



2002 Pinot Noir - Owl Ridge Vineyard

The Owl Ridge Vineyard is in the Russian River Valley Appellation of Sonoma County. It was planted with premium Dijon clones. The vineyard receives 180 degree sun, when available, and a direct cool breeze coming up the Russian River from the ocean. The combination of sun to develop flavor and the cool wind to help retain acidity, along with outstanding vineyard management (by Charlie Chenoweth), gave this fruit exciting flavors and kept it in perfect condition. The vineyard produced slightly more than two tons to the acre, which accentuated the flavors and richness. There are approximately two acres of Pinot Noir and two acres of Chardonnay.

The 2002 vintage was marked by a mild summer with unusually warm days around harvest. This warmth made the picking decision difficult, because it would have to be based upon flavors of the fruit and not the sugars that were beyond the normal picking point. Finally the weather cooled down and the sugars came back into balance before harvest. The 2002 harvest has turned out to be outstanding, with ripe fruit and great balance of acidity.



Harvest was at sunrise on a foggy day in September of 2002; the fruit was handpicked and sorted at the picking bins to remove leaves and other unwanted material. The fruit arrived at the winery at a temperature of about 54 degrees.

The Owl Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir was planted in two blocks, each with a different clone and on a different rootstock. Unlike the 2001 harvest, in 2002 each block of Pinot ripened at the same time and they were picked together. A small amount of Chardonnay clusters were added at picking. The presence of the Chardonnay helps to stabilize the color. The whole clusters were then put into the destemmer-crusher, which produced a must composed of whole berries and crushed fruit. The must was placed into small 2.5 tons fermenters and cold soaked for 48 hours. Then yeast was added, as well an enzyme to help break down the skins and promote maximum extraction. The must fermented for nearly a week with temperatures reaching the upper eighties to help stabilize the color and richness from the skins.

The wine was pressed, and then settled overnight and put-to-barrel the following morning. The barrels were all small, tight-grain French oak, coming mainly from the Allier forest. 55% of the barrels were new (4/5 from Tonnellerie Remond, 1/5 from Tonnellerie Bernard). The wine was put through 100 percent malolactic (ML) fermentation. I sought out a particular ML strain that would not reduce the acidity but would retain the brightness and liveliness of the fruit. After ML, the wine was left undisturbed, without further racking, and was bottled in July of 2003. A coarse filtration was done just prior to bottling. We produced 295 cases.

This wine is much richer than the 2001, as expected for the second year of vineyard production. While the 2001 was a fantastic, drinkable, fruity wine, the 2002 has much more structure and will continue to benefit from bottle aging for some time. The wine offers aromas of dark fruits, with hints of cola and anise. The flavors are much defined with ripe pie cherries and a rich mouth feel that makes this wine very enjoyable with from everything from Salmon to Duck. It would be a major feature of any fine dinner experience.

Additional Technical Information:

- Harvest Sugar: 25.2 Brix
- Ph at Harvest: 3.57
- Ph at Bottling: 3.65
- Total Acidity at Harvest: .62 g/l
- Total Acidity at Bottling: .65 g/l
- Final Alcohol: 13.6%
- Yeast: RC212
- Malolactic culture from CHR HANSEN

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