

Diamond Series



The Donum Estate

To put it simply, this month's *Diamond Series* selection, The Donum Estate, is the type of winery many other wineries would like to emulate. Relatively young by industry standards, the Donum Estate is a carefully thought out, perfectly situated property that combines the absolute finest in grape growing with the exacting expertise of gifted winemakers.

First, the particulars...the Donum Estate is comprised of two vineyard properties, 90 acres of the former Tula Vista Vineyard and 56 acres of the revered Ferguson block, located on hills that skirt the marshlands of Carneros in the lower parts of both Napa and Sonoma counties.

The Donum Estate is owned by the Racke Family of Germany, who also owns the prestigious Robert Stemmler Winery in upper Sonoma. Donum is the pet project of Anne Moeller-Racke, who recognized the value of the vineyards when they were part of the Buena Vista Winery sale to Allied Domecq in 2001.

"I first started to see the incredible possibilities when I took a really close look at Carneros," she admitted. "The Carneros terrain shaped its own destiny. All this land was formerly pastures, big expanses of rolling grassland that fed beef and dairy herds, goats and sheep. For a number of years, the cool climates and ever present moisture off the bay wasn't that attractive to growers."

Moeller-Racke feels that the advent of smaller, quality-oriented wineries shaped the future of Carneros. "When the demand for superior quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir started in the mid 1980s, Carneros quickly became everyone's favorite place. I fell in love with the marvelous vineyards that comprise today's Donum Estate and made sure they weren't part of the Buena Vista sale."

Moeller-Racke then set about to making what some insiders have called "the perfect Pinot Noir." She has developed a formula that most wineries simply cannot afford to employ. Anne limits the tonnage to about one ton per acre, well below both the Napa and Sonoma averages. She also encourages a most unique approach to making a Donum wine.

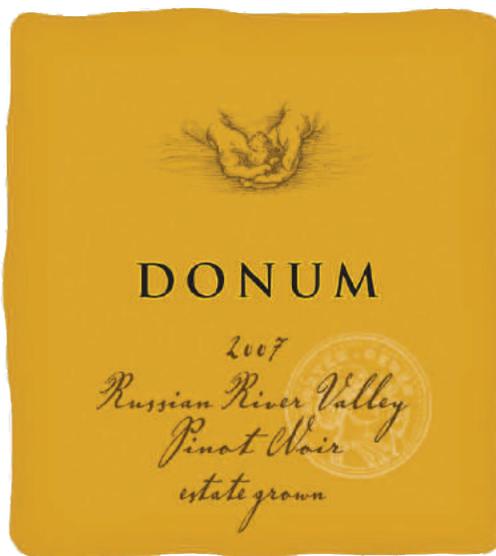
According to international winemaker Kenneth Juhasz, "Donum is a really wonderful project. We're given no case numbers (to produce). We're just asked to make a small amount of extraordinary Pinot Noir."

Introduced with a tiny number (300 cases) in 2001, The Donum Estate has grown to produce just around 2,000 cases a year. What is neat is the fact that any future growth will depend entirely on the quality of fruit the vineyards provide.

"It is really quite simple," Moeller-Racke continued. "We divide our vineyards into individual units for quality control, and each is farmed a bit differently. The rows up on the ridge have shallow soil and are better drained, and are more exposed to the wind and sun than the vines down in the swale. We call this precision

farming and it's all about smaller and smaller units to ensure uniform quality control."

Moeller-Racke also explained that each vintage is capable of producing grapes that will be used for The Donum Estate. Because it is not known which units will prosper under each vintage's conditions, all vines are given the same exacting care. "It's all about allowing the vines to develop their utmost potential," she added, "it just happens at The Donum Estate, we attempt to give them all painstaking attention." She is also pleased that all The Donum



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Anne Moller-Racke,
President & Winegrower



Estate vineyards are post-phyloxera, a fact that bodes well for the future of the winery. She also credits her other brand, Robert Stemmler Winery, with allowing her the chance to be so selective for The Donum Estate.

“Our Stemmler label makes Donum possible,” Moeller-Racke, pointed out.

“It provides us with a wonderful array of fruit from which to select.

We have been very pleased that the resulting wines have proven to be quite exceptional.”

That last quote might be an understatement. Since its first release, The Donum Estate has consistently garnered superior accolades from the wine industry press and has become a hard item to find on a consistent basis, a fact aided by such limited production.

The word Donum (from the same Latin root as donation) literally means “gift of the land,” a phrase that rings particularly true in the case of The Donum Estate. During its brief history, it has set a standard that other Pinot Noir makers will surely attempt to achieve.

Please enjoy this marvelous *Diamond Series* selection from The Donum Estate.

Accolades and Tasting Notes

Donum 2007 Russian River Valley Estate Grown Pinot Noir

94-Points, *Wine Enthusiast* — “This is a restaurant wine. It’s really fancy, really good, and really food-friendly. Although it’s rich in fruit and oak, it possesses an underlying tension, with acidity and tannins all vying for center stage. You’re always looking for the center of gravity. In other words, a wine of great complexity and interest.”

96-Points, *Wine Spectator* — “There’s a pleasant zestiness to the wild berry and red cherry fruit flavors, with ripe, spicy elements and a bit of peppery tobacco, cedar and fresh herb notes. Full-bodied, with good intensity that persists through the finish. 600 cases made.”

“Top Pick,” *San Francisco Chronicle* — “This soon-to-be-released vintage from Kenneth Juhasz and grower Anne Moller-Racke, who planted the estate vineyards in 1989, has intense but elegant fruity, ripe black cherry, licorice; fresh bay leaf and spice are balanced with food-friendly acidity and structure. A nuanced bottling.”

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This month's *Diamond Series* featured *Plus!* wine:
Highway 12 2007 “Highwayman” Blend
94-Points - *Beverage Tasting Institute*
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Reorder

Commonly known as the “ultimate Pinot Noir project,” The Donum Estate is associated with world-class, cult-status Pinots that garner international recognition and unbeatable ratings with each highly coveted release. This 2007 Russian River Valley vintage is an exquisite Pinot Noir of luscious fruit, incredible balance, and great intensity – Donum Estate’s most sophisticated version of the wine to date.

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2-Bottle Members.....\$55.00 / bottle

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