

FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

Dedicated farming, Masterful Winemaking, Profound Wines

2017 PINOTAGE · FORT ROSS VINEYARD · FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST



From our mountain vineyard that overlooks the Sonoma Coast in the Fort Ross-Seaview American Viticultural Area, Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery produces limited quantities of single vineyard, Estate grown, cool-climate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinotage. With spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean less than one mile away, the vineyard is divided into 32 separate blocks, one-half to two acres in size, that range in elevation from 1700 down to 1200 feet above sea level. Owners, Lester and Linda Schwartz with their small crew began preparing the 52 acre vineyard in 1994. It took them 4 years of preparation before they could begin planting. The year 2000 marked the first vintage from the Fort Ross Vineyard.

VINTAGE: The 2017 growing season welcomed generous rainfall for the first several months of the year. After five drought years the soils were hydrated and our irrigation pond was brimming. Bud-break occurred in mid-March followed by a warmer than usual spring which brought an early fruit-set, fortunately, by then the rains had subsided. The summer enjoyed mild to average, 80–85° temperatures, allowing the grapes to develop ideal complexity and flavors with optimal development. During the first week of September, all of California experienced a heat spike, with this the first few blocks were harvested. Temperatures then mellowed during the remainder of harvest, allowing each variety to be picked at the ideal time. Pinot Noir was unhurriedly harvested between August 31–September 19, one of the many advantages of growing grapes overlooking the cool Pacific Ocean. Chardonnay was picked September 10–14 and finally the slower ripening Pinotage on October 3rd. Fortunately, all of our fruit was picked prior to the heartbreaking 2017 Sonoma fires. The vintage brought in lower yields, producing wines with great depth and concentration, while the hydrated soils delivered vibrant aromatics and acidity.

WINEMAKING: Pinotage was first developed in South Africa in 1925 by crossing the two vinifera varieties, Pinot Noir and Cinsault which was called Hermitage at the time. Our Pinotage consists of two Fort Ross proprietary clones, MM1 and MM3, developed at UC Davis from budwood personally imported by Fort Ross from one of the most select Pinotage vineyards in South Africa. The grapes for this Pinotage were handpicked during the cool hours of the night in small two-gallon picking trays. After hand sorting, the fruit was cold soaked for several days and fermented in a single 5 ton tank. During fermentation, the wine was pumped over and sparingly punched down, to carefully control the amount of extraction from the thicker skins in order to produce a well-balanced, age-worthy Pinotage. Shortly after pressing, the wine was barreled in a combination of 15% new and 85% neutral French oak for 14 months.

TASTING NOTES: While Pinotage shares many traits with Pinot Noir, there is an earthy brambleness that distinguishes it from its more famous cousin. This legendary South African varietal is a true rarity in California and our 2017 Pinotage is in itself a special wine. Displaying a deep ruby hued core, this wine has a slight haze, which speaks to its being bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Slightly wound upon removing the cork, the wine slowly starts to express itself as it begins to breathe, through bold notes of plum, ripe blueberry, new leather, and cedar pencil shavings. The palate dazzles with a delicate tension of juicy black fruits with an array of spicy, savory characteristics. Firm, persistent tannin surrounds a core of baked dark berries, licorice, cocoa, and freshly ground coffee. This wine has incredible structure and a long-lasting finish that is sure to age gracefully well into the next decade. Our Pinotage pairs beautifully with exotic spices, rich Italian food, smoked and grilled meats, anything from a wood fired oven and for the adventurous – sweet berry desserts.

COMPOSITION:	100% Pinotage	AGING:	10 months in French oak;
APPELLATION:	Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast		15% new
ESTATE GROWN:	Fort Ross Vineyard	HARVESTED:	October 3 rd , 2017
SELECTIONS:	Proprietary Clones MM1 and MM3	BOTTLING:	November, 2018
CASES PRODUCED:	195 cases, 750 ml		Unfiltered & Unfiltered
WINEMAKER:	Jeff Pisoni		

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