

Paso Robles Garagiste Festival 2014: The Best of the Rest

Our earlier review focused on the best two pinot noirs we found at Garagiste: [Vinemark Cellars](#) 2012 Paso Robles pinot noir (\$29) and [Vino Vargas](#) 2012 Rio Ruso Russian River Valley pinot noir (\$45).

Today we want to cover the other fine pinots we tasted at the **Paso Robles Garagiste Festival 2014: the best of the rest**. In roughly the order we tasted their wines, the wineries are:

1. Tlo Wines (Paso Robles)
2. Lazarre Wines (Paso Robles)
3. Felten Cellars (Paso Robles)
4. Cutruzzola Wines (Cambria)

Cutruzzola is a name you've read here before. We discovered them at **last year's Garagiste festival**. They were one of our two newcomers of the year for 2013. (The other, Baker & Brain, was not at the 2014 Garagiste Festival.)

Tlo



Andy Zaninovich

Tlo Wines is a long-time dream of **owner and co-winemaker Andy Zaninovich**. The other **co-winemaker is his son Adam**. Keeping things in the family, **newlywed daughter Avery Z. Jones handles marketing**. (As an aside, she gets extra credit for cleverly shortening her last name.) Her husband Bryce helps out in the winery. **Avery and Bryce usually handle events, sharing the pouring and other duties**. But the two were absent from the Garagiste Festival because **they were on their honeymoon**. (Excuses, excuses.) Andy is married to **Kathleen who holds the crew together**. **Lili** takes care of mice. Their first vintage was **2010**. They've grown to **500 cases per year**.



Adam, Kathleen, Lili, Avery, and Bryce

The Tlo 2013 Spanish Springs, Edna Valley pinot noir (\$25) opens with aromas of Bing cherries followed by red raspberry and cranberry on the palate with a bit of earth. A long spicy finish rounds out a respectable pinot. Andy pointed out that the Spanish Springs vineyard is the closest vineyard to the coast in California. It gets that fog every night.



Adam and Andy with Nicole Burns

LaZarre

Adam and his wife Angie are completely committed to providing the very best possible wines at any price and will continue to do so until he departs this earth. After all, wine is a gift from God and should be enjoyed responsibly or at least naked....

LaZarre Wines is a joint venture of Adam and Angie LaZarre, both of whom were nice enough to pour us a taste and chat for a few minutes. These two folks are as enthusiastic about wine as anyone we've met. This from their website →

There doesn't seem to be much else to say about the winery, so let's get to the pinots.

The LaZarre 2011 Central Coast pinot noir (\$32, 120 cases produced) is competent, featuring aromas of cherry and earth. The flavor spectrum is dominated by huckleberry with surprising candy notes. A solid entry in the pinot noir category.

Adam poured us a **barrel sample of their 2012 vintage**. Right now this wine is **crunchy with tannins and oak, but the structure seems very nice**. Look for it in a year or so. **My guess is that it will develop nicely**.



Adam and Angie LaZarre

LaZarre produces under 1,000 cases per year. This year 600 of those cases were pinot noir. **Let's encourage them to make more!**

Felten



Mary-Elle Felten

Felten Cellars is another true Garagiste winery with annual production of 500 cases. As far as I can tell, the winery's first vintage was 2011. Felten is the brain child of Stephen A. Felten who started making wine when his then-fiancée Mary-Elle gave him a home winemaking kit. He has made wine for Norman Vineyards, EOS Estate Winery, and Rutherford Hill Winery in Napa Valley.



Stev and Mary-Elle Felten

Felten's 2011 San Luis Obispo County pinot noir (\$21, BARGAIN) is a competent pinot noir. Unusually for vineyards this far north, the wine has the characteristic that we call "desert" (see Santa Rita Hills). Featuring fruit and spice, the undertone of dust is unmistakable.

Cutruzzola

Cutruzzola's Lisa Miller was pouring their 2012 Gloria pinot noir (\$40). Named after co-owner Frank Cutruzzola's mother, the website's tasting notes match ours:

Ripe black cherries, red plum, tobacco and cedar on the nose graduate to an powerful palate of cherry and spice, lifted by bright acidity. Silky tannins are beautifully balanced by the fruit and spice, and are only revealed on the precociously long finish.

Lisa had **some exciting news** for us. There were enough exceptional grapes in 2013 to let them produce **their first reserve wine**. Named, naturally, Giacomino (after Frank's father), this gives us something to watch for in the coming months. This wine will only be available in their Cambria tasting room, scheduled to open in January.

Conclusion

This has been an excellent year for pinot noir newcomers. They have been helped by the excellent growing conditions in 2012. The real challenge will be for them to maintain the quality when the grapes aren't quite this good (or plentiful).