

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grain-inducing pinot

Road 31 Wine Co. 2016 Pinot Noir Napa Valley

Harvest dates: Sept 5th and Sept 7th
Oak: 33% new; (60% French, 40% Tokaji/Hungarian)
pH at bottle: 3.54
Alcohol at bottle: 13.9%

Brix at harvest: 24.2 and 25.3
Time on Oak: 11 months
TA at bottle: 5.3 g/L
Total production: 805 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: This 2016 wine originated from vines that enjoyed the first significant rainfall after a four-year drought; it has structure and depth that reflect the health of those vines at harvest. There is a freshness to the nose and palate of the wine that I believe reflects the renewed vigor of the vines after the stress of the string of drought-influenced vintages. Batteries were recharged and the vines (and resulting wines) display remarkable youthfulness and energy.

Winemaking: A three-day cold soak preceded 11 days in the fermenter. As the vines were less stressed than previous vintages, nutrient availability for the yeast was good, and the fermentation proceeded quickly and cleanly. 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 has always — from fermenter to barrel to bottle — been effusively aromatic: ripe red fruit with an accompanying hint of tea leaf and rose hips. It has also been both bright (it has ample acidity) and weighty (the mid-palate on this wine brings a depth of fruit that rivals the most unctuous wines I've ever crafted). Notes of vanilla and nutmeg, from barrel aging, round out the experience.

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