



Tasting Notes

I have always felt that most attempts at trying to describe a wine are fairly futile. I don't mean that in a negative way, but, the reality is that what you experience in any given wine is unique to you, and will probably be different than what I experience, and that is the way it should be; that is one of the beauties of wine. Wine is very much a living thing that is forever changing and evolving, and what is experienced today for any given wine is typically different than what is experienced down the road. Anyone put in the position of writing about any given wine has a responsibility to leave enough room for each individual to have their own experience; the power of suggestion must not be abused! That being said, my wines are like my children: I have been with them from the beginning, watched them grow and evolve, and have certainly developed an intimate relationship with them. What I have noticed is that every wine and vineyard, like every person, has its own unique personality and, therefore, my tasting notes tend to be personality-driven as well as flavor-driven; this is what makes sense to me. There are so many factors involved that have nothing to do with the wine itself that will affect your experience with it: who you are with, your mood, the weather, what time of day it is, what foods are present, etc. Therefore, when trying to write a wine's description, I feel that the best thing I can do is try to get a handle on its personality and give you my impression of some of what is in the bottle. Your experience of the wine is what happens when you drink it; there are no right or wrong descriptions, just experiences.

Overall, I would say that my goals in winemaking are an effort to fully capture the personality of the vineyard with highly extracted, food-friendly, fruit-driven wines with oak as a component, never a dominating presence. My goal is to get as close to the edge of the cliff without falling off.

2002 Pinot Noir/Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (275 cases produced):

As I have stated before, to say a wine is from Bien Nacido Vineyard is far too broad a description. This particular bottling is from "T" block, the planting is over 30 years old, and the grapes are Clone 22 (a clone from Beaujolais) of Pinot Noir. While wines from different blocks of Bien Nacido certainly have their own unique personalities, like different children from the same families, there are a few traits that I see in my wines that seem to be fairly consistent from this vineyard. Though in varying levels, I consistently notice flavors that are smokey, gamey, spicy, with a bloody meat/game quality combined with a richness and depth that is never for the faint of heart. While this wine certainly satisfies the above characteristics, there is also a real floral and perfumey femininity that makes it enchantingly sexy. It continues to amaze me how many people still say that they don't like Pinot Noir because they feel it is "too light". I dare them to try this wine and make that statement.