



2010 Vintage Fall Release Letter

2012 Current Vintage update:

I wake up each morning in a nervous furor as this harvest is just 30 days away. This is my Olympic event, and six weeks after it starts, it ends, and I will be forced to wait another entire year to compete again. Like any great athlete, I run through my play book adapting to Mother Nature and what she provides. I watch her tempo, her bluffs, and her demeanor and use my experiences to adapt to an ever changing landscape. This year, my eighth vintage, she is playing gracefully, with poise and providing a rather steady show. That is exactly what any farmer and vintner hopes for, but we all know that the last month is crucial, and she has the final say in how this game ends.

Initially a cool Spring began a slow tempo to the vintage until labor day, when bloom commenced in most of our vineyards with a warm spout of heat. This created a great “set” and a healthy crop devoid of moisture, which is so important. A mix of warm and cool bursts of temperature has provided an unmarred growing season; and while this year there is a very serious labor shortage, fortunately we haven’t been affected.

The winery is buzzing as tanks are being wired, glycol lines tested and fittings purchased. It’s an understatement to say I’m excited with so many new tools at my ready. When it came to equipping the new 20K foot facility, my essentials included: twenty four, 1 ton tanks which were custom built along with cat walks. Three, 2 and 3 ton wooden vats direct from an artisan craftsman outside the town of Beaune (Burgundy, France) with whom I visited and ordered through a French speaking interpreter. And finally, five various capacity pressurized tanks so the wines can be bottled without the use of a pump. I hope many of you come and visit someday soon.



2010 Sonoma Coast: The Season

Winemaking is really all about the weather. We can talk about barrel selection and gentle cellar practices but ultimately, the wine is what Mother Nature gives us.

In 2010, she gave us challenges. Northern California experienced record-breaking low temperatures in the spring, coupled with early season rains, which resulted in late bud-break. Buckets of rain in May, twice the historic average, left flowering vines susceptible to shatter, a condition that reduces the crop and can result in inconsistent berry size. Cool weather persisted throughout the summer, with meteorologists reporting the second coldest July in Sonoma over the past 50 years!

The cool, moist weather triggered bountiful canopy growth, creating the perfect conditions for mildew and botrytis. To combat these constant threats, we dropped crop and in some vineyards pulled leaves, opening up the canopy for sun exposure, better airflow and to make fungicide sprays more effective.

And then everything changed. The heat arrived on August 23rd. Temperatures pushed first into the high 90s and then cracked 100 for several days, breaking records around Northern California. Many grapes were sunburned or just withered in the heat. Some clusters were literally cooked. This necessitated multiple passes through the rows for crew to drop both burnt and under-ripe grapes. While the level of damage varied from region to region, in some vineyards we source fruit from we saw an incredible 30% drop in yields. As we usually buy our Pinot Noir fruit by the acre, our costs skyrocketed!

The warm weather continued into September and the threat of rain returned. We picked 70% of our grapes in 3 days, from September 27TH to the 29TH. Once in the cellar, we treated the fruit as carefully as always. While the grapes had fully developed flavors with high acidity and low sugars, not all of the seeds were completely ripe brown. We chose gentle extraction techniques to avoid incorporating any bitter tannin from green seeds into the fermentations.

The Wines

2010 Falstaff, Sonoma Coast, Pinot Noir (13.25% Alc): A real knock out nose keeps ones full attention focused on the aromatic fireworks that this wine processes. Abundant layers create a complex sensory experience with notes of herb & spice along with berries & fruit in the foreground. The rich density of material keeps the wine balanced and weightless. A great accomplishment as this vineyard and vintage created something really special for us.

2010 McDougall Ranch, Sonoma Coast, Pinot Noir (13.85% Alc): Like an orchestra, the nose provides a medley of high, medium & low tones of fruit complexities. The palate interlaced flavors of earth & fruit both of which have been carefully framed by a mild kiss of French oak. A great satiating experience with charm, balance & harmony. This is a powerful yet refined example from this great vineyard.

Please allow all wines to rest for a few months after delivery to resolve the shock from shipping and bottling.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.



Jamie Kutch