

Mercy Vineyards

The Mercy Vineyards wines reflect what might be called the “new school” of California wines, and they stand out in two respects. First, they are characterized by elegance and restraint together with very judicious use of oak. Second, they speak of a specific origin; hence they are as well part of a growing niche of terroir-driven wines. The Mercy wines will appeal to buyers and drinkers who favor these two criteria, but less so to those who want potent wines with lavish wood treatment. I find their style particularly appealing, but of course my palate was shaped by years of working with (and drinking!) white and red Burgundy. Wines tasted March 2013.

Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco 2010

Pale dark ruby purple. The aroma is very clean, youthful and restrained, and is marked by a gently warm scent of red raspberry, strawberry and red cherry. The palate delivers a similarly clean impression from the start. The wine is precise as well as exceptionally polished, with a sensual feel. Medium plus in weight, the taste is framed by fine, ripe acidity at the end along with understated red fruits and berries. Youthful but appealing right now, this wine that stands out for its equilibrium and finesse.

Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco 2009

Pale dark ruby red with purple rim. The nose is clean and offers a warm lift of ripe red cherry, red currant and red raspberry. There is nuance and generosity along with attractive oak in the background. The palate is immediately ripe and silky, medium full, and exhibits an attractive mouth-coating quality. There is an undertone of sweet red fruit, and the wine finishes with ripe acidity melded into the wine's flesh. There are very delicate red fruit inflections in the finale. Balanced and elegant, yet does not lack for richness of texture.

Pinot Noir Cedar Lane Vineyard 2009

Very pale, very dark red with thin purple rim, with a light unidentifiable sediment. The aroma reveals warmth and maturity with nuanced red cherry, red plum and red currant fruit notes. The taste again speaks of the wine's ripeness and is polished and fat. There is excellent length with subdued accents of mature red fruits. This single vineyard does indeed have a distinctive personality, yet the composite A.S. Pinot is, to me, just as appealing.

Chardonnay Arroyo Seco 2010

Bright yellow gold. Clean though muted, low-toned nose at first. Then there are restrained notes of yellow fruits and carefully married oak in the background. The wine delivers a polished, clean attack, and is attractively textured and finely calibrated. There are understated flavors of yellow fruits, followed by a well-defined acid spine, leaving a dry, elegant but not expressive aftertaste. This may come out more with a few months in bottle.

Chardonnay Arroyo Seco 2009

Yellow gold to the eye. The aroma is lovely and rich, exhibiting restrained ripe peach with tropical highlights and subtle creamy, toasty oak. The palate is ripe and fat but not heavy. The wine offers a creamy finish with yellow fruit accents and a ripe acid backbone. Well-balanced, this attractive Chardonnay shows well now.

Chardonnay Zabala Vineyard 2009

Golden yellow color. Subdued nose at first with evident substance. There are attractive toasty, blanched nut and vanilla notes along with restrained mature yellow fruits. The palate is fat and mouth-coating. This is a generous Chardonnay but understated in its expression. There is a very subtle creamy, toasty undertone and ripe acidity hidden in the flesh. Has a great deal to offer while remaining controlled.