



Pinot Noir in the Santa Cruz Mountains

"A mountain vineyard is the most beautiful sight on earth!" - Martin Ray

"It's a hard grape to grow...it's thin-skinned, temperamental, ripens early...it's not a survivor like Cabernet, which can just grow anywhere and thrive even when it's neglected. No, Pinot needs constant care and attention. It can only grow in these really specific, little, tucked-away corners of the world. And only the most patient and nurturing of growers can do it, really. Only somebody who really takes the time to understand Pinot's potential can then coax it into its fullest expression. Then, ahhh, its flavors are the most haunting and brilliant, thrilling and subtle and ancient on the planet." ~ The character Miles, from the 2004 movie, "Sideways"

Breathtaking vistas. Ocean and valley views. Lush forests. Majestic first-growth redwoods. Coastal fog. Ocean breezes. Surf and sand. And mountain vineyards. This is the Santa Cruz Mountains. This mountain terroir is where we grow and make award-winning Pinot Noir.

Pinot Noir grows best in mountain terroir: high elevations, rugged terrain, cool climate. The Santa Cruz Mountains enjoys a proximity to the ocean and the benefits of its coastal climate: warm days, cool nights, coastal fog in the morning, and soft breezes by afternoon to dry the vines without stressing them – all so important to growing premium Pinot Noir. Santa Cruz Mountains vineyards are distinguished from most California vineyards by being so close to the ocean, enjoying the benefits it brings to producing quality Pinot Noir. Plus, visitors can come and taste our wines, then enjoy a sunset walk on the beach!

Family-owned vineyards and artisan wineries. Personal attention to the vines and the wine. Low impact farming. Attention to detail, patience, respect, the quality that time lends. The best Pinot results from this kind of dedication and artistry. This is Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir.

The Wine

Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir reflects our special mountain terroir and personal attention:

- Complex flavors and deep intensity
- Balanced acidity and elegance
- A long finish on the palate
- Age worthy –develops in the bottle
- Pairs well with food!

Wine lovers tired of over-oaked or overly sweet wines made of grapes harvested at increasingly high Brix appreciate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot and other appellation varietals for their balanced flavors, complexity, food-friendly acidity and age-worthiness.

Gold Medal Pinot Noirs

In the 2006 San Francisco Chronicle International Wine Competition Santa Cruz Mountains wineries were awarded seven Gold, seven Silver and five Bronze Medals for Pinot Noir made from appellation grapes – a testament to the excellent quality of our appellation wines and our fruit. Gold Medals for appellation wines were won by Soquel Vineyards, Storrs Winery, Windy Oaks, and Hallcrest Vineyards. Hallcrest won four Gold and two Silver Medals for wine from several different appellation vineyards. For a complete list, go to www.vascm.org.

The Santa Cruz Mountains has played a pivotal role in the history of winemaking in California, with roots going back over 100 years. Celebrated Pinot Noirs have been made in the Santa Cruz Mountains by Martin Ray following Prohibition and others since. Pinot from wineries such as Mt. Eden and David Bruce have played a pivotal role in establishing the legacy of exceptional Pinot Noir from the Santa Cruz Mountains, a legacy that continues today with the growth of many new vineyards and wineries in the appellation. Changes in viticultural and winemaking practices (new trellising and improved canopy management, new clones, sustainable agricultural practices) are producing improved, more reliable and consistent quality Pinots throughout the appellation.

The Vineyards

Out of only about 1400 acres planted in the Santa Cruz Mountains*, about ¼ or 300+ acres are planted to Pinot Noir, making Pinot from appellation fruit a special and rare experience. Slightly more acreage is planted to Chardonnay, an indication of the perfect suitability of this terroir for Burgundian varieties. There are upwards of 75 Pinot vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains and all are very small –almost all under 15 acres. Most of the Pinot acreage (app. 70%) is planted in Santa Cruz County or on the mountain ridges above Monterey Bay, closest to the coast and the cooling fog influence.

Although the terroir comprises numerous factors, probably the greatest influence on our grape flavors and resulting wine is from the maritime, Mediterranean climate:

- Cool nights, warm but not too hot days moderated by coastal fog create intense, concentrated flavors in the fruit.
- Warm coastal breezes honor the integrity of the fruit, allowing for softer skins and tannins that release more easily in the wine. (These breezes are not so heavy that they overstress the vines, which can close down the leaf stomata, inhibit vine respiration and photosynthesis, and produce tough fruit and skins, resulting in harsh tannins.)
- The long growing season and slow ripening process result in complex, nuanced flavors.

Soils are varied throughout the appellation, and include decomposed rock, clay, loam and limestone, but the overall effect often releases a fresh, mineral character to the wines.

The unique combination of climate, soil, artisanry, and progressive sustainable agriculture that honors the soil and the vine come together in the bottle to create a memorable Pinot Noir experience – *heaven in a bottle*.

For more information on Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards and microclimates, see “The Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowing Appellation”.

For More Information:

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Windy Oaks Vineyard