

ARTS & LIFE

Calera creates rich Pinot Noir

By SEAN WOOD Wood on Wine
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Donnafugata Anthilia, \$19.99, is a fine match for fresh seafood.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the good fortune of attending a rather special tasting of California's Calera Wine Co.'s wines at the Port of Wines in Halifax.

Calera, the brainchild of Josh Jensen, an American who had long worshipped at the shrine of Burgundy, has established an enviable reputation for creating memorable, age-worthy Pinot Noirs.

Jensen firmly believes in the French concept of "terroir," that combination of soil, specific climate and terrain responsible for producing wine with unique personality and style.

Burgundian producers of Jensen's acquaintance emphasized that limestone soils are critical to the production of a fine Pinot Noir. Accordingly, finding a location rich in limestone was a key factor for Jensen as he searched for a Californian site to try his luck with this capricious grape.

He settled on a high-altitude site, improbably located on the Central Coast, partly because the elevation made for cooler temperatures, but also because it was rich in limestone, relatively uncommon in California.

The name Calera means lime kiln in Spanish.

Time and meticulous work in the vineyards and cellar has proven the soundness of Jensen's vision.

His story is the subject of Marq de Villiers' book *The Heartbreak Grape: A California Winemaker's Search for the Perfect Pinot Noir*. Over the years, the two have become friends. So much so, that Jensen named a vineyard after de Villiers, who now lives in Nova Scotia.

A single vineyard bottling from this vineyard was among those

we tasted.

REVIEWS

I should warn readers that the Calera single vineyard wines are in extremely short supply. Two have already sold out but the remaining three are reviewed below. Don't despair, though, there is also a reasonable quantity of the excellent Calera Central Coast Pinot Noir.

Also reviewed are two additional wines from the excellent Sicilian producer, Donnafugata, famous for terrific wines and their elegant and imaginative labels.

Calera de Villiers Vineyard Pinot Noir 2007, Mount Harlan, \$48.79, NSLC Port of Wines:

Good varietal cherry fruit with suggestion of currants, spicy and peppery notes, and a whiff of mineral on the nose. It follows through with a fine fruit on the palate, though still somewhat closed, with stern-dry tannins and primary acidity needing plenty of time to settle down.

Calera Ryan Vineyard Pinot Noir 2007, Mount Harlan, \$52.99, NSLC Port of Wines: Still youthful but reveals delicately fragrant pinot fruit, mineral and a slight minty overtone. In the mouth, generously ripe cherry-like flavours with firm, astringent tannins, a light splash of chocolate and subtle, spicy notes on the finish. Will definitely reward keeping.

Calera Mills Vineyard Pinot Noir 2007, Mount Harlan, \$57.29, NSLC Port of Wines: Powerful bouquet unfolds, developed red fruit and layers of fine spice. Dark cherry dominates on the thickly textured palate that is evolving towards velvet. Tannins remain quite firm but shift towards more suppleness and a light mineral note on the well integrated finish. Great fruit and structure, leaning towards power rather than finesse.

Calera Pinot Noir 2006, Central Coast, \$37.79, NSLC Port of Wines: As with other Calera Pinots, this one is hand-harvested and fermented with wild yeasts in small, open fermenters before ageing in French oak. It shows plenty of breed on the nose, along with finely developed, yet complex, oak, spicy and herbal overtones. Already well integrated on the palate, it has a seductive red fruit and smooth chocolate countered by a firm tannic touch and well integrated finish. A robust Pinot, it marries elements of California and Burgundy.

Donnafugata Anthilia 2009, Sicilia IGT, 12.5 %, \$19.99, Cristall & Lockett, Sunnyside Mall, Bedford: A blend of Cataratto and Ansonica (Insolia), with enticing floral, citrus, tropical fruit scents and a light whiff of mineral. In the mouth, it is a finely balanced fruit, cleansing acidity and appetizing mineral grip. A lovely wine and a fine match for fresh sea food.

Donnafugata Sherezade 2009, Sicilia IGP, 12.5 %, \$24.99 Cristall & Lockett: Attractive, fresh, cherry scent with light herbal and mineral overtones carries through on the palate with bright cherry fruit and rounded berry flavours in the background. Lightly firm tannins are softened by lingering perfumed fruit and a lick of smooth chocolate on the finish.

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