



2008 Vintage Release Letter

If Pinot had a voice, you would have heard shrieks up and down the North Coast of Sonoma in Spring, 2008!

January 18, 2010: This letter marks my fourth release as a winemaker and completes yet another chapter for my handcrafted Pinot Noirs. 2008 was the most difficult vintage I have experienced to date, as Mother Nature wreaked havoc in many forms and caused me many sleepless nights. Yet, after meticulous work and worry in both the vineyard and winery, I am very proud of the single resulting wine.

2008 Sonoma Coast, California

Winter '08 saw an incredibly dry season across Northern California. While this condition often helps to stunt the growth and intensify the flavor of Pinot Noir, Spring brought with it a wealth of unexpected and highly unfavorable conditions. The month of April saw 20+ days of freezing temperatures as the North Coast experienced the worst cold-snap in over 30 years. The result was the destruction of thousands of Pinot Noir buds and primary shoots whose damage ranged from 10% to 80%, depending on the vineyard. While secondary buds usually create new shoots several weeks later when frost sets in, the damage on the primary buds was done and the delicate balance disturbed as the ripening between early buds which weren't frost affected and secondary buds which had been affected was in flux.

The goal of growers was to return balance back to the vineyard by focusing less on the resulting yields and more on canopy management. During veraison (when the fruit changes color from green to purple), it was imperative to drop all of the fruit that wasn't coloring in unison with the rest, as it would be drastically behind in ripening.

Unfortunately, some vineyards were beyond hope. Le Jons, one of my six contributing vineyards, saw an 80% kill rate. While a small amount of fruit was harvested, the quality wasn't there. Therefore, the finished wine was sold off in barrel.

The month of May switched gears. Instead of frost, we endured several 100+ degree days, as a heat spike mid-month surprised forecasters and farmers alike. The vines, having already fought through a dry and frosty winter, were in a vulnerable state, and the elevated temperatures prevented ripening. Fortunately, the spike was short lived and growth was soon back on track.

Our problems weren't over yet. In mid-June we were hit with a serious thunderstorm with lightening strikes that caused over 100 fires throughout Mendocino County, just north of Sonoma. The smoke was thick for nearly a month, as the fires blazed amidst the dry forest terrain. There was fear that the smoke would taint the delicate skinned Pinot Noir, but that could not be ascertained until the wines were made

2008 began with the production of 850 cases from six different vineyards. However, after finishing and tasting the wines, I chose to release only half, (420 cases) under the Kutch label. The rest was sold off as bulk wine in barrel, as the quality did not meet the high standards of Kutch Wines. Of the six vineyards from which I sourced my fruit, Le Jons and Monument Tree had severe frost damage, while McDougall and Monument Tree had smoke taint. Only the remaining three vineyards - Rogers Creek, Sonoma Stage and a site in Chileno Valley made the cut. Each is located in the Southern Sonoma Coast.

As in the past, roughly 30% new French oak was used for the élevage. Primary fermentation was accomplished natively, without the use of laboratory yeast. The wines finished their malolactic fermentation natively, in barrel. I believe that the use of native yeast adds an extra dimension of complexity to the resultant wine. Finally, the wines were aged in cask for 17 months, with 14 months on the lees (sur lie). During the 14th month, the wine was assembled in tank with the use of gravity and returned to barrel after mélange. Bottling is scheduled for February 1st.

2008 Sonoma Coast, Pinot Noir: 420 cases

A blend of three Sonoma Coast vineyards, this wine clocks in at 13.95% alcohol. It's forward, easy to consume, and has a compelling mix of red and black fruits. The flavors are pure in profile, and there is an abundance of character which compliments its lingering finish. I would suggest decanting if you open it in the first year. I would also recommend allowing the wine 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