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January, 5th 2011

Wine of the Week:
DeLoach 2009 California Heritage Reserve Pinot Noir

by Peg Melnik

Pinot noir grapes are headstrong and demand to be pampered.

It is, in fact, pinot noirs' big personality that presents both the challenge and the reward of producing it, according to Brian Maloney of DeLoach Vineyards.

Maloney is the winemaker behind our wine of the week winner - the DeLoach 2009 California Heritage Reserve Pinot Noir, a great value at $13.

"Pinot noir has more character and individuality to it than every other varietal combined (with the exception of old-vine zinfandel)," Maloney said. "Each site wants to be treated differently. You see it on the vines."

Maloney said what makes this label a stand out are the farmers behind it - the growers who know how to deal with the fickle grape varietal and those who know how to embrace the environment. He said progress began with converting the estate vineyards in Santa Rosa to biodynamics and "encouraging partner vineyards to work toward more sustainable and organic practices."

Maloney said the most fascinating thing about pinot noir that will surprise the uninitiated is its "incredible diversity. There are pinot noirs that have very low color." he said.

"There are pinot noirs that will be as dark as any other wine in the cellar. Aromatics and flavors will range from pure red fruits to dark spices to the realm of smoked meats. It has a lot going on, but no matter what, if made and grown well it will always get that luscious mouth-feel and mid-palate weight, and that is incomparable to any other wine."

Agriculture was always in Maloney's bones; his great-grandfather planted the Palisades Vineyard in Calistoga 100 years ago. But as for becoming a winemaker, his interest was piqued during a lecture series at UC Davis when he heard winemakers like Paul Draper of Ridge Vineyards speak.

"It was on seeing these incredibly passionate people talk about the way they found themselves in wine, and the level of care they took in discussing with us their labor, that I knew this was something I needed to be involved in," Maloney said.

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