

2010 Pinot Noir - Lambda

It had been awhile, but the journey always brought them back together. The attraction was intense, the flavors an intoxicating blend of deep cherry skins, smoldering wood fire and exotic spice. Wiser and a bit older, Lambda showcases the magnitude of great relationships - complex, but smooth and fulfilling.

Wine Making Style:

After we harvested the fruit, it will stay 1 day in our cold room to avoid using dry ice. The fruit is cold soaked for about 3 days and then the natural wild yeast will kick in for the primary fermentation. We hand punch down twice a day to assist the extraction of colors, tannins and flavors. When it has completed primary fermentation, we may elect to continue with extended maceration which allows more extraction of colors and flavors. Once completed we barrel it down keeping the “free run” juice separate.

The second fermentation (converts malolactic acid to lactic acid) utilizing the natural wild ML bacteria. The wine is barrel aged for about 18 months in 1/3 new French oak. The wine is un-fined and unfiltered.

The Ampelos Story:

Some dream of spending the rest of their lives on golf courses and cruise ships, but with a taste for business and a love of Santa Barbara wine country, we chose a different retirement plan.

In 1999 we purchased 82 acres in what would later become the Sta. Rita Hills appellation, and named it “Ampelos”, which is the Greek word for vine. The name has a two-fold purpose. First, we believe that all great wines start in the vineyard. Secondly, we have close-ties with Greece; we were married there and own a small bed and breakfast, called Ampelos Resort, on the island of Folegandros. We bought the land with dreams of someday watching the nightly sunset over the hills and our dogs running through the vines.

At the time we were still working long hours in corporate America, and delegated our son Don (now winemaker at Sea Smoke) to get the vineyard started. Our vineyard consultant assured us that the land could produce a great vineyard with patience and care, but we had little time to focus on the vineyard with non-stop business travel, meetings and conferences.

In 2001, the first 15 acres were planted in the Ampelos vineyard. That same year, we landed in Newark on the morning of September 11th. Peter had a meeting in the first tower of the World Trade Center, and interrupted his plan to board Path 1 of the New York Subway when his meeting was canceled. If he had gotten on the train, 8:45 am would have found him under the towers as the first plane hit.

When we finally got out of the city five days later, we went straight to our safe place—the Ampelos vineyard. That is when we made the life-changing decision to quit our corporate jobs and focus all our effort into pursuing our dream of full-time viticulture. “Someday” was no longer part of our vocabulary.

We moved to the Santa Ynez Valley in January of 2002. We began to learn to nurture the soil and prune the vines to prepare for the first harvest, and purchased one ton of Pinot Noir and two tons of Syrah in order to learn winemaking as we waited for the vines to mature. We toiled under the tutelage of our son Don and several expert consultants.



2004 marked the inaugural Ampelos vineyard harvest. The first harvest yielded 15 tons of Pinot Noir and 6 tons of Syrah. In 2005, we planted 10 acres on top of the original 15, totaling 25 acres. Pinot Noir and Syrah remain our primary varietals, with a line of Viognier and just under two acres of Grenache—the unsung hero of the Sta. Rita Hills. We persist in experimenting with different grapes and winemaking styles, as we are major believers in the journey being the destination.

With the efforts of family and friends, wise guides, and a twist of fate, we have come to create our small, sustainable vineyard and winery. We have gone from expanding big businesses to focusing on creating a limited release of high-quality product that people can afford to share with friends and loved ones. For us, sharing those gifts is what makes it all worthwhile.

