

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grin-inducing pinot

Road 31 Wine Co. 2018 Pinot Noir Napa Valley

Harvest dates: Sept 18th and Sept 25th
Oak: 33% new; (65% French, 35% Tokaji/Hungarian)
pH at bottle: 3.69
Alcohol at bottle: 13.9%

Brix at harvest: 24.8 to 25.2
Time on Oak: 11 months
TA at bottle: 6.4 g/L
Total production: 890 cases

Vineyard: Four plots across two vineyards contributed to this wine. From the Green Island, 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 and power of clone 667. Stanly Ranch, in Carneros just northwest across the Napa River from Green Island, provides clone 114 structure and robustness of clone 777.

Vintage: After the startling fires of 2017, the uneventful growing season and relaxed harvest schedule of 2018 was a much-welcomed change. 2018 was wet in early spring, but with a dry bud-break season, and that began the unfolding of a cool, steady summer with excellent ripening days and no significant heat strikes. It was a summer of fleece in the morning. The resulting wines are more balanced, with lower alcohols, than is typical of our growing region.

Winemaking: A three-day cold soak preceded 14-16 days in the fermenter. The even growing season provided sufficient yeast nutrition, and the fermentations were clean and smooth though slower to finish due to higher natural acidity. 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: This wine walks a fascinating fine line between friendly and intense; sort of Tom Hanks in an Oscar-worthy role. It's got a brighter hue than usual in its young age, with the nose of cola, dark fruit and even a note of tea; there's also an elegant, mature hint of spice not usually present in my wines until they gain more age. Initial mouthfeel is delicate, but then unfolds in a multitude of warm and weighty layers of dark fruit and earth, ending with a touch of friendly vanilla. Yeah, Tom Hanks.

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