

2009 Sandler Keefer Ranch Pinot Noir

100% Keefer Ranch Pinot Noir
Appellation: Russian River Valley
Clones: Mariafeld 23 and Dijon 777
Alcohol: 14.5%
pH: 3.59
TA: 6.4 g/L
Barrel aging: 10 months in 40% new and 60% 1 and 2 year old French oak
Cases produced: 116

I first met Marcy Keefer and her son Craig Strehlow in the winter of 2004. I had heard of the Keefer Ranch, and had tried a few of my friends' Pinots they had made from this vineyard. Marcy agreed to sell a few tons of Pinot to Freeman, where I'm also the winemaker. From that first vintage of 2004 Freeman Keefer Ranch, I knew this was a special place, right in the middle of the Green Valley sub-appellation of the Russian River Valley. And I knew Marcy and Craig were growers I'd like to continue working with for a long time.

This first vineyard-designated Keefer Ranch Pinot for Sandler is a blend of 2/3 Mariafeld clone 23 (from Switzerland), and 1/3 Dijon clone 777. 2009 was the fifth in a string of cool vintages, and I waited until early October for these two clones to ripen--and they did ripen. The 2009 Sandler Keefer is a bold, full-flavored Pinot that is balanced by firm acidity. There are aromas of rose petals which come directly from the Swiss clone of Pinot Noir called Mariafeld, also known as clone 23. And the bright acidity is a feature of the Keefer Ranch, no matter how ripe the vintage.

I usually recommend holding onto my Pinots for a year or two before they approach their peak of enjoyment, but I'd say there's no need to wait on this '09 Keefer. It's very good already, and I do hope it continues drinking well for at least 5 years.

