

FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

~VARIETIES, CLONES & HERITAGE FIELD SELECTIONS ~

When Linda and Lester Schwartz first planted their vineyard in the 1990s, their goal was to select varieties, heritage field selections, clones and rootstocks that would help capture the essence of their site. In addition to varietal typicity, they wanted their Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays to reflect the soils and climate of their unique coastal mountain vineyard.

In the Fort Ross Vineyard there are more old heritage field selections than squeaky clean certified clones that have a tendency to overcrop and often produce larger berries with diluted flavors. With the heritage field selections the small bunches and the tiny berries yield a light crop and produce wine of great flavor intensity and vibrancy.

The Fort Ross Vineyard is planted to three varieties based upon soils and exposure: Pinot Noir (40 acres), Chardonnay (8 acres) and Pinotage (2 acres). The Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were first harvested in 2000; the Pinotage in 2001. Grapes are picked for flavor development and physiological ripeness, not just by the numbers. Sometimes single blocks are harvested several times so that only those grapes with the desired flavor components are selected.

PINOT NOIR ~ 40 acres

The Pinot Noir plantings include old field selections of Calera with its pure and lingering taste profile, Pommard with its elegant structure and Swan with its honeyed richness, as well as Dijon clones 115 and 777 that add vibrant red and black fruit flavors. The vines are planted in areas of lean soil on a variety of rootstocks, depending on soil types and rootstock-scion compatibility.

CHARDONNAY ~ 8 acres

There are some areas of the vineyard where the soils are richer and better suited to Chardonnay than Pinot Noir. For those sections, Lester and Linda planted two very special heritage field selections chosen for their small berries and loose clusters; Old Wente, which is graceful and fruity and Hyde for its sleek structure.

PINOTAGE ~ 2 acres

The Pinotage consists of two Fort Ross proprietary clones, MM1 and MM3, developed from bud wood personally imported from one of the most select Pinotage vineyards in South Africa. Pinotage was first developed in South Africa in 1925 by crossing the two vinifera varieties, Pinot Noir and Cinsault, known in South Africa as Hermitage, hence the name Pinotage. Fort Ross was the first vineyard to import bud wood into California through the Foundation Plant Services at UC Davis, after the latter was assigned quarantine and certification duties in 1994. The Pinotage plant material was kept at UC Davis for five years and took three years to field graft.