



# The WINE ADVOCATE®



## The Independent Consumer's Bi-Monthly Guide to Fine Wine Central Coast Pinot Noir & Chardonnay CALERA

CALERA	2006	ALIGOTE	MT. HARLAN	(\$20.00)	WHITE	<b>89</b>
CALERA	2006	CHARDONNAY	CENTRAL COAST	(\$16.00)	WHITE	<b>87</b>
CALERA	2006	CHARDONNAY LA PETITE	MT. HARLAN	(\$20.00)	WHITE	<b>89</b>
CALERA	2005	CHARDONNAY 30TH ANNIVERSARY	MT. HARLAN	(\$25.00)	WHITE	<b>92</b>
CALERA	2004	PINOT NOIR JENSEN VINEYARD	MT. HARLAN	(\$60.00)	RED	<b>94</b>
CALERA	2004	PINOT NOIR MILLS VINEYARD	MT. HARLAN	(\$45.00)	RED	<b>93</b>
CALERA	2000	PINOT NOIR REED VINEYARD	MT. HARLAN	(\$50.00)	RED	<b>90</b>
CALERA	2004	PINOT NOIR SELLECK VINEYARD	MT. HARLAN	(\$75.00)	RED	<b>96</b>
CALERA	2005	PINOT NOIR 30TH ANNIVERSARY	MT. HARLAN	(\$30.00)	RED	<b>87</b>

This venerable winery, which has thirty years of history (long by California standards), has turned out a bevy of new releases. A new, but limited production white wine offering is the **2006 Aligoté**, which comes from a tiny 1/4 acre parcel planted in the Jensen Vineyard. An excellent effort, it exhibits copious amounts of crushed stone and white currant notes in a firm, austere style, along with considerable personality and flavor intensity. Although not exotic, it is an interesting, authentic, fairly-priced Aligote to enjoy over the next 1-2 years.

The least expensive Calera Chardonnay is the **2006 Chardonnay Central Coast**. Fashioned from fruit grown in seven different counties, and aged ten months in small amounts of new oak, it offers buttery, waxy, honeysuckle notes, medium body, attractive, pure fruit, and a straightforward, uncomplex style. Drink this tasty Chardonnay over the next 1-2 years. Made from young vines planted on Mt. Harlan, the light green/gold-hued **2006 Chardonnay La Petite** exhibits a complex bouquet of pineapples, white currants, acacia flowers, and crushed rocks. Medium to full-bodied and nicely delineated, it offers sweet Chardonnay fruit buttressed by decent acidity. Drink it over the next 3-4 years. From Mt. Harlan's limestone slopes,

**92 pts.** the **2005 Chardonnay 30th Anniversary** exhibits a greenish/gold color as well as a nuanced perfume of honeysuckle, pears, white peaches, and stones. Full-bodied with beautiful acidity, a broad, complex mouthfeel, and stunning richness, it is a fabulous bargain that should age easily for 4-5 years.

The **2005 Pinot Noir 30th Anniversary Mt. Harlan Cuvée** is Calera's effort to offer a Pinot Noir that is drinkable upon release. This selection is fashioned from younger vines and lots from the limestone soils of the Selleck and Mills vineyards. A medium ruby color is followed by chalky, earthy scents intermixed with notions of sweet cherries, pomegranates, spice, and minerals. Medium-bodied, with velvety tannins, it represents a naked expression of beautiful Pinot Noir fruit as there is no evidence of oak (even though 30% new French oak barrels are utilized during the aging process). Drink it over the next 4-5 years.

The four single vineyard Pinot Noirs are relatively limited in availability. They range from a minuscule 212 cases of the Reed vineyard, to 300+ of the Selleck, and just over 1,200 cases of the Mills and Jensen offerings. These wines often require several years to perform at their peak, and some vintages have had an unbelievable ability to age fabulously. For me, the great glory years

of Calera Pinot Noir were during the late eighties, until winemaker Steve Doerner left for Oregon at the end of that decade. However, over recent vintages, things have gotten back on track, and all of these 2004s possess surprising ripeness and headiness for California Pinot Noirs.

For starters, **the cool climate 2004 Pinot Noir Reed Vineyard**

**90 pts.** exhibits a dark ruby color as well as a beautiful, sweet nose of cranberries, kirsch liqueur, and spice, and surprisingly evolved and intense fruit for a young Calera Pinot. As it sits in the glass, spicy, sassafras, Allspice, and a Gevrey-Chambertin-like meatiness and roasted herb character emerge. This is a medium to full-bodied wine with considerable power, outstanding fruit depth as well as ripeness, and surprising charm for a young Reed. Drink it over the next decade or more. The

**2004 Pinot Noir Mills Vineyard** boasts a deep ruby/purple color along with seductive, sweet aromas of black raspberries, black cherries, spring flowers, and spice. It possesses beautiful red and black fruits, good acidity, full body, and more tannin, but less spice than the Reed cuvee. This complex, fruit-driven Pinot Noir will benefit from 1-3 years of cellaring, and should drink well for 10-15 years. The dark ruby/purple-tinted,

**94 pts.** spicy, full-bodied **2004 Pinot Noir Jensen Vineyard**

reveals a stunningly complex nose of roasted meat, sweet red and black currants, cherries, earth, and spice. With excellent structure, acidity, and length, it should be another terrific example of this vineyard. Exceptionally long and rich, it should be cellared for 2-3 years and enjoyed over the following 15. The **2004 Pinot Noir Selleck Vineyard** possesses a deep, dark garnet/ruby color in addition to dense, forest floor aromas reminiscent of a DRC Richebourg or Grand Echezeaux. Extraordinarily complex notes of truffles, berries, and damp forest are both enticing and profound. This full-bodied, rich, long, compelling Pinot Noir can be drunk now, but it will be even better with 2-4 years of bottle age. It should keep for 12-15 years. It is stunning stuff!

All of these Pinot Noirs are aged 16 months in French oak barrels with usually no more than 15% new, and there is no vanillin/pain grille oakiness in evidence. Yields from the late 1980s through 2004 have ranged from 1.3 to 1.5 tons of fruit per acre, which is remarkably low. Tel. (831) 637-9170; Fax (831) 637-9070