

FEATURES



The Wine Corner

The Best of Sonoma County, Part 1

By Pierre DuMont

Recently the Sonoma County Vintners Association put on a huge tasting at Kendall-Jackson Winery in Santa Rosa. The “Taste of Sonoma” event was one of the largest and most interesting wine events I have ever participated in. Over 100 wineries from all over the county were pouring their wines often 5 or 6 different wines per provider. The quality was astonishingly high as I have come to expect from Sonoma County.

After many years of living in the shadow of its big brother Napa County, I feel Sonoma has really come into its own, and certainly in terms of the experience of wine tours. When friends come to visit, I never take them to Napa to taste. It has become wildly expensive and terribly crowded. Better to ramble around the scenic roads of Sonoma County looking for gems.

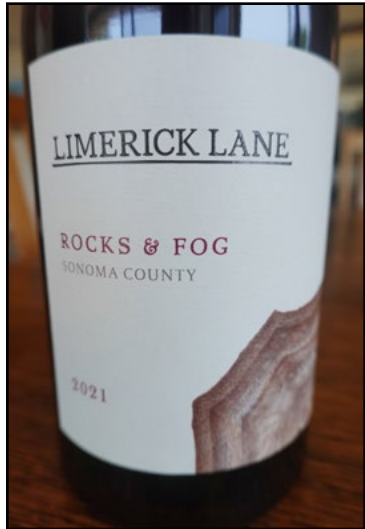
One thing that was evident from this tasting is that **Pinot Noir has hit it big**. The grape was everywhere, and most regions of the county produce it extensively. Pinot was closely followed by Chardonnay, by far the most popular white grape. Throw in some fine Zinfandels, Cabernets and Syrahs and the result was an exceptional and varied day of tasting.

The following wines and the ones I will be reviewing in Part Two represent the best of Sonoma County.

- **2021 Ernest Pinot Noir Freestone Valley**

The Freestone Valley is a cold weather section of the Sonoma Coast appellation, and the wine is Burgundian. It has a lovely floral nose of violets and roses over a core of cherries and pomegranate with hints of cinnamon and toast.

Medium-bodied, the palate is packed with perfumed red berry flavors with a solid frame of tannins and seamless freshness, finishing on a spicy note.



Limerick Lane Winery made a strong impression.

- **2021 Limerick Lane Rocks and Fog**

Limerick Lane has long been one of my favorite producers of high quality Zinfandel and Rhone blends and the 2021 Rocks and Fog is no exception. A blend of Grenache, Mourvedre, Syrah and Petite Sirah the wine is deep garnet-purple colored with a very spicy nose of black pepper and dried herbs. In the mouth it has layers of blackberry pie, currants, leather, kirsch and earth. It has great structure and balance and a long savory finish. Try with grilled ribs or chicken.

- **2021 Cattleya Chardonnay Cuvee Number Five**

Crafted from a vineyard in the Sonoma Coast appellation the Cattleya Chardonnay shows a nose of warm citrus and floral perfume with a deep core of orchard fruits. The palate is silky

and expansive, with a streak of mineral-like undertones, a flush of juicy acidity and long, layered finish.

- **2019 Emeritus Pinot Noir Hallberg Ranch**

The Emeritus Pinot offers a remarkably pure and refined yet also intense and aromatic bouquet of cherries and limestone. Round and elegant on the palate, is a medium-bodied, finessed straight forward stimulating Pinot with finely grained tannins and a delicate acidity with a long spicy finish.

- **2019 Monroy Cabernet Sauvignon**

Hailing from the Chalk Hill AVA this wine offers up deep, sweet-smelling notes of blueberries, plums and earth accented by a hint of vanilla. Full-bodied and rich on the palate without being heavy, it's supple tannins leave behind a softly dusty feel on the prolonged finish. It should last for a couple of decades in the cellar.

- **2021 Rockpile Zinfandel Rockpile Ridge Vineyard**

Produced by Mauritson Winery in Healdsburg the Rockpile Zinfandel is dark and intensely flavored with blackberry and black cherry notes, its full-bodied and smooth-textured, almost creamy without being overly heavy or rich- then finishes easy and silky.

- **2019 Enkidu Pinot Noir Tina Marie**

This Russian River Pinot is harmonious, expressive, and ultra-perfumed. Medium ruby, the nose is bursting with raspberry, cranberry with wafts of black pepper and conifer. The palate is velvety and concentrated, offering layer after layer of sweet berries and spices, and its mouthwatering acidity calls you in for another sip. Beautifully done.

- **2019 Windracer Chardonnay Alexander Mountain Estate Vineyard**

Concentrated and imbued with a coil of juicy acidity and energy. Opulent and composed at once, it offers notes of peach, nectarine, yellow plums, apples and pineapple. Through the finish, there is



Guests were greeted at the Taste of Sonoma wine tasting in Santa Rosa.

a nice yeasty presence. Try with roast chicken.

- **2017 Ramey Cabernet Sauvignon Cooley Ranch**

The Cooley Ranch Cabernet is juicy and sweetly fruited. It has a core of pure cassis and blueberry fruit wrapped in a casing of very fine tannins. A delicious wine, complex and layered with great purity and a long lingering finish.

- **2021 Thompson 31 Fifty Chardonnay Lolita Ranch**

This Russian River Chardonnay has gregarious aromas of apple, pie crust, toast, and flint. The medium-bodied palate is silky and seamless with gently honeyed flavors and hints of exotic spice on the long finish. Should improve for up to five years.

- **2019 Benovia Pinot Noir Martella Vineyard**

Benovia's Martella Pinot Noir is scented of black cherries and raspberries with exuberant anise, dried herbs and black pepper plus a waft of violets. Medium bodied, the palate is intense, charged with black fruits and earthy flavor layers and supported by ripe, fine-grained tannins finishing long.

- **2021 Nottingham Cellars Cabernet Franc**

Cab Franc sometimes suffers from vegetal bell pepper aromas



The Benovia Pinot Noir was among the best Pinots at the wine tasting.

but not this one. It shows black cherries, plums and grace notes of cedar and vanilla. Its medium to full-bodied, concentrated, yet silky and easy to drink. Long and mouthwatering, with ripe tannins, it should age nicely.

- **2019 Deerfield Syrah**

This wine is blended with a splash of Petite Verdot and Merlot for added complexity and is farmed biodynamically and certified organic. It shows plums, raspberries, bacon fat and earth. In the mouth it is round and juicy with great mouthfeel and a long spicy finish.

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