

PinotFile[©]

World of Pinot Noir

I just returned from the two day conference, World of Pinot Noir, held at the Cliffs Resort in Shell Beach, California. If you ever wanted to rub shoulders with 300 people that are passionate about Pinot including winery owners, winemakers, collectors, and sommeliers, then plan on attending next year's conference. If you do, be sure and get your palate in shape. On Friday, via seminars, walk-around-tastings, and meals, you could have tasted over 100 different Pinot Noirs from California, Oregon, Australia, Germany, and Burgundy. Then if you were in peak condition, you could have done it again on Saturday. My impressions of the event follow.

The wineries whose Pinot Noirs left an impression on me included: Santa Rita Hills— Sea Smoke, Rosack, Fiddlehead, Melville, Sanford, Loring Wine Company, Clos Pepe, and Bonaccorsi; Santa Maria Valley— Flying Goat, Dierberg, Hitching Post; Edna Valley— Domaine Alfred; Arroyo Grande— Talley; Russian River Valley— DuMol, Dutton-Goldfield, Freeman; Anderson Valley— Patz & Hall (Aldersprings), Goldeneye, Roessler Cellars; Santa Lucia Highlands— Morgan; Carneros— Etude (Heirloom), Ancien; Chalona— Michaud; Oregon— Shea Wine Cellars, Brickhouse.

Everyone talks about picking fruit at perfect balance as the optimum way to reflect the terroir, but unfortunately many winemakers are looking for flavor impact and pick riper and riper grapes at high brix levels. The resulting "Ultraformian" wines, as Ted Lemon refers to them, are high in fruit and alcohol, but are not truly balanced in the cuisine driven sense. They all taste the same, and do not truly reflect the terroir. Jammy, overripe Pinot Noirs taste the same regardless of where they are from.

In Europe there is recently a trend away from the New World style of Pinot Noir and more emphasis on the old school style with lower alcohol. Still, there is a generation shift in Burgundy with younger winemakers with modern training making Burgundy in a more "international style." The downside to this trend is that the wines taste too much the same. Diversity is the real appeal of Pinot Noir.

There is no current "Holy Grail" for Pinot Noir in California. Many quality growing areas have been identified, but the vines in most vineyards are still young. Older vines show their terroir better, and it will take several generations to determine the "Grand Crus" of California.

The way Pinot Noir is judged has nothing to do with the way it is consumed.

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Pinot Noir is probably indigenous to Burgundy. It was then dispersed from Burgundy to other European sites beginning sometime in the 15th century. It is now grown in nearly every wine-producing country in Europe, and is cultivated on every continent except Antarctica.

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Oscars

Last week at the Oscars there was a Prince sighting, but it was not The Prince (of Pinot), but the entertainer who calls himself either Prince or a symbol. Like any great film or performance that wins an Oscar, stellar Pinots are deserving of recognition. This year I bring you the 2003 inaugural “Prince” awards. I am the sole judge and the results reflect my experiences in 2003.

Best American Pinot Noir

Nominees: 2000 Littorai Theirot Vnyd, 2001 Melville Carries, 2001 Brewer-Clifton Melville, 2001 Patz & Hall Alder Springs, and 2001 Etude Heirloom. The winner: 2000 Littorai Theirot Vnyd.

Best American Pinot Noir Winery

Nominees: Sanford, Talley, Rochioli, Littorai, Morgan, The winner: Littorai

Best American \$20 Pinot Noir

Nominees: 2001,2002 Melville Estate. The winner: Melville Estate (very small category).

Most Expensive American Pinot Noir

Primary market: Paul Hobbs Cuvee Augustina (\$125). Secondary market: Marcassin (How much you got?).

Coollest Name for American Pinot Noir

The winner: Tie, Shea Wine Cellars “Homer”, Patricia Green “Notorious”, and Sine Qua Non “a’Capella”.

Best American Pinot Noir label

The winner: Sine Qua Non 2000 a’Capella Shea Vineyard.

Best Pinot Noir Winery with No Advertising, No Tours, No Tasting, No wholesale, No Worries

The winner: Kistler (Rochioli second because they do have a “tasting room” although Pinot is rarely poured).

Cult American Pinot Noir That You Can’t Buy

Nominees: Marcassin, Brewer-Clifton, Sine Qua Non, Peter Michael Pisoni Vnyd. The winner: Marcassin (if you must have try secondary auction market, top restaurants).

Most Prolific Pinot Noir Winemaker

The winner: Siduri.

Best American Pinot Noir Wineries to Visit

The nominees: Gary Farrell, Domaine Serene, Carlton Winemaker’s Studio, Lynmar. The winner: Carlton Winemaker’s Studio (especially if Eric Hammacher leads the tour; bring your wall-climbing shoes).

Most Spectacular and Expensive Pinot Noir Winery

The nominees: Domaine Serene (only nominee, nothing else comes close). The winner: Domaine Serene.

Most Out of The Way Pinot Noir Winery (special effort required to visit)

The nominees: Chalone, Calera, Mt Eden, Esterlina, Flowers. The winner: Flowers

Best American Pinot Noir Producers with No Vineyards, No Winery

The nominees: Loring Wine Co, Whitethorn, Bonaccorsi, Hitching Post. The winner: Bonaccorsi

Best American Pinot Noir Winemaker

The winner: Ted Lemon, Littorai



New Book: North American Pinot Noir

I knew it was only a matter of time until someone wrote a definitive text on American Pinot Noir. Author, John Winthrop Haeger is a former columnist for *Wine & Spirits*, who has also written for *Sunset*, *Saveur*, *Los Angeles*, and *Connoisseur*. He is a Professor of Chinese language and Chinese history at the Claremont Colleges.

This is the complete sourcebook on Pinot Noir in North America. It includes extensive historical and viticultural background on Pinot Noir in the New World (ie the oldest current Pinot Noir vineyard still producing in North America is a 1946 block at Chalone). Over seventy prominent Pinot Noir producers in California, Oregon, British Columbia, and New York are profiled. This is a must read for winemakers and PinotFile readers.

Mary Ewing-Mulligan, Master of Wine, and coauthor of *Wine For Dummies* writes, "An impressive work, scholarly and masterful. Haeger's book paints a thorough portrait of Pinot Noir in America today— what's happening, where, and with whom. Wine lovers will gain a broader understanding and appreciation of Pinot Noir wines; aficionados of Pinot Noir will find the book a bible to feed their passion."

The book will be released June 14, 2004. Order it for \$34.95 plus \$3.75 shipping at www.ucpress.edu or toll-free at 1-800-777-4726.

Another Prince Surfaces

Prince Georg zur Lippe is a descendent of a German noble family that has owned the largest privately-held wine estate in Saxony, East Germany for generations. The vineyards are in highly fertile ground which produces high quality Riesling and white and gray burgundies. A Baroque castle is the centerpiece of the estate. Lippe has spent approximately \$8.3 million to reinvigorate the vineyards and restore the castle to its old Baroque glory. A state-of-the-art winery is being constructed in the cellar.

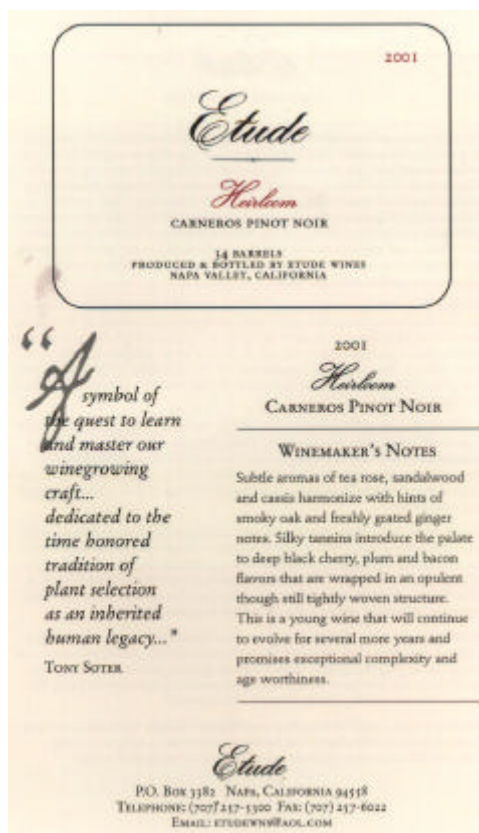
Lippe, 46, is linked by bloodline to many noble families in Europe, including the current Queen of the Netherlands. He has a doctorate in economics as well as a degree in agriculture. Currently 300,000 bottles of wine are produced annually, and sold to high-end retailers and hotels. He also has a retail shop on the estate.

His wines have won notable prizes, including Best Fruhburgunder, a Pinot Noir, in the well-known German wine magazine *Alles Uber Wein* (All About Wine).

Francis Tannahill Winery

Sam Tannahill, formerly winemaker at Archery Summit with Gary Andrus during the years of 95 point scoring Pinots, has teamed with Cheryl Francis, former winemaker at Chehalem, to start the Francis Tannahill Label. The two are marriage as well as business partners. The thrust of their new label is to make Pinots that are very personal and reflect a different sensibility than the "blockbuster" Pinots they made in the past. They feel the industry has gone for too concentrated and extracted Pinots. Sam is trying for the ideal of balanced extraction with high concentration or as he calls it, "power without size." Sam and Cheryl source their fruit from Shea Vineyard (Sam is also the winemaker for Shea Wine Cellars), and Momtazi Vineyard (farmed by Jimi Brooks).

2001 Francis Tannahill "The Hermit" Pinot Noir (\$34) The first release shows copious spices, cherries, and blackberries in the aromatics and flavors. A little Burgundian barnyard adds charm. This wine will benefit from a little cellaring. Rock'em, roll'em all night long, sixty minute wine. [Www.avalonwine.com](http://www.avalonwine.com).



During the past six years, young adults ages 21-27, have added 25% to the core wine consumer group in the United States. The United States per capita wine consumption stopped shrinking six years ago, and has risen to an all time high of 2.68 gallons, while French wine consumption has decreased.

There are 8.5 million hectares of vines in the world producing 25 billion bottles per year.



Princeofpinot.com

Etude Heirloom

Heirloom plants are horticultural treasures that have been handed down from generation to generation for centuries. These fruits, flowers, and vegetables are original varieties or clones that express unique characteristics. Much of the splendid diversity represented in the seed banks of history have become threatened by marketplace standardization and criteria that satisfy commercial requirements.

A rich heritage of plant variation exists in vines, particularly among the many variants of the ancient variety Pinot Noir. Some of the most interesting clonal selections are on the brink of extinction because disease-free, higher-yielding vines are the basic tenets of academic and commercial plant selection.

Tony Soter of Etude Wines has a fascination for wines that reflect a unique body of genetic material. Heirloom Pinot Noir is made from several heirloom selections of Carneros Pinot Noir. Heirloom is an example of the distinctive quality of wine that can be made from these rare vines. All of the fruit used in Heirloom comes from clones that are shy bearing with a marked tendency to produce small, irregularly shaped bunches and very small berries (some even harbor certain grapevine viruses). Growers typically hold vineyards such as these in poor regard due to their inability to produce consistently profitable crops at market prices.

Heirloom is made in small lots using the most traditional techniques, which exclude pumping, fining, or filtration. New French oak barrels are employed for aging each vintage. Only 300-400 cases can be produced annually from these very limited sources. The current release, **2001 Etude Heirloom Carneros Pinot Noir** is one of the most unusual Pinot Noirs you will ever experience. 4.1 in the 40. Email: etudewns@aol.com to join the mailing list.