

FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

Dedicated farming, Masterful Winemaking, Profound Wines

2016 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: 2016 was another year of drought throughout California. Fortunately, Fort Ross Vineyard was not affected as the early December rainfall was sufficient to fill our irrigation ponds to capacity and even allowed us to have water at the end harvest. The ideal moderate weather on the coast leading up to harvest was free of heatwaves and rain, allowing the grapes to mature slowly and evenly to reach their optimal development. The Pinot Noir was unhurriedly harvested between September 3 — 20, one of the many advantages of growing grapes overlooking the cool Pacific Ocean. Chardonnay was picked September 17 — 26 and finally the slower ripening Pinotage on September 23 — 28. Our new block of Chardonnay, just off Meyers Grade Road had its first harvest in 2016 and the fruit is showing great promise. The lasting memory of the harvest is a vision of perfect bunches of grapes, with no side wings to delay the ripening, even berry size and a balanced crop hanging on the vines. These wines are vibrant and aromatic with excellent 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 20% new and 80% neutral French oak for 10 months.

TASTING NOTES: While Pinotage shares many traits with Pinot Noir, there is an earthy brambleness that distinguishes it from its more famous cousin. Magnetic aromas of dark berries and lychee fruit are supported by hints of gardenia and white pepper notes. This deep purple Pinotage has a concentrated depth of bold flavors that envelop the palate with tiers of blackberry, loganberry and black plum framed by sassafras and ginger. Prominent dark berry fruit is in complete harmony with the ripe tannins, balanced acidity and long, persistent finish. The layered textural complexities and robust flavors pair beautifully with exotic spices, rich Italian food, smoked and grilled meats, anything from a wood fired oven and for the adventurous - sweet berry desserts. Prior to release, this wine was patiently cellared until optimal, but it will certainly age gracefully for years to come.

COMPOSITION: 100% Pinotage
APPELLATION: Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast
ESTATE GROWN: Fort Ross Vineyard
SELECTIONS: Proprietary Clones MM1 and MM3
AGING: 10 months in French oak; 20% new
HARVESTED: September 23 — 28, 2016
BOTTLING: August, 2017, Unfined & Unfiltered
CASES PRODUCED: 240 cases, 750 ml
WINEMAKER: Jeff Pisoni