

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grain-inducing pinot

Road 31 Wine Co. 2015 Pinot Noir Napa Valley

Harvest dates: Aug 25th and 29th

Oak: 33% new; (60% French, 40% Tokaji/Hungarian)

pH at bottle: 3.55

Alcohol at bottle: 13.9%

Brix at harvest: 24.1 to 24.6

Time on Oak: 11 months

TA at bottle: 5.5 g/L

Total production: 785 cases

Vineyard: Three vineyard plots contributed to this wine. From the Nord Vineyard, at the southern mouth of the Napa River where the water spills into the San Pablo/San Francisco Bay, comes the prettiness of clone 115. Stanly Ranch, in Carneros just west across the Napa River from Nord, provides the structure of clone 114 and the robustness of clone 777.

Vintage: 2015 was the culmination of four years of bone-dry soils. Though vines are drought-tolerant, and we have come a long way with irrigation techniques, 2015 was the year when the stress reached a crescendo. Darwin and Mother Nature are stunning dance partners. A vine's core purpose is to nurture its offspring (grapes/seeds). Stress the vines to the limit with four years of drought, and they focus *all* their energy into very *few* grapes, yielding incredible intensity.

Winemaking: A three-day cold soak preceded 14 long days in the fermenter. As the vines were stressed, nutrient availability for the yeast was low, and the fermentation proceeded slowly, coaxing out extra intensity, color, and flavor to the final wine. Run to barrel before the finish of fermentation, the wine sat on its gross lees (without oxygen nor racking) for the entire year of aging, which adds a creamy texture and significant weight to an already intense wine. A mixture of Tokaji (Hungarian) and Mercurey (French) oak contributes a nice blend of spice and vanilla to the profile.

Wine: 2015 is lush, bold, and yet — somehow — still pretty. It is a Bond girl (in a little black dress). It's Elvis (in his early years). It is a Ferrari Testarossa (red, of course). It is still Pinot Noir, and it is still Road 31, but the dial is on 11, even while it arrives for dinner with less than 14% alcohol. I find the whole vintage, and this wine, remarkable.

Road 31 Wine Co. produces tiny batches of one handcrafted Napa Valley Pinot Noir. The label pays homage to the gravel road outside my grandparents' homestead back in Kansas—where I too was born—and the mighty green '66 Ford Truck that drove it regularly. My grandfather, a farmer, willed the truck to me when he passed in '86, and the truck now seems right at home bouncing among the vines of Napa. The green truck and I oversee farming, harvest and hauling of the grapes to cave space borrowed from some friends up in Stag's Leap district of Napa. My hands handle every step of the crafting: fermenting, barrel aging, bottling, and peddling. I am a one-man show (with a little help now and then from my wife, my cousins, and Daisy Dog).

—Kent Fortner (Winemaker/Truck Owner)



NAPA VALLEY