**Vintage**

The 2015 vintage was a very low rainfall year, beginning with a mild winter followed by an early budbreak, which resulted in rapid canopy development. Although it was an overall warm spring and summer, the crop was on the light side, due to cold temperatures in May that retarded berry set. The early start to the season, coupled with a warm summer and light crop, led to the earliest harvest on record for our Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir.

**Vineyards**

Our Highlands Bench Pinot Noir comes from the Escolle Road Vineyard, just west of the town of Gonzales in the Santa Lucia Highlands appellation of Monterey. We were invited to partner with a group of friends - Gary Caraccioli, the Nunes and Hiyashi families - in 2006 to establish a vineyard on the Rianda family property. We participated in soil evaluation, vineyard layout and clone and rootstock selection, ultimately choosing the highest elevations and most gravelly soils for Pinot Noir planting. The Pinot Noir clones selected were Dijon origin 777, 115 and 828, as well as Pommard 4 and Joseph Swan. The vines are spaced at four feet within the row and eight feet between rows in a north-south orientation. The close proximity to Monterey Bay, the eastern slope and aspect, and the elevation above the Salinas Valley floor provide a cool, sunny and ideal environment for growing intensely-flavored Burgundian varietals.

**Winemaker’s Comments**

The 2015 Highlands Bench Pinot Noir has a wonderfully spicy fruit character with generous aromas of ripe strawberry and a touch of bergamot. The palate is round with fruit at the attack and flinty-firm on the finish.

—Steve Peck, red winemaker

**Food Pairings**

Delicious with beef carpaccio, barbecued oysters or grilled lamb.

**Wine List Description**

Notes of ripe strawberry and spicy fruit with a firm finish.

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**Technical Data**

**Appellation:** Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County, CA

**Composition (Blend):** 100% Pinot Noir

**Harvest Dates:** August 26th, 2015

**Harvest Process:** Hand-picked into half-ton bins. Destemmed and berry-sorted on Pellenc Selectiv

**Harvest Chemistries:** 27.0° Brix at harvest, total acidity 0.79 g/100ml, pH 3.43

**Fermentation:**

- **Yeast:** The initial inoculation was done with the non-saccharomyces strain Lachancea thermotolerans, prior to cold soak in order to lift fruit and spice. This was followed by a second yeast inoculation of an Australian strain, Maurivin Platinum, to complete alcoholic fermentation.
- **Fermentation:** 20% saignée, 3-day cold soak, then fermented in 10-ton open-top tanks with twice daily punchdowns
- **Malolactic:** 100% malolactic with Viniflora Oenos in barrel
- **Stirring:** Barrels stirred every 2 weeks through February
- **Post-Stirring:** Monthly barrel topping up until bottling

**Maturation:**

- **Barrel Type:** 228-liter Burgundy barrels, 60% new
- **Forests:** Center of France
- **Coopers:** Marcel Cadet

**Bottling Chemistries:**

- **pH:** 3.76
- **Total Acidity:** 0.58 g/100ml
- **Alcohol:** 14.7% by volume
- **Residual Sugar:** 0.04 g/100 ml (dry)
- **Cases Produced:** 1,075 six-bottle cases

**Cellaring:** This wine has the structure to age 5 to 7 years with the greatest fruit evolution in the early years.

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