damp earth and anise. This wine always smells like the vineyard. The palate excites with boysenberry, blueberry in the attack and layers of raspberry and red licorice with a frame of lime and slate mineral. It is very delicate on the palate with very fine tannin to support the wine. What we like the most about this wine is the nerve and the freshness. It is also very linear without the huge blockyness or saltyness you see in many California pinot noirs. This wine, like all of our Pinot Noirs will really benefit from a few years of cellaring.



Vineyard

Mariah Vineyards is family owned and farmed by Dan and Vicki Dooling. It is beyond sustainability and organic as the first Savory Institute Global Land to Market Verified regenerative vineyard. The vineyard is situated at 2400 feet elevation on a remote ridge near Point Arena and has black loam soils. The vineyard was originally planted to Syrah, Zinfandel and Merlot starting in 1980. The Syrah and Merlot blocks have been replaced with Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay.

Winemaking

The grapes were picked on September 14th at night. After they were picked, Dan Dooling, who owns and farms the vineyard, loaded the grapes onto his beautiful 1960's Peterbilt and trucked them down to the winery. We chose to bring in 3 tons of Dijon clone 115 and 1.5 tons of Pommard clone pinot noir. Since this is mountain fruit, we are always aware of the wonky chemistry. Mountain fruit tends to have a high pH and high acidity which may lead to a salty tasting wine. Many winemakers will add lots of acid to pinot noir when it hits the tank in this situation but we don't. Our strategy is to let the fermentation drop out all of the extra potassium naturally. This strategy is successful for us and leads to a wine with pretty normal chemistry and no saltiness!

The grapes were destemmed and added into the tank. We warmed the tank to get the fermentation to start naturally and then let it ferment at cool temperatures with very gentle cap movements. This wine fermented very quickly and we held it for a couple of days to warm temperatures (80F) to get a bit more extraction. Afterward, we drained the tank and transferred the free-run wines to new and used large-format barrels. The press wines were aged separately and bulked out. The free-run wine was very light in color as usual. Pinot noir puts on color when it ages in barrel and now it is a beautiful jewel. We left the wine to age on its lees until one month before bottling (14 months after harvest), when it was racked clean. Before bottling, we racked the wine clean from tank to tank, and we were able to bottle without fining or filtration.

Label Design by Alex Goose

Production: 316 cases | ABV: 12.66% | TA: 6.57 g/L | pH: 3.68 | VA: 0.92 g/L | DCO2: 719 ppm
Total SO2: 74 ppm | RS: 1.0 g/L | Turbidity at bottling: 38.8 NTU