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Wine of the Week-Gary Farrell 2018 Russian River Selection Pinot Noir-Russian River Valley

Winemaker Theresa Heredia captures the “essence” of great California Pinot Noir



The 2004 romantic comedy-drama *Sideways* had everything to do with catapulting the profile of California Pinot Noir into the oenological stratosphere. Besides winning an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay and garnering nominations for the director (Alexander Payne) and its two supporting actors (Haden Church and Virginia Madsen) it cemented the reputation of California Pinot Noir in the collective public mind.

No grape varietal has been more celebrated or maligned, depending upon which wine critic you're reading at the time. Certainly, no other wine has been the subject of such scrutiny and impassioned debate.

Gary Farrell 2018 Russian River Selection Pinot Noir (\$45) from Sonoma County's Russian River Valley enters the crowded field with a beautiful expression of this finicky grape.

As realized by winemaker Theresa Heredia, the wine captures the Russian River Valley's unique terroir, that elusive blend of soil, climate and growing season. It's an achievement that Heredia likes to call "capturing the essence of place."

The season began, Heredia recalls, with a cold wet winter that set the pace for the ensuing growing season. "2018 was a breath of fresh air," she recalled. "After several years of drought, intense heat and early harvests, it was a return to a more normal harvest onset."

Grapes are sourced from a variety of vineyards, Hallberg, Rochioli, Toboni, Martaella, Bacigalupi, Nonella and Pratt-Lakeview. The juice is then fermented and aged for 10 months in 35% new French oak.

"I like to ferment the wine using a lot of the fruit solids. That allows me to get that real 'expression of place' that I like to talk about."

Her tactics paid off. The freshness and voluptuousness of the wine really shine through.

A heady bouquet of brandied cherries, raspberry fields and rose geraniums intoxicate the senses. Alluring layers of flavor also await.

Handfuls of ripe, juicy red fruit spill over into hints of floral herbs such as oregano and thyme. Then follow hints of clove and cinnamon. Bits of cranberry and Hibiscus tea and a touch of vanilla bean cascade into zesty ginger snaps. A final swirl of caramel finishes the glass.

Vibrant acidity and silky tannins make this the perfect wine to pair with your absolute favorite meal. Mine is roasted pheasant, which I get straight from MacFarlane Farms in Indiana, with a homemade stuffing made with flavorings of your choice.

I'm slow roasting mine with Chestnuts, which I've steamed and shelled myself. I'll add homegrown Sage that I'll place under the skin, and use a bit of the wine in the bottom of the roasting pan.

Low temperature cooking will allow the bird to become infused with the aromatics of the wine.

This is what life is all about. It's a state of being that Gary Farrell 2018 Russian River Select Pinot Noir imparts with the simple act of uncorking the bottle. For more, visit garyfarrellwinery.com.