

2011 Keefer Ranch Pinot Noir

Harvest date: 9-30-11

T.A.: 6.4 g/L

pH: 3.58

Barrel aging: 25% new French oak

Fermentation: 15% whole cluster, 85% destemmed, 25 days in the fermenters

Bottling date: 6-27-12

Alcohol: 14.1%

The unusual growing season of 2011 for California Pinot Noir farmers started after a normal winter with average rainfall. In early to mid April we saw several days of frost which reduced the number of shoots on the vines. As soon as the frost worries were over, it started raining again. Just when it looked like our typical four months of dry weather were underway, long range forecasts predicted a significant rain event in late June. It's not out of the ordinary to see very light rain or drizzle in the summer months, but not measurable rainfall in coastal California. It turned out to be the third rainiest June in California since records have been kept since 1849.

Even after the rains finally ended and we were into July, we experienced the second year in a row of cold, foggy, windy days with virtually no afternoon sunshine. Veraison started very late because of the lack of warmth and sun, and the 2011 season was heading for September with a long way to go for physiological ripeness in the fruit. Then of course the threat of rain appeared again. Luckily, we avoided any major storms at Keefer, and with patience and good luck, Marcy and Craig harvested some excellent fruit for Sandler on September 30.

The 2011 Sandler Keefer Ranch Pinot Noir is a one clone Pinot Noir, and that is clone 23, a Swiss clone also known as Mariafeld. The clone 23 clusters are larger and more loosely bunched than most other Pinot clones. It also produces wines with bright acidity, deep berry flavors and often times fragrant, floral aromas. This 2011 has all of these attributes and is very similar to the 2010 Sandler Keefer. It is starting to drink well in early 2013 and should be at its height of enjoyment sometime after 2016.

