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Sonoma Coast pours on top Pinots

A Bounty of Pinot Picks from Sonoma Coast

The Chronicle Recommends • by Jon Bonné • Sunday, September 11, 2011

Leave aside any geographic squabbles for a moment, though, and consider something more crucial: The Sonoma Coast, or at least a portion of this omnibus appellation, is turning out some of the most exciting Pinot Noir in America.

This coastal lot of vintners often talks more of exploration than appellation (see sfg.ly/nXMVWi). It's a savvy move, for California's wine geography is still young, and the coast's younger still. As it happens, that spirit of exploration is turning out some of the best of what California can grow.



Craig Lee / Special to The Chronicle

2009 Freeman Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$44, 14.1% alcohol): Ken and Akiko Freeman and winemaker Ed Kurtzman again show their ability to finesse the fruit from around the appellation — much from the Rayhill and Sexton Road sites near Sebastopol's Bodega Highway, but from Occidental and Petaluma as well. This straight Sonoma Coast bottle again slightly edges the stylish, green-peppercorn-tinged 2009 Akiko's Cuvee (\$54, 14.2 percent) with its cool, saline edge. Aromas of damp forest (think redwoods after a rain), bright raspberry and duskier bayberry flavors make for a finessed, layered package.