FERRY PLAZA WINE MERCHANT & WINE BAR

FEBRUARY 2018 RED CELLAR TRIO



2015 Anthill Farms Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA

Anthill Farms was founded in 2004 by Anthony Filiberti, David Low and Webster Marquez, three friends who met while working at Williams Seylem in 2003. They had each arrived with a few years of experience as cellar rats in California, Oregon and Virginia. After finishing the 2003 harvest at Williams Seylem, they took a road trip up to Oregon and toured the Willamette Valley. They were so inspired by what they experienced and thought it would be fun to branch out and do their own Pinot thing. Once back in California, they decided to focus on vineyard designate Pinot Noir and came up with the name 'Anthill Farms' to emphasize the many tiny individual vineyards that form the "link between place and product." With an initial eight-and-a-half barrels of juice, they produced three Pinot Noirs in 2004 and were off and running. The wines with the quirky name and distinctive label made quite a splash yet it was what was inside the bottle that made the best impression. They were graceful and restrained with vibrant fresh fruit and acidity as opposed to overly ripe and rich with copious amounts of oak. Over the years since then, Anthill Farms became firmly established as a serious player in California Pinot Noir and their wines are in high demand. The total production of 1,400 cases includes six vineyard designate, as well as Anderson Valley and Sonoma Coast-appellation Pinot Noirs and a Sonoma Coast Syrah.

The fruit for this delicious 2015 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir was sourced from two of the appellation's coolest areas: one on the 'low coast' at the edge of the Petaluma Gap and the other on the 'high coast' at the first ridges inland from the Pacific Ocean. Grapes in both vineyards are heavily affected by the cool, marine air off the ocean and thus, don't achieve significantly high ripeness levels, making in turn for more restrained, elegantly-toned wines. That said, the nose is all about warming aromas of dusty cherry, sandalwood, nutmeg, white pepper and cedar even though the wine didn't see any new oak in its 18 months of barrel aging. The medium-bodied palate on the other hand, reveals the peaceful, restrained character one would expect from cool climate Pinot Noir with prettier flavors of cherry, red plum and a little black tea. Given that the wine ends on a note of sappy tannins balanced with a nice tang of acidity, it still finishes with a silky texture and elegant composure; just as we've come to expect from Anthill Farms.

Cellar Recommendations: Winemaker Anthony Filiberti recommends drinking now through 2024. However, since 2015 was a limited vintage and they made significantly less wine, we wouldn't recommend waiting that long to try it because it will be long gone by then!

Red Cellar Trio Selection

\$42.00

\$35.70

Wine Club Member reorder price



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2012 Saxon Brown Syrah, Parmelee-Hill Vineyard, Owl Box Block, Sonoma Coast, CA

Growing up in Sonoma Valley, Jeff Gaffner was surrounded by wine yet didn't realize he had a passion for it until he started working at a few wineries as a young man and subsequently, 'fell in love with it.' His first official foray into winemaking was in 1981 when he began his impressive 16 year career working under the legendary Richard Arrowood at Chateau St. Jean, where he was famously part of the winemaking team behind the 1996 'Cinq Cepages' which was named 'Wine of the Year' by Wine Spectator. Richard was an early champion of bottling small-lot, single vineyard wines, and that focus on creating not just vineyard specific but site specific wines within a certain block of the vineyard became one of the guiding principles of Jeff's winemaking philosophy. In 1997, Jeff set out to establish his own winery, calling it 'Saxon Brown', a name he borrowed from Jack London. 'The Valley of the Moon' was one of Jeff's favorite books and he always wanted to name a daughter after the main character, but alas, he had two sons so he used the name for his wine label. With the great success of his award-winning, critically praised Saxon Brown Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Semillon, Zinfandel and Syrah, Jeff is a very in-demand consultant for many producers and makes the wine for several other labels including, Black Kite and Ram's Gate.

Thanks to his long-standing relationships with the top growers in Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Monterey Counties, Jeff has the pick of the lot from which to source grapes. For his Syrah, he particularly likes the fruit from the Owl Box Block, named for the two owl boxes 'whose inhabitants provide pesticide-free rodent control' of Parmelee-Hill Vineyard in Sonoma Coast. While it only makes up less than one acre of the 52-acre vineyard, the block is perched on the edge of a hill where the wind "helps concentrate the violet and lavender tones". Jeff aged this very cozy Syrah which also includes 10% Viognier in a mix of new and one year old French oak barrels for 10 months, then let the wine age further in bottle before release. The Viognier helps bring out those violet aromas on the nose which also offers scents of fresh thyme, white pepper, black olive and dark berry. The full-bodied palate is very juicy with rich, densely packed dark red fruits flavors as well as notes of marinated olives to go with its meaty/gamey character. The wine ends with a suggestion of sweet cocoa and cinnamon yet it also feels fresh and savory at the same time. With such a fun split personality, this lusty, supple Syrah would be an equally tasty pairing with a decadent Mole sauce or herb encrusted rack of lamb.

Cellar Recommendations: It seems like the wine is in its sweet spot of drinkability now but should continue to develop and reveal more complexity for another three to five years.

Red Cellar Trio Selection

\$35.00

\$29.75
Wine Club Member reorder price



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2014 Château Gontey, Saint-Emilion Grand Cru, Bordeaux, France

Count Guy Balotte had been the proud proprietor of Château Fonrazade in Saint-Emilion since 1958 until his passing in 2013. His only daughter Fabrice, who has been in charge of running the estate for years, cherishes fond memories of her first harvest when she was only five years old and knew she would follow in her father's footsteps. It was 1964 and she still remembers the sights and smells of harvest as well as running through the vineyard in search of her grandmother riding her galloping horse alongside the vines. Located adjacent to the Premier Grand Cru Classé Château Angélus on the southern slopes of the picturesque medieval village of Saint-Emilion, Château Fonrazade spans 13 hectares and is made up of 80% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. The vines, which are situated on the southwestern slope of the Coteau de Mazerat, have been farmed organically since 2013 and are on average, 40 years old. Fabrice employs green harvesting, hand picking and hand sorting at the winery to keep the yields lower and ensure only the best grapes are used for vinification. In addition to the Château Fonrazade wines, Fabrice created a second label, Château Gontey, for which she makes equally fine, cellar-worthy wines.

The fermentation for this 100% Merlot 2014 Château Gontey occurred on indigenous yeasts 'under temperature controlled conditions which were carefully monitored, with a constant eye for sanitary conditions by Fabrice', who is obsessed with cleanliness. The wine was then aged for 18 months in 30% new French oak barrels which gives the wine 'a touch of wood: not too much, not too little, but just the right balance, which is a sticking point with Fabrice.' When we first took in the aroma of this wine, our immediate reaction was "mmm, this is a pretty Merlot from Bordeaux" with classic scents of cassis, black plum, black licorice and a touch of cedar-y spice. The fuller-bodied palate continues with those darker-fruited flavors in a nicely juicy, ripe, yet not overly ripe, way. It is a well-balanced wine that ends with both a lovely, silky texture and semi-firm, tannic structure which indicates this pretty, elegant Merlot from Bordeaux is headed for the long haul. While it could benefit from a little decanting and would be best served alongside a nice, juicy steak like a fatty rib-eye, it drinks well on its own after it opens up in the glass.

Cellar Recommendations: this is a very well structured wine, especially for a 100% Merlot that will age gracefully for another four to five years at least.

Red Cellar Trio Selection

\$38.00

\$32.30

Wine Club Member reorder price



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