



Spring Release Letter

"A great wine is crafted in the vineyards, not in the cellar." ~ Henri Mayer

2011 Sonoma Coast: The Season

The above statement couldn't hold more truth whether it be in Burgundy, where Mayer crafted his magnificent wines, or here in California, where we strive for our own. Mother Nature was in charge (as always!) in 2011, yet by intuiting her next move, we were prepared for everything she threw at us. It was the coldest vintage I have yet to experience and while cold vintages can be wrought with challenges, they can also be great. A cold season equates to needing more time to ripen but that doesn't hold truth if there is a small quantity of crop on the vine as was the case in 2011. It's best correlated by thinking of tomato plants. Fewer tomatoes equates to sooner to pick, with ripeness. More tomatoes equates to later to pick, with less ripe. The blessing in 2011 was a small crop of great quality.

An unusually wet and cool spring delayed the start of the 2011 growing season. Flowering and fruit set, a period that always has a profound influence on the construction of the vintage, was especially fraught in 2011 when a June storm hit and "shattered" a portion of our undeveloped crop.

"Shatter" occurs when rain interrupts the vine's reproductive cycle. Normally, grapevines self-pollinate, which results in the development of grape clusters. In 2011, when many vines had started to drop their pollen seeds down onto their eggs, rains interrupted this delicate cycle. The rain washed away some of the pollen, and in some cases prevented a little cap on the stamen from popping off, in effect shattering the cluster as seen in this picture.

The shatter increased the overall quality of the vintage but reduced the quantity. With a smaller crop, vines can focus their resources on ripening fewer berries, often leading to fruit with greater intensity. This was the first significant event of the vintage and, while it didn't determine the true final quality, it did have a strong influence on it.

Summertime temperatures remained atypically cool for the rest of the growing season, rarely rising above 90°F. This encouraged steady, slow development, which contributed to the greatness of the vintage. Finally, in mid-September, a welcome burst of temperatures began to reach the mid-90s for nearly a week. It was during this warm spike that we



began picking vineyards as quickly as we could. This turned out to be a wise decision, as the hot weather didn't hold and the forecast called for significant rain in early October. Fortunately, on Oct. 3rd when the rain began, we had less than 6% of our fruit still hanging on the vines. A few days later, on Oct. 10th, another storm swept through and brought with it hot, humid conditions, which caused an outburst of botrytis (rot). We were fortunate to have avoided a dramatic end to a truly wonderful season.

Our vineyards were harvested in the following order:

September 21 *Campbell Ranch, Sonoma (1st pick)*

September 22 *McDougall Ranch, Sonoma*

September 23 *Sonoma Stage, Sonoma*

September 23 *Savoy, Anderson (1st pick)*

September 26 *Campbell Ranch, (2nd pick)*

September 26 *Savoy, Anderson (2nd pick)*

October 2 *Le Jons, Sonoma*

October 15 *Falstaff, Sonoma*



The Wines

The tasting notes below were written by Rusty Gaffney MD, The Prince of Pinot www.princeofpinot.com

2011 Sonoma Coast, Pinot Noir 12.8%: 7-day cold soak, native fermentations, 75% de-stemmed (twice daily punch down) and 25% whole cluster (crushed by foot), gravity movement of all wine, aged sur lie 10 months in 30% new and 70% used French oak barrels. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Beguiling aromas of black cherries, clove, nutmeg, orchid and redwood cask with aromas dancing in and out over time in the glass. Earthy flavors of black cherries, plums and black raspberries with a hint of oak anise in the background. Not the finish of the vineyard-designates, but very appealing now. Still fine the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.

2011 Savoy Vineyard, Anderson Valley, Pinot Noir 12.9%: 7-day cold soak, native fermentations, 50% de-stemmed (twice daily punch downs) and 50% whole cluster (crushed by foot), aged sur lie 10 months without racking in 100% neutral oak. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark red fruits, rose petals, jasmine, fruit leather. Moderately rich essence of black raspberries with an earthy soul. Caressing tannins, very smooth and polished, with some delicacy, finishing with uncommon persistence without weight.

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

Thank you for your continued interest and support. Drink well!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Kutch'.

Jamie Kutch