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Calera— California's DRC?

The story of maverick winemaker Josh Jensen and Calera Wine Company is well-chronicled in the 1994 book written by Marq de Villiers—*The Heartbreak Grape*. After spending time in Burgundy, Josh decided that limestone in vineyard soil was

the key to growing great Pinot Noir. Like the French, he could not explain exactly why limestone makes wine grapes (particularly Pinot Noir and Chardonnay) so outstanding, but he was sold on the notion. The site that became Calera Vineyards has plenty of limestone as well as a nineteenth-century lime kiln, which gave the winery its name (Calera means lime kiln in Spanish). The winery is situated at 2,200 feet on Mt Harlen, some distance from the nearest town of Hollister, California. Located on the San Andreas Fault, it was probably the unstable geological conditions that thrust up the limestone from ancient sea-floor sediment.

Many people thought the eccentric Josh Jensen a madman. He began without a winemaker, managed to carve 24 acres of plantable land out of scrub brush, and was significantly underfunded, living the first several years with his family in a 10 by 60-foot mobile home set at the end of the paved road to the winery. His persistence overcame all obstacles, however, and he produced intense, mouthfilling Pinots that have received much notoriety. The 1985 Calera Jensen Vineyard is a legendary wine, probably one of the top two or three Pinot Noirs ever made in California.

Calera produces five Pinot Noirs, one from each of its four small estate vineyards— Jensen, Selleck, Reed, and Mills— and one from purchased grapes. Robert Parker recently pronounced Calera as “One of the most compelling Pinot specialists of not only the New World, but of planet earth.” The 1999s have just been released and Parker said about the **1999 Jensen Vineyard Pinot Noir**, “95 points, a spectacular young pinot— one of the greatest New World Pinots I have ever tasted— phenomenal bouquet..dense, full-bodied, explosive on the palate, extraordinary concentrated, yet elegant and gracious.” The other single vineyard releases are also quite good and maybe the 1999s are the best Pinot Noirs ever produced at Calera Wine Company.

Retail distribution is limited. Try www.calerawine.com.



**If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

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The Pinot Noir 2004 conference will be held Jan 28-31, 2004 in Wellington, New Zealand. The conference is modeled after the International Pinot Noir Celebration held in Oregon annually. Nearly 100 New Zealand wine producers will participate. For a list of speakers and registration go to www.pinotnoir2000.co.nz

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Pinot and Peanuts— Prince's Diet

You may lose more weight on the Atkins Diet, but you will be a lot healthier consuming a diet high in Pinot Noir and peanuts. This is because red wine and peanuts are virtually the only source of resveratrol in the human diet. Resveratrol is a naturally-occurring anti-fungal agent found in small amounts in peanuts, and in higher amounts in the skins of red grapes. This compound has been the subject of intensive study in recent years and has been shown to minimize the risk of atherosclerosis and heart disease by increasing good cholesterol and inhibiting blood clotting. In addition, it is both cancer-protective and cancer-fighting, and resveratrol protects individuals from degenerative neurologic diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's by stimulating diseased nerves to regenerate.

Oregon grapes have higher amounts of resveratrol because of the cool weather. Pinot Noir has twice the amount as Cabernet or Merlot (8 versus 13 micromoles/liter). The 1997 Benton Lane Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley has tested the highest level of resveratrol to date— 40.9 micromoles/liter. You might be familiar with Benton Lane because of its distinctive postage stamp label and its owner Steve Girard who started the Girard label in Napa in the 80's. A Pinot lover, Steve left Napa and bought a 1860 acre sheep farm between Eugene and Corvallis and planted Pinot Noir in 1989. Today he has 126 acres of Pinot Noir and makes 20,000 cases per year.

Oregon Notes

Well-known vineyard owner and winemaker Gary Andrus and wife Christine have started a new winery in Hillsborough, Oregon, Gypsy Dancer Estates. The 40 acre Pinot Noir vineyard will supply the estate fruit for the wines. A 2002 "Preview" Pinot Noir will be released at \$34. A full lineup of wines from the estate vineyard will be available in 2004. Gary also owns vineyards in Canada and New Zealand.

Bergstrom Winery will release the 2002 vintage this December. This relatively new winery has received much acclaim. The 2001 Arcus Vineyard Pinot Noir was the "best " Oregon Pinot Noir reviewed by *Wine Spectator*.

2002 Bergstrom Arcus Vineyard Pinot Noir \$85

2002 Bergstrom Bergstrom Vineyard Pinot Noir 225 cases \$60 Inaugural release. A massive Pinot.

2002 Bergstrom Cumberland Reserve Pinot Noir 520 cases \$32 From the Hyland Vineyard. A winner.

This past weekend was the annual Wine Country Thanksgiving Event in Oregon. 78 Yamhill County wineries and tasting rooms were open November 28-30. This is a great time to visit Oregon wine country as the event kicks off the holiday season, and many of the wineries are only open to the public at this time. The annual event is Oregon's largest and oldest wine weekend. www.yamhillwine.com.

Make Your Own Pinot Noir

Bridgeview Vineyards, Oregon's largest producer of premium varietal wines, now has the capability to ship bulk wine to out-of-state wineries and/or home winemakers. These 275 gallon, reusable tanks are a safe and convenient way to transport wine via common carrier in refrigerated trailers. When full, the tanks weight 2800 lbs and take up the floor space of one pallet. The cost of the reusable tanks is \$275 and Bridgeview will buy the empty tanks back from you.

2001 and 2002 Oregon Pinot Noir sells for \$15.00 gal.. Directions for making great Pinot Noir not included. 877-273-4843, bvw@bridgeviewwine.com.

Wine Books

Death By the Glass is a new novel by San Francisco writer Nadia Gordon. A very enjoyable read for wine lovers about a Napa bistro chef drawn into the death of the owner of a posh restaurant in Yountville. The plot includes tainted mushrooms and a torrid love affair. \$9.50



A Short History of Wine by Rod Phillips. An informative history of wine for the general reader, but also includes some technical challenges. The author points out that the growing of grapes and the making of wine is still largely what we inherited from our forbearers. Politics, world-wide conflicts and wine markets, and unsettled questions such as which variety and which canopy are among the many subjects treated. \$15.95 paperback.

Wine Stores

For those of you who live in Southern California, we are blessed with a plethora of excellent wine retail stores. In Orange County the triad of Wine Club, Wine Exchange, and Hi-Time have been a source of great Pinot for years. Now there are three newcomers who deserve attention. Some frank comments about the older stores and some new impressions about the newer stores may be helpful to Pinot shoppers.

Wine Exchange 2368 N. Orange Mall, Orange, CA 92865 1-800-76-WINEX www.winex.com

The store carries an extensive variety of California, Oregon, and New Zealand Pinot Noirs with very competitive pricing. The Burgundy selection is much more limited and the owner's heart doesn't seem interesting in stocking too many Burgs, probably because they do not sell as well as other varieties these days. The store's free monthly wine newsletter is written by Steve Zinardi, the owner, who is both knowledgeable about wine and very adept at wine writing. Terrific wine prose. But, I have been buying wine at this store for over 15 years and the owners have yet to acknowledge me when I walk in. The rest of the staff is similarly frigid. Regular wine tastings in an adjacent room, but rarely are Pinot Noirs featured.

Wine Club 2110 E McFadden, Santa Ana, CA 714-835-6485 www.wineclub.com

A huge wine retailer with an impressive stock of Burgundy. Ask for Greg Koslovsky to help you find a great Burgundy. The California and Oregon Pinot Noir selections are mainstream choices with few boutique offerings. There are also stores in Santa Clara and San Francisco. The monthly newsletter is primarily a listing of wines offered with advertising. Occasional wine tastings. A no-frills warehouse store.

Hi-Time Wine Cellars 250 Ogle St, Costa Mesa, CA 92627 1-800-331-3005 www.hitimewine.com

Pinot buyer here knows his stuff.. Huge selection of great offerings with many small producers and hard to find Pinot Noirs. Many older vintages of Burgundy available. Staff can be helpful when you can find them. Monthly newsletter is a listing of wines available with some informative wine descriptions. Wine bar and regular wine tastings. The store needs updating, but they have the goodies.

Wineroom.com 16 Tech West, Ste 163, Irvine 866-585-wine (9463). Both a website and retail store. Open daily. Stocks smaller wineries and over 20 Pinot Noirs. Owners Mark TeVault and Jason Carter. Wine storage

Fermented Grape 31 E MacArthur Crescent, (behind Doubletree Hotel) Costa Mesa 714-436-0836 Anti-warehouse French boutique style retail store. Many boutique Pinots (ie 200 cases) are stocked. Gifts, accessories, baskets. Competitive pricing. Open Mon-Sat. Very friendly and welcoming.

Great Legs Wine 2701 W Coast Hwy South Newport Beach 949-515-8466 A retail wine store and comfortable tasting bar. Speciality is niche market Pinot Noirs from the Central Coast. Open daily. Friendly.



Pictured above is the old lime kiln at Calera Winery

I am often wondering how many grapes it takes to make a bottle of wine. The numbers below are only averages and will differ depending on the varietal, the climate, and the yields.

3 clusters or 2.4 lbs of grapes=one bottle Pinot

1 vine=10 lbs grapes=4 bottles of Pinot

One acre=5 tons of grapes=13.5 barrels=797 gallons=3985 bottles=15,940 glasses of Pinot


Princeofpinot.com

More New 2003 Last Gasp Releases

I can't figure out why wineries bring out new releases in early December when most winos are decorating their homes for Christmas and thinking about what to buy their family to put under the tree. Unlike in October when wine guys can tell their wives that they are receiving their annual winter shipment of wine they ordered six months ago, it is hard to justify spending \$350 for a half case of a new release when Johnny needs a new bicycle for Christmas. But wineries, like everyone else, need some cash for Christmas presents. Today I received two notices of new releases worthy of passing on:

Londer Vineyards 2001 Parabol Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Parabol is the name reserved for the winery's rare and most classic Pinot Noir. "Para" is an art classification of a deep, cherry-red color. "Boll" translates as "great." or of excellent quality in Boontling, a jargon spoken extensively in the late 1880's in the upper Anderson Valley. The grapes are sourced from the Ferrington Vineyard near Boonville and the Valley Foothills Vineyard. 110 cases \$42. Also **Londer Vineyards 2001 Van der Kamp Pinot Noir** \$35 and **Londer Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** \$28. www.LonderVineyards.com.

Siduri Wines 2002 Clos Pepe Vineyard Pinot Noir (a WS 93 and RP 92) \$50 67 cases, **Siduri Wines 2002 Cargasacchi Vineyard Pinot Noir** (a WS 92 and RP 94) 121 cases \$45, and **Siduri Wines 2002 Central Coast Pinot Noir**, a blend of Clos Pepe, Gary's and Cargasacchi Vineyard's declassified juice \$25. The Santa Rita Hills Appellation is a special region for Pinot Noir and current releases from this area are among the most exciting Pinots on the entire West Coast. Other Siduri 2002 releases from Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Santa Lucia Highlands, Gary's Vineyard, and Keefer Ranch are still available. 707-578-3882.