



The wine is visually beautiful – garnet in color and a gorgeous clarity. On the nose, smoky nuances mingle with black cherry, currant and cola aromas. The silky texture of the wine delivers flavors of cherry cobbler and rhubarb along with a bright acid structure. After some time in the glass and with good swirling, the wine begins to blossom and open, bringing more cran-cherry fruit, dried blueberry and earthy notes. The wine lingers on the palate with fine-grained tannin, black-cherry cola and refreshing, mouthwatering acids. A great food wine – definitely.

Hibbits Ranch is the most western vineyard in the Sta. Rita Hills appellation and an eclectic combination of clones and rootstocks. Father and son, Art and Gregg Hibbits, began planting the vineyard in 2001, added in more vines in 2003 and a few more in 2005. The vineyard is small (just about 2 acres), on a rather steep southwest facing hill with challenging soils of chert and adobe clay. It is impossible to keep clones and rootstocks separate, as there is quite a mélange. This is a field blend that works in harmony! Rootstocks include 101-14, 1103-P, Freedom and own-rooted. The clonal selection boasts 777, 667, 114, 459, 828, swiss clone 2A, Pommard 4 and Sanford & Benedict field selection. Yields in 2008 were typically small (2.5 pounds per plant), but very intense with small berry and cluster size.

2008 was an extreme vintage characterized by harsh weather conditions at the beginning and end of the growing season. But, whereas much of the west coast's wine growing regions lost a good percentage of their crop to a springtime freeze and autumnal frosts, Hibbits Ranch did not. The close proximity to the nearby Pacific Ocean kept the vineyard temperatures above freezing, and there was no damage to vines. Another drought year, the 2008 vintage was characterized by extremes – winds, lows and heat spikes – causing confusion to the vines and consternation to the winegrower. Hot spells in June and again in August produced some dehydration, but brought ripening back on schedule and physiological ripeness with balance in acids and ripe tannins was finally achieved in late September. It was a wacky and crazy vintage, but the placement of the Hibbits Ranch vineyard in the cool, maritime climate of Sta. Rita Hills allowed this fussy, thin-skinned grape to come through with grace and elegance.

The Pinot Noir was picked on two separate days, with the top half of the vineyard harvested on 9/20 and the lower half ten days later. Both lots were entirely de-stemmed and then cool-soaked before being inoculated. To add just another layer of complexity to the wine, one fermenter was inoculated with BM45 yeast and the second with RC-212; two yeasts that work well together in a final blend. Each fermenter was punched down by hand 2-3 times each day to extract color, flavor and tannin from the skins and to control fermentation temperatures. At dryness, the wines free run wine was drained to a combination of French oak barrels – five neutral and one new Rousseau barrel. The skins were lightly pressed in our manual basket press, with that wine bucketed into neutral French oak barrels. Malolactic fermentation occurred in barrel and had completed by the early part of December 2008. The wine aged in barrel on soft lees and without racking until tasting trials determined that the wine was ready to be bottled. Gently moved from barrel, lightly filtered and then bottled in May of 2010.

Dave's recipe suggestion: Cedar-planked salmon

127 cases produced  
\$32 recommended retail price