



## Zooming Through Gary Farrell Wines

“I want to capture the essence of place,” winemaker Theresa Heredia tells me regarding her diverse portfolio of Pinot Noir. Theresa joined Gary Farrell Winery in 2012. Prior to that she worked at Joseph Phelps’ Freestone Vineyards on the Sonoma Coast, and Domaine de Montille in France. On this particular day several wine writers joined Theresa on Zoom to explore an impressive line-up of her Pinot Noirs focusing on diverse vineyards.

To begin with she works with 36 different vineyard sites – and that’s a lot of work right there. “I’m a huge fan of whole cluster fermentation,” she says though it depends on the vineyard - she feels cooler sites need less whole cluster. She also follows extended maceration between 7-14 days after fermentation, a “steeping period” she calls it, where the wine just sits; there is no stirring, no punch downs or pump overs.

Curiously, during our Zoom one writer boldly said that consumers don’t care about clones, and that even she (that particular writer) didn’t fully understand clonal selection either. I have written about Pinot and site and clonal selection for decades now and almost every winemaker will tell you the same thing Theresa told me: site is more important than clone, it has more influence on the end wine. But I would disagree with the other writer. People want to care, they are indeed curious about the nuances in how a wine comes to be. I’ve run four wine departments and many consumers want to understand clones better. Will a Swan clone from Santa Barbara taste different than a Swan clone from Russian River Valley or Willamette Valley? Absolutely, but therein is the beauty of clones and how they express themselves from different regions. Obviously the vineyard site is crucial - too hot, too cold, poor drainage, what’s actually in the soil, etcetera.

The entire point of this exercise was, frankly, to explore clonal differences and site differences. Some sites Theresa works with produce wildly different sizes of berries – “hens and chicks,” she calls them - small berries are very concentrated, big berries less so. She has an arsenal of clones at her disposal and helped clarify a few of them. “Pommard is classically earthy, juicier with more red fruit,” she notes. Clone 777 tends to be more blue and purple fruit, whereas 667 offers red earthy fruit, and Swan (a personal favorite) is more floral but with less structure to it, which is why often other clones are used to bring more fruit character. Are they subtle? Yes and no. Both a place and clone have a greater disposition on Pinot Noir than other grape, Cabernet for example, and the beauty of this tasting exercise was to examine how both worked in the glass. The point? Go explore, learn about not just AVAs, but sub-AVAs and even different blocks within the same vineyard. Ask questions. The variety of these Gary Farrell Wines (there are more Pinot’s than shown here) is a great place to start. Below are a few notes on specific wines.

### **2016 Santa Maria Valley, Bien Nacido Vineyard (\$70, 719 cases)**

Bien Nacido is the single most well-known and respected vineyard site in Santa Barbara County, and these grapes come from the equally well-known Q Block. Pommard, clone 777, which has “a mystery spice” to it Theresa says, make up the wine. There are beautiful notes of cranberry, green tea, pomegranate. Theresa used just 20% whole cluster for this fermentation.

### **2016 Russian River Valley, Taboni Vineyard (\$55, 915 cases)**

Vacillating between tart and sweet, this has a strong acidity running through it, offering rich strawberry, black cherry, pomegranate, rhubarb with subtle green tea and hints of cola.

### **2016 Sonoma Coast, Gap’s Crown Vineyard (\$80, 618 cases)**

Earthy and spicy, it helps frame the fruit of macerated strawberry, black cherry, a little lighter on the acidity but with a handsome viscosity.

### **2016 Russian River Valley, Martaella Vineyard (\$65, 618 cases)**

This wine shows a little more jamminess than the others. It comes from the heart of the Russian River Valley, a 42-acre Pinot site heavily blanketed with morning fog. It is rich and deep, emphasizing black cherry, boysenberry and blackberry notes.

### **2016 Fort Ross-Seaview, Fort Ross Vineyard (\$75, 565 cases)**

These grapes get more sun exposure because of their 1,400 feet elevation. She uses clones 777, and Calera, which “is the most complete clone I work with. It’s got great structure and concentration, interesting savory qualities,” Theresa says. There’s an interesting salinity to due to its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. Notes of blackberry, violets and black cherry.

