



## 2009 Vintage Release Letter

**January 1, 2011:** *This letter marks my fifth release as a Vintner and completes yet another chapter for my handcrafted Pinot Noirs. As I feel these are the most polished wines I have yet to produce, I am truly excited to share them with you.*

### Priorities

Careening down a mountain with six tons of Pinot Noir fruit strapped in the bed of a truck would certainly test the mettle of most winemakers, but rarely does it threaten life, limb and most importantly, livelihood. At 10:00 a.m. on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, I would climb into that exact truck which was loaded to the gills with 12 bins of Pinot Noir fruit freshly harvested from McDougall Ranch. I was carefully shepherding this precious cargo back to the winery along windy Sonoma Coast mountain roads when, as I approached Meyers Grade, I noticed a sign that read “20% Grade Ahead Trucks Use Lower Gear.” For a split second I considered my priorities. If the brakes were to fail, should I ditch approximately \$30,000 of Pinot Noir fruit and jump out of the truck or should I risk possible physical harm to save what looked like the greatest fruit I had ever harvested? Moments later this question would become all too real when I pumped the brakes not only once but twice, then three times and nothing....

Fortunately, I was able to maintain control of the truck guiding it safely down the mountain with low gear. I finally rolled to a stop at the bottom of the Grade with my prized Pinot Noir fruit safe and sound. Luckily, the rest of the 2009 growing season and harvest were markedly less dramatic.



### 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 Sonoma County 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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

I was excited to attend La Paulée, the annual American celebration of the wines of Burgundy, which was held in San Francisco earlier this year. Fortunate enough to sit with Domaine Dujac's winemaker Jeremy Seysses at a private dinner, we struck up conversation and he asked to taste my wine. I had a barrel sample of the 2009 McDougall Ranch with me, which I happily shared with Jeremy. I was floored when he later posted this unsolicited review on Twitter:

*"'09 Kutch: One of the more exciting US pinots I've had in a long time. Nice tannins, going places. Real sense of direction."*

There were several 'firsts' in 2009 -- First time harvesting fruit from famed Savoy Vineyard in Anderson Valley (I have been nurturing a relationship with the owner since 2006 and my persistence finally paid off.) First grapes from noted Falstaff Vineyard (the tiniest berries I've ever seen!)

These milestones contributed to a total production of 1,200 cases of Pinot Noir in 2009. I will be offering the wines in two separate offerings, one now and one in the fall.

**2009 Anderson Valley, Pinot Noir:** The most elegant wine in the range. Red fruits lead to fresh, round, pure, yet detailed flavors that possess lovely acidity and offers fine length and impeccable balance.

**2009 Sonoma Coast, Pinot Noir:** Compared to the Anderson Valley wine, this is much deeper and darker with complex yet remarkably primary black fruit notes that range broadly. It's very "Sonoma" and packed with rich opulent flavors which maintain impeccable balance from start to finish.

**2009 Savoy Vineyard, Anderson Valley, Pinot Noir:** Medium weight flavors are rich, sweet, elegant and beautifully persistent which complements the racy acidity. Food is a must with this wine.

**2009 Falstaff, Pinot Noir:** This wine will be released to you in the Fall.

**2009 McDougall Ranch, Pinot Noir:** This wine will be released to you in the Fall.

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