

Truchard Pinot Noir

has a past and future

On the shoulders of the gentle hills rising from the north edge of San Pablo Bay in southern Napa County, Tony and Jo Ann Truchard are exorcising an old family ghost.

In 1885, Tony Truchard's grandfather, Jean Marie Truchard, migrated from France to oversee the vineyards and the winery that his brother, Father Anthony Marie Truchard, had established near Houston.

But Texas was too hot and humid to yield the kinds of wines they had hoped to make, and then the operation was done in for good by Prohibition, though some of the vines survive to this day.

Tony Truchard grew up on the farm with the old vineyards, and seems to have inherited the pioneering spirit of Jean Marie and Father Truchard. He migrated West, not to plant grapes but to practice medicine, which he was doing in Reno in the early 1970s, when he began to scratch the old family itch for fine wine.

He started by buying a small prune orchard alongside San Pablo Bay, converted it into vineyards and then continued to acquire and develop other parcels in the area, until the couple's holdings totaled 167 acres. The Truchards have been growers primarily, selling Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and several other varieties to Carneros Creek, Ferrari-Carano, Raymond and Havens, among other wineries.

In 1989, they began to make wine under their own label, Truchard Vineyards. And they just released a 1991 Pinot Noir (\$18) that affirms why the Carneros district—the region in which they grow their grapes—is becoming so celebrated for the varietal.

By handling the fruit and juice delicately—light crushing, cool fermentation, infrequent racking, gentle clarification—they hoped to sculpt a Pinot Noir complex in flavor and broad in texture. In fact, that's what they got, putting to rest the ghost that has haunted the family since those early struggles in Texas.

In build, the Truchard 1991 Pinot Noir is lean yet sturdy. In flavor, it suggests fresh, plump cherries and raspberries, with a spicy and earthy liveliness that lingers on the palate as long as this year's runoff. In "mouth-feel", it has the texture of fine, supple leather. The good Father Truchard would want to use this Pinot Noir as a sacramental wine.

Food suggestions: Tony and Jo Ann Truchard like the Pinot Noir with turkey, duck with a cherry sauce, or pork, especially pork tenderloins baked with a honey/soy glaze.

WINE OF THE WEEK *By Mike Dunne*
