

Ceritas

FALL 2014 ISSUE

Dear Friends,

The 2014 harvest is days away from starting. The five day marine layer that parked itself on most of Sonoma County this past week has decided to allow the August weather back in. With a week of high's in the 70's we could not be more pleased. While there has been little time for the romance of winegrowing this year, on occasion I find some solitary moments. Early this week, while walking the vine rows of Hellenthal, I watched as the Pacific fog peeled away from the land to my east allowing crystalline light to pour in. These are often the moments of insight and the understanding of the true character of site and vintage.

It's often said that one "saves the best for last" and this release is nothing short of this. For our final release of the year, we present three wines from some of the oldest and most important vineyard holdings of Ceritas. Each of these vineyards finds their roots on the western ridges of the West Sonoma Coast.

HELLENTHAL VINEYARD "OLD SHOP BLOCK" PINOT NOIR / SONOMA COAST

In the spring of 2012, we received a phone call informing us that several sub-parcels of the Hellenthal property were available for the first time in many years. Owner, Gard Hellenthal, who spends most of his days amongst the timber of the North Coast (he is a master logger and big machine operator), spoke to us about his property and his desire to work with Ceritas. John had been intrigued by the Hellenthal property since his first vintage in California. We were aware that Hellenthal had some of the oldest vines on the coast and given its location and kaleidoscope of soils, we knew this was a match for Ceritas.

We began working with the property in 2012. While there are several parcels of grapes across the entire property, what makes our bottling unique is the planting known as the "Old Shop Block". The Old Shop Block is part of the original planting dating back to 1980 and is the only own rooted vines on the Hellenthal property. These vines along with early plantings at Hirsch and Bohan Ranch represent some of the oldest plantings of Pinot Noir on the Sonoma Coast. Given their age and the fact that they are own rooted allows for a unique expression of Pinot Noir not typically found here in California. Soils here are fractured pink sandstone and quartz and allow for good drainage.

The wine has vibrantly high-toned aromatics – red cherry, rose petal, mahogany and bay leaf. Very pure transparent palate with fine tea-like structure and texture, complete with all elements in place. Long and vibrant with the balance to age.

ESCARPA VINEYARD PINOT NOIR / SONOMA COAST

Escarpa was our first Pinot Noir bottling back in 2007. The vineyard is located in a small slot canyon just west of Occidental. Here the vines receive less sun than sites further to the west due to the rugged topography. As a result, flavor is slow to develop allowing bright flavors to be retained without higher potential alcohols.

Soils here are dominated by blue schist and quartz lending structure and fine-grained tannins. This is a wine to put into your cellar and rewards patience. After the 2012 harvest, we decided to replant the site due to it no longer making financial sense to farm it. The 2012 vintage was the last great harvest for these long-lived vines and it's the most expressive bottling to date. Our next harvest will be around 2017/18.

Cool, focused aromas of cherry and currant, smoked meat, porcini and violet. Firm structured entry on the palate, then silky, focused and dry with flavors that are a direct progression from the nose. Quite long, yet holding much in reserve.

PORTER-BASS VINEYARD CHARDONNAY / SONOMA COAST

For those who know our wines, Porter-Bass has been and will always be near and dear to our hearts. This is where Phoebe grew up amongst the vines. After 9 years of making wine from here, the site continues to speak to us in new ways each year. We find the Chardonnay that comes from this place to have some of the greatest intensity of acidity backed by lithe fruit and perfumed essence of baking spice and honeysuckle.

Intense nose featuring oyster shell, lemon curd, forest floor and chicken broth, lifted by lemon ice and wild rose. The palate is equally dry and intense with bracing acidity, given depth by notes of granny smith apple, green tea and anise. Very long, driving finish.

As always, we are humbly grateful for the raw materials that nature provided and strove to capture their true expression. We sincerely hope that you enjoy these wines. Thank you for your continued support.

Be well,

John Raytek & Phoebe Bass