

WDC – Wine Description

Alazan Pinot Noir 2006

Purchased: April 3, 2008
By: Charlie [REDACTED]
Reason: The Wine Committee is extending the cellar beyond traditional French wines. After a committee tasting of a number of South American wines at West Side Lounge, we chose this Pinot Noir and look forward to the time when it moves to a “drink now” classification.

Tasting Notes from Winemaker Byron Kosuge

2006 Alazan Pinot Noir



Production: 470 cases
Alcohol: 14.5%
Release Date: Fall 2007
Suggested Retail Price: \$28/bottle

After a year off from making Alazan (there was no 2005 Alazan) we are back with a bottling of our top Pinot Noir. A lot has changed since the last Alazan, with new blocks coming into production in the vineyard and a new winery in which to make our wines. The 2006 growing season gave us a modest sized crop—smaller than the 2005 crop, but more than the 2003 or 2004 seasons. Harvest was a little later than average.

I think the wine shows what we've learned over the four years we've been making Pinot Noir and what we have learned about our vineyard. While the previous Alazans were good wines, in my mind, the 2006 represents a significant step forward—the most successful marriage yet of purity of fruit, completeness across the palate, and concentration without excessive extraction or ripeness. We are very close to what I originally felt was the potential in the vineyard. Yes, I am happy with the wine.

In terms of flavor specifics, I find lovely black cherry and other berries on the aromas and the palate and a hint of spice and smoke. This wine is seamless on the palate—rich and delicate at the same time. Like all our red wines, it needs a little air when young, although I don't think it needs decanting. Just savor it in a large glass, and swirl it around a lot. It should improve for several years.

The Vineyards

Our vineyards, first planted in 1998, occupy 200 acres on a northern facing hillside within the greater Kingston Family estate. Situated at the southwestern end of Casablanca, our marginal site is a significant 10°F cooler than Casablanca winery Veramonte further east. Our well-drained, low fertility soil is primarily red clay loam with decomposed granite. Several of the most promising selections of Pinot Noir and Syrah are planted in the upper reaches of the vineyard on their own roots. We applied the best Californian knowledge to every aspect of vineyard design, and our vineyard practices are modeled on the best New World vineyards. We farm at very low yields, typically 2 to 3 tons per acre, a must to ripen our crop. Like the great vineyards of Europe, we are well into cold nights and short days by the time our grapes are ready to harvest, but the payoff is

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in the intensity and vibrancy of the fruit. Last year, we picked our last lot of Syrah in May (the equivalent of November in California or France).



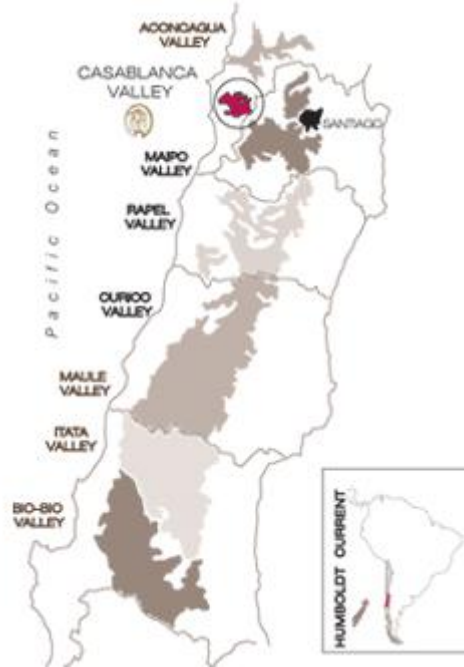
Casablanca Valley

Coastal Chile is a more dramatic version of California, with narrower valleys, and much higher mountains. The Casablanca Valley lies about 12 miles from the ocean and is surrounded by rolling forested hills. The ocean's icy Humboldt Current cools Casablanca, in ways analogous to the northern coast of California. The climate is mild and the season is long. The Casablanca Valley feels like the Central Coast, or perhaps the Sonoma Coast of California (even the plants look similar), but at a higher elevation. Our hillside vineyards sit at an altitude of 1,640 feet, at latitude 33.20°, and longitude 71.26°.



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