



PinotFile

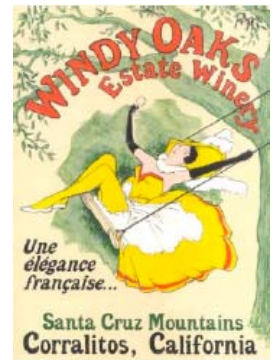
The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 7, Issue 14 March 13, 2009

Santa Cruz
Mountains
Part II

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Windy Oaks Estate Vineyard & Winery Those who read the *PinotFile* regularly know that I am a big fan of Windy Oaks Pinot Noirs and Chardonnay. Forget all those big name cult Pinot Noirs in California, this is the real deal. Unfortunately, there are only 2,200 cases to go around and many pinotphiles are already clued in. Jim and Judy Schultze have used their over 20 years of interest and experience in artisan winemaking to create Windy Oaks. The Burgundian varieties, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, are produced from a 19-acre vineyard (18 acres of Pinot Noir, 1 acre of Chardonnay) located 1,000 feet on a ridge overlooking the Monterey Bay. The Schultzes have lived in Australia and Europe and visit Burgundy yearly to exchange information and meet with their coopers. They have a clear sense of the Burgundian methods of winegrowing. The vineyard was planted between 1996 and 1999 and is farmed according to organic and biodynamic principles with a permanent cover crop and direct measurement of plant water status. The vines are all hand-tended. The microclimate allows for an extremely long growing season with bud break typically in late February and harvest in mid-October. Typically, Windy Oaks Estate Vineyard is the last to be harvested in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Physiologically ripe grapes are harvested without high Brix with the grapes possessing a balanced natural acidity. A small winery is beautifully laid out and equipped on the property allowing for the entire production of the wines including bottling to be performed on site.





All the wines are made with 100% estate grapes. Extreme minimal intervention is employed with no additives, 50% wild yeast fermentations, ML in barrel, 25 to 30 day fermentation periods and no settling before barrel, no racking in barrel. About 30% to 40% whole cluster is used. All winemaking is done by gravity from crush to final bottling. Long barrel aging is employed with a high percentage of new French oak. For example, the Reserve is typically aged for 25 months in 75% new French oak. Special French oak barrels are chosen for their tight grain and only 3 year air-dried (seasoned) wood staves are used. When I visited in late January 2009, Jim told me he had been in Burgundy at the Francois Freres cooperage and was offered and bought some 4 year air-dried barrels that DRC had reserved but not used. He also showed me one 5 year air-dried barrel with gold staves (photo).



Why the fuss about tight grain in oak barrel selection? Tighter-grained white oak used in wine barrels doesn't necessarily have less tannins but it releases the tannins more slowly. Also, when the grain is tight, there is less oxygenation of the wine, less evaporation of the wine and aging is prolonged allowing the wine to remain fresh. Finally, tighter grain wood comes from trees that have grown more slowly in more favorable climates and theoretically will have more desirable flavor compounds incorporated from the soil and climate. The forest of origin is of importance as the climate will affect the grain density and thus the quality of the wood. Vosges, Nièvre, Alliers and Sarthe oaks all have a tighter grain and are widely used. Many Pinot Noir winemakers feel strongly that tight grained oak barrels are less assertive and more supportive, providing structure without creating obvious oakiness in the finished wine.

Why is the length of seasoning of oak staves important? Staves are allowed to dry in the open air, exposed to the natural elements of sun, wind and rain, which removes harsh flavors and other elements from the oak. Seasoning in the open air also develops and releases spicy and sweet elements. Longer drying regimes enhance the removal of undesirable elements while allowing additional time for welcome elements to emerge.

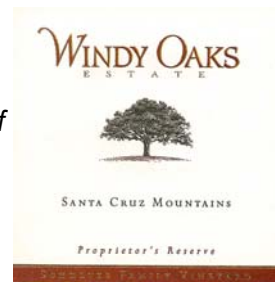
Jim is never satisfied and works diligently on new techniques to refine his wines. He has run trials and released Pinot Noirs that are wood-fermented, wild yeast-fermented, and produced limited bottlings from Burgundy suitcase clones. Despite the multiple winemaking approaches, the hallmark of Windy Oaks Estate is consistency. Year in and year out, the wines are reliably and often spectacularly crafted. With Chambolle Musigny as the model, the Schultzes are quietly crafting some of the best and most intriguing Pinot Noir made in California. The wines are sold almost entirely to select restaurants and mailing list devotees. Tours and tasting are available by appointment. The website is www.windyoaksestate.com and the phone is 831-786-WINE. A limited number of wines are for sale on the website.



2004 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 175 cases, \$45. *This is a "Wow" wine. Wonderful scents of spiced cherries, sandalwood, caramel and grass. The flavor trio of cherries, mocha and cinnamon spice are delicious. The whole package is impeccably balanced and elegant with an endless finish. A pretty and diaphanous wine that is tres Pinot.*

2005 Windy Oaks Estate Cuvée Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 285 cases, \$35. The cuvée is a blend of clones from the estate vineyard, meant to be a wine that can be drunk every day with almost anything. Think of it as the younger sister of the Proprietor's Reserve. *Oak char and smoke dominate the fruit aromas and a bit of heat peaks out over time in the glass. Slightly tart red and black berry fruit flavors are linear with barely noticeable tannins and lively acidity. Fairly plush and mouth filling but not exciting.*

2005 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$55. *Shy nose that opens beautifully with time in the glass revealing black cherries and oak with a minerality in the background. A little darker fruit profile and noticeably fuller than the 2004 vintage, tasting of jam on toast with just the slightest hint of spice. Smooth as a baby's bottom, perfectly balanced, with a lasting impression on the long finish that leaves a touch of heat in its wake. This one is more California, the 2004 vintage is more DRC.*



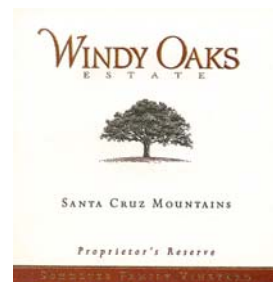
2005 Windy Oaks Estate Wood Tank Fermented Limited Release Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 26 cases, \$44. *The nose is loaded with red fruits and exotic Indian spices. A middleweight wine with charming flavors of red cherries and strawberries with a touch of oak and brioche added in for interest. The wine builds in intensity and interest with time in the glass, leaving a memorable aromatic impression on the endless finish. Plenty of swag here.*

2006 Windy Oaks Estate Cuvée Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 435 cases, \$38. 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *A softer nose highlighting red fruits, light toast spice and a touch of funk. The*

red-toned fruit flavors are brisk and refreshing, even a little steely. Very smooth in texture with no obtrusive oak or tannins. Surprisingly good with a pastrami sandwich.



2006 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 345 cases, \$60. Primarily sourced from the 1.5 acre Bay Block planting of the original 3-acre vineyard. Aged 22 months in 80% new French oak. The signature Windy Oaks Estate wine. *This wine starts out shy and ends in ecstasy. Plenty of patience (foreplay) is required. The nose unfolds to reveal well-spiced cherries, sage, vanillin and a touch of flowers. The fruit is demure but surrounds the tongue with fullness. Tangy and spicy with spot on balance. Always the best wine in the Windy Oaks cellar.*



2006 Windy Oaks Estate Wood Tank Fermented Limited Release Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 47 cases, \$55. Aged 21 months in 75% new French oak. *Heavenly and complex nose with a classroom full of black cherry fruit, cola, and cardamon spice. Very flavorful darker red fruits with an underlying earthiness and a citric note on the finish. Not the intensity or punch of the Proprietor's Reserve, but a perfectly fine drink.*

2006 Windy Oaks Estate Henry's Block Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 145 cases, \$45. Named after Judy Schultze's father, this is 100% Wädenswil clone and from one of the oldest blocks in the vineyard. Aged 21 months in 65% new French oak. *A beautifully composed and balanced Pinot Noir featuring juicy raspberries, herbs, cedar and barnyard on the nose. The flavors follow in step adding a hint of dirt and root beer. Feminine in spirit but packed with flavor, and like all Windy Oaks wines, impeccably balanced.*

Although not formerly reviewed, I can vouch for the other 2006 Windy Oaks Estate wines as well. On my recent visit to the Santa Cruz Mountains, I attended a dinner in Santa Cruz which turned out to be spectacular. The young and talented chef at Gabriella Café, Bradford Briske, took the time to taste all the wines in advance and the resulting food and wine matches brought me looking to the heavens and saying thanks. I have duplicated the menu below for your interest.



I should add a few comments about the other Windy Oaks Estate wines that were not formally reviewed for this issue. The One-Acre Chardonnay is a perfect compromise between the non-oak fermented and heavily-oaked and endowed contrasting styles of California Chardonnays (Windy Oaks Estate Chardonnay, \$38). Diane's Block Pinot Noir is sourced from a 4-acre vineyard located in Aptos a short distance from Windy Oaks Estate that was planted and is farmed by the Schultzes. It is a very fruit-forward wine. (2006 Windy Oaks Estate Diane's Block, 341 cases, \$45). The Wild Yeast Pinot Noir is a 4 barrel blend of 100% native yeast fermented Pinot Noir. This is quite earthy and has become very popular to Windy Oaks disciples and can take on voluptuous foods. (2006 Windy Oaks Estate Wild Yeast, 96 cases, \$55). In 2009, there will be a value-priced Windy Oaks Pinot Noir added to the lineup called "Terra Narro" (\$30), making a total of 9 unique Pinot Noirs for the 2009 vintage.

The 2004 Windy Oaks Estate Special Burgundian Clone Pinot Noir was the first release from a special half-block at the top of the vineyard ridge planted to a "suitcase clone" from Vosne-Romanee in Burgundy. Jim tends to this vineyard block himself, doing everything from pruning to leaf pulling to tucking vines. Its taste is similar to its Burgundian counterpart. It is a celebratory release presented in a wood box with a silk screen image of a poster created for the Schultzes by the French poster artist, Jean-Pierre Got. Aged 27 months in 100% new French oak, 26 cases, \$95. I opened a bottle awhile back at a French restaurant and found the wine stunning. Unfortunately, there is only a 2 bottle allocation - Boo-Hoo.



gabriella

WINE DINNER WITH JUDY AND JIM SCHULTZE OF WINDY OAKS
February 3rd 2009

Applewood Smoked Kampachi Crudo
Meyer lemon ice • micro cherry bell radish thinnings
Windy Oaks Estate 2006 'One-Acre' Chardonnay

Roasted Baby Beets
crispy Route One Farm sunchokes
Four Sisters upland cress • pistachios • pistachio oil • Pecorino Romano
Windy Oaks Estate 2006 Diane's Block Pinot Noir

Roasted Monterey Bay Sardines
baby artichoke-fennel-green garlic conserva • mint • bread crumbs
Windy Oaks Estate 2006 Henry's Block Pinot Noir

Anson Mills Farro Tortellini
Wood Tank Pinot Noir braised Sonoma lamb ragout
lamb prosciutto mint brodo
Windy Oaks Estate 2006 Wood Tank Fermented Pinot Noir

Liberty Duck Breast Braciolo
Italian Black Truffles • Cabernet vinegar caramelized Cipollini onions
Lindencroft Farm young spadona • duck leg confit
Arborio encrusted Rancho Gordo Runner beans • Pecorino Romano
Windy Oaks Estate 2006 Wild Yeast Pinot Noir

Chocolate Mousse Torte
Pinot Noir crème anglaise
or
Chardonnay Honey Saffron Poached Apple
vanilla ice cream

or
Truffle Gelato
black pepper shortbread
candy cap Diane's Block reduction