



B. Kosuge Wines

2006 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. That is what inspired the picture.

But the real inspiration is to experience the 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.

We finally got a decent sized crop in 2006, after two years of miniscule yields. I managed to get an entire ton, yielding 60 cases of wine. Mind you, the crop was only big by comparison to 2005. In my block it was still less than three tons per acre. Nonetheless, it was a huge pleasure to see normal sized clusters. The 2006 growing season was quite mild, with a mild heat spike just before harvest. Many parts of California (although not all) set a pretty big crop, and those who succumbed to the temptation not to thin back to normal levels had some problems. But if you did everything right, the fruit was in fine shape, although maybe not as extravagantly ripe as some years. I find the 2006 Hirsch to be quite elegant and perfumed, with lovely flavor concentration even if it is not as dark and tannic as the 2005.

To me, there is a purity in the aromas and flavors of the 2006 Hirsch that speaks loudly of its place. And that's what it's all about, isn't it?