

Ancien Wines

1998 Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir

STEINER VINEYARD



ABOUT THE VINEYARD...

Perched atop Sonoma Mountain at 1000 feet elevation, on the cool northwestern slope, Steiner Vineyard is a mere 17 miles from the ocean. Dave Steiner planted his first grapes up here in 1973 - making him a pioneer of the region. Seeing the unique qualities of grapes grown in this outstanding area, Dave (together with Patrick Campell of Laurel Glen) was a driving force in creating the Sonoma Mountain Appellation. While it remains sparsely planted in comparison to other well known appellations, the proven quality of the grapes have created high demand among winemakers.

The soils vary through the vineyard changing from clay loamy stuff with fractured rhyolite to an austere rocky area that Dave theorizes was "probably an ancient rock slide" composed of alluvial soils intermixed with rocks and gravel. All soils are very old and leached of nutrients giving them low fertility.

It is a truly spectacular vista point but a challenging place to grow grapes (as are most great Pinot noir areas). As the vines wake up after their fall dormancy, they are greeted to the cold, harsh, maritime breezes that sweep through the area unimpeded by the lower hills in the coastal range. This makes for sometimes problematic fruit set resulting in low yields.

ABOUT THE WINE...

The grapes were 100% destemmed into an open top fermenter and cold soaked for 4 days. We punched down by hand 4 times per day at the beginning of fermentation. This was decreased to 2 times per day by the end of fermentation. We inoculated with RC 212 yeast (a Burgundian isolate) and fermented warm, peaking about 92°F. The wine given a post-fermentation maceration, with a total skin contact time of 14 days. The wine was aged entirely in French barrels from the Tonnellerie Remond cooperage, of which 50% were new. The wine was racked once prior to bottling. Wine movements were made by pushing with inert gas all the way until bottling. Wine analysis: Alc. 13.7 %, pH 3.66, ta 6.1 g/l, r.s. 0.01 g/l. 56 cases produced.

TASTING NOTES...

Very aromatic with exotic spices, sage, violets, dried roses, truffle nuances, and black tea. Black cherry and blueberry fruit predominate on the palate framed nicely by subtle vanillin, cocoa and toasted oak. The wine is velvety in texture and finishes with very long, lingering flavors echoing the floral aromas in the nose.