

2012 California Pinot Noir: A Year of Plenty



Top Central Coast Pinots

93 Testarossa 2012 Fogstone Vineyard (Santa Lucia Highlands). A savory nose of seared beef crust gets lift from violet and lavender florals. The wine then coats the palate very softly, with luscious flavors of stewed cherry, ripe cranberry and more herb-crusting roast. A licorice-aided acidity cleans the mouth on the finish.

Central Coast: The Drink Now Generation

For such a warm, moderate and curveball-free growing season along California's Central Coast, the 2012 Pinot Noir harvest proved quite variable around the region.

Some vineyards in Monterey County, for instance, delivered three times the normal fruit. Other appellations, like the Edna Valley, weighed in a bit lighter than the ideal weather predicted.

Up north, Bill Brosseau makes wines from the Santa Lucia Highlands and elsewhere for Testarossa Winery, and he also tends to his family's vineyard near Chalone on the other side of Monterey County.

"It was just a year when you could twiddle your thumbs, like a winemaker's paradise," says Brosseau, who was caught off guard by the varying yields.

On those vineyards where the berries were quite big and plentiful, he concentrated intensity by bleeding off 10–15% of the juice. He was still worried while bottling the wines due to lack of acid and tannin.

"But it's really been coming around the last year in the bottle," says Brosseau. "I'm really enjoying how the wines are evolving."

—Matt Kettmann