SPECIAL ISSUE
Wine & Spirits
25TH ANNIVERSARY BUYING GUIDE

100 BEST WINES

100 BEST BUYS

TOP 100 WINERIES OF 2011

Wine & Spirits MAGAZINE 2011 WINERY OF THE YEAR

2011 WINERIES OF THE YEAR

DELOACH


Brian Maloney

MULTISOURCE

Founded: 1975
Winemaker: Brian Maloney
Viticulturist: Eric Pooler
Acres owned: 17
Annual production: 150,000 cases
Estate grown: 1%
Owner: Boisset Family Estates
Known for: Benchmark pinot noir and zinfandel from the Russian River Valley.
Location: Santa Rosa, CA
Website: deloachvineyards.com

Zinfandel was the first wine that Cecil DeLoach made after he founded his winery in 1975, and Russian River zinfandel fueled the winery's rising though the 1990s. But since Côte de Nuits native Jean-Charles Boisset took over in 2004, the winery has become known for pinot noir and chardonnay as well. One of Boisset's first decisions was to bring in 20 open-top fermenters—enter hand punch-downs and native yeast fermentations. Boisset also transformed the winery's farming practices, converting DeLoach's 17-acre estate vineyard to biodynamics and offering bonuses to growers interested in going biodynamic. DeLoach now invites its growers to monthly blind tastings, where they inevitably talk shop.

Given this effort to establish relationships among growers, it's perhaps appropriate that DeLoach's highest scoring pinot noir this year is the 2008 OFS ("Our Finest Selection"). It's a barrel selection blended from multiple vineyards, one that was particularly challenging to put together in 2008: Frost reduced yields in the center of the Russian River Valley, while forest fires smoldered to the north. Winemaker Brian Mahoney looked to the southern end of the appellation, sourcing fruit from cooler-climate vineyards such as Maroboshi and Pennacchio in the Sebastopol Hills, to produce a firmly delineated pinot with mineral tannins that add complexity to its invigorating fruit.



The 2008 Von Weidlich Vineyard Zinfandel, the product of vines going back to the 1930s and before, might have fit right in to DeLoach's portfolio circa 1985—except this is the first year that the winery has worked with this vineyard. From a cool, dry-farmed hilltop in Green Valley, it's a lithe, peppery zin with a bright streak of acidity that begs for food. It was treated gently, almost like a pinot noir: open top fermenters, hand punch-downs and only 15 percent new oak. In the cosmos of zinfandel, you could easily call it Burgundian. —L.S.