

FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

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

OVERVIEW

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 and their small crew began preparing the 55 acre vineyard in 1994. It took them 4 years of preparation before they could begin planting. The 2000 vintage marked the first vintage of Fort Ross Vineyard.

VINTAGE

On the Sonoma Coast we are accustomed to 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, three months later than usual, when the days suddenly grew hot. In June, during bloom, the clusters were well positioned but a single rain resulted in far less cluster development than expected. During the cool summer the grapes did increase their pace to make up for lost time and developed vibrant flavors at far lower degrees Brix. With some hot weather the sugar levels increased but still remained far lower than previous vintages. 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 approximately 22° Brix.

WINEMAKING

Pinotage was first developed in South Africa in 1925 by crossing the two vinifera varieties, Pinot Noir and Cinsault that 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 25% new and 75% neutral French oak.

TASTING NOTES

While Pinotage shares many traits with Pinot Noir, there is an earthy brambleness that distinguishes this varietal. Enticing aromas of fruit driven elderberry, lychee and cassis meld artistically with hints of mocha, sandalwood and licorice in the background. This deep garnet hued Pinotage is composed of mulberry, dark plum and black currant with allspice and saffras all chiming in on the palate. The defined dark berried fruit is in complete harmony with the finely structured tannins, mouth-watering acidity and lengthy, composed finish. The bold textural complexities and intensity pair beautifully with exotic spices, Italian food, as well as smoked and grilled meats. This wine has been patiently cellared until optimal for release.

COMPOSITION:	100% Pinotage
APPELLATION:	Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast
ESTATE GROWN:	Fort Ross Vineyard
SELECTIONS:	Proprietary Clones MM1 and MM3
AGING:	15 months in 100% French oak; 25% new
ALCOHOL	12.5%
HARVESTED:	October 16, 2011
BOTTLED:	January 2013; Unfined & Unfiltered
RELEASE DATE:	Fall, 2016
CASES PRODUCED:	215 cases, 750 ml
WINEMAKER:	Jeff Pisoni