

VINOGRAPHY: a wine blog

Wine and food adventures in San Francisco and around the world

05.02.2008

2005 Piña Napa Valley "D'Adamo Vineyard" Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa

If one were to speculate on the wine market as a savvy investor might in the small-cap stock market, the game would be the same: follow people you know with good track records. In the wine world, we'd also have to include a corollary about betting on great vineyard sites, but leaving aside the raw materials, it's clear that most good wines don't happen by accident. They're made by talented people.

Finding talented people in Napa isn't hard at first. There are a lot of them, many of whom have big brand names. When they start working for a winery, everyone pays attention.

But there are many more talented folks in Napa that never get the limelight of big names. These are the "small cap" talents that are responsible for many of small production wines throughout the valley that are just waiting to be discovered anyone who can start connecting the dots between great vineyards and the people work them.

Piña Napa Valley is owned and operated by the Piña Family, a name that might not mean much to most wine drinkers, but will turn the head of anyone who is reasonably involved in growing grapes in Napa. In the current generation, the Piña Family, through their firm Piña Vineyard Management are responsible for farming some of Napa's most prestigious vineyards (Bryant, Pahlmeyer, Cafaro, Gemstone, Outpost, Showket, Sawyer, O'Shaughnessy, just to name a few), but the family has been making its home in the Napa valley since 1856 when their progenitor Bluford Stice led a wagon train into the valley from Missouri.

Only a few years after that wagon train, the family became involved in the wine business in Napa. They owned a vineyard just south of St. Helena, and Bluford Stice's son became a prominent winemaker at the then famous Inglenook winery (now Rubicon Estate) The family has been part of the Napa wine industry ever since.

As early as 1979 the family had thought about making their own wine, even founding a company called Piña Cellars with that intention, yet somehow never found the time until they purchased a small property on Howell Mountain in 1996 and decided to put their viticultural talents to work for themselves.

Their Howell Mountain property is known as the "Buckeye Vineyard" and its partially terraced hillside surrounded by Redwoods, Oaks and Madrone trees border Ladera and Beatty Ranch.

The family has been producing wine from their estate vineyard for the past 7 years, and the last couple of years they have been acquiring long term leases on several more vineyard sites around Napa with the goal of producing single vineyard wines.



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One of these sites is the D'Adamo vineyard which sits at the foot of Atlas Peak in the southern part of Napa. This sustainably farmed vineyard is planted with 100% Cabernet Sauvignon.



The Piña's began their project with the wines being made by winemaker Cary Gott (a longtime Napa wine veteran and consultant who has worked for more vineyards than are possible to list). In 2001, Ted Osborne (of Storybook Mountain Vineyards most recently) took over as head winemaker, and is responsible for this particular wine. Osborne recently departed Piña, and has been replaced by the young Anna Monticelli.

This particular wine is aged for 18 months in 100% French oak (50% new) before bottling. 1147 cases are made.

Full disclosure:

I received this wine as a press sample.

Tasting Notes:

Inky ruby in color, this wine has a rich and juicy nose of cherry and dark cassis aromas that are surprising and arresting for a Napa Cabernet. In the mouth the surprises continue with dark juicy flavors of black cherry and cassis wrapped in a package of silky tannins. The wine is beautifully balanced and dynamic on the palate, conveying darker fruits than typical for the varietal, making for an unusual and compelling experience. The wine finishes nicely, with lingering notes that nearly reach blueberry.

Food Pairing:

This wine would be a likely contender to accompany this beef stew with herbed dumplings.

Overall Score: between 9 and 9.5

How Much?: \$72

<http://www.pinanapavalley.com>