

Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards' Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs Shine Bright Part 2

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Although it seems that all has gone smoothly, there have been some bumps in the road for **Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards**. As interest in winemaking in Malibu picked up, with 52 winegrowers in the area, the business of branding and labeling took center stage. Dolin helped spearhead the movement among local vintners to create the **Malibu Coast AVA** (American Viticultural Areas). Currently, there are three Malibu AVAs: Malibu-Newton Canyon, comprised of one producer, Rosenthal; Saddle Rock-Malibu, and the newly minted Malibu Coast. Dolin explains why the AVA was so important, "Originally, the only way we could identify with Malibu is by putting it in our names versus being able to label the bottles as originating from Malibu, now we can do that." An AVA defines what makes the wines unique to that area, a geographic pedigree that explains why the **wine** tastes the way it does.

But just as corks were popped in celebration of the Malibu Coast AVA in 2014, the brakes were put on for Malibu winemakers. The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, in a bid to regulate land use in the coastal zone of the Santa Monica Mountains in accordance with the California Coastal Commission, passed **legislation** that banned new vineyards and expansion of existing vineyards. Dolin uttered, "It sort of dampened the effect that we had when we established the AVA. A month after we had the headlines "Vineyards Banned in Malibu", from that standpoint, in some people's eyes, it affected the viability of the region. What good is an AVA if you're not allowed to plant vineyards?" The politics of the situation is not lost on Dolin, "At one point it (the measure) banned other forms of agriculture, it also banned a variety of equestrian uses. The day before the Coastal Commission was going to either approve or disapprove of that plan, they backed off because they had so much pressure from the lobbies, from the equestrian groups, they are highly organized. So, in the



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end, it was just us, the vineyards, that got thrown under the bus.” The high hopes that Malibu could become a serious wine region had been squashed, but producers hold out hope that someday the rules may be amended.

In the meantime, Dolin is focused on improving his estate vineyard, with its new tunnel system trellis, which allows for wind exposure and even ripening of the fruit. To gain a greater overall understanding of Malibu’s “terroir”, Dolin and Kirby are experimenting with different vineyard practices to coax the best from this small patch of vines, to make every bottle of Dolin Malibu Estate Chardonnay the best it can be, and with such a small production, 135 cases in 2013, everything counts.



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Tasting through Dolin’s current releases, two Malibu Chardonnays, four Central Coast Pinot Noirs, and one Pinot Rosé, you’re struck that the wines are expressive of their origins. The **2014 Dolin Rosé of Pinot Noir** is vibrant and lively, with wild strawberry and honeysuckle aromas, and a bright palate of blood orange and raspberry, a wine you want to sip on all year long. The label, inspired by Malibu tiles from the 1920’s and designed by his wife Lynn, is beautiful. For \$22, it can be your go-to house wine, food friendly and delicious.

The **2013 Dolin Malibu Estate Chardonnay** is stunning, a shining star of fruit, acidity, structure, body, and texture. Apple and pear aromas and flavors, accented with subtle oak notes, makes for an elegant, refined wine. The 2013 Dolin Newton Canyon Chardonnay is richer, with aromas of apple, buttered toast, and vanilla notes from the more extensive aging in new French oak barrels. Both Chardonnays retail for \$39, the Malibu Estate was my favorite.

All four Pinots sampled were from the 2012 vintage. The **Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** is big and ripe, with intense cherry and berry fruit, bright acidity, and a long finish. The **Talley Rincon Pinot** is more perfumed and structured, yet juicy and silky. Layered, with cherry, cranberry, and blueberry fruit, earth, meat, and spice, this is a voluptuous wine with a long, elegant finish. The **Bien Nacido Pinot** is vibrant and full-bodied, with red berry fruit, licorice notes, and hints of vanilla on the palate, finishing long and distinctive, showing particularly well against the others on this day, a fabulous wine! The **Solomon Hills Pinot** is robust yet delicate, complex with high-toned red berry fruit, spice, and earth notes, good acidity, and a long finish, this is Dolin’s favorite Pinot. All three single vineyard Pinots sell for \$45, while the Sta. Rita Hills wine is \$32.

Dolin is experimenting with his first love, Bordeaux blends, from the Malibu Coast AVA. They are still a work in progress, with deep shoes to fill, since the inspiration, a Château Ducru-Beaucaillou 1996, second-growth Bordeaux, was poured at the end, a beautiful wine that served as a wishful benchmark for Dolin's wine aspirations.

Eventually Dolin would like to exercise more control over the finished wines, “we’d like to have our own production facility, 100% control from bin to bottle”, he says. For now, the Dolins are building the brand, participating in every wine event that they can, to increase awareness of their Pinot

Noirs and Chardonnays.

At this point, Dolin is drinking in the good life, sharing it with his wife Lynn, son Derek, and three Maltese terriers, Enzo, Alfie and Ruby, all within the grounds of his breath-taking Mediterranean villa overlooking the Pacific Ocean, ground zero for his incredible wine journey in the hills of Malibu.



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