

Pinot Noir Press



DRAGONETTE CELLARS

One of the most fascinating wineries on California's Central Coast, Dragonette Cellars produces small-lot wines of purity, complexity and balance from world-class vineyard sites.



After fifteen years of existence, the 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 month's featured 2018 Sta. Rita Hills 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 sustainable farming concept and many of our grapes come from organic or biodynamic-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 ten 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 2018 Dragonette Pinot Noir from Sta. Rita Hills a perfect case study. Utilizing grapes from several 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 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."

Dragonette Cellars also operates a tasting room in the picturesque town of Los Olivos in the Santa Ynez Valley.

Incredible stuff from a winery that started in a garage and has garnered countless awards, high scores and prestigious 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-Gills. "We learned from some really top winemakers and figured out that what we needed 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.

As vignerons, the three co-owners have committed themselves, above all else, to the mindful farming of precise blocks in exceptional vineyards and in turn, crafting wines of purity, complexity and balance that represent the remarkable diversity of Santa Barbara County's wine country.

DRAGONETTE 2018 PINOT NOIR

Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County

The Dragonette 2018 Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir is crafted from several of the finest vineyards in the region, including the old vines from the famous Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, as well as Bontrook, La Rinconada, John Sebastiano, Radian, Spear, Fiddlestix, and Donnachadh. The multiple vineyards combine to create great complexity and balance. On the nose, this Pinot Noir shows fresh red fruits (black cherries, red fleshed plums and strawberries) along with rhubarb, baking spices, and hints of fresh basil and thyme. The palate is velvety smooth with concentrated red fruit flavors that are lifted by fresh acidity and blood orange citrus. The fine, supple tannins provide structure and focus on the long finish. Aged 15 months in oak. 100% Pinot Noir. Enjoy!

93 POINTS

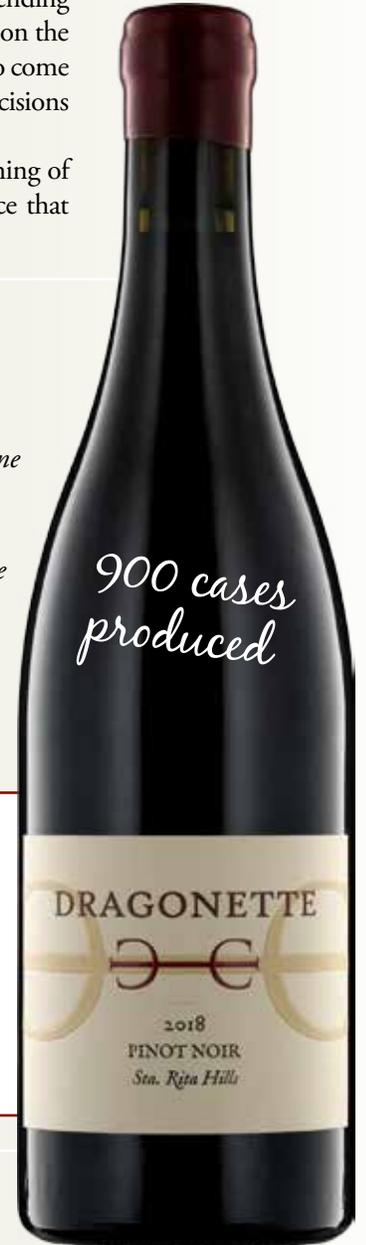
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