

# Pinot Noir Press



## DRAGONETTE CELLARS

This alchemistic-themed winery is making world class wines worthy of distinction that has brought great joy and satisfaction to its fervent band of followers.



As it completed its thirteenth year of existence, cultish Dragonette Cellars of Lompoc (between Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, just south of Vandenberg Air Force Base), has become a prime producer of top shelf varietals such as this 2014 Dragonette Pinot Noir.

“We are constantly chasing quality,” offered Brandon Sparks-Gillis one of Dragonette’s three co-owners. “The past decade has seen us embrace the sustaining farming concept and many of our grapes come from organic or bio-dynamic-farmed vineyards. It has most certainly improved the quality of our wines.”

To set the facts, Dragonette Cellars is the product of brothers John and Steve Dragonette, along with their best friend, Sparks-Gillis. It seems that John and Brandon found themselves working for famous Los Angeles wine retailer Wally’s and formed a bond that would eventually lead to the establishment of Dragonette Cellars. John’s younger brother Steve came aboard and the entity was soon in the business of making wine. Today, all three devote all of their time to their successful winery.

Interestingly, the name Dragonette was selected for the winery because it carried a certain panache of mystery and uniqueness. The two brothers’ family name was originally Italian (Dragonetti) but was changed when the family emigrated from Italy in the 1930’s.

Some six years ago Dragonette Cellars moved its operation into a new winery facility in Buellton that has allowed the winery to pursue its own destiny. It continues to source fruit from selected vineyards on a long term, per acre basis. “This is a bit more expensive for us,” confessed Sparks-Gillis, “but it also allows us to have a say in how the vines are tended, allows us to drop fruit whenever we wish and also gives us the right to determine when the grapes are picked. In the case of Pinot Noir, that decision is all important.”

Sparks-Gillis considers the 2014 Dragonette Pinot Noir from Sta. Rita Hills a perfect case study. Utilizing grapes from six different vineyards the wine exudes marvelous complexity and richness. “In the (Sta. Rita Hills) AVA, the temperature drops a degree for each mile. That fact greatly affects Pinot Noir and how it develops. By using six different sources it is much like putting a puzzle together with little pieces. In the end the resultant wine is able to display multiple characteristics, exactly what we intended when we started the winemaking process.”

Incredible stuff from a winery that was started in a garage and since has garnered multiple awards, high scores and imposing accolades since its inception.



## ABOUT THE WINEMAKERS



All three co-owners share in the winemaking duties and all are self-taught in the winemaker's art. "Each of us apprenticed at a different winery," explained Brandon Sparks-Gillis. "We learned from some really top winemakers and figured out that what we wanted to do with our wines couldn't be learned in the classroom." Dragonette Cellars' three co-owners get together after harvest and make all the important decisions for each of their wines. When blending time comes around, the three again meet to make the final decisions on the wines. "We each have different opinions but in the end, it all seems to come together," finalized Sparks-Gillis. Judging by the winery's success rate, it seems that most winemaking decisions are assuredly appropriate.

## DRAGONETTE 2014 PINOT NOIR Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County

The storied Sta. Rita Hills AVA provided the fruit for the six vineyards that comprise this complex and compelling 100% Pinot Noir. John Sebastiano (52%), La Encantada (20%), Cargasacchi (10%), Raidan (8%) Fiddlestix (7%) and Duvarita (3%) all contributed and lead to the suggestion that the sum is better than the parts. Deep berry fruit on the nose with black cherry dominating. Hints of spice and minerals on the palate with some fresh herbs thrown in for good measure. Excellent, lingering finish and almost perfect balance add to its luster. [Aged] unfinned and unfiltered, in French Oak for 16 months. Enjoy now and until 2024.

**92 POINTS**

– Antonio Galloni *Vinous*

**90 POINTS**

– *Wine Advocate*



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