



B. Kosuge Wines

2005 HIRSCH VINEYARD
SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR

Over the past two years, I have made many trips down the long, winding road depicted on the label to visit David Hirsch's vineyard. David somehow found this spot, some years ago and even more improbably planted it to Pinot Noir grapevines. Now the vineyard is famous but I am sure at the time, it seemed like folly to plant anything so far out in the middle of nowhere. This is what inspired the picture. But the real inspiration is to experience single mindedness that David brings to his vineyard. When I make the long drive out there to snoop around, he's nearly always out in the field, working the land, thinking about the vines. He has stacks of handwritten notes about each block of vines. Sometimes when we chat, I'm unable to follow what he's saying because too many ideas are pouring out all at once. During harvest, he's the one driving the tractor, pulling leaves from the bins of grapes. Not afraid to get dirty. It's all about the wine for this guy - and I'm drawn to that.

Farming on the edge of the continent has its drawbacks though. The coastal ridges intercept a lot of moisture during the winter, and they can get 60 inches of rain - or more - in a wet year. The area also has a tendency to be cold in the spring; so poor set and small crops occur much more often than further inland. But the wines from this place (David was kind enough to let me taste a bunch of them, going back to 1996, from a variety of producers including Kistler, Littorai and Williams Selyem), have a wildness about them that is pretty compelling.

I hope that my small offering is a worthy successor to those wines. The crop in 2005 was as tiny as the crop of 2004. I managed to get about three-quarters of a ton, which resulted in 47 cases of wine. Better than the 33 cases I made in 2004, I guess. The berries were uneven - and mostly very small. When I visited the vineyard about a week ahead of harvest, it looked like my block had already been picked! The 2005 growing season was pretty forgiving the rest of the way, and the fruit arrived at the winery in excellent shape. Because there were so few berries per cluster, I didn't use as much whole clusters as I normally would. Lots of stem per bunch in '05! The wine shows the coolness of the vintage, with a raciness and "cut" which I quite like. You would expect the wine from such low yields to be good. And it is.