

Jonata – Santa Ynez Valley

High quality, limited production Bordeaux varietals made in a difficult region

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The winery is owned by Stan Kroenke, who also later purchased the Screaming Eagle property in Napa Valley. Like Screaming Eagle, Jonata is relatively small at 84 acres, although this is bigger than the 54 acres Screaming Eagle property. Also like Screaming Eagle, Jonata has a somewhat more restrained style, although I would stop short of characterizing the winemaking style as “Bordeaux”. Furthermore, unlike the a-typical Oakville Screaming Eagle property, Jonata’s terroir in Ballard Canyon is dominated by Careaga Sandstone. This undoubtedly presents very different winemaking challenges than the a-typical rich volcanic soil that dominates Oakville. To meet these challenges Jonata utilizes its own unique brand of sustainable farming, which includes the judicious use of water and never includes herbicides or pesticides.

Jonata released its first wine in 2004 under the direction of winemaker Matt Dees. While Matt does not have a formal degree in enology, Matt does have a degree in soil science from the University of Vermont and has significant vintage experience at the Staglin Family Vineyard in California and at Craggy Range in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. While this is indeed an unconventional background, so is the idea of growing wine in sandstone laden soil. So far the expressiveness and structure of the wine is surprising considering the challenges the terroir presents. Jonata has indicated they will seek to produce the best wines possible given what they have to work with – only time will tell if this winery pushes its vilification further into a Bordeaux-style or further toward its sister Screaming Eagle.

Select Jonata Tasting Notes – 2013 Release

El Desafio:

Made from 87% cabernet sauvignon, 5% cabernet franc, 5% petit verdot, 3% merlot and fermented in 80% new French oak and 20% neutral French oak. Only 377 cases were produced

The Winery: “Ripe red fruit moving to black fruit and fresh mushrooms. Perfumed and lifted. Cassis and freshly turned soil. Stunning combination of black and evergreen. Regal structure that starts out taut and fleshes out with time in the glass. Mint leaves. Coolness. Black olive and smoky fruit. Intense structure with beautifully robust tannins. Classic Jonata cabernet sauvignon.”

El Alma:

Made from 81% cabernet franc, 16% cabernet sauvignon, 2% merlot, 1% petit verdot and fermented in 80% new French oak and 20% neutral French oak. Only 428 cases were produced.

The Winery: “Coy and reserved at first, then ripe and musky on the nose with rosemary, mint, dark chocolate and perfumed incense. Black cherry, cassis and pine needles. Such a sensual nose. Supple dark chocolate and sweet black raspberries on the palate. Creamy and generous. Clove and pipe tobacco. Chalky and tight tannins reminiscent of cacao nibs. Reticent; showing voluptuousness then covering up. Fascinating Alma displaying the poetic side of Franc.”

Fenix:

Made from 65% merlot, 30% cabernet franc, 5% petit verdot and fermented in 75% new French oak, 25% neutral French oak. Only 435 cases were produced

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The Winery: “Robust and sexy. A veritable black hole of sweet black fruit and structure. Layers and layers of powdered tannins. Rose petals and cinnamon. Red licorice and dried strawberry. Soft and pillow-like mid palate attack. Immense. Supremely rich. Huge push of herb-laced bold fruit with notes of cedar. Erupts with wonderful fruit push on the finish. Cacao tannins. Salted caramel and toasty oak. Lingers with nuance of dried blueberries and charred steak.”

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