

Ceritas

FALL 2011 ISSUE

Dear Friends,

The orchestra took their seats, and the conductor raised his baton, and everything started in perfect unison. Before long there was a sense that the whole thing was happening effortlessly, as though clouds had parted in the sky and what spilled out was a fluid stream of what was meant to be.

Great vintages feel like that to us. They just seem to roll out to specification, without hitches, leaving us wondering as they run their course whether each successive day and night could be as calm and lovely as the last. On the Sonoma Coast, where weather is unpredictable and can be severe, these vintages don't come around all the time.

2009 was such a vintage.

In this, our fifth vintage of Porter-Bass chardonnay, and our third vintage of Escarpa pinot noir, we can't help but feel as though the 2009 vintage has helped us to better understand why we do the work we do. There were no significant heat spikes, no great late-season rainstorms, we harvested under the same warm and sunny conditions that had characterized the whole summer. The wines, accordingly, seem to us like what we dream of wines from these vineyards being.

Describing the flavors in the wines might be best accomplished by a quick kitchen analogy. Plum tomatoes, many of you know, can be roasted with wonderful results. And to a casual observer, it can seem as though the same results can be achieved by roasting them at high heat for a short period of time or by roasting them at a lower temperature for longer. Tasting the two examples, though, reminds us that the slow, incremental flavor development of roasting them overnight at 200 degrees makes them more complex and more delicious.

The 2009 Ceritas chardonnay from Porter-Bass is a kaleidoscopic rendering of a summer afternoon in the vineyard. Minerally, saline and luscious, it splashes the palate with every drop of lime zest, beeswax, and lavender that great chardonnay has to offer. Sweet and salty, sour and savory, drinking a glass of this wine is like eating an entire meal.

And yet we may be still more thrilled with the '09 Escarpa pinot noir. Many of you who love pinot noir know this: unlocking the magnificent flavors and glorious subtlety of the grape is among the most exhilarating triumphs in the world of wine. The densely packed smells and tastes of mushrooms and fresh herbs, of forest floor and ocean driftwood are as beguiling as any we know.

That this 2009 Ceritas pinot from Escarpa has so much flavor, and moves through your mouth so weightlessly (it's 13.1% alcohol), well what can we say besides that it makes us very happy. In a nutshell, it's what we set out to do as devotees of pinot noir. It, and the chardonnay both, are going to be reminding us for years to come about how good these varietals really can be in California.

2009 will always hold a special place in our hearts—it might have been the vintage that told us who we want to be when we grow up.

ALLOCATIONS

Allocations will be honored for 14 days after the release. From this point forward, any remaining wine will be sold on a first come, first serve basis. We hope you enjoy it. Thank you for your continued support. Be well.

Gratefully,
John Raytek & Phoebe Bass

Coming . . .

2010 Helgren Vineyard Pinot Noir will be released in the spring of 2012. Please be on the lookout for news of the release.