



Monthly Wine Club

March 2010

During the winemaking process, there are some final decisions a winemaker has to make once fermentation is complete. Before bottling, a choice is made on whether to fine or filter a wine. Fining is usually done for two reasons: one you have a cloudy wine, or two, the wine has more tannin than you want. Fining is the process of adding something, usually a protein to the wine that will draw out particles and tannins. Egg whites are traditionally used; although bull's blood, clay, fish, and other materials can be used. Filtering is passing the wine through a filter, and many types can be used. The objective is to "polish" the wine, meaning to clarify or remove any impurities and defects. Filtering is normally done at the time of bottling. Our two wines this month are both unfined and unfiltered. Unfined and unfiltered wines can be rich and have great mouth-feel, but from a winemaking perspective they are more difficult to make because of bacterial issues. Yet many believe some of the world's best wines are made this way. Do not let the cloudy appearance of these wines mislead you. Let your organoleptic sensors bask in the complex textural and flavorful delights these wines offer. As a friend and colleague in the wine industry said to me, "The more particulates, the more personality!"

*2008 Field Recordings
Chenin Blanc
Jurassic Park Vineyard
Santa Ynez Valley, California*
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*2007 Iota Cellars
Pinot Noir
Amity, Oregon*

With one exception, coastal mountain ranges from Alaska down to the tip of South America run north/south to parallel their nearby shorelines. The one exception is in Santa Barbara County, California, where the Santa Ynez Mountains break this rule, and open up to run east/west for about 40 miles. This east/west gap funnels cool air from the coast up to the foothills at the base of Figueroa Mountain every morning and late afternoon, but allows for enough mid-day sun to ripen wine grapes perfectly. The Santa Ynez Valley AVA (American Viticultural Area) lies at the heart of this unique growing area. As a growing region, Santa Barbara is made up of four officially recognized AVAs, plus at least another four unofficial sub-regions, known by their varying climates, soil types and topographies. The county's largest AVA is Santa Ynez Valley, which runs along the Santa Ynez River in a west-to-east direction, starting about 12 miles from the coast at the town of Lompoc, and extending almost 28 miles until running up against the Los Padres National Forest. Andrew Jones is a 29-year-old winemaker. During his years as a vine nursery representative, he has set foot in just about every Central Coast vineyard, and has developed deep connections to a few of the sites, and friendships with the farmers who care for them. While these vineyards are typically low-profile and out-of-the-way, they yield outrageously good fruit that Andrew uses to make his Field Recordings Wine. Produced only in small quantities, each bottle speaks of the place, the time, and the friendship that made the wine possible. When asked what he looks for in a vineyard, Andrew says, "Good variety. Good dirt. Good location. Good personal connection with the grower. I prefer owner-operators because there's no middleman. They care more about the fruit they're supplying and take more responsibility for their product. They also tend to know what they're doing." The unique qualities of the sites and farmers Andrew has chosen to be a part of Field Recordings are beautifully expressed in all of his wines, especially in the 2008 Jurassic Park Vineyard Chenin Blanc. This Santa Ynez AVA wine is unlike any other found on the Central Coast. Only a handful of local winemakers try their hand at this varietal, but certainly none of them look like Andrew's Chenin Blanc. With a cloudiness reminiscent of Country Time Lemonade, this Chenin Blanc is completely unfined and unfiltered. "I wanted to capture in the bottle what the vines are like in the vineyard," says Andrew. "They were planted in 1978 - so they're older than me - and barely surviving. They're naturally stressed by age and the infertile sandy soil. It's like beach sand down there. I love that story behind the wine so I choose not to strip its character just for the sake of

clarity." The 2008 Chenin Blanc is bright and expressive, with aromas of key lime pie, almonds and chamomile, along with crisp acidity from the unadulterated lemon curd flavor. Field Recordings' production is extremely limited, and only 350 cases of Chenin Blanc were made in 2008. The wine was aged in 50% neutral French oak barrels and 50% stainless-steel for a total of 6 months before bottling. Equally delicious with everything from lighter dishes like salad Niçoise to heavier ones like gnocchi in butter and sage, this wine has limitless food-pairing capabilities.

The 2008 Field Recordings Chenin Blanc is \$16.99/bottle, \$183.50/case.



Eola-Amity Hills is a sub-appellation of the Willamette Valley AVA, located just west-northwest of Salem, Oregon's state capitol. It's comprised of 37,900 acres, 30 wineries, and 2,000 vineyard acres. The climate in this region is greatly influenced by its position due east of the Van Duzer Corridor, which provides a break in the coast range that allows cool Pacific Ocean air to flow through. The soils in the Eola-Amity Hills are predominantly volcanic basalt from ancient lava flows, as well as marine sedimentary rocks, and alluvial deposits at the lower elevations of the ridge. This combination results in a relatively shallow, rocky set of well-drained soils, which typically produce small grapes with great concentration. The majority of the region's vineyard sites exist at elevations between 250 to 700 feet. Iota Cellars is located in the Eola-Amity wine appellation, outside the town of Amity, and is a new name on the Oregon Pinot Noir scene. The name Iota refers to small quantity, reflecting the winery's commitment to small yields, small lots, and small case production. In 1999, Don and Johanna Sandberg moved to Oregon from Minnesota, purchased land in 2000, and began a commercial winery in 2006. The Pelos-Sandberg Vineyard was planted starting in 2001. They have been making wine on a noncommercial basis since 2002, initially from purchased grapes, and then, beginning in 2004, from their own estate. Their 2007 wine is the second commercial vintage. The Sandbergs, and Lynne and Perry Pelos, relatives of the Sandbergs, believe, "our land is at the center of the dream. We started with the land, added the grapes, and now the wine. We are growing the business from the ground up. It is all about hands-on experience and doing things that feel right to the four of us." Like a number of Oregon winemakers, Johanna gained her basic winemaking knowledge at the NW Viticulture Center in Salem, Oregon along with well-known winemakers Tina Hammond (Privé) and Laura Volkman (Laura Volkman Wines). She interned with the Casteel family at Bethel Heights and Bryce Bagnall when he was the winemaker at Witness Tree. The estate Pelos-Sandberg Vineyard (PSV) consists of 11.5 acres in the Eola-Amity Hills AVA planted to Dijon 667 and 777, Pommard and Wädenswil clones. The vines are farmed sustainably and are not irrigated. Some of their grapes are sold to Rex Hill, Bergström and Beaux Freres wineries. Currently, Iota Cellars makes its wine in a leased winery space less than 2.5 miles from their vineyard. This location is ideal for quick grape transport on harvest days, and allows them to closely monitor all aspects of the winemaking process from "crush" to bottle. In addition, this facility gives them access to a wide range of winery equipment, from a state-of-the-art sorting line and destemmer, to a press and a temperature and humidity-controlled barrel room. The 2007 Pinot Noir is composed of grapes from four estate blocks: Ana block (16%), planted to the Dijon 777 clone, Pappou & Yiayia blocks (63%), planted to the Pommard clone and Abino Hill block (21%), planted to the Wädenswil clone. Each of these blocks has a unique soil makeup and exposure. After harvest, whole berries are delicately separated from their stems and fall into open-top fermentors placed below the elevated destemmer. The fruit is allowed to cold soak in the smallest possible fermentor that can hold a particular lot, generally two tons or smaller, and is further separated by vineyard block and clone. Once fermentations begin, punch downs are done by hand at least twice a day. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered, the wine was aged for ten months in third year air-dried French oak barrels, 50% new. Iota Cellars winemaking follows a philosophy that states, "Our wine is handcrafted with minimal intervention in the winemaking process. Since we believe that 'wine is truly made in the vineyard,' we take great pains to make certain that the pinot noir grapes from our estate vineyard, Pelos-Sandberg, are never compromised. Our motto is slow and steady." Only 345 cases were produced. The '07 Iota Pinot Noir offers flavors of plums, warm strawberries, sandalwood, and a dynamic spice with dusty pepper. This is a wine with rich red fruit, a hint of rose petals, and earth. It has great mouth-feel, nicely balanced acidity, and a pleasant tannic presence. The wine evolves and changes dramatically as it is exposed to air. Try this wine with pan roasted lamb chops with a ragout of Morel mushrooms. Grilled salmon, or your favorite chicken dish will be delicious as well, but make sure it includes mushrooms.

The 2007 Iota Cellars Pinot Noir is \$25.99/bottle, \$280.70/case.