

Hanzell

2006 HANZELL VINEYARDS
SONOMA VALLEY
PINOT NOIR

Blackberry, strawberry compote and blueberry pie give this vintage a very prominent fruit character, but there is the darkness of tea leaf, humid forest, and a feral quality, like the fur of an animal or the nape of a neck. Clove and cardamom are warm spice notes that give the impression of sweetness to balance the firm presence of ripe tannins.

VINTAGE AND WINEMAKING NOTES

While the devastating frosts in March diminished the Chardonnay crop, the Pinot Noir vines suffered no damage as they were still dormant through the cold snap. Later on, spring warmth following the frost was so conducive to fertility that nearly every flower fulfilled its potential to become a berry. In a typical vintage only a fraction of the flowers survive and mature into grapes, instead falling victim to heat, rain or wind. But in 2006 the heavens truly embraced our Pinot Noir vines.

As it is with farming, rejoicing good fortune is at best a temporary station immediately preceding despair. What had been such a beautiful spring developed into a brutishly hot July as the earth seemed to plunge into the sun and temperatures reached 114° on the estate. This was a classic case of too much of a good thing as the grapes, normally insatiable in their desire to devour sunshine, expressed their displeasure under extreme solar duress by developing a pink shade on their sunny-side skins instead of the blackish-purple hue.

But as the summer turned to fall, our prayers were answered and the season became...unseasonably cool. The marine layer descended to envelop our slopes in cool damp fog. Typically this would have been welcome, but in an extraordinary year like this one, in which every flower had matured into a grape and the clusters were so tightly packed with tiny Pinot berries, the damp conditions favored *Botrytis*, a mold that seriously compromises quality.

In the days leading up to harvest it was incumbent on us to change the course of the vintage by shedding the fruit which had been awarded to us so abundantly at flowering. And drop fruit we did; we passed through the vineyards just days before harvest, clipping off any clusters that had succumbed to the *Botrytis*, and allowing only clean and healthy clusters to remain on the vine. As the grapes arrived in the winery we knew we were in the company of profound quality.

The fermentations were initiated after a week-long cold soak, and temperatures were allowed to climb to 90°. Macerating the must for nearly a month allowed the development of good color and a firm tannin backbone that truly differentiates this Pinot Noir from typical offerings of California. The 2006 has the structure for extended aging, and with the early showing of fruit character, the wine should develop well for decades.

— Michael Terrien, Winemaker

TECHNICAL DETAILS

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- 18 MONTH ÉLEVAGE IN 50% NEW SIRUGUE BARRELS
 - ALCOHOL: 15.3%
 - ACIDITY: 3.91 PH AND 5.4 G/L TITRATABLE ACIDITY