



A I E N A

THE HANDS ARE THE TOOLS OF THE HEART.

Tasting Notes

2007 Aiena Santa Lucia Highlands McIntyre Vineyard Chardonnay.

I'm not a fan of the big, high octane style of Chardonnay. Although I can definitely appreciate the achievement of some of the richer examples of that style, when it comes to the Chardonnay wines that I make, they always seem to be livelier, more fruit driven and, to use a cliché, more elegant than powerful. The 2007 Aiena Chardonnay has lots of toasty, yeasty notes but also plenty of citrusy fruit and mineral highlights. On the palate, there is a lovely balance of richness and bright fruit. It will stand up to richer fare but is not heavy or dull.

McIntyre Estate Vineyard, in the "sweet spot" of the Santa Lucia Highlands. Clone 76, a new import that has a tendency to set poorly, resulting in uneven clusters and modest yields. Sandy clay loam soil, similar to Garys' and Rosella's. In fact, the vineyard is about a quarter mile north of Rosella's, so it is very similar. Yields were very light in 2007, about 2.75 tons to the acre. Like the Pinot from this vineyard, the



clusters were small with a mixture of normal size and small berries. This vineyard is being reborn; it was originally planted to sparkling wine Pinot, and is now being redeveloped to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for high-end still-wine production.

I have a long history of making Chardonnay, dating back to the late '80's and my early years at Saintsbury in Napa. The way I learned to make Chardonnay way back then is still pretty much the way I do it now – minimal juice clarification, barrel fermented, native yeast fermentation, aged on the lees, malolactic, 100% barrel-aged in French oak. Even though those processes seem fairly standard these days, back then they were cutting edge. Most importantly, they worked, and, as they say, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Like the Pinots I make, I try to let the vineyard show through. Although I admit that Chardonnay does taste better with a little toasty oak and some lees character. Think of it as a little tastefully applied makeup, to enhance what is already there.



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Tasting Notes

2007 Aiena Santa Lucia Highlands
McIntyre Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Wines from this part of the Santa Lucia Highlands always have a bright, lively core of fruit and a perfume that is sometimes reminiscent of orange rind mixed with red fruits – raspberries and strawberries. I hesitate sometimes to use the expression “fruity” when describing a wine but that’s what this wine is – tastes like Pinot Noir. There is some sweetness (fruit sweetness, not residual sugar) on the mid-palate and enough acidity to keep it fresh. It should age well.

McIntyre estate vineyard is in the “sweet spot” of the Santa Lucia Highlands. Clone 115. Sand clay loam soil, similar to Garys’ and Rosella’s. In fact, the vineyard is about a quarter mile north of Rosella’s, so it is very similar. Yields were very light in 2007, about 2.75 tons to the acre. Clusters were



small with a mixture of normal sized and small berries. I remember being struck, as the fruit came across the sorting line at the winery, by how little the clusters weighed. Not good for quantity but excellent for quality. This vineyard is being reborn; it was originally planted to sparkling wine Pinot, and is now being redeveloped to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for high-end still-wine production.

Winemaking is the same as the other Pinot Noirs I make (B Kosuge, Miura, McIntyre) native yeast fermentations, moderate use of oak (I like to say, enlightened use of oak) minimal handling. The usual high-end Pinot stuff. While I am careful not to make all the wines I make in exactly the same way, I am always trying to put the fruit and the vineyard first. In other words, I try to stay out of the way and let the wine speak for itself.



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The 2007 Aiena Monterey Pinot Noir is a combination of red and black fruits in the aroma and flavor. Bright red color, medium dark. This wine is perhaps a bit riper and showier than the 2006 Foghorn, which was its predecessor. It shares with that wine a raciness and vibrancy on the palate that speaks to the cool climate and low yields of two vineyards that make up this blend, although it is definitely darker and richer.

Two vineyards provide the grapes that make up this wine: Mission Ranch, southwest of the town of Soledad and at the junction of the Arroyo Seco and Santa Lucia Highlands appellations, and Silacci, which is just outside the northern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands and is one of the coolest sites in the county where Pinot Noir is planted. Both are on silty, decomposed granite-based soils. Mission is a bit better drained and less fertile than Silacci and both naturally bear small crops.



Because Mission is about 18 miles south of Silacci, and further from Monterey Bay, the climate there is warmer and grapes ripen around the middle of September. At Silacci the grapes are still on the vine until around the end of the month. The sites have different characteristics. Mission gives dark, fairly ripe and plush wine while Silacci is a bit tighter, higher in acid and more perfumed. They fit together quite nicely.

Winemaking is the same as the other Pinot Noirs I make (B Kosuge, Mirua, McIntyre) native yeast fermentations, moderate use of oak (I like to say, enlightened use of oak) and minimal handling. The usual high-end Pinot stuff. While I am careful not to make all the wines I make in exactly the same way, I am always trying to put the fruit and the vineyard first. In other words, I try to stay out of the way and let the wine speak for itself.



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