

International Wine Review

The Sonoma Coast Pinot Noirs of Ross Cobb: The 2018 Vintage

September 7, 2021

Winemaker Ross Cobb, who founded Cobb Wines with his father David in 2001, is a product of his father's Sonoma Coast 'Coastlands Vineyard', as much as the grapes that are grown there. His father planted the vineyard in 1989, looking for a place to grow a more complex and graceful style of Pinot Noir, and Ross embraced his father's mission. After valuable experience as a viticulturist and enologist at Williams Selyem and Flowers, he has established himself as a specialist in cultivating and crafting a unique style of Pinot Noir at Cobb Wines: elegant, soft, subtle but concentrated and complex low-alcohol wines that have structure and truly express the nuances of their particular site within the Freestone Occidental Occidental subregion of the west Sonoma Coast. Ross also makes small quantities of Chardonnay from this area and Riesling from Mendocino / Anderson Valley. Reviews of Ross's Chardonnays will be included in our upcoming issue on Sonoma County Chardonnay and the following is look at his 2018 Pinot Noir releases.

The Wines

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Coastlands Vineyard Old Firs Block Sonoma Coast (\$80) - 94

Red garnet. Expansive, perfumed bouquet of red cherry, cherry blossom with a touch of cigar box. Impressively flavored and finely textured with earth and herbal overtones, although not as spicy as anticipated given the high percentage of whole clusters. Complex, vibrant and with enough structure for lengthy cellaring. 60% whole cluster. Coastlands is a 14 acre vineyard on a ridge above Occidental planted in 1989 to Wadensvil, Martini and other Pinot Noir selections. 13.3% alc. 175 cs.

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Diane Cobb Coastlands Vineyard Sonoma Coast (\$120) - 96

Tightly coiled bouquet with notes of red cherry skin and spice. Layers of generous fruit and savory flavors on a keenly concentrated and silky palate. A harmonious, singing wine of striking purity and focus. Exceptionally persistent aftertaste. This is a 1.5 acre parcel of the Coastlands Vineyard that was begun in 1989 by Diane Cobb as a half acre nursery growing over 20 selections of Pinot Noir. 13.9% alc. 250 cs.

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Doc's Ranch Vineyard Swan & Calera Selection Sonoma Coast (\$80) - 95

An intriguing, subtle nose of spicy red cherry and pomegranate with uplifting floral scents. Racy but refined with a silky feel and deeply drawn. Youthful tannins need some time to resolve, but the potential is there for this to be Ross Cobb's finest wine. This vineyard sits at 1100' elevation just 3 miles from the Pacific and Bodega Bay. Doc's Ranch is next to the Coastlands Vineyard. 13.5% alc. 275 cs.

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Emmaline Ann Vineyard Sonoma Coast (\$75) - 93

Spicy, emphatic nose of raspberry and pomegranate. Intense on the attack and pure, leading to good depth of high toned fruit with a silky texture. Finishes dry with lingering extract of red fruit. Made with 40% whole clusters. Emmaline Ann is a 3 acre vineyard located near the town of Occidental with two Dijon selections of Pinot Noir planted on Goldridge sandy loam on a gentle south facing slope. 13.2% alc 275 cs.

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Monticue Vineyard Sonoma Coast (\$75) - 95

This is a deeply flavored, complex wine with serious but grippy, ripe tannins that we would opt to lay down for at least a couple of years. There's toasty spice and subtle fruit in the nose, but it's most expressive on the palate, showing dark red fruit and significant non-fruit notes of tobacco, chocolate and spice. Finishes dry, long and rich. 90% whole clusters. This 2 acre vineyard at 700' elevation and 5 miles from the Pacific was planted by Michael Galli in 2010 to Calera, Pommard, and 3 Dijon selections. 177 cs

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Rice-Spivak Vineyard Sonoma Coast (\$75) - 94

Very pretty, vibrant nose of pure light red fruit. Explosive on the attack with intense, rich flavors underpinned by a stony minerality with refined savory elements. An intriguing, strikingly elegant and feminine Pinot Noir. Very special. This 6 acre vineyard near Sebastopol is planted to Dijon and Swan selections on a gentle northeast facing slope with Goldridge sandy loam and volcanic ash soils. 13.4% alc 300 cs.

Cobb 2018 Pinot Noir Wendling Vineyard Anderson Valley (\$75) - 94

One of the Ross Cobb's most intensely fruit wines beginning with pure pomegranate, raspberry and kirsch aromas that carry over to the palate with the introduction of some darker fruit notes. Intense, opulent and high toned with an impressively silky feel and vibrant, long aftertaste. 30% whole cluster; 30% new French oak for 22 months. Paul Ardzrooni planted this phenomenal twenty-acre vineyard on loam over sandstone-shale soils in 2009, the most Northwestern vineyard in the Anderson Valley at 250-300' elevation. Planted to Pommard, 115, 667, and Massal Selection from his other vineyards, it's in close proximity to the Pacific Ocean and has steep, rocky southwest facing slopes. 14.2% alc. 148 cs.

