

2016 Bearwallow Pinot Noir

Bearwallow is located in the very “deep end” of Anderson Valley. Owned by Kevin Harvey of Rhys Vineyards, there was no expense spared in the development and the biodynamic farming is meticulous. It is a very densely planted, hillside vineyard with thin soils of sandstone shale, quartz and schist. The fruit for this wine comes from a north-facing slope of 100% Swan clone.

All that detailed farming resulted in beautifully clean, consistently mature fruit at just 22 brix. We elected to follow our standard regime – a four day cold soak, a 10 day fermentation with native yeasts, followed by a short tank maturation. 35% whole-cluster was included and it was aged in 20% new French François Frères oak.

The wine shows a stony red fruit profile. There are complicating notes of damp leaves, sage, fennel and balsa. It has a medium bodied weighting, and is bright and focused. There is a little tannin to resolve but it is approachable with a few hours of air. This wine will certainly benefit from 2-3 years in the cellar. Bottled unfinned, unfiltered. **150 cases.** 12.7% alc.

2016 Oppenlander Pinot Noir

Oppenlander vineyard experienced a very similar vintage to Halcón – the extremely cool May in 2015 led to poor bud formation and a very low 2016 crop level. Just one ton per acre of predominately clone 115 plus a little Pommard selection was harvested late September.

Once again we utilized native yeast fermentation and there was no adjustment for acids or alcohol. 35% whole-cluster and aged in 20% new French oak. There is certainly no shortage of color and flavor density this year. There is the typical earthy darker fruited profile but an extra density, depth and color that hints at a Chambertin. Bottled unfinned, unfiltered. **110 cases.** 13.3% alc.

“The 2016 Pinot Noir Oppenlander comes from a site in the Yorkville Highlands, just outside of Mendocino, and saw a touch of whole clusters in the fermenter and is currently aging in mostly neutral oak. It offers a masculine, Côte de Nuits style in its earthy cherry, currants, smoked earth and ground herb aromatics. Rich, nicely textured, with good density and ripe tannin structure, it’s going to be an outstanding wine.” (Jeb Dunnuck, July 2017) 90-93pts

2016 Alturas

The rains returned after three dry years – Mendocino County received approximately 110% of normal rainfall in the 2015/16 winter season. The winter temps were a touch above average leading to a slightly early bud break but 10-14 days behind the very early 2014/15. Summer was mild with the only significant heat coming in the last week of July. 2016 saw a return to an October harvest for our estate Syrah. A mix of estate Syrah blocks, mainly Chave clone plus 3% co-fermented Viognier, was picked October 8th. Crop level was the lowest since 2013 - just 1.25 tons per acre. We utilized 50% whole-cluster and aged in 15% new French oak, in the form of a 500L Ermitage puncheon. This version of Alturas reminds me of a slightly more structured version of the 2013 (another very low crop year). Meaty, floral, fruits that trend towards the red spectrum and dried herb notes. It is more open knit than the two preceding vintages and will drink well young but undoubtedly improve for a decade. I have to say that I believe it is the best Alturas to date. 13.5% alc. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. **250 cases**

“I tasted two samples of the 2016 Syrah Alturas, one fermented with 100% whole clusters, and one with 50% whole clusters. Both were serious barrel samples possessing terrific notes of blackcurrants, cracked black peppercorns, meat and olives, full-bodied richness, solid density and ripe, yet certainly present, tannin. It’s loaded with potential, and is reminiscent of Côte Rôtie from the northern part of the appellation.” (Jeb Dunnuck, July 2017) 93-95pts

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