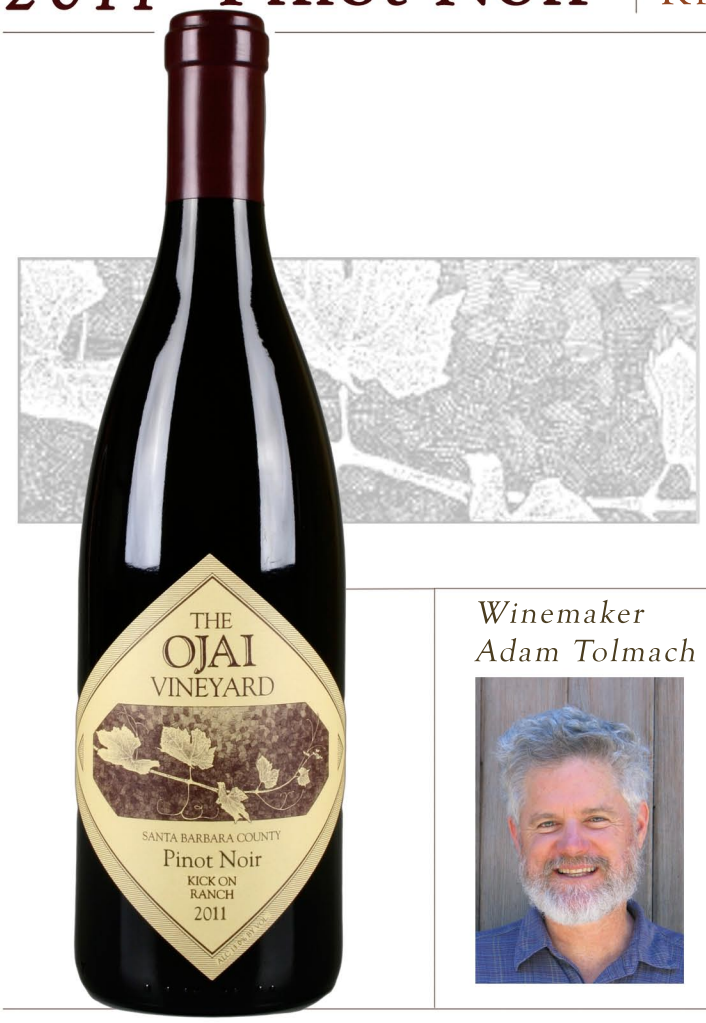
2011 Pinot Noir | Kick On Vineyard, Santa Barbara County



Winemaker
Adam Tolmach

Blend: 100% Pinot Noir
Vineyard: Kick On Ranch
AVA: Santa Barbara County
Alcohol: 14%
Vinification: 25% New French Oak
Barrel Aging: 15 Months
Total Production: 220 Cases

Winemakers Notes

Kick On? The owner of Kick On Ranch is an avid fox hunter. He was introduced to the sport in England and was so enthralled by the experience that he set up a full kennel with 50 or 60 dogs and a lovely French trainer on his ranch 9 miles west of the town of Los Alamos in Santa Barbara County. The hunters call out from their horses "kick on" when things aren't going well, vocalizing that the party should carry on and persevere. I like that spirit and it's certainly the attitude that has to be taken when growing pinot noir in this area.

In many ways the little Los Alamos valley is inhospitable for vines. Located between Point Sal and Point Conception, just before the California seashore takes a 90 degree turn to the east, this is one windy spot. For centuries mariners have been terrified by this stretch of the coast because of the funneling effect that the three river valleys (Santa Maria, Los Alamos and Santa Ynez) have on local meteorology. The same wind and fog that make ocean navigation difficult also makes it tough on vines. They struggle to grow in such cool conditions, the wind actually inhibiting vine vigor and messing with pollination. But what is bad for the vine is good for wine quality; cool conditions preserve the delicate fragrances that make pinot so special. And specifically here at Kick On the wine expresses its provenance with an earthiness and mineral quality that is beguiling.

Planted on poor sandy soil, the vines struggle to produce even a modest crop, and in 2011 there was a horrible spell of cool windy weather during flowering and that didn't help. The summer wasn't any better—just lots of fog and cool days—but this gave us a wine of superb balance that's powerfully intense yet delicate and nuanced at the same time. I loved the 2009 and 2010, but this is our best Kick On pinot noir to date.

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