



B. Kasuge Wines

2011 Sonoma Coast Chardonnay

Everyone was moaning about how difficult the 2011 vintage was. We Californians are spoiled by how forgiving our weather is—we almost never get rain in the summer time, and seldom during harvest (except for later in the season), we seldom get hail, our grapes get ripe and we generally have plenty of them. At the risk of sounding curmudgeonly, I feel like a little adversity was exactly what we needed, to remind ourselves of how easy we usually have it.

To be honest, there were many things about the 2011 growing season that made things difficult. We did, in fact, get rain during the growing season and mildew pressure (grapevines are sensitive to mildew growing on the leaves and shoots, more so than on the fruit although that can happen too) was high. Growers really had to be on their toes to maintain the vineyards in healthy shape. On top of that, the crop was small, so there was no margin for error. There wasn't much to go around! But the cool, late season, the small crop and the attentiveness that the season forced upon us yielded surprisingly good fruit. In fact, for people like me who are always trying to walk the fine line between new world ripeness and old world structure, the season played right into our hands.

I've been trying for several years to fine tune my Sonoma Coast Chardonnay. While the La Cruz vineyard is a naturally late ripening, high acid site, the wine always has a surprising degree of ripeness and body. Not that there is anything wrong with that, but my personal tastes lean a bit towards crispness and minerality. 2011 naturally gave that kind of wine. Some citrus blossom notes, a little richness from aging on the lees, subtle oak and bright acidity. It's pure, just the way I like it. That's the good news. The bad news is that I got about half what I usually get, so there are only 110 cases this year.