



Sea Smoke Selected Press and Accolades

Wine Review Online

May 22, 2013

Ed McCarthy

“Wines Well Worth Drinking”

“I was impressed with wines from the following California wineries that I have tasted over the past few months:

Sea Smoke Vineyard (Santa Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County) – I knew Sea Smoke’s Pinot Noirs were good, but I had no idea about its other wines. Sea Smoke’s **2008 Sea Spray Sparkling Wine** is outstanding, definitely one of California’s premium sparkling bruts; it’s 100 percent Pinot Noir, very aromatic and full-bodied. Almost as good is its characterful **2010 Chardonnay**. The well-balanced **2010 Sea Smoke ‘Southing’** was my favorite of the winery’s Pinot Noirs.”

Wine Spectator

James Laube

April 30, 2013

2010 Southing Pinot Noir

“Firmly tannic, with a rich, ripe core of earth-laced wild berry and raspberry flavors, this gains depth and complexity on the long, detailed finish, reverberating with flavors. Drink now through 2021. 5,000 cases made.” **92 Points (Outstanding: a wine of superior character and style.)**

2010 Ten Pinot Noir

“A reined-in style, this captures the delicate mix of blueberry, wild berry, rose petal, subtle mineral and earth touches, supported by vibrant acidity and graceful tannins. Blueberry notes echo on the finish. Drink now through 2021. 2,500 cases made.” **91 Points (Outstanding: a wine of superior character and style.)**

360 West Magazine

March 2013

Anthony Head

“Savor a sip of Santa Barbara”

“If you’ve never traveled to Santa Barbara, don’t bother. It’s as beautiful and exotic as you’ve heard. The people are as glamorous as you’ve imagined. The year-round Mediterranean climate is, well, perfect. If you go there, at some point you’ll have to leave, and that will just depress you. Instead, get a taste of Santa Barbara County through its wine. With a growing number of distinct American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) being recognized for producing world-class wines, this favorite Southern California oenophile destination is hard to beat. But save yourself the cost of a plane ticket—and heartache—just try these terrific wines at home.”

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American Wine: The Ultimate Companion to the Wines and Wineries of the United States

2013

Jancis Robinson and Linda Murphy

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Sta. Rita Hills AVA

“Designated an AVA in 2001, Sta. Rita Hills comprises more than 30,000 acres, but just 1,700 acres of wine grapes are planted on its steep slopes above the Santa Ynez River. The appellation, east of Lompoc and west of Buellton, is a superb yet risky location for growing cool-climate, structured, bracing Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. Sta. Rita Hills is what's known as a ‘nested’ AVA—in this case a small appellation within the Santa Ynez Valley AVA.”

“Sta. Rita Hills AVA Snapshot”

“Superstars: Sea Smoke Cellars”

Includes a label image of the 2009 Sea Smoke Southing Pinot Noir

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“Bob Davids was and still is a big boomer in Santa Rita. He made his money in handheld electronic games and invested chunks of it in Sea Smoke Cellars, arguably Sta. Rita Hills’ most sought after Pinot Noir, Sea Smoke produces three Pinots—Botella, Southing, and Ten—from its 300-acre property overlooking the Santa Ynez River, where Davids and his general manager/director of winemaking, Victor Gallegos, planted 25 separate blocks with ten Pinot Noir clones and four different rootstocks.

Davids named his vineyard Sea Smoke after the maritime fog that rolls across its hillsides on summer evenings, slowing fruit maturation and preserving the natural acidity in the grapes. Sea Smoke and Sta. Rita Hills in general is an unlikely place to grow Pinot Noir. The area is rated Region I—the coldest—on the UC Davis heat summation scale, but it has the same latitude (34°N) as Tunisia in North Africa, with the same solar intensity and lack of rainfall. Somehow the frigid temperatures and sun power combine in yin-yang fashion to produce some of California’s longest-lived, most bracing Pinot Noirs.

The long growing season produces intense flavors, great complexity, and firm acidity in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes. Still, there is enough daytime warmth at the end of the season to fully ripen the fruit. The soils are a mix of loams based on dune sand, marine deposits, alluvium, and terrace deposits. Yields are low and farming costs are high, Gallegos says, making Sta. Rita Hills viticulture ‘borderline economical.’ This region is only for the fanatical and well-funded.

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CityEats by Food Network

February 12, 2013

Brian Freedman

“Sea Smoke: Standout Pinot and Chardonnay from the Santa Rita Hills”

“Every once in a while, I taste a wine that makes me sit up a little bit straighter, that crystallizes and embodies everything I love about the wines from a certain part of the world.

That’s what happened recently when I tasted three sample bottles of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Sea Smoke.

Located in the Santa Rita Hills—which is in Santa Barbara County, the part of California’s wine country featured so lovingly and prominently in the movie *Sideways*—Sea Smoke has been working toward the production of standout reds and whites since 1999, when it was purchased by Bob Davids. The name itself is a reference to the cool fog that rolls in over the vines in the summertime, and that allows the berries to hang long enough to develop a remarkable level of complexity.

The result is a line-up of wines that, though occasionally difficult to find, is more than worth the effort to seek out. They lift even meals that otherwise might be merely very good, to a level of noteworthiness that only a handful of special bottles ever help facilitate.

The current releases, from the 2010 vintage, are stunning. The ‘Southing’ Pinot Noir is elegant and expressive with cherry, pomegranate, and violet characteristics, whereas the ‘Ten’ Pinot Noir sings a darker tune, its brown spice, black cherry, peppercorn, and savoriness all mysterious and beautiful. The Chardonnay reminds me of warm butter cookies, grilled fennel, sesame seeds, and a touch of honey-kissed smoke. All of them are amazing on their own and delicious with food, and, luckily, available at several great places around the city, including R2L, White Dog Cafe, Barclay Prime, and Del Frisco’s.”

Gayot.com

March 2012

“Top 10 American Sparkling Wines”

2008 Sea Spray Sparkling Wine

“Only those on Sea Smoke’s allocation list are able to purchase this exclusive sparkling wine. Made entirely from their own estate-grown Pinot Noir, the 2008 Sea Spray is light, refreshing

and smooth. Aromas of violet, raspberry and ruby red grapefruit continue in the mouth, along with a hint of caramel.”

The Washington Post

October 28, 2009

Dave McIntyre

“Pinot Noirs that won’t drain your wallet”

“Pinot noir takes on religious significance for wine lovers. It’s the spiritual, romantic grape, in contrast to the intellectual cabernet sauvignon. And while cabernet can grow almost anywhere and be recognizable as cabernet, pinot is devilishly selective, preferring cooler climates and rocky soils to show its best. The International Pinot Noir Celebration is held every year in Oregon, attended by devotees who might sell their souls for a taste of Romanee-Conti or **Sea Smoke**. I know of no such orgy of cabernet fever.”

Wine Spectator Online – James Laube Unfined

March 26, 2008

“A Region’s Wine Stars Define Its Quality”

Sea Smoke Cellars

“Being a pioneer sounds exciting and adventuresome. Put your name in a sentence that describes you as a pioneer and you’ll probably feel pretty good about yourself. Fearless. Visionary. Leader. Creator.

But being a pioneer also means that you’ve probably stubbed your toe or bumped your head along the way. For all the glamour the word pioneer evokes, most pioneers have more than their share of setbacks and disappointments.

Still, these experiences are vital. In a youthful, rapidly changing wine world, plenty of vintners—young and old alike—are genuine trailblazers, and while they may not realize it, they’re leading the way for future generations. It’s hard for a thirtysomething winemaker to think of himself or herself as being the Robert Mondavi of their territory.

Yesterday, as I started tasting the Santa Barbara wine futures, I thought about how important it is to have a region’s best wines, including the pioneers, in all the top tastings. For without the best wines, it’s harder to measure quality or progress, or even to compare vintages—especially in a young winegrowing area, as there’s a steep learning curve with grapegrowing and winemaking.

When critics taste Bordeaux futures, for example, they taste all the wines—and once they do that, they have a pretty good read on the vintage quality. Seeing the whole field is important.

In my situation, where only a few Santa Barbara wines are being sold as futures, many of the region’s top wineries that are selling futures didn’t want their young wines reviewed. The specific reasons don’t matter, whether their wines aren’t ready to show now or they’re concerned that a less-than-glowing review will hurt their wine’s chances of success in the marketplace.

One example: There were no **Sea Smoke** Pinot Noirs yesterday. In the past few barrel tastings, this winery has been a dominant presence, typically offering three great Pinot barrel samples, which ended up being just as great once they were finished, bottled wines. A few other top Pinots were missing from the tasting, which made the group as a whole less exciting than it might have been.

I'm not sure why Sea Smoke, whose winemaker, Kris Curran, left recently, didn't participate. Since it's a barrel tasting, the reason why matters less than making sure Sea Smoke is in the tasting of the finished wines (and it will be), because it is an important part of Santa Barbara's wine scene and one of its 'grand cru' properties."

Restaurant Wine – Issue 119/120

Ronn Wiegand

“Wonderful Pinot Noirs from Sea Smoke. The **Botella** is fragrant and full bodied; a round, crisp, moderately intense Pinot Noir of excellent quality. It is well balanced and very long on the palate, with a finish reminiscent of raspberry, red currant, toast, spicy oak, and violet. The **Southing** is superb: supple, rich, well balanced, and very long on the finish, tasting of raspberry, toast, nutmeg, tobacco, roasted nut, and cherry. **Ten** (named after the number of Pinot Noir clones it is made from) is rich and complex in style, yet without being heavy. It is full bodied, very long on the palate, with evident new oak character and intense fruitiness (raspberry, red currant, cherry). Very long aftertaste.”

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San Francisco Chronicle

December 2, 2007

Jon Bonné

Top 100 Wines

“**This year's list is a blend of familiar names, fresh faces, interesting varietals and new locales**”

Sea Smoke Cellars

“A dash of the old, a dash of the new - that's the theme of this year's **Top 100 Wines**.”

The Chronicle Wine section tastes wine from all over the world, but our **Top 100 Wines** are a showcase for the most compelling winemaking on the West Coast. We tasted thousands of wines this past year from California, Washington and Oregon. We recommended hundreds. You may recognize some of the lucky 100 from our weekly Wine Selections, but instead of simply choosing the best of what our panels tasted, we sought out a balance between quality, price and innovation - particularly innovation. So while many of our top contenders are familiar names, this year we also kept an eye out for new faces, new locales and new types of wine...

Is it a surprise that, once again, our strongest showing came in Pinot Noir, with 18 wines? That's fortunate, considering that its popularity hasn't wavered one bit, with volume sales up more than 25 percent from a year ago, according to the Nielsen Co. We saw plenty of new names during

our panels this year, but Pinot is a tough grape to perfect and this was a category where experience counted. Hence standouts like **Sea Smoke** and... once again make an appearance.”

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Wine Spectator

January 15, 2007

James Laube

“Top 100 wines at a Glance”

Sea Smoke Cellars

“Located in the Santa Rita Hills appellation of Santa Barbara County, the Sea Smoke estate vineyard was planted in 1999. Each of the 11 wines produced from it by Sea Smoke and other wineries since the 2001 vintage have been outstanding. Sea Smoke winemaker Kris Curran has a way of crafting dark, spicy wines with incredible richness and elegance.”

2004 Botella Pinot Noir

“Generous and complex in its presentation of ripe blueberry, wild berry, earth, mineral and sage flavors. But what’s most impressive is the aftertaste, which brings all the flavors together for a wonderful finish that keeps repeating the essential flavor themes.” **93 Points**

Food & Wine magazine

October 2006

Richard Nalley

“Best New Winery”

“Sea Smoke, in the coastal Santa Rita Hills area of Santa Barbara County, began like so many wine ventures—with a dream, stubborn persistence and plenty of money. Owner Bob Davids, CEO of Hong Kong’s Radica Games and an avid Burgundy collector, was determined to produce a world-class Pinot Noir in California, and he knew exactly where he wanted to grow this finicky grape: in a bean field. Not just any bean field, of course, but a perfectly sited bean field across from the famed Sanford & Benedict vineyard. Except it wasn’t for sale. Davids persisted, and after a long campaign he was able, in the words of Sea Smoke’s Winemaker, Kris Curran, to ‘obtain the unobtainable,’ in 1998. Sea Smoke currently produces less than 15,000 cases of three critically acclaimed Pinot Noirs: the fruity, approachable Botella, the elegant Southing and the more monumentally scaled Ten. Priced from \$28 to \$69 a bottle and available in restaurants and a limited number of retail stores, all are remarkable for their liveliness and purity of fruit.”

Food & Wine Guide 2007

November 2006

Jamal Rayyis

“Most Promising New Winery”

Sea Smoke Cellars

“Most vintners struggle for decades to get Pinot Noir right. So it’s astonishing that only seven years after planting vines in Santa Barbara County, Sea Smoke has been able to establish its Pinots as some of California’s best. Sea Smoke’s three distinctively styled wines show the

rewards of excellent winemaking and the benefit of slope-side vineyards that provide lots of sun moderated by Pacific fogs (sea smoke) that blanket the vines at night.”

Wine Spectator

January 15, 2007

James Laube

“2005 Top 100”

Sea Smoke Cellars

“Located in the Santa Rita Hills appellation of Santa Barbara County, the Sea Smoke estate vineyard was planted in 1999. Each of the 11 wines produced from it by Sea Smoke and other wineries since the 2001 vintage have been outstanding. Sea Smoke winemaker Kris Curran has a way of crafting dark, spicy wines with incredible richness and elegance.”

#53 – 2004 Botella Pinot Noir

“Generous and complex in its presentation of ripe blueberry, wild berry, earth, mineral and sage flavors. But what’s most impressive is the aftertaste, which brings all the flavors together for a wonderful finish that keeps repeating the essential flavor themes.” **93 Points**

Wine Spectator

December 31, 2005

James Laube

“2005 Top 100”

#50 – 2003 Botella Pinot Noir

“Excellent intensity, with pure ripe plum, wild berry, fresh earth and boysenberry flavors that are silky in the mouth and supported by firm tannins. There's a subtle richness and underlying layer of complexity that slowly shows itself. Drink now through 2010. 500 cases made.” **93 Points**

Wine Spectator

December 31, 2004

James Laube

“2004 Top 100”

#63 – 2002 Southing Pinot Noir

“Proprietor Bob Davids invented handheld electronic games such as Draw Piker and Bass Fishin. In 1999, Davids purchased his 100-acre property and planted it to Pinot Noir. The Southing vineyard is named for the exposure of the parcels selected for this wine. Winemaker Kris Curran chills the must in open-top vats for a few days before beginning a slow fermentation. This red is aged 18 months in 70 percent new French oak barrels and is bottled without filtration.”

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Wine Spectator

December 31, 2003

“Top 100 Wines of 2003”

#80 - 2001 Botella Pinot Noir

“This pinot noir gets its name from the rich, well-drained clay loam soil that covers the Sea Smoke Estate vineyard. Winemaker Kris Curran favors a long, slow fermentation, gentle pressing, and 18 months of aging in 70 percent new French oak barrels before bottling without filtration. This is the debut release. Dark, firm, rich and intense, with lots of concentration to the black cherry, blackberry, fresh earth and blueberry jam flavors. Well-focused, with mouthcoating, integrated tannins and a long, pure, rich aftertaste.” **91 Points**