

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grain-inducing pinot

Green Truck Cellars 2005 Pinot Noir Napa Valley

Harvest date: September 9-12

Oak: 80% French, 20% Hungarian (30% new)

PH at bottle: 3.64

Alcohol at bottle: 13.9%

Brix at harvest: 24.5 to 25.4

Time on Oak: 11 months

TA at bottle: 5.59 g/L

Total production: 600 cases

Vineyard: Three blocks spread over 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, which lies in Carneros just west across the Napa river from Nord, provided not only a block of clone 114, but also a last-second arrangement provided a block of clone 777. Between the two vineyards, they form the “gateway” to the Napa Valley. Nord gets the brunt of the wind and fog, whereas Stanly is a on a windy but drier hillside.

Vintage: It was a wet, protracted Spring in 2005. This left me with worries of botrytis (rot) for the entire season. In fact, in the end we did not harvest one of my typical vineyards; Suscol Ridge, sitting three hundred feet above and a mile north of Nord, is the typical tannic “backbone” of my blend, but this year botrytis completely took over this cool spot. Great vineyard sites are always fragile. I was fortunate enough that the owners of Stanly stepped up with an extra two tons of fruit from a choice block to fill the void. Crop levels were relatively low again this year, and for those vineyards that did not succumb to botrytis, the finish to the season was picture-perfect. There were threats of rain, but never a drop did fall. We managed to dial in the finish of ripening with precision.

Winemaking: We picked at daybreak on two days, and at night on another, so the fruit came in cool and clean. We sorted aggressively to battle botrytis. Fermentations were picture perfect, which I attribute to enough experience to now know each vineyard’s must’s temperature and nutrient variables, needs and limits. Wines went to barrel by the 1st of October, with the Budapesti Kadar (Hungarian) barrels showing particularly pretty in the first month. ML was straightforward, and the wines stayed fresh and clean and thus were held separate without racking until a few days before bottling. As always, the alarming acidity in barrel post-harvest mellowed perfectly during maturation in barrel in the caves. Fools me every year.

Wine: If my 2003 was Darth Vader, and my 2004 Luke Skywalker, then the 2005 is certainly Han Solo: Dashing, a good heart, but definitely adventurous. The wine has the richness that comes from such a cooler growing season, protracted without rain, to allow hang time. Perhaps the wine gives up a bit of delicacy in exchange. The typical Green Truck “juiciness” and earth are there as well, with cherry and cola coming from Nord and Stanly vineyards respectively. The oak is a perfect match on this wine: just enough to compliment the fruit, but not overwhelming. The Budapesti Kadar barrels provide the spice, and the French oak provides the vanilla. Less delicate than the 2004, the strong backbone of this wine certainly makes it eligible for four to six years of aging from the vintage date. However, I estimate it will be showing perfectly on Dec 25, 2007.

Green Truck Cellars produces tiny batches of handcrafted Napa Valley Pinot. The label pays homage to the green '66 Ford Truck willed me by my grandfather, a farmer from Kansas, where I too was born. I cannot describe to you the actual *hue* of green of the truck; I'd simply have to show it to you sometime, which I'd be happy to do. 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 oversee 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 Annie the wonder-mutt).

Kent Fortner (Winemaker/Truck Owner)



NAPA VALLEY