

Clos Saron 'Tickled Noir' 2018

Producer: Gideon Beinstock and Saron Rice

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

Farming: Organic

Grape(s): 100% Pinot Noir

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

Fermentation/ Aging: hand harvested bunches are foot crushed and immediately pressed into barrel for spontaneous fermentation.

Fining/ Filtration: none.

Sulfur: Sulfite applied at crush and at bottling netting out to about 35ppm added.



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 so they were replanted to pinot noir at the outset of Clos Saron. 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.

The 2018 'Tickled Noir' is a resurrection of a rosé first tried with a bumper crop of home vineyard Pinot Noir in 2006. In 2009 they made the second vintage and then more or less forgot about the wine for almost ten years. One auspicious night they popped a bottle of the '09 and were totally floored. They resolved to make this a priority moving forward with the 2018 harvest.

Due to an unfortunate vineyard disease that has limited yield without affecting quality, the 'bumper crop' notion has been replaced with a desire to decrease the labor of bird netting. They pick the Pinot for the rosé before the winged thieves get too interested thus saving time and producing one of their favorite wines: 'We love it, we drink it at home' Gideon says and they've made it again in '19 and plan to do the same with the 2020 harvest.

The Cellar

Hand harvested bunches are foot crushed and quickly pressed into 10 year old neutral barrels for spontaneous fermentation and aging.

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. With 2018's harvest Gideon has transitioned to adding sulfite at crush and at bottling aiming for ~35 ppm added total across the entire process.

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