



ZEPALTAS

Fall 2011 Newsletter

October 5, 2011

A tale of two vintages.... 2009 vs. 2010

Greetings! We hope that this letter finds you well, and that you had a wonderful summer. As we begin this harvest (our 8th, unbelievable!) we take a moment to look back at the two most recent vintages. 2009 had everything that a winemaker could ask for: a long cool, even keeled growing season where the fruit ripened perfectly. Sugars, acids, tannins all were in balance at the time of harvest and the wines were a no brainer once the fruit was harvested. In the cellar there was not much to do except guiding the wines along through the process.

2010 brought on a new meaning to “long, cool growing season” It seems that we did not have a real summer in 2010. We joke that we hardly drank any margaritas last summer. Usually, we are squeezing limes, and breaking out the tequila everyday after work in the summer. Aside from the blast of heat in late August (that ended up sun burning a bunch of local vineyards to the point where the fruit just turned to mush on the vines,) it was a very cold summer. It seemed like the grapes would never get ripe. Our Lake County Sauvignon Blanc that historically is harvested the first week of September was picked October 5th!

In the end, 2010 was a truly unique vintage for the books, and is probably the most polarizing vintage that I have experienced. There was a lot of speculation early on. Two prominent wine writers wrote opposing articles that were posted on damn near the same day. One declaring something to the tune of “The best vintage ever” the other wrote “Total F%&*ing Disaster.” In the end after the dust settled, they both were about half correct. In our cellar, it was a tough year when it came down to the final cuts for blends. There were a lot of gems in the cellar, but there were batches that just didn’t belong on the Zepaltas roster. We sold some wine off to the bulk market, and kept the best barrels for Zepaltas.

What remained as Zepaltas Wines, turned out much better than expected. The 2010 wines have a lot of layers, gripping tannins, and deep flavors. I believe we may have made our most age-able wines to date, but that also means that 2010 wines may need longer than usual cellaring. Any short term drinking will require some decanting, though the wines are best suited for aging.

In this offer we have two wines from 2009 and two from 2010. The second vintage of our, mailing list only, Pinot Noir from the Nunes Vineyard in Russian River Valley and our 74 case lot of 2009 Rosella’s Vineyard Syrah. For the first release of the 2010 reds we offer you our top value, the Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and the 6th vintage (whoa.) of our La Cruz Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Please read the following notes on the wines, and if you are interested in purchasing, the wines are available on our online store or you can fax or email us the order form contained in this newsletter. We are offering a 15% case discount to all mailing list members (except for the Nunes Vyd.) to help offset the cost of shipping. *Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.* As always the wines are available for pickup at the winery.

Cheers!

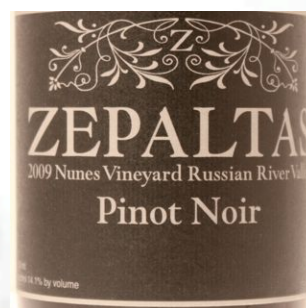
Ryan, Anna & Audrey Zepaltas

2009 Nunes Vineyard Pinot Noir Russian River Valley

We have been working with Fred and Wendy Nunes since 2008. I fell in love with Fred's passion for farming when I met him years ago. When Fred talks about his vines, he gets all worked up and goes into this tent revival preacher-like mode that is just plain awesome to witness. The man seriously knows every single vine on his property, and how it is feeling that day.

We originally set out to use the Nunes Vineyard to make our Russian River Valley Pinot, but we just could not deny the quality of the fruit and the resulting wine. Those insane aromatics that jump out of the glass in the Russian River blend? That is Nunes Vineyard talking. We bottled up a one barrel cuvee' just for you. Only 24 cases made!

On the nose there are vibrant scents of cherry, dried strawberry and smoky, cured meat. As the wine opens up, secondary layers reminiscent of cheese rind and mushrooms creep out of the glass. We aged the wine 16 months to help settle down some of the youthful fruit character, and shed some light on the deeper, more savory layers of spice, cedar and mushroom. This rustic wine is tense, layered and nervy in structure. Good acid and tannins from the stem inclusion provide backbone and balance out the fruit. I think that this wine is drinking well now and should show well for the next 2-4 years. It will never be found on a restaurant wine list or in a retail store. You can only get it from us directly.



24 cases made

\$39/750ml

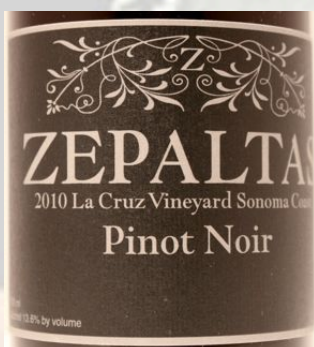
Limit 4 bottles per customer

Available through mailing list only

2010 La Cruz Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

I feel that our La Cruz often gets overlooked within our roster of wines, because of its shy and elegant nature early in its life. It doesn't show much early on, and as one customer told me it is kind of a "fastball down the middle." I do agree, but as retrospective tastings have shown, the wine seems to "run on all cylinders" after about two years in bottle. Right now, the 2008 is showing lots of layers, and has gained intensity in its fruit character (which seems backwards to me.) The 2010 could possibly be our best version of La Cruz (I think I said that last year too.)

Because of its location in the Petaluma Gap along the Lakeville Highway, bud break tends to be about 10-14 days earlier than in our other vineyards. I think that the head start it gets was advantageous in 2010. We got full fruit maturity in the 3 different blocks, and had good acid levels and great flavors at low sugar levels.



The final blend is 75% clone 115, and 25% Pommard selection, both planted on hillside slopes. The 115 provides the brightness, and the Pommard adds the depth, and layers. On the nose we get hints of raspberry, currant and wet stones. There are under layers of mushroom and forest floor that show after a bit of air. The vibrant acidity gives the wine tension and a refreshing feel. The tannins are light to medium grit, and give the wine a nice presence on the finish. I recommend holding this wine for about one year in the cellar before popping it for your best return on investment.

98 cases made

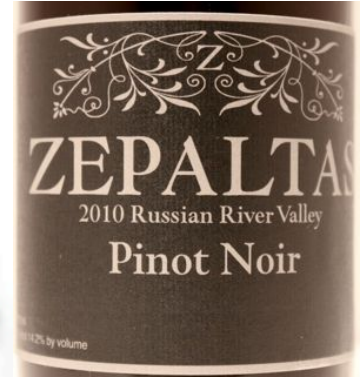
\$42/750ml bottle

Limit 6 bottles per customer

2010 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

The “Big Brother” in our Appellation series of Pinot Noirs. We set out in 2008 to make a wine that could reflect the best characteristics of Russian River Valley, at a great price, with out overdoing it. I love Russian River fruit, and I set out to harness the power of the fruit in the Valley. I wanted to make a pinot that was a bit more lush and vibrant than the other Zepaltas Pinots, but still have it taste like a Zepaltas Wine. I wanted to have great acidity, dense fruit character, yet not have it taste like it was farmed by Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens.

The 2010 version seems to be right in line with our vision, despite the “uber-cool” vintage. As mentioned earlier, we were careful when selecting the pieces for this blend. It was a challenging year, and some lots just had to be cast off. We are definitely building this bottling over time, but we are not going to dilute the quality just to make more cases. It is a blend of two vineyards Nunes (North Santa Rosa) and W.E. Bottoms (Occidental), where the former contributes the intense fruit aromatics, and flavors and the latter adds the structure and rustic qualities. On the nose intense Raspberry, Cherry and Rhubarb pie jump out of the glass. With some aeration, touches of dead leaves and mushrooms appear. While the vibrant acidity is present, this wine has a silky, plush feel that makes the wine “ready when you are.”



321 cases made
\$31/750ml bottle
Limit 12 bottles per customer

2009 Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Syrah



These days there are so many syrah “haters” out there. You can't really blame them, I guess. There is a lot of forgettable California Syrah out in the wine world. At times it seems that boring, monolithic, syrupy and flabby seem to be the hallmarks of California Syrah. Well that may be true in the mainstream, but there are many great, unique expressions of syrah in California (see: Carlisle, Arnot-Roberts, Edmunds St. John.) You just have to know where to look. Don't get me wrong-I am not claiming to be the second coming of Thierry Allemand, but I think I know an amazing vineyard when I see one.

I wouldn't make Syrah from Rosella's Vineyard, if I didn't believe in it (plus it always seems to be one of my wife's favorites). Year in and year out, Rosella's yields consistent, dense, multi-layered fruit. Top notch farming by Gary Francioni, and a cool and windy site means we get long hang time and slow, even ripening. No need to pick at 29 brix, you can get all the stuffing you could ever need at 22-24 brix at Rosella's. Our two clonal selections (877 and “Bien Nacido”) are co-fermented and we only de-stem half the fruit. We aged this wine for 18 months in one-third new French oak barrels and then held it in bottle until now.

The flavors of the vineyard seem to be evolving slightly away from the youthful flavors of citrus, coffee and bright blackberry and are now producing a more earthy, layered wine (as I write the notes for this wine, I am pairing it with some pork ribs that my wife Anna braised overnight using Chinese five-spice, tien-tien chilis, and a few other secret ingredients. It is the perfect pairing.) On the nose (day one) there are hints of bright blackberry, orange zest and as it opens up we get scents of coffee & sheep's milk cheese. I tasted this wine over the course of 3 days, and it only got better with each day. As usual, the Rosella's Syrah should age nicely and be in a great place in about 3-4 years.

74 cases made
\$39.00 / 750ml bottle
Limit 6 bottles per customer
92 points Robert Parker's The Wine Advocate

**To order any of these wines please log on at zepaltaswines.com
If you prefer to fax or email you order we will take care of you. A pdf of the
order form is available at zepaltaswines.com**

