



2004 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard

Cases Produced: 412
Harvest Date: 8/27/04
Numbers @ Harvest: 22.5 Brix
Wine Numbers: 12.8% Alc. 3.61 pH No R.S.

The 2004 Pinot Noir crop was, once again, on the small for Santa Barbara County. The exciting news is that the grapes came in a bit early and the sugars were low at maturity compared to previous years. This means that we finally could make a Pinot Noir under 13% alcohol! This hasn't happened in so long, I can't remember the last time. The wine is not only lower alcohol, it is more lean and delicate...the way a young Pinot Noir should taste (not like a Syrah or Zinfandel) The fruit arrived at the winery looking very clean and picture perfect. The 2004 Bien Nacido is pure N block (Martini clone on it's own rootstock, planted 1973) and is just the happy boyish charm Pinot Noir that we have come to expect from this premiere vineyard. The nose holds cherry, plum, blackberry and Chinese five spice. The mouth is extremely well balanced with silky tannins and a long and spicy finish. White pepper is always lingering somewhere in the flavors. This is a very marked characteristics of many red grapes from the Bien Nacido Vineyard.

I gently destemmed (100%) into 4' by 4' by 4' open top fermenters, avoiding the harsh wood tannins from stems. The juice was fermented with Aussmanhausen yeast to retain the fruity components. Punch down routines were performed to maximize the delicate flavors and subtle, elegant nuances of the Pinot Noir grape without extracting the more coarse, alcohol soluble components. The fermentation took about two weeks. The wine spent about 11 months in Francois Frere French oak barrels. I used 35% new wood to obtain a trace taste of smoke and spice without overshadowing the fruit. The wine is unfined and gently filtered for visual clarity. I bottled this wine on August 10th. It may naturally throw some sediment over time.

Pure, perfectly ripened fruit is ever the dominant theme for this baby. Cherryish fruit framed by sweet oak and hints of violet move into a positively plush finish. This vineyard is becoming very well known and has been featured in a number of magazines in past years including Food and Wine, Gourmet, Wines and Spirits and The Wine Enthusiast.

This years wine will initially taste on the lean side to those people used to the previous years wines. As I have mentioned above, I personally think young Pinot Noir should taste this way. The lower alcohol and more delicate fruit structure will ensure a fabulous wine for aging and a lovely drinking wine.

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