

Springtime in Real Wine Country 2011 Ah-chew! Moondance Cellars

Blooms on the hillsides; Bud-break in the vineyards; New Wines in the Bottles. Just a few reasons to take a moment to smell the roses (between sneezes) and visit Sonoma Valley as soon as you can. A good reference for the day is Wine Country This Week Magazine's *Day Trips Guide*. **Moondance Cellars** is featured as a "must stop" in the Glen Ellen Loop.

New Wines in the Bottles at Moondance are the 2009 Russian River Valley Reserve Selection Pinot Noir, and the long-awaited 2009 Sonoma County Special Select Zinfandel.

Pinot Noir is a demanding son of a gun and is plagued as perhaps the most difficult grape to bring from vineyard to the table. Achieving consistency is a winemaker's dream. And, Pinot Noir can be a winemaker's worst nightmare. Perfect vineyard location with proper sun exposure, soil composition, temperature, and drainage are but a few of the specific requirements which a delicate Pinot grape demands. Yet even with all of those ducks in a row, it is not until the wine is safely in the bottle that the winemaker has any idea if she (or in this case, he) has a successful vintage. At **Moondance Cellars**, Winemaker David Cohen has tried to limit the guess work by finding vineyards with the qualities required, and then crossing his fingers.

Success! Only five barrels were made by fermenting half whole-cluster, and half crushed grapes. From that, two barrels of the free-run were reserved for this release. Pale in color and the lack of bitter tannins make this Reserve Selection one of the best yet. Consistence counts, but not always!

Zinfandel is California's claim to enology fame. Actually, it is said to have been born on the Adriatic coast, but who's picking nits? Like the pretty girls of whom the California Gold Rush prospectors dreamed, the grapes that grew on the grapevine starts, which they planted, were sweet and rich. The warm and protected valleys inland from the Sonoma Coast proved to be perfect nurseries to raise the tantalizing wines of their dreams.

Sonoma County vineyards have since produced some of the most highly acclaimed Zinfandel wine in the world. Choosing the grapes for the **Moondance Cellars** 2009 Special Select was easy. A ton from this vineyard, a ton from that dry-farmed vineyard, , and a few bins of very ripe grapes from a favorite hillside vineyard in Dry Creek Valley. No need to wait for June when the roadside fruit stands are on every corner. Just pop the cork, pour a glass, swirl, and then take a good sniff. You are back in your grandmother's kitchen washing the blueberries you just picked, and putting Band-Aids on your scratches from the blackberry briars.