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02.14.2005

2002 PhillipsHill Estates "Oppenlander Vineyard" Pinot Noir, Mendocino, California

Sometimes I hesitate to write about wines that are so small in production that they are virtually impossible to get. In this case, however, it is possible to purchase the wine online, so I'm going to go ahead.

A mere 100 cases of this wine is extracted from 18 acres of prime Pinot Noir vineyard located at the mouth of the Anderson valley as it opens up to the Mendocino Coast. Known as the Oppenlander Vineyard, it is named after homesteaders with the name Oppenlander, who eked out a living on this property in the 1860's and were so isolated from the rest of the country that they and other residents at the time were able to continue growing wine grapes straight through the years of Prohibition. Interest in growing grapes in this region waned in the early part of the century, but picked up gain in the 1970s after wineries like Roederer Champagne cellars were established. According to the Oxford Companion for wine, scouts from Roederer Estate searched high and low in California for "somewhere with weather as bleak as north eastern France" and found it here.

Just 8 miles from the ocean, this property is very cool climate, subject to the coastal fogs which also creep into the Anderson Valley, but lacking its neighbor's bone dry heat during the summer.

This vineyard, nearest to the town of Comptche, was planted in 1998 by brothers Bill and

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Norman Shandel, who currently own the property and sell their grapes to several producers, including a label called Surprise Valley Ranch, this [PhillipsHill](#), and at one point, apparently a label simply known as Shandel's Oppenlander Vineyard. The vineyard doesn't lie within the official borders of the Anderson Valley AVA, and is simply labeled as Mendocino.

I am unable to find any information regarding the winemaker or winemaking for this wine.

Tasting Notes:

Medium to light ruby in color, this wine has a delicious nose of cranberry and lavender aromas with a hint of vanilla. On the palate it is lush and round with light flavors of raspberry and strawberry mixed with crushed fresh herbs. Nicely balanced with acidity the fruit is not overly extracted and lasts to a moderate finish. This is a delicate, feminine wine, and one of the better coastal Pinot Noirs I have had in some time.

Food Pairing:

I had this wine with [Chinese pan fried pork dumplings with chives](#). The fruit flavors of the wine nicely complement the crispy skins and juicy flavors of these pot stickers, and even hold up with a little garlic and chili sauce on the side.

Overall Score: **9/9.5**

How Much?: \$35

I get mine through [Porthos](#).

Posted by: [Alder](#) on February 14, 2005 10:48 PM

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[Cam Wheeler](#) wrote:

02.15.05 at 8:14 AM

