

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grain-inducing pinot

Road 31 Wine Co. 2017 Pinot Noir Napa Valley

Harvest dates: Sept 5th and Sept 7th
Oak: 33% new; (60% French, 40% Tokaji/Hungarian)
pH at bottle: 3.66
Alcohol at bottle: 13.9%

Brix at harvest: 24.6 and 25
Time on Oak: 11 months
TA at bottle: 5.3 g/L
Total production: 856 cases

Vineyard: Three plots across two vineyards 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 northwest across the Napa River from Nord, provides the structure of clone 114 and the robustness of clone 777.

Vintage: The 2017 year will certainly be noted for the dramatic fires that struck wine country late in the harvest season. Luckily, being a very-early harvesting varietal, all my wines were put to bed and resting safely in the caves by the time the fires surrounded Napa; my barrels were unaffected. The fires added an unfortunate and unearned marker on the vintage, as in truth, 2017 saw healthy vines that enjoyed two years of sufficient rainfall after the four years of drought during 2011-2015, and the resulting wines are robust and gorgeous.

Winemaking: A three-day cold soak preceded 12-14 days in the fermenter. The healthy growing season meant that nutrient availability for the yeast was in balance, and the fermentations were clean and smooth. 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 substantial wine. A mixture of Tokaji (Hungarian) and Mercuray (French) oak contributes a nice blend of spice (particularly nutmeg) and vanilla to the profile.

Wine: I believe this is one of the prettiest wines I've ever made. It exhibits the classic cola, floral, and red fruit aromas typical of this growing region. The underlying wine is equally pretty, but also exhibits a racier side; darker fruit flavors and a hint of earth are tied together with vanilla and a slight spice derived from the French and Tokaji/Hungarian oak barrels respectively.

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