



2016 Folk Machine Pinot Noir 'Batten Down The Hatches'

Hobo Wine Company, Potter Valley, USA

Product details

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| Vintage: | 2016 | Drinking: | |
| Producer: | Hobo Wine Company | Alcohol: | |
| Region: | Potter Valley | Variety: | Pinot noir |
| Country: | USA | | |

About the producer

Let's be clear from the start - this is a wine company called Hobo, not a company making hobo wine (in case you're interested: Welch's purple grape juice + white sugar + bread yeast - but we suspect our customers are not in the market for that!). The name refers to Kenny Likitprakong, who started his company in 2002 as an itinerant winemaker, a natural progression from his time travelling America and beyond, listening to Guthrie, Dylan and Springsteen sing about life on the road. Like the hero of the Woodie Guthrie song, he didn't got no home, he was just a-roamin' 'round; just a wandrin' worker, he went from town to town.

Likitprakong started the company at the age of 27 and, with his beanie hats and skateboards, and his hip designer labels, is the new face of Californian winemaking - but the best version of that new generation. He's agile and imaginative, backing innovation up with a deep understanding of grapes and terroir. He has been incredibly specific and dedicated in his approaches to established estates to acquire grapes - in the early days he pestered one grower for over a year to let him have some of the Zinfandel grapes from his ranch on a high-elevation ridge near Lake Sonoma, and eventually spent several nights camping there with his family. Seeing such dedication, the grower let him have an acre of the vineyard to farm as he saw fit.

For the first decade, Likitprakong vinified grapes at various estates around California such as Hallcrest Vineyards in the Santa Cruz mountains. But in 2013, the Hobo stopped riding the rails and set up a permanent bunkhouse for the fermentation tanks, eggs and barrels in Santa Rosa. Settling down in a permanent, full-production winery has not changed The Hobo Wine Company's philosophy, which Likitprakong describes as "the possibility for wine to create community, to be history, to tell a story, and to transcend time and place is what enchants, captivates, and inspires us."

To achieve such ethereal qualities, he believes, takes craftspeople with an artisan approach both to growing grapes and making wines. For his part, he hand-picks, uses wild yeasts for fermentation and a minimalist approach in the winery. The aim is well-balanced wines with geographical and varietal individuality, as well as unbelievably good value for money (not hobo-affordable, but - given the quality - remarkable, nonetheless).

There are different collections within the Hobo range. Camp wines - Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay - showcase the quality and value of lesser known Sonoma County vineyards. The Chardonnay is testament to Likitprakong's precision picking. The majority of the grapes come from the Lloyd vineyard in Alexander Valley, but the harvest is in three parts, with an early pick to gain acidity and a late one to add lush, tropical flavours to this approachable, food-ready white wine. The Cabernet Sauvignon comes from a raft of organic, biodynamic and

sustainable vineyards and has classic dark fruits and soft tannins coming across as chocolate and tobacco. The Camp Zinfandel comes from Ceja Vineyard and is notably bright and fresh in comparison to the high-fruit, high-alcohol norm of Californian Zinfandel.

Folk Machine was a line started as a home for Pinot Noir, exploring the different characteristics of terroir such as the Central Coast or Potter Valley, as well as specific vineyards such as Antle in Chalone. A silky, subtle and vivacious wine, it lacks nothing in body or flavour, despite its light colour and, at this price, is a wine that will work through a week of dining (it rarely fails to pair) or simply quaffing. Also in the Folk Machine collective is an annual red blend called Parts & Labor. This is usually a Carignane, Syrah, Grenache and Barbera blend, rich with autumnal fruit but with agile spices and pepper.

Kenny Likitprakong has another, low-key project outside The Hobo Wine Company - Ghostwriter Wines - which is his return to his early days working in the Santa Cruz Mountains, where he felt he'd previously not produced a wine to show off an underappreciated appellation. With a charming combination of knowledge and self-effacement, he believes his role as winemaker is like that of a ghostwriter, telling the story of growers such as the Woodruff family. The Ghostwriter Pinot Noir Woodruff Vineyard is exuberantly perfumed and compelling. Armit Wines has imported it to the UK, along with many of The Hobo Wines releases, since 2012. Woody Guthrie would probably look at California and Kenny Likitprakong, and say, this land is his land.