

ROCO WINERY

2021 GRAVEL ROAD PINOT NOIR



92 points
Wine Spectator

ABOUT GRAVEL ROAD PINOT NOIR

The hills in the Willamette Valley are punctuated by gravel roads, which lead to the regions finest vineyards. ROCO's Gravel Road Pinot Noir is a blend of several of these distinctive vineyards including the Soles' own Wits' End Vineyard in the Chehalem Mountains AVA. An outstanding value, the Gravel Road Pinot Noir flavor profile surpasses many other wineries flagship Pinot Noirs. The old world style offers bold flavor with balance and grace to pair well with nearly any food.

VINTAGE NOTES

The Spring start to 2021 was one of the driest on record. Heaps of sunshine and warmth gave us the prospect of a nice crop of winegrapes. Just as the clusters bloomed, we received a shot of cold, wet drizzle. The result was rather poor pollination, limiting a potentially large crop. The Summer progressed normally until record heat hit us over the 25-28 July period. By plan, most of our vineyards are setup to drip irrigate if required. Watering vines a couple of days before the 25th seemed to allow the vines to "weather" the heat. Much of our chardonnay and pinot noir was harvested under sunny Fall skies. A refreshingly cold rain dropped snow down to 5500' on the 19th and 28th which benefited our later ripening Pinots. The last day of harvest was October 14th. The wines are delicious, do not lack for acidity, and due to our ability to drip irrigate vines and chill whole clusters at the winery, fruit expression is concentrated and fresh.

WINEMAKING PROCESS

ROCO Pinot Noir is handpicked and then chilled overnight to 38°F in our large cold room. The chilled bunches are gently de-stalked and the whole berries fall into small 1.6 ton open fermenters. The berries soak for ten days before beginning ferment with our proprietary, house-cultured, indigenous wine yeast. Soaking allows gentle extraction of color and flavor from the berry skin, and not the bitter-tasting seeds. The fermentations are hand punched twice a day to mix skins and fermenting juices. Ferments are allowed to reach about 28°C. A post-fermentation soak occurs until the wine is just right for removing from the skins and seeds. At that time the ferment is gently pressed in our modern tank press. The young wine is then sent to barrel for malolactic fermentation to soften the acidity and to add further complexity, then racked once to new, one, two and three-year-old, tight-grained, French oak barrels. The wines are aged in barrel for 18 or more months before bottling.

WINEMAKER'S TASTING NOTES

At this early stage the aromatics show a generous number of dark fruits like cherry, black plum and pomegranate concentrate, with a buried treasure chest of spices circling your senses. Then, it's the palate that belies the true depth of this rich Pinot noir. A delightful gallimaufry of Luxor cherries, red cranberry compote, strawberry leather, black currant, mission fig, and prickly pear jam is layered into spiced Sichuan peppercorn, petrichor, and Christmas spice. This wine has a most generous middle "sweetness", and depth that pipes into a long, rich, sanded tannin finish.

-Rollin Soles, Winemaker



VARIETAL: 100% Pinot Noir
APPELLATION: Willamette Valley AVA

ALCOHOL: 14%
RETAIL: \$30