

The Wines of Davis Bynum



Davis Bynum first flirted with winemaking at home in Berkeley when he was a young reporter working at the San Francisco Chronicle. It was 1951 and he purchased a small amount of petite sirah from Robert Mondavi. Things became a bit more serious in 1965 when he transformed a warehouse in Albany into a small winery, where he made wine using knowledge gained from the extensive library at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1973, Bynum found an 84-acre piece of land that eventually became Davis Bynum Winery.

Davis Bynum quickly established a reputation as a serious winemaker and was credited as the first to produce a single vineyard pinot noir wine from the Russian River Valley in Sonoma.

The 1973 vintage was made from pinot noir fruit sourced solely from Joe Rochioli's famed vineyard. This innovation eventually became synonymous with distinctive Russian River Valley pinot noirs and chardonnays made from single vineyard fruit. More than thirty years later, the legacy of Davis Bynum lives on through the hand crafted creation of pinot noir and chardonnay grown exclusively in Russian River Valley.

Today, the Davis Bynum Winery is owned by the Klein family - a fourth generation California farming family - and is part of Rodney Strong Wine Estates, where the winemaking duties have been passed along to Greg Morthole. The winery still focuses on single vineyard wines from the Russian River Valley.

Greg started working for the winery in 2005, when he accepted a job as lab director. His acumen for winemaking became immediately clear and he quickly ascended to an appointment as associate winemaker in late 2007. In the spring of 2010, Greg was promoted to Davis Bynum winemaker, overseeing all aspects operations and winemaking. His quiet demeanor belies his enthusiasm for making single vineyard wines. Greg says, "making wine from Russian River Valley is not only an honor, it's one of the best growing regions in the world, it is exhilarating, it's a blast."

The wonderful tropical fruit character and vibrant acidity of Virginia's Block from Jane's Vineyard defines the **2013 Davis Bynum Sauvignon Blanc**, which opens with hints of minerality intermingled with flavors and aromas of tropical fruit, melon and an underlying backbone of citrus fruit. The wine has a fresh and bright acidity that harmonizes perfectly with a creamy frame - thanks to time spent in neutral oak - that adds richness to the wine. **\$18**

It has been said that Chardonnay shows the hand of the winemaker more than other varietals. Winemaker, Greg Morthole sure has a deft hand as his signature is embedded in the **2013 Davis Bynum Chardonnay** where he blends his favorite blocks and clones from the River West Vineyard. This chardonnay has beautiful aromas of baked apple, citrus and white floral. On the palate the wine opens up with brioche, lemon meringue and toasty baking spices, with a lush finish that is balanced with acidity and a rich creaminess. **\$25**

Greg likes his Pinot Noir delicate and graceful, with all elements in balance, so he makes sure that the fruit he starts with is handle the same way. The fruit for the **2013 Davis Bynum Jane's Vineyard Pinot Noir** is hand-picked in the early morning hours, de-stemmed to stainless steel tanks for cold soaking, followed by fermentation with native yeasts for extra complexity. The result is a wine with pretty aromas of cherry, cranberry, tea leaves, dusty oak and baking spices. On the palate, the dark cherries, red plums and vanilla characteristics shine through with balance, acidity and a nice lingering finish. **\$35**

One of my personal favorite wines from the Davis Bynum lineup is the **2013 Davis Bynum Dijon Clone 777 Pinot Noir** from Jane's Vineyard. The 777 clone tends to show darker fruit characteristics than the other clones planted at Jane's Vineyard, with exceptional balance and a pinch of spice for a complexity. This chewy Pinot Noir features scents of black cherry, black wild raspberry and crushed violet on the nose and flavors of lush earthy minerality on the palate, with notes of dark cherry, black raspberry, black tea and touch of toasty baking spices on the finish. This elegant wine is complex in structure with a long velvety finish. **\$55**