

Deovlet, “Sonny Boy” Red Blend, Santa Barbara County

- De-licious wine that transcends perceptions about Bordeaux Blends from Santa Barbara
- Showcases Ryan Deovlet’s amazing craftsmanship and versatility as a winemaker
 - Very small production

The Producer

Ryan Deovlet is one of the most exciting new winemakers in the Central Coast. With each of his small-production Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays, Deovlet strives to give identity to the vineyard, a nod to the old world and a kiss of fruit. Like new producers in Burgundy, Deovlet partners with vineyards as if he were the estate owner, controlling the whole process from vine to bottle with passion, artistry, and intuition.

His inspiration to make wine came unexpectedly in 2004 during a college vacation in Hawaii, when he tasted fresh coffee from a local coffee plantation. Having grown up with a green thumb, he was struck with the desire to create a product from the land. He quickly decided to pursue wine and embarked on a 4-year exploration to learn everything he could about making it.

Deovlet sought to learn first hand from great winemakers and viticulturists, gaining apprenticeships with Stephen Dooley of Stephen Ross Wine Cellars, David Ramey at Red Car Wine Company, and Paul Hobbs of Viña Cobos in Mendoza, Argentina. Through this work he developed a vision for managing vine balance—versus vineyard yields—to achieve optimal phenolic ripeness. He also gained conviction about being impeccable in the cellar, doing things by hand, and not being dogmatic about vinification. Thorough in every detail, Deovlet next studied his customer, taking the certified sommelier exam.

Deovlet returned to California in 2008 with the aspiration to start his own label. While developing estate projects for Santa Barbara clients (including Refugio Ranch, where he is now winemaker), he landed a vineyard parcel of his own at La Encantada from Sta. Rita Hills winemaking legend, Richard Sanford. He quickly showed himself to be a true partner of the vineyard by working together on farming techniques and producing outstanding wines that give the vineyard identity. That auspicious beginning led Deovlet to develop enduring partnerships with other prime vineyards in the Central Coast.

Today Deovlet produces Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from great vineyards in the Central Coast including La Encantada, Sanford & Benedict, Solomon Hills. Each wine is produced in very small quantities (200 cases or less). His second vintage, 2009, earned more than 90 points from Parker.

The Wine

When Deovlet set out to create a Right Bank Blend, his vision was to complement Merlot’s supple and roundness with a great backbone of supporting varietals. He chose a vineyard in Happy Canyon, Santa Barbara’s warmest region where grapes get more of the extended hang they need. The Merlot is planted in rich alluvial soils are similar to those of the Right Bank, while the Cab is perched high on the hill in serpentine soils that enhance structure. Deovlet started infusing the Merlot with structure by cofermenting with Petit Verdot. But the more interesting challenge was with the Cabernet Sauvignon—which can be either too tannic or too opulent even in Happy Canyon. Deovlet harvested just before tannins were fully resolved to keep brix in check. To soften the tannins, he used an aeration technique during pump overs that he learned from Paul Hobbs, and then he racked the wines four times, an approach that his mentor Philip Togni used in Margaux. After blending, the wine was left for 6 additional months to homogenize before being bottled. Sonny Boy is a term of endearment Deovlet’s grandfather used to call him.

DEOVLET WINES

Region: Central Coast

Appellation: Santa Barbara (became Happy Canyon AVA in 2012)

Vineyard: Grassini Family Vineyards;

Siting: Merlot is grown at ~ 600’ in alluvial, loamy soils, while the Cabernet is planted in serpentine soils at 1200’

Varietals: Merlot 68%, Cabernet Sauvignon 21%, Petit Verdot 11%

Production: ~100 cases

Cuaison: Merlot and PV (conferment) 18 days; Cab 30 days

Aging: 1 year separately, 6 months blended; 225L French oak, 33% new

Tasting note: A beautifully complex nose of black currants, fresh black plums, and dried dark cherry and dried blueberry. Underneath the lovely lift of fruit are notes of cedar, pencil lead, earth, dried oregano, and fennel. A medium to full body frame with great structure supplying hints of dark chocolate and freshly ground coffee beans throughout.