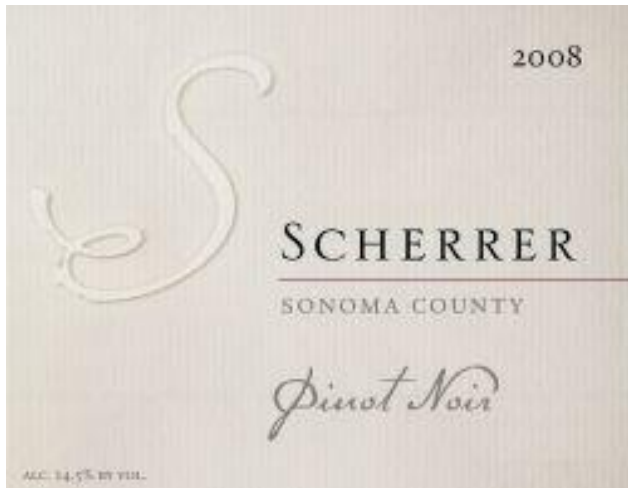


Pinot Noir

Sonoma County, 2008



Pinot Noir from Sonoma County varies in its expression according to where it is grown. This wine exhibits the sassafras character of coastal Pinot Noirs, as well as the cola of those from the area between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa. Moderately structured, it has a central core of red fruits and lightly toasty oak that anchor these coastal and inland elements. It should be at its best two to six years after the vintage.

Winemaker's Notes

Happily, the Russian River Valley was not affected by the unfortunate wildfire smoke that plagued much of the northern high-elevation vineyards. Additionally, the growers we work were either minimally frosted in the spring or took heroic measures to remove lagging fruit – despite the fact that their yields were already diminished. Right on the heels of the frosts, in a rare exhibit of forward planning and good timing, I was able to secure additional grape contracts for that year in order to hopefully make up for some of these losses and give me more blending options.

As in past vintages, this wine is actually all Russian River Valley fruit that belongs in this supplier, more forward blend. Knowing the shadow (rightly or wrongly) that would hang over the entire 2008 vintage, I was unusually brutal in declassifying and removing anything that was not a

real asset to our principal blends/bottlings. The additional fruit sources made it easy to optimize our own blends, maintain reasonable quantities and still send barrels of wine that we do not absolutely need to other producers for their purposes.

Our Sonoma County Pinot Noir bottling has captured what I consider the best elements of 2006 and 2007: Suppleness and transparency of the 2006, and the focus of the 2007. Recent research at the dinner table with Salmon reaffirms the heavenly match and illustrates the balance of this wine: More on acidity, red fruit and liveliness than on sheer extract and dark fruit which is more typical of our Russian River Valley bottling (to be released next spring). As a generality, I'm quite impressed at the restrained fleshiness of all our 2008 Pinot Noirs across the board.