

FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

2011 CHARDONNAY · FORT ROSS VINEYARD · FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

OVERVIEW

From our mountain vineyard that overlooks the Sonoma Coast and now part of the new 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 30 separate blocks, one-half to two acres in size, that rapidly fall from 1700 down to 1200 feet above sea level. Owners, Lester and Linda Schwartz and their small crew began preparing the 50 acre vineyard in 1994. It took them 4 years of preparation before they could begin planting the first vines in 1998.

VINTAGE

On the Sonoma Coast we are used to dripping coastal fog and winter rains of up to 125" a year. The growing cycle generally starts late in this cool, maritime climate but the 2011 spring was unusually cold and wet. The vineyard remained dormant until May when the days suddenly grew hot and the vines burst into action three months later than usual. In June, during bloom, the clusters were well positioned on the vines. Then it rained once more resulting in far less cluster development than expected. During the cool summer the grapes did increase their pace to make up for lost time and miraculously developed vibrant flavors at far lower degrees Brix. With some hot weather the sugar levels did increase but still remained far lower than in previous vintages. Unexpected early fall rain, followed by thick fog, caused many vineyards to pick their crop before optimal ripeness. All around Sonoma County were horror stories of rot raging through the vineyards and grapes being picked at 19° Brix. Each of our blocks were left to ripen as long as the grapes remained healthy and made significant gains in flavor. Finally most of the vineyard was picked at about 22° Brix which converts into wine of approximately 13% alcohol. It was going to be a vintage of low alcohol levels. We were fortunate that the wild Sonoma Coast gave us another unexpected gift - time to wait patiently before harvest.

WINEMAKING

The grapes were handpicked during the cool hours of the night in small two-gallon picking trays then hand sorted in the vineyard and gently whole cluster pressed at the winery. After pressing, the juice was put into barrels and underwent primary and malolactic fermentation in a combination of 30% new and 70% used French oak. This discrete use of new oak allowed the fruit to shine. This wine is comprised of small berried old Hyde field selection chosen for its richness and sleek structure and small berried old Wente for its luscious fruit and grace. These heritage field selections have full, complex flavors that are intensified by the small size of both the bunches and the berries.

TASTING NOTES

The hazy pale lemon hue is evidence of subtle stirring of the lees and bottling without fining or filtration. The decadent texture intertwined with electrifying acidity and stoney minerality expresses the high elevation and cool coastal climate. Aromas of lemon tart, butterscotch, clementine, mineral, and marzipan soar from the glass. As the wine touches the palate, Bartlett pear, wet stones and golden plum flavors wrap around the energetic, linear, nervy core. The wine is elegant, with supple texture and a crisp expansive finish. This wine is certain to evolve for years to come.

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| COMPOSITION: | 100% Chardonnay |
| APPELLATION: | Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast |
| ESTATE GROWN: | Fort Ross Vineyard |
| SELECTIONS: | 80% Old Hyde - 20% Wente field selections |
| AGING: | 10 months French; 30% new oak |
| ALCOHOL | 12.8% |
| HARVESTED: | October 2nd & 4th |
| BOTTLING: | August, 2012 - Unfined & Unfiltered |
| RELEASE DATE: | March, 2013 |
| CASES PRODUCED: | 470 cases, 750ml |
| WINEMAKER: | Jeff Pisoni |