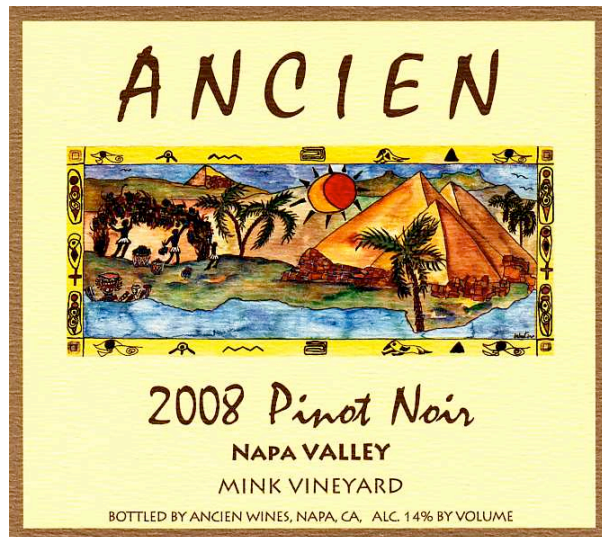


# Ancien Wines

## 2008 Napa Valley Pinot Noir

### MINK VINEYARD



#### **ABOUT THE VINEYARD...**

The Mink Vineyard is located next door to the winery, in an area known locally as Coombsville. Open to the same morning fogs and afternoon breezes that cool Carneros to the west, Coombsville is consistently one of the coolest pockets in Napa. Mink sits on a level bench just leeward of a knoll that slows down the prevailing maritime winds, allowing cooler air to settle, and making Mink's mesoclimate a couple degrees cooler, even, than the surrounding hills. But the real secret to Mink's explosive flavors, smooth, mouth-coating minerality, comes from the soil. Underneath the top few feet of alluvial clays and cobblestones (typical throughout the southern reaches of Napa), is a layer of compressed volcanic ash, called tufa. The tufa drains the top soils, storing moisture in rich clays underneath. The vines are able, with some work, to grow roots into the tufa layer, accessing moisture during the long, dry growing season. In a typical year, Mink can be practically dry-farmed.

#### **ABOUT THE VINTAGE...**

2008 was a lesson in the primary importance of balance in the vineyard. A drier than usual winter exacerbated the existing drought conditions, and a late spring series of frosty mornings cut down the yields considerably. A summer full of warm mornings coddled the fruit as it developed and made for an earlier than average harvest. The lower yields made it possible for the vines to withstand the stress of the drought and deliver healthy, ripe fruit full of concentrated fruit flavor. The vines achieved this level of balance naturally, and what started out like difficult year resolved itself into a very solid vintage. Unfortunately, yields in this vineyard were extremely low. The frosts damaged over half of the young fruiting buds, leaving very little fruit to work with in this already limited monopole.

#### **ABOUT THE WINE...**

The grapes were destemmed into small, one-ton, open-top fermenters, where we employed a submerged cap device during the first half of fermentation. This helps to extract the rich flavors and deep color that we expect from this vineyard. We finished the fermentation with traditional hand punch downs, and aged the wine in Billon cooperage, a barrel that tends to sit subtly underneath the delicate fruit, lifting aromas without crowding them. The wines were racked once, gently, prior to bottling. Grapes, must, and wines were moved using gravity through to the barrel and using inert gas through racking and bottling. 74 cases produced.

#### **TASTING NOTES...**

Elegance is the mainstay of this vintage from the Mink Vineyard. A lighter, brighter than normal nose is generous and fruity, with aromatics of blueberry and cassis interwoven with lilac and lavender. A note of wild mushroom and cocoa roots the aromas in the soil. The palate is all dark fruits, brambly berries and black raspberry, spiced again with cocoa and cardamon. As usual, the acidity is bright and crisp, and the chalky fine tannins linger long and coat the palate with a distinctive minerality. Aging will emphasize the silky elegance of this wine all the more, while also introducing darker, earthier layers.

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