



On the Vine

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# A Pleasantly Surprising Pinot Noir

December 02, 2009 03:57 PM ET | Guerra, Sue | [Permanent Link](#)



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I'm not a fan of sweeping generalizations—this applies to life as well as to wine. With that proviso I can state that, for the most part, I've never been a lover of California Pinot Noir.

Of course there are some wonderful California Pinot Noirs but more often than not I find them too rich, too alcoholic, too fruity, and overly oaked. Sometimes they are just too smooth, lush, and technically perfect for my taste.

So when my friend Rick gave me a bottle of the wine (made by his friend Michael) and requested that I open it with fellow wine geeks to render a "professional" opinion, I was a little nervous. I'm not a good liar and I hate to insult anyone.

I held onto the bottle for at least six months. When I finally opened it, I was pleasantly surprised. It has red berry fruit with earthy, herbal and savory notes, a lighter bodied style that won't overpower a meal, nice acidity, and balanced, but not obvious oak. There also was something about it—just this little hint of funk that evolved as the wine opened up, an imperfection if you will—that makes a wine all the more interesting.

La Encantada Pinot Noir, 2007 is the inaugural release of [Think Tank Wine Company](#), founded by Michael Giarraputo, a marketing professional from Basking Ridge who had been making amateur wines for five years before deciding to launch his own brand of single-vineyard, hand-crafted wines that would also promote environmental stewardship.

According to Michael, the grapes are organically grown and sourced from sustainably farmed vineyards—La Encantada is an organic site in the Santa Rita Hills AVA (that's American Viticultural Area). The packaging features recycled, lighter-weight glass bottles, tree-free bamboo labels, and natural corks without foil capsules. A portion of the profits from the sale of the wines is donated to Ecology Action, a nonprofit organization promoting "biointensive" farming practices devised to nurture the soil and conserve natural resources.

The wines are made with minimal intervention—no added tannins, colors, or enzymes (yes—some of those perfect wines do have things added), no fining, and no filtration. Fermentation takes place using native yeasts and aging is done in French and American oak barrels from coopers who are committed to responsible forestry management.

Think Tank brands itself with the tagline: "Wines Worth Knowing" and I have to say that I am glad I was introduced. It's nice to find wines that intrigue the taste buds—especially a California Pinot Noir that treads lightly on the palate and the planet.



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Thanks, Sue, for providing links, very helpful. As expected, Think Tank doesn't ship to Germany, but at least I got to check them out.

Posted by: Sebastian Keil, None | Dec 02, 2009 17:02:14 PM |



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