

Now And Zin Wine

words on wine by Randy Fuller

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Mother And Daughter Work Together On Chardonnay, Pinot Noir



Tasting a wine while in the company of one whose livelihood depends on the impressions left by said wine is not always fun. Sometimes you swirl extra long, swish it around for awhile, searching for something nice to say. Sometimes it's hard to do.

This time it was easy. Trombetta Family Wines CEO **Rickey Trombetta Stancliff** (on left) was dragged over my way by a publicist friend to pour wines that were made by her daughter, **Erica Stancliff**. The pressure was really on. If I don't like them, I insult not only her, but her daughter as well. Swirl, swirl, swirl. Swish, swish, swish.



To be honest, Rickey didn't seem like someone in the middle of a PR tour prior to the Pinot Days Los Angeles event. She was quite at ease. She broke out the tools of the trade - a map of her growing area and the comfy spiel about its virtues, but not before sitting back in our outdoor setting and commenting, "What a lovely day it is!" I got the feeling she was confident her wines would be well received, that she had fielded all the compliments before. To her credit, she made me feel like my opinions sounded fresh to her ears, even though I knew they did not. Her daughter's creations in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are completely praiseworthy.



Rickey - and Erica - have a great history in wine. They both worked with California wine guru Paul Hobbs, the result of a chance meeting and friendship that followed. It was Hobbs, in fact, who offered a taste of Merlot to a ten-year-old Erica, who wrinkled up her nose at the idea of tasting wine. She then proceeded to describe that

wine as a super taster would, using descriptors like leather, tobacco and pepper. Her palate was revealed, and Hobbs put in a waiver claim on her right there.

Sure enough, Erica followed her nose - and palate - to an oenology education. The rest is in the bottle.

Vineyard

Grapes for the Trombetta Chardonnay and one Pinot Noir come from Gap's Crown Vineyard, a 100-acre parcel in the Petaluma Gap region, which will hopefully receive recognition as an AVA by summertime 2016. Easy sailing is predicted in the area that boasts more growers than wineries. The Petaluma Gap bridges the gap between the Pacific Ocean and the bay, allowing for a wind tunnel effect blow through, making it a very cool climate area. Smaller, more concentrated berries and great acidity are the results of that cool breeze. The region is contained mostly in Sonoma County, but it dips south into Marin County a bit.



Chardonnay

Trombetta *Chardonnay, Gap's Crown Vineyard 2014* is Erica's first attempt at Chardonnay. I wish all my first times had been like this. A great growing season in the cool Petaluma Gap region gave some August fog, common on the Sonoma Coast, which helped make for optimal ripening.

Rickey said, "Erica wanted to make a Chardonnay in which the old world meets the new world." The wine puts me in mind of both worlds. Two barrels saw new French oak, while six were aged neutrally. The wine hits 14.2% abv and runs \$50 at retail. 200 cases were produced.

The wine has a rich, golden hue and shows an absolutely gorgeous oak effect, just enough to put me in mind of classic California Chardonnay. There is tropical fruit, lemon chess pie and caramel in the whiff as well. The

palate is where the old world comes into play. The acidity is right on the money, and only a slight touch of vanilla comforts the apples, pineapple and citrus flavors. The wine is very well balanced and shows great weight, the result of malolactic fermentation which occurred in the barrels and aging on the lees - the spent yeast cells. Eight months of aging in French oak was just right. About a third of that oak was new, the rest neutral.



Pinot Noir

The grapes for Trombetta's *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast* 2013 hail from Peterson Vineyard, a few miles west of Gap's Crown. Again, there is very little production from this cool climate vineyard, which means tiny berries and concentrated aromas and flavors. This wine also comes in at 14.2% abv with 272 cases made, selling at \$45.

The wine shows a lovely, deep ruby color, and an elegant nose of cranberry, violets, pomegranate and black tea. A savory streak of spices runs through this graceful Pinot. On the palate, there are flavors of cranberry, raspberry and pepper spice, and the acidity is great. Forest floor notes add complexity and depth to this sophisticated wine.

For the Trombetta *Gap's Crown Pinot Noir* 2013, they went back to Gap's Crown Vineyard, harvesting grapes grown at an elevation of about 800 feet, the highest point in the parcel. Eight months in oak - 25% new - barely leaves a mark to take away from its charms. Alcohol is still at 14.2% abv, while the retail price is \$65.

More color than in the Sonoma Coast offering shows immediately, a deeper and darker shade than the other bottling. The nose is a little more savory, too, with more tea notes but still offering a basket full of bright fruit. The palate shows darker, but it does not go near what we might call "bold." It is deeper and richer, again with food-friendly acidity to die for.