

Wine of the week: Freeman 2010 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

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Our wine-of-the-week winner is from a winery that's a bit under the radar.

Freeman Vineyards in Sebastopol is tucked away in a very quiet part of west Sebastopol, but its 2010 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is making noise.

"The house style is what we like to drink and what we expect from a good pinot noir," said winemaker Ed Kurtzman. "We want the wines to express the appellations and vineyards from which they come. My only contribution is that I want the aromas of the wines to be as intriguing as possible — not that I have any control over that, but it's what I look for in a pinot."

Kurtzman doesn't see burgundy as a model for their house style.

"Burgundy is more of an inspiration in that those are excellent pinots (and chards) which can age for decades," he said. "Our techniques are based on their traditional methods. Our barrels come from their coopers. But our vineyards are entirely different, as is our climate, so the flavors are unique to this area. Whenever we taste a barrel in our cave that reminds us of burgundy, it's not a bad thing at all ... but it's only once in a while."

Kurtzman said the reason this pinot noir is a standout is largely because vintners Ken and Akiko Freeman have an eye for good vineyard land.

"Year in and year out the Freemans meet growers, walk their rows of vines, try other wines made from those vineyards," he said. "Then they decide if they want to take on any new sites. It has been a very successful strategy for Freeman since the first vintage of 2002."

The winery offers tasting by appointment only.

“The most interesting things about the winery are its beautiful setting and the caves where our wines age,” Kurtzman said “It’s truly a place to see.”

Kurtzman said he’s a good fit as a winemaker.

“I’m following the tried and true recipe of many winemakers: Work hard for a few years so that there’s a good track record of wines and be taken seriously as a winemaker,” he said. “Then hire excellent people to do all the real work, and take all the credit for years to come.

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