

2012 PINOT NOIR

PUERTA DEL MAR
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

140 CASES PRODUCED

One of the great thrills of pinot noir is how radically the vineyard site (exposure, climate, soil) affects the finished wine. My first introduction to this was in 1988 when Jim Clendenen and I were making wine together and we purchased grapes from Bien Nacido and Rancho Vinedo, which are across the street from each other. We crafted the wines identically but the results were so dissimilar! At first I couldn't wrap my mind around the cause of this, however there were some obvious differences in how the vineyards grew. The Rancho Vinedo soils were far sandier and those vines grew without much vigor, while the Bien Nacido vines grew more exuberantly and were on a south facing slope of heavier soil—and these differences were dramatically expressed in the wines. Though it still astonishes me that two vineyards grown across the street from each other could have such different personalities, my years of experience since have validated the assumption that vineyard site plays a crucial role in wine quality.

This brings us to Puerta del Mar (door to the sea)—a six acre vineyard planted to pinot noir and chardonnay, located on Santa Rosa Road a stone's throw from Highway 1—just south of Lompoc. A decade ago no one could have imagined that it was possible to ripen grapes successfully so close to the ocean. Perceptions change and so does the climate! Close planted on a level site of mostly alluvial soil with shale-y bits mixed throughout, the most distinctive trait of the vineyard is the constant wind that blows up the Santa Ynez River from the Pacific Ocean. In 2011, the first year we worked with the vineyard, the wind blasted the vines from bud break to harvest and the result was a fascinating but tiny crop (1/2 ton/acre). In the warmer 2012 harvest the breeze at the vineyard kept it cooler than any of my other pinot sites. The crop was just as tiny, but the mild weather produced a more generous wine.

In both vintages there are discernible vineyard characteristics of sweet baking spices—nutmeg and vanilla—with Bing cherry fruit and a clean fresh mushroom mineral earthiness. From such a harsh windy site I wasn't sure what we would get—perhaps an odd wine that would only appeal to wine geeks—but no, Puerta del Mar delivers an elegant and friendly elixir that is simply delicious.

PRESS REVIEWS

Antonio Galloni's Vinous

"Brilliant ruby-red. Potent, spice-accented aromas of dark berries, cherry pit and cola, with a bright mineral overtone. Peppery and taut on entry, then fleshier and sweeter in the middle, offering intense black raspberry and cherry-cola flavors and a jolt of Asian spices on the back half. I'd have guessed that there were some whole clusters used here, but that's not the case. Finishes spicy and long, with excellent clarity and silky, even tannins coming in late." - JR 95 Points

Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

"Downright exotic, with perfumed floral, germanium, white pepper and sappy nuances, the 2012 Pinot Noir Puerta del Mar comes from a new vineyard for Tolmach, which lies to the west of Sta. Rita Hills, right up next to the Pacific Ocean. All about tension and clarity on the palate, it has bright acidity, fine tannin and impressive length, and it plays nicely in the new style of this estate. It will benefit from short-term cellaring and have a 7-8 years of longevity." - JD 92 Points

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