

## **Clos Saron 'Home Vineyard Pinot Noir' 2015**

**Producer:** Gideon Beinstock and Saron Rice

**Provenance:** North Yuba AVA, Oregon House, California (Sierra Foothills)

**Farming:** Conventional, irrigated

**Grape(s):** 100% Pinot Noir

**Vineyard(s):** 4 parcels planted in volcanic ash and quartz in a shady, cooler pocket within the otherwise arid North Yuba AVA.

**Fermentation/ Aging:** Foot crushed in whole clusters and fermented in polyethylene harvest bins. Macerated between 6-11 days depending on development with once daily punchdowns. Pressed into neutral french oak barrels.

**Vintage:** although the 2015 shows the drought influence, it has a bit more 'padding' than the comparatively more austere 2014.

**Fining/ Filtration:** none.

**Sulfur:** 35 ppm at bottling.



### **The Producer:**

Given the meteoric thrust of the natural wine 'scene' there are all manner of ideologies being thrown about that tend to paint American naturalists in a reactionary hue. Clos Saron is emblematic of an older, more contemplative approach that finds itself in the natural camp because, well, that's the best way to express a sense of place! Israeli ex-pat Gideon Beinstock is a consummate terroir-ist whose discomfort with the definition of 'winemaker' stems not from radical minimalism for its own sake but from the simple fact that he spends nearly all his time farming and very little in the cellar.

Even setting aside the historicity of the project, Clos Saron is remarkable. The winery has never stopped evolving, continuing to explore ideas of ripeness, cofermentation and sulfite application in thoughtful ways despite decades of successful production. The wines are monolithic embodiments of North Yuba's scorching, iron-laden granitic terroir. They have potency in the manner of the southern French masters - presence and assertiveness couched in the language heat and earth.

### **The Vineyard**

The story of the so-called 'home vineyard,' a patchwork collection of four discrete, half acre blocks, is the story of Clos Saron's earliest moments. Originally planted by Gideon and Saron's friends to Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in 1979, the cool growing pocket

was not ideal for those varieties and together they were replanted to pinot noir. The new plantings were conducted without any concern for clonal specificity, everything is coplanted and Gideon has neither the interest nor inclination to delineate as he feels too much fixation on clonal specifics obscures his notion of terroir.

In a way this wine is the ultimate encapsulation of the Clos Saron harvest ethos: once the season arrives they walk through the blocks almost every day, starting at the oldest block higher up on the ridge where grapes ripen more readily. Employing what Gideon calls 'the avocado rule,' using touch and color to select ONLY ideally ripe grapes. A single block ferment will be started ONLY when the parcel gives them enough of these perfectly ripe bunches to warrant the decision. Otherwise they are vinified together into the 'Home Vineyard Pinot Noir'

### **The Cellar**

Whole clusters are completely crushed by foot (no intracellular 'carbonic' effect) in polyethylene harvest bins. Once a day manual punch downs are conducted using a peicemail tool made of a piece of pvc piping and a stainless steel rod but they are meant only to keep the cap hydrated and NOT to enhance extraction. Each ferment from the many passes through the vineyard is pressed according to its specific development with macerations usually ranging from 6-11 days before pressing. The wine ages in mostly French oak barrels of at least 10 years of age.

Although Gideon has experimented with zero and extremely low sulfur wines, he has found that mouse is too much a distraction and his approach to sulfur has changed over the years. He started with 35 ppm added at crush with a period in the middle trying to use almost none and has fallen into an equilibrium between the two. Lab results from his bottled wines reveal almost no 'free sulfur' remaining. During the period of time he made this wine, the approach was to only add SO<sub>2</sub> 24 hours before bottling at the same moment the wine was racked away from the gross lees into tank for short settling before bottling.

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