



Gary Farrell Single-Vineyard Pinot Noir Is Intriguing and Precise

When does a wine cross the threshold from being good to very good, or even great? I don't seek perfection in wines because I'm not certain it exists. And let's be honest, barring technical flaws that render a wine undrinkable, perfect wines, just like self-righteous people, can be a bit boring. For me, a wine goes beyond the ordinary when it is intriguing. I'm not sure if the art of intrigue is taught at winemaking school, but intriguing wines don't just taste good; they captivate you. Each sip sparks an emotion, a question, a revelation. Winemaker Theresa Heredia, of **Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery**, certainly knows a thing or two about crafting intriguing wines.

When Gary Farrell founded his eponymous winery in 1982, Sonoma's Russian River Valley was not officially an AVA. He was indeed a pioneer in crafting small-lot single-vineyard Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Theresa Heredia has been at the helm of winemaking at Gary Farrell Winery since 2012 and carries on this legacy.

Theresa's studies honed her scientific approach to winemaking: she earned a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and was a Ph.D. candidate in chemistry, with an emphasis in enology, at the University of California, Davis. However, she opted out of the Ph.D. program to pursue hands-on experience as a winemaker.

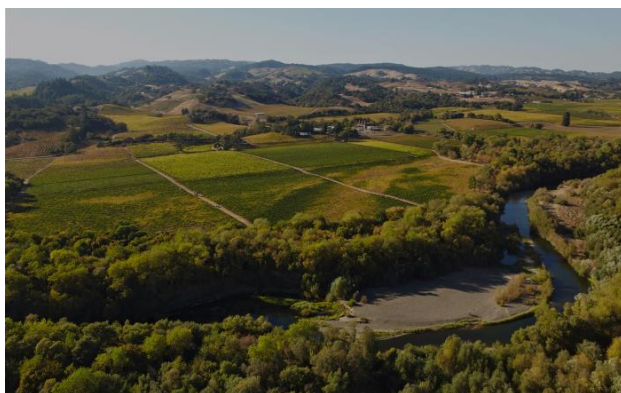


Image courtesy of Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery

I recently tasted several Gary Farrell single-vineyard Pinot Noir wines in a Zoom webinar led by Theresa. Her scientific prowess and commitment to precision were apparent, but Theresa also understands that there's an ineffable dimension to winemaking that adds a bit of magic.

I believe that when crafting single-vineyard wines, a cookie-cutter approach must be avoided. For the single-vineyard designation to mean something beyond a mere geographical description, the wine must convey that terroir's unique qualities. It should capture the essence of the variety as it manifests itself in that vineyard. Gary Farrell's single-vineyard Pinot Noir meets that criteria.

Gary Farrell has an impressive selection of single-vineyard Pinot Noir, and I've highlighted three that I found particularly intriguing. One of the reasons why winemakers worldwide are enamored with Pinot Noir is its capacity to express terroir transparently. Tasting these Gary Farrell wines side-by-side is a priceless master class in better understanding how a well-crafted Pinot Noir stays true to the variety's character and conveys a unique sense of place and time. My tasting focused on 2016 vintages, but the Gary Farrell website features many 2017 vintages.



2016 Gary Farrell Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$70) is a fantastic introduction to the Gary Farrell style. "This Bien Nacido Pinot Noir is like an elixir of exotic red fruit, exuding aromas of Açai, Goji, pomegranate, dried stems, cardamom, powdered ginger and star anise, all balanced by an earthy under layer of dried stems, toasted cedar and sandalwood. The array of palate flavors is simultaneously fruit-driven and savory, exploding with hints of wild strawberry, raspberry, Mangosteen and crushed herbs, all wrapped up in a blanket of velvety grape tannins. The juicy acidity creates a persistent, tangy sensation, while the spicy oak and wood tannins add a polishing finish to this beautiful wine."



If you really want to geek out, taste **2016 Gary Farrell Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$55)** and **2016 Gary Farrell Hallberg Vineyard-Dijon Clones Pinot Noir (\$60)** side-by-side to see how different clones respond to the same terroir. The Hallberg is described as "Lush aromas of dark cherry, currants, and cola naturally follow the deep ruby hue of this wine in glass. Dried mushrooms, black tea, and an

array of fresh violets, rose petals, and a hint of peppermint provide complexity and intrigue. Exceptional palate weight coupled with a tremendous concentration of fruit flavors and zesty acidity deliver a balanced package of power and finesse.”



And my favorite of the three, the Hallberg Vineyard-Dijon Clones is described as “A captivating bouquet of savory herbs and spice introduce this complex offering from the Hallberg Vineyard. Generous notes of white pepper, black tea, cloves and tobacco leaf are in the forefront but slowly give way to the classic red fruit aromas of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Flavors of dried cranberries and fresh raspberries entice the palate while subtle tannins from lightly toasted French oak barrels lend finesse. Exceptionally soft and approachable, this wine is impeccably balanced from start to finish.”