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2015 Winemakers to Watch

by Esther Mobley | December 3, 2015

“Fruit is easy to attain here,” says Alex Kanzler of the flavors of the Sebastopol Hills, a small slice of the Russian River Valley. “It’s the accents, the exotic spice, that are harder.”

There aren’t many young winemakers these days who get to work with an estate property, but Kanzler got lucky. His parents had planted the vineyard on their property, formerly a Gravenstein apple orchard, to Pinot Noir in 1996. Kanzler Vineyards built a strong reputation as a vineyard designate for wineries like Kosta Browne, Rivers Marie, Lynmar and A.P. Vin, and since 2004, the Kanzlers have kept some fruit for themselves. Tucked among the Sebastopol Hills on an east-facing slope, Kanzler Vineyards sits below the fog line and benefits from the cool winds coming in through the Petaluma Gap. Its fruit is concentrated, intense and masculine — feral, even.

Kanzler originally thought he’d be a teacher, but once he worked his first harvest, after college, he was hooked. Since 2010, Kanzler has led winemaking for the family business, which is growing modestly. He’s become an unofficial ambassador for the Sebastopol Hills, as his micro-region is known (though it’s unlikely to become an AVA anytime soon). The Kanzler wines are a great example of the combination of spectacular site and respectful stewardship. “We’re not trying to be the next Kosta Browne, the next Siduri,” says Kanzler, referring to the larger-reaching



Alex Kanzler, 29

Winemaker for Kanzler Family Vineyards

Sonoma Pinot brands that sold earlier this year. His Pinot Noirs navigate beautifully between a generosity of fruit and a firm, unrelenting structure. For all their brawn, these are not polemical-tasting wines; it’s hard to imagine who wouldn’t find them delicious.

Wines to Try:

Kanzler’s Estate Reserve Pinot Noir 2013 (\$72, 14.6%)

Velvety and seductive, with black fruit tones and an exotic spice component due in part to its 20% whole-cluster fermentation.



Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 2013 (\$52, 14.4%)

Leads with sweet-tasting fruit, with a midpalate movement toward cocoa and nutmeg, finishing chalky.



KANZLER
FAMILY VINEYARDS
