

GARY FARRELL

VINEYARDS & WINERY

2020 SANFORD & BENEDICT VINEYARD PINOT NOIR STA. RITA HILLS

Vineyards

In 1971 Richard Sanford and Michael Benedict took a chance on a spring fed farm on the north facing slopes of the east west traversing Santa Ynez River on California's Central Coast and planted what became Sanford & Benedict Vineyards to Pinot Noir. The success of this site depends on the maritime influences of the Pacific Ocean. The movement of fog and cooling winds up valley and the soil, a living medium of minerals and organic material, is quite unique to this growing region. A byproduct of receding seas, river-deposited particles, landslides, and the slow weathering of ancient stone, which in the Sta.Rita Hills AVA includes shale, serpentine, and sandstone. The Sanford & Benedict Vineyard is the cornerstone of this iconic AVA and continues to produce exceptional fruit.

Vintage

What an interesting year 2020 was around the world, and here in wine country as well. The growing season began with one of the driest winters in memory, and certainly the driest February in recorded history. The dry weather continued through the spring months and even into summer, leaving the vines with very little soil moisture to maintain a healthy canopy. Water stress can create beautifully concentrated wines, and that's precisely what we're observing. Budbreak and flowering began a couple of weeks ahead of the previous season, indicating an early onset of harvest. The summer weather was relatively mild, with very few heat spikes, so the vines soaked up the sun, producing a beautifully balanced crop with small to moderately sized clusters. Moving into late summer, veraison was early, but the weather and the crop were looking pretty close to ideal. In the middle of August, wildfires caused several interruptions and cut the harvest short by a great deal, but neither the winery nor the vineyards suffered damage.

Winemaking

Grapes were harvested in the cool morning hours and then brought to the winery. After careful hand sorting, ~80% of the fruit was gently de-stemmed, then transferred to small, open-top tanks, and 20% of the fruit was added later as whole clusters. The juice was chilled to 45°F and allowed to cold soak for five days before fermentation was started. During fermentation, the cap was gently punched down 2-3 times daily. After fermentation, the new wine and its solids were allowed to sit in a tank for 10-15 days of extended maceration, a period during which the tannins soften, and the primary fermentation esters develop more complexity. The wine was then gently pressed off the skins and seeds, inoculated for malolactic fermentation, and racked into 40% new French oak barrels (light toast François Frères, Tonnellerie O, & Ana Selection) for 15 months of barrel aging on primary lees.

Tasting Notes

Ripe and juicy yet restrained and beautifully complex, this wine offers a gorgeous perfume of hibiscus, dried herbs, boysenberry, anise and bergamot. The ripe fruit core suggests huckleberry, bourbon-soaked cherries, and dried flower petals, all nicely framed by a hint of black tea, sweet tobacco, and fresh cedar. Youthful tannins, chalky minerality and bright, focused acidity come into a persistent, snappy finish.

Appellation

Sta. Rita Hills

Vineyards

Sanford & Benedict

Composition

100% Pinot Noir

Fermentation & Aging

15 months in 40% new French oak

Alcohol

14.3%

pH / T.A.

3.32 / 6.3 gm/L

Production

213 Cases

Bottling Date

January 26, 2022

Release Date

February 2024

Retail Price

\$75