

Porter Creek, Pinot Noir “Fiona Hill”

- The flagship Pinot Noir of this pioneering Russian River producer
 - Balanced and elegant in Alex Davis’s signature style
 - Biodynamically farmed; very small production

The Producer

With a focus on organic, hillside-grown, vineyard-designated wines primarily from its Russian River estate, Porter Creek produces some of the most balanced, elegant, and refined wines in America. Since the first vintage in 1982, the small family-owned winery has gone beyond its flagship Pinot Noir to produce Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Carignane, Syrah and other varieties that have attracted cult-like followings among experts and consumers alike. Porter Creek’s small production and consistent high quality keep the wines high in demand, and many sell out just months after release.

Located in the most prestigious part of the Russian River appellation, Porter Creek was established by George Davis in 1979—before Russian River Valley was an appellation. The estate features 20 acres planted—all hillside vineyards (averaging 20 degree grade), reminiscent of grand cru vineyards in the Côte d’Or, Burgundy.

Following the European vigneron model, George Davis groomed his eldest son, Alex, to become proprietor and winemaker. Before taking the helm in 1997, Alex learned how to operate every aspect of the winery—from welding tractors, to running the books; he also studied enology and viticulture at Fresno State and Dijon, and trained in Dijon (with Christophe Roumier and Bernard Michelot), and in the Rhône Valley (Marcel Guigal).

With his years of apprenticeship, Alex developed a strong vision for balanced, vineyard-driven wines—a vision that he has successfully realized vintage after vintage, through rare dedication, passion and attention to detail. While trends favored riper, more fruit-driven wine, Alex stayed true to his vision, even converting the estate to organic and then biodynamic farming at considerable expense, to coax the best from the soils.

During harvest, sorting is done in the vineyard to minimize handling. While common in Burgundy but less so in California, Alex uses whole cluster press on whites and about 1/3 on Pinot Noirs, rendering more flavor in wine.

Fermentation is natural: native yeasts are rarely supplemented; ideal temperatures are attained through harvesting at night when grapes are cold and warming tanks with blankets.

Winemaking is gravitationally oriented. Alex achieves a fine tannin structure through extended aging in limited use of new oak. Wines age in bottle for 3-6 months prior to release.

The Wine

Iconic for its history and squarely in the forefront of today’s trend toward natural wine, Porter Creek Fiona Hill appeals to wine lovers across generations. Fiona Hill is a meticulously planted, steep hillside vineyard with an ideal southern face, situated in Porter Creek’s estate in the birthplace of Russian River Pinot. Hard clay topsoil with a fractured stone bedrock places continual stress on these Pinot vines, resulting in a very expressive, unique vineyard designated wine. Biodynamic farming, timely harvesting and winemaking with native yeasts allow the finesse, nuance and prettiness of vineyard and varietal to shine through. This small production gem always sells out.



Region: Russian River Valley

Appellation: Russian River Valley

Vineyards: Fiona Hill

Altitude: 100-300 feet

Soil: Clay and Bedrock (reminiscent of schist, shale, granite)

Varietal Blend: 100% Pinot Noir

Vine age: 16 years old

Planting system: Double arc cane pruned

Vine density: 8’x5’

Farming: Biodynamic

Yield: 2 tons/acre

Harvest: Late September

Vinification: 3-4 day cold soak in naturally temperature controlled tanks. Open top bin fermentation with native yeasts.

Aging: 18 months aging in 228 liter French oak (25% new)

Production: 420 cases

Tasting Notes: The nose has aromas of wild berries and forest