

Wine of the Week: CrossBarn pinot noir is just right for fall weather

By PEG MELNIK THE PRESS DEMOCRAT on October 29, 2013, 3:00 AM

As the chill of fall sets in, pinot noir is a great cool-weather wine.

“It's somehow the perfect welcome to fall,” said Molly Bohlman, winemaker of Sebastopol's CrossBarn Winery. “It pairs well with the game birds we associate with the fall holidays.”

Bohlman produces pinot noirs like our wine-of-the-week winner — the CrossBarn, 2012 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir. At \$35 a bottle, it's a budget-savvy pick for pinot noir of this caliber.

“It has taken time, that's for sure, but we have found excellent sites that we can farm to high standards at a price appropriate for producing CrossBarn,” Bohlman said. “In addition, the focus of CrossBarn pinot noir is fruit, acidity and structure with a relatively small percentage of new oak.”

What the uninitiated don't know about pinot noir is its versatile nature, Bohlman said.

“You can find pinots to suit almost any palate, from light to full-bodied, austere to rich and lush, etc.,” Bohlman said. “Also, it's just so versatile with food — from mild duck and salmon preparations with lighter pinots to heartier, spicier preparations of pork and beyond with pinots of a richer style.

“Finally, it doesn't have to be difficult to understand. Just find one you like, pair it with food or not, and enjoy.”

Bohlman, who studied at Cal Poly, just started working at CrossBarn this year.

Prior to that, she spent the last 15 years in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, making wine at Gainey Vineyard and Vina Robles as well as doing custom winemaking for brands from Napa to Monterey to Santa Barbara.

“When I studied in France, I got the wine bug,” Bohlman said, adding, “Pinot noir is my favorite varietal. ... It would definitely be my 'desert island' varietal.”

Scouting for the tastiest mixed reds

Wine writer Peg Melnik had a blind tasting this week of mixed reds, from pinot noirs to syrahs to zinfandels, and our wine-of-the-week winner is the CrossBarn, 2012 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir at \$35.

TOP PICK: CrossBarn, 2012 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 14.1 percent alcohol, \$35. (4 stars) A complex pinot with a range of flavors — blackberry, cherry, cola and mineral. A seamless texture. Lingering finish.

Others worth mentioning:

Siduri, 2012 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir, 14.5 percent, \$32. (4 stars) A concentrated pinot noir with depth. Layered flavors of Bing cherry, herbs and spice. Well integrated. A smart pick.

Bella, 2010 Lily Hill Estate, Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, 14.6 percent, \$40. (4 stars) A racy zin with concentrated, gorgeous fruit. Ripe tannins. Seamless texture. Knockout.

Picket Fence, 2012 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, 13.9 percent, \$18. (3 1/2 stars) A bright pinot with notes of cherry, herbs and a hint of cranberry. Balanced. Good acidity. Nice length.

Montpellier, 2012 California Syrah, 12.5 percent, \$10. (3 stars) A value syrah that's a good quaffer for the price. Smoky with herbs and spices. Zesty finish.

Wine writer Peg Melnik can be reached at 707-479-3880 or peg.melnik@pressdemocrat.com.

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