

# ROAD 31 WINE CO.

*grain-inducing pinot*

Spring 2009

Dear Trucker:

When I first plopped down to pen this year's offer letter, I found myself suddenly second-guessing the relative merit of my vocation; after all, I craft old, spoiled grape juice for a living. With all the foul fiscal headlines atop papers all over the world, is releasing wine right now an insensitive thing to do? I voiced these concerns to a long-time trucker. His response: "But Kent, yours is the most important stimulus package I'll get this year..." Ah, faith restored.

So, here is your liquid stimulus package.

It strikes me that perhaps winemakers are a bit more comfortable than most when it comes to cycles, fiscal or otherwise. Of course, there is the annual harvest schedule we live by. But beyond that, I spend my mornings pruning the 2009 crop, yet I'm in the cellar at mid-day nurturing the 2008 wine in barrel. My afternoons are dedicated to peddling bottles of the 2007, while my evenings are spent drinking 2006 and earlier from decanter. And on any of these vintages, Mother Nature might knock me rump over teakettle with a flick of her wrist. When people ask me how things are going in these uncertain times, I have to figure out if they are talking about the past, the present, or future.

So it is to the 2007 wine and release that we now turn our attention. It is, and I will pause for dramatic emphasis here ... the finest vintage of pinot noir I've ever had the honor of crafting. Earlier this morning I cracked a bottle just to get one last impression, and half a bottle later, I had to put the writing of this letter on hold until this afternoon. What a breakfast; it is that good. The vintage was "strikingly reasonable" in the words of one of my viticulture brethren. We had cool weather, but not so much that botrytis invaded. We had a drought, but not so severe that we ran out of water entirely, resulting in perfectly stressed vines. We had extremely low yields—clusters so small that four of them would fit in your hand—which might make the bank grumpy, but is splendid for flavor. Finally, we had shockingly even weather at harvest time. If I wasn't able to actually taste the outcome in the glass in front of me, I might think the whole thing a dream.

As for the mechanics of the offer, I've decided that since 99% of my orders come in online—and thus I'm a bit suspect that many are not reading this hardcopy letter at all when a similar email likely inhabits their inbox—I will spare some trees. I've left the fact sheet for viewing online ([www.road31.com](http://www.road31.com)), and the enclosed card replaces the old order form, pointing you directly to the Web for securing your allotment. Just reach out if you'd like to order the old-fashioned way or if your allotment seems out of whack; it is an imperfect science. Heck, call even if you simply have a good tale to tell; as a one-man band, I do love hearing from you (though, I don't always return calls as promptly as a gentleman should). The order window closes March 25; I'd urge you to walk over to your computer and take care of business right this moment.

These days, people seem to be dining a bit less at restaurants, but making up for it with more scrumptious meals at home. If Road 31 (vintage 2007 or otherwise) is part of your dinner table, I am, as always, immensely honored. Sincere thanks to you, and—more than ever—keep on truckin'...

Kent Fortner  
(Winecrafter/Truck-Owner/King of the Road)



NAPA VALLEY

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