



WAYFARER

Robert Parker
WINE ADVOCATE

USA, Sonoma: Wayfarer

LISA PERROTTI-BROWN 31st Oct 2017, The Wine Advocate



One of the most impressive vineyard visits I've made this year was to the Wayfarer Vineyard in Sonoma Coast's relatively newly formed Fort Ross-Seaview AVA (established in 2011). I cannot say that I've seen a happier looking vineyard in a long time, and by "happy" I refer to the immaculately trimmed, healthy, vivid green vines supporting well-balanced canopies and crop loads. And what a site! Apart from being incredibly remote, down a long, winding mountain road paved by gorgeous old redwoods and leading away from the Pacific Ocean, it's perched fairly high in the mountains at about 1,100 feet. So, altitude and proximity to the ocean both have a cooling influence, which can be felt when you drive up from the warmer Sonoma plains. But don't let the cool air fool you—this mountaintop vineyard is a real sun trap!

The 30-acre vineyard site was originally brought to the attention of Jayson Pahlmeyer of Pahlmeyer Estate in Napa by eagle-eyed Helen Turley, whose Marcassin vineyard is just down the road. The vineyard was designed and planted by David Abreu in 2002, exclusively to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. There are twelve Pinot Noir clones and four Chardonnay clones planted, among which there are only five Dijon clones, the rest are local heritage clones with the exception of the somewhat mysterious "Wayfarer" Pinot Noir "suitcase" clone. (Meaning, it arrived via someone's suitcase from the motherland of Burgundy, presumably from a pretty snazzy vineyard there.)

The property is now adeptly managed by Cleo Pahlmeyer, Jayson's daughter, **while Bordeaux and Burgundy-trained Bibiana Gonzalez Rave is both winemaker and vineyard manager.** Bibiana told me, "Acidity is naturally very low here, so all the wines go through 100% malolactic. All the clones are fermented separately and then a barrel selection is made for the wines—therefore not everything makes the Wayfarer grade." **Bibiana explained she makes all her winemaking decisions by taste, not by formula, which is absolute music to a wine critic's ears.**

I had the opportunity to taste through all the Wayfarer wines that Bibiana has made thus far, since she joined the winery in 2012—four vintages. **Her sensitivity and bonding with this vineyard is clear in this outstanding collection of wines—brava!** Regarding the newly released 2015s, she commented, “2015 crops were down 60% due to flowering, mainly the Pinot was affected.” Thin on the ground they may be, but man, are the 2015s good. Lovers of great Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, this is unquestionably a winery to start following.

2015

2015 Wayfarer Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard - 96+ points

The 2015 Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard has an intense nose of pineapple, guava and ginger with honeysuckle, marzipan, cashews and brioche. The medium-bodied palate is incredibly taut for such a gregarious nose with wonderful tension framing the pronounced tropical flavors beautifully, finishing with lingering savory notes and a gorgeous creamy texture. 800 cases were made.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2015 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard - 96 points

Sadly, because Pinot Noir yields were down by around 60% in 2015, no Golden Mean, Mother Rock or Paige's Ridge were made this year. The good news is that all that superlative fruit went into this “straight” Pinot Noir label. Medium to deep ruby-purple colored, the 2015 Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard delivers pronounced crushed black cherry, black raspberry and red currant notes with touches of forest floor, tea bark, rose hip tea, cracked pepper and cedar. Medium-bodied, the palate is superbly poised and intensely flavored, with a firm backbone of very fine, ripe tannins and great freshness supporting the generous red and black berry notes, finishing with lingering earth and savory nuances. Wow! 875 cases were made.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2015 Wayfarer Pinot Noir The Traveler - 95+ points

Deep ruby-purple colored, the 2015 Pinot Noir The Traveler (made from the “suitcase clone”) is a little reticent at this youthful stage, revealing pure crushed Bing cherries, raspberry tart and cranberry notes over notes of violets and dark chocolate, plus a waft of underbrush. Medium to full-bodied, the palate has a nice balance between red fruit and savory/earthy flavors, with firm, grainy tannins and a lively backbone, finishing with a mineral suggestion

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2014

2014 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Mother Rock - 94 points

Deep ruby-purple, the 2014 Pinot Noir Mother Rock (made from Mt. Eden and 777 clones) has a cherry cola and chocolate box-laced nose with suggestions of black raspberries, dried Provence herbs and menthol. The medium to full-bodied palate is packed with lively black cherry and spicy flavors, supported by grippy tannins and just enough acid to lift the fruit through the long finish.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2014 Wayfarer Pinot Noir The Traveler - 94 points

Medium to deep ruby-purple colored, the 2014 Pinot Noir The Traveler (made from the "suitcase clone") opens with mulberries, red currants and cracked pepper on the nose with hints of garrigue, damp soil, truffles and rhubarb. The medium to full-bodied palate is very finely constructed, with pixelated tannins and great freshness supporting the delicate red fruit and earthy flavors, finishing with great persistence and elegance.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2014 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Golden Mean - 94 points

The Golden Mean is made exclusively from Pommard and Swan clones. Medium to deep ruby-purple, the 2014 Pinot Noir Golden Mean has a lovely floral nose of violets and roses over a core of red cherries and pomegranate with hints of cinnamon stick and toast. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is packed with perfumed red berry flavors with a solid frame of chewy tannins and seamless freshness, finishing on a spicy note.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2014 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Paige's Ridge - 93 points

Deep ruby-purple in color, the 2014 Pinot Noir Paige's Ridge (all 667 clone) has a profoundly scented nose of baked cherries, black raspberries and black pepper with hints of allspice, underbrush and dusty earth. Medium to full-bodied, it fills the mouth with vibrant berry layers, supported by fine-grained tannins and a lively backbone, finishing long and fruity.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2014 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard - 93 points

Medium ruby-purple colored, the 2014 Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard has a gregarious nose of ripe Bing cherries, cranberry sauce and rhubarb pie with hints of mossy bark, lavender and cumin seed. Medium-bodied, **the palate has wonderful restraint and a quiet intensity**, with chewy tannins and seamless freshness framing the savory flavors, finishing on an appealing dried herb note.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2014 Wayfarer Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard - 92+ points

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2013

2013 Wayfarer Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard - 95 points

The 2013 Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard has a youthful nose of pink grapefruit, white peaches and lemon curd with honeyed toast, beeswax and coriander seed. The palate is very finely crafted, tightly knit and still quite primary, revealing vibrant citrus and stone fruit flavors and a satiny texture, finishing long and minerally.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2013 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Paige's Ridge - 90 points

Medium to deep ruby in color, the 2013 Pinot Noir Paige's Ridge (all 667 clone) is a little youthfully mute at this stage, revealing glimpses at pure kirsch, mulberry and red currant notes plus underlying black soil and lavender hints. The medium to full-bodied palate is laden with juicy berry flavors, framed with a racy backbone and well-balanced, chewy tannins, finishing long.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2013 Wayfarer Pinot Noir The Traveler - 94 points

Medium ruby colored, the 2013 Pinot Noir The Traveler (made from the "suitcase clone") has an earthy nose of fungi, underbrush, fertile soil and moss with a core of black cherries and cloves, plus wafts of violets and pepper. Medium-bodied, the palate has a great tannic backbone with plenty of freshness cutting through the intense earth and fruit layers, finishing on a wonderful textural note.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2013 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard - 91 points

Medium ruby-purple colored, the 2014 Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard has a gregarious nose of ripe Bing cherries, cranberry sauce and rhubarb pie with hints of mossy bark, lavender and cumin seed. Medium-bodied, the palate has wonderful restraint and a quiet intensity, with chewy tannins and seamless freshness framing the savory flavors, finishing on an appealing dried herb note.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2013 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Golden Mean - 92 points

The Golden Mean is made exclusively from Pommard and Swan clones. Medium to deep ruby colored, the 2013 Pinot Noir Golden Mean has a savory, sautéed herbs-led nose with earthy notes of mossy bark, loam and dried leaves over a gentle red currant jelly and raspberry tart core. The medium-bodied palate has a wonderfully firm, chewy texture that nicely corrals the vibrant red fruits and earthy layers, finishing with a refreshing lift.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2013 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Mother Rock - 94 points

Medium to deep ruby-purple, the 2013 Pinot Noir Mother Rock (made from Mt. Eden and 777 clones) has a gorgeous, spicy nose of Chinese five spice, raspberry coulis, red currant jelly and dried rose petals with a touch of smoked meat. Medium to full-bodied, **the palate is opulent and seductive**, with velvety tannins and lovely, understated freshness, finishing with lingering perfumed notes.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2012

2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Golden Mean - 95 points

The Golden Mean is made exclusively from Pommard and Swan clones. Medium ruby colored, the 2012 Pinot Noir Golden Mean has a savory nose of charcuterie and Marmite toast with a core of dried cranberries, potpourri, spice box and menthol. Medium to full-bodied, the palate has a beautiful earthy/savory character with lovely, fine-grained tannins and a good long finish.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard- 94 points

Medium to deep ruby-purple in color, the 2012 Pinot Noir Wayfarer Vineyard has an understated earthy/meaty nose over a core of dried mulberries and kirsch plus a waft of potpourri. Medium to full-bodied, there is a generous amount of savory and red berry preserves flesh filling the palate, with soft, velvety tannins and just enough freshness, finishing with a bit of spiciness coming through.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Paige's Ridge - 90 points

Medium ruby colored, the 2012 Pinot Noir Paige's Ridge (all 667 clone) is scented of dried cherries and cranberries with suggestions of spice box, dried flowers, forest floor and bay leaves. Medium to full-bodied with a chewy, stewed tea texture, it has a restrained, savory palate and elegant finish.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir Mother Rock - 91 points

Medium ruby in color, the 2012 Pinot Noir Mother Rock (made from Mt. Eden and 777 clones) is scented of aniseed, cumin seed and fennel over a core of kirsch and red plum preserves. Medium bodied, it has a firm structure of chewy tannins framing the exotic spice flavors, finishing savory.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2012 Wayfarer Pinot Noir The Traveler - 95 points

Medium ruby colored, the 2012 Pinot Noir The Traveler (made from the "suitcase clone") is scented of baked cherries and warm cranberries with smoked ham, spice box, underbrush and menthol. Medium to full-bodied, the palate has a pleasant restraint of savory layers with a firm tannin backbone and great freshness, all of which really define this singular wine.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown

2012 Wayfarer Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard - 93+ points

The 2012 Chardonnay Wayfarer Vineyard opens with crushed stones, yeast extract, waxed lemons and peach preserves notes, morphing into suggestions of yuzu, acacia honey and praline. The medium-bodied palate reveals great elegance, with slowly evolving citrus flavors and a silken texture, finishing with chalky notes lifted by a racy line.

- Lisa Perrotti-Brown