

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grin-inducing pinot

Spring 2010

Dear Trucker:

I read an article the other day on “five common mistakes to avoid when writing a novel.” Number three: “Don’t start with a passage about the weather.” Good thing this isn’t a novel.

As I sit in the cellar writing this, it is raining outside. Hard. It has been like this most of the winter. We’re talking Seattle rain. And I love it; not just because I loved Seattle when we lived there long ago, and not just because our kids are now wearing cute “Cars” and “Hello Kitty” galoshes every day. I love it because we need the rain. We were on year three of drought here in California, and although drought can beneficially stress vines and result in some stunning wines (more on that in a moment), there is a point at which stress turns into enhanced interrogation. This rain is invigorating: the cover crop in the vineyards is a brilliant green, the mustard a crazy yellow, and the trunks of the pruned, dormant vines are a wet black. It’s like the vineyards suddenly started broadcasting in HD.

But let’s rewind for a moment to the 2008 vintage and the Pinot Noir that I am proud to offer with this letter. The middle year of the aforementioned three-year drought, the 2008 is—for that reason—quite similar to the much-heralded 2007. If I may be allowed a moment of braggadocio, *Pinotfile* described the 2007 as, “Soft and smooth in the mouth leading the wine to literally slip off the back of the palate. A juicy and seamless wine that is nicely crafted and well-priced.” *Pinot Report* chimed in with “92 pts.” I’ll take that. And, when I taste the 2008 and 2007 side-by-side, as I did over a turkey and provolone sandwich just an hour ago, I’m struck by how similar they are in profile.

Not that the two wines got to that same point by the same path. Whereas the 2007 growing season was strikingly uneventful, 2008 was much more dynamic. While today Haiti and Chile shake, and D.C. and New York have mountains of snow where one would otherwise park, I’m reminded that back in 2008 we had a crippling frost in the spring and vicious wildfires late in the summer. That said, 2008 was indeed a great vintage for me, as the frost barely nipped my particular vines, resulting instead in a flavor-focusing lower yield. Unlike others who had smoke find its way into their wine, my vineyards simply enjoyed a nice haze/sunscreen on the hottest days of the summer. If it didn’t force thousands of Californians to flee their homes, I might be tempted to ask for a wee bit of wildfire every July.

Every wine—particularly Pinot Noir—tells a story. The 2008 Road 31 Pinot Noir Napa Valley is that much more special given the crazy yellow brick road that it had to follow to the land of Oz.

The enclosed card points 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 allocation seems out of whack; it is an imperfect science at best. The order window closes March 27, so don’t dilly-dally. With only 800 cases crafted, I make no promises about availability after that. As a one-man show, I seize any opportunity to take the edge off the chaos; therefore I wait and ship all the wines in one batch on April 5 unless otherwise requested.

I’m honored if you would consider bringing the 2008 Road 31 Pinot Noir into your cellar. Just think, the next time it is raining, snowing, shaking or smoking outside ... the wine will be there, ready for you.

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



NAPA VALLEY

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