

2024 SLS PINOT NOIR / *Michaud Vineyard* / CHALONE

TERROIR

Michael Michaud planted his vineyard in 1995, after spending many years as head winemaker for Chalone Vineyard. The vineyard sits at 1,550 ft in the northwest corner of the appellation, located at the foot of Pinnacles National Park in the Gabilan Mountains, immediately east of the Salinas Valley. Chalone AVA is characterized by an arid, high desert climate, where hot days are followed by cold and generally clear nights. Decomposed granite soil is the norm here, though pockets of limestone are also found. Wines from Michaud lend themselves to elegant structure and distinctive earthiness.

When I started experimenting with Chalone pinot noir in 2021, I didn't believe it was possible to make such compelling "cool-climate" wine from these grapes, due to the high desert climate. While it's certainly fringe in that sense, it also makes some of the prettiest, earthiest, and most distinctive pinot I've come across. The '24 *Michaud Pinot* is truly the balance of opposites and a must-try for any pinot lover.

TASTING

Medium red. Sour cherry, white sage, and scorched earth are supported by subtle notes of pepper and toasted coconut. A medium light body is framed by fresh acid and tightly wound, chalky tannins.

TECH

Alcohol 12.8%

pH 3.59

50% whole cluster fermentation

Native fermentation started by a pied de cuve from the vineyard

11 months élevage in 33% new and 67% neutral French oak barrels

2 barrels • 50 cases produced

Unfined & unfiltered

PRESS

95 WE

97 JD

2024 VINTAGE

The Central Coast of California had another good water year. Though it didn't get as cold and wet as quickly as in 2023, we eventually got what we needed. And after soils being rinsed and replenished, our earliest sites came out of dormancy the second week of March. The last rain event of the growing season was early May, followed by the typical "May Gray" and "June Gloom" for which the Central Coast is known. With temperatures hovering in the average range through the end of spring, flowering commenced mid-May and finished mid-June. Along with beautiful weather early June came healthy fruit sets, followed by the increasingly common warm weather starting around the 4th of July. Temperatures were consistently a bit above average in July and August, followed by heat waves at both the beginning and end of September, and the last one in early October. The *SLS* harvest started on August 27th with chardonnay from Coastview Vineyard in the Gabilan Mountains, and ended on October 10th with syrah from Lester Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Consistent with the warm weather and timely picking decisions, the '24 reds are characterized by rich fruit and spice intensity, backed by elegant structure, moderate alcohols, and fresh acidity. The whites are fairly lean, very fresh, and quite fruit-driven. Perhaps a bit less ethereal than 2023, and a bit more elegant than 2022- a classically Californian vintage.

SAMUEL LOUIS SMITH

SLS is a micro-négociant based in Santa Cruz, CA, focused on some of the coolest sites of the Central Coast. Mountainous terroir, organic viticulture, and minimal intervention in the cellar are tenets of the brand. *SLS* presents a compelling cross-section of the Central Coast, focusing on chardonnay, gamay noir, pinot noir, and cool-climate

syrah from Santa Barbara, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties. The brand embodies a neoclassical style where lower alcohol and higher acidity, stem inclusion in the reds, and native fermentations with little to no additions create wines of place and purity, aroma and structure. Over the course of his career, Sam has worked in Santa Barbara (Brander, Tres Hermanas, Margerum), Australia (Mitchelton), the Willamette Valley (Tendril), the Northern Rhône (Villard), and Champagne (Nowack & Sélèque). Until recently, he was head winemaker of Morgan Winery, a pioneer of organic viticulture in the Santa Lucia Highlands. *SLS* produces about 1,600 cases annually.