



2009 Vintage Fall Release Letter

2009 Sonoma Coast: The Season

Mother Nature blessed the Sonoma Coast in 2009, in stark contrast to the previous year, giving us ideal growing conditions. Late winter and early spring were marked by mild, dry weather. While farming is never stress-free, the weather conspired to create a growing season which perfectly suited the style of wines that we strive to create.

Temperatures were cooler than in recent vintages, with fewer heat spikes above 90 degrees in July and August. While a long, temperate season can reward a grower with complex flavors and lower alcohol, as September approached some winemakers began to worry as ripeness levels lagged behind.

Fortuitously, a burst of heat in September kicked harvest into high gear. While one rainstorm blew through the Sonoma Coast in the same month, it was just light enough to settle the dust. The overall cool weather combined with warm afternoons allowed the grapes to ripen at an even pace. This produced grapes with uncharacteristically small berries; in most cases they were less than one-quarter inch in diameter. Smaller berries result in high skin-to-juice ratios, creating wines of unusual depth and concentration.

Never rushed, we were able to fine tune our vineyard activities and pick when flavors were at their peak. Harvest began on August 17th and while it was a small pick, it set a record as our earliest to date. We brought in the last 2.5 tons on September 30th which still maintained excellent fruit quality and bright acidity.

The grapes were meticulously sorted on the crush pad and fermented in small lots, handcrafted with minimal intervention in the cellar.

The Wines

2009 Falstaff, Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (13.1% Alc): With a colder climate than Burgundy and located just over one mile from Freestone in the Sebastopol Hills, Falstaff exhibits everything I personally love about Pinot Noir. Aromatics, beauty, finesse, balance and purity. Unfortunately the yields were smaller than any other vineyard I worked with in 2009 (less than 1 ton per acre) so while the quality was there, the quantity was not. During fermentation, 25% of the stems were retained which allowed this unique terroir to show off its full, complex character which includes a black pepper and spice cake nose and penetrating dark cherry fruit palate all of which are framed by fine grained tannins. With just 13.1% alcohol and generous natural acidity, Falstaff should have no problem aging for 10 plus years. If you let curiosity get the better of you and open a bottle anytime soon, please be sure to decant so as to introduce as much oxygen as possible

2009 McDougall Ranch, Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (13.9% Alc): Perched on top of a 900 foot ridge, a short 1.5 miles from the Pacific Ocean, there is a reason I saved McDougall as my last 2009 Pinot Noir to be released. I was blessed when it came to the quality of this coastal terroir in 2009 as it was qualitatively above anything I had ever worked with in the past. From the moment the grapes were picked, until the day the wine was sealed with a cork, I worked meticulously to maintain what Mother Nature had given me. Unlike Falstaff, McDougall's yields were bountiful and I am proud to say that for me, this is the single best wine I have produced to date. With exceptionally tight, high quality clusters, I chose to push my luck and ferment by retaining 50% whole clusters (in other words I left half of the stalks on with the grapes during fermentation). This created incredibly complexity and power yet while maintaining a vast amount of finesse. One taster said over dinner recently, "this literally dances on my tongue like a ballerina yet has the power of a body builder." As for my own description of the wine, every time I have tasted it, it has left me speechless... In truth and in two words, the best description I can give this wine would be **complete & balanced**. It is not to be missed and will age easily for 20+ years. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do. Try to be patient.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Kutch', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jamie Kutch