

**World of
Pinot Noir
Issue**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotaficionados

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World of Pinot Noir: The Proper Care & Feeding of Pinot Geeks

I'm gonna rock
I'm gonna roll
I'm gonna party to five
To save my soul
Gonna move
Got to groove
Gonna shake this body like you don't know
Gonna make this night go fine
Drinkin' wine

Drinkin' Wine, Vernon Green & Medallions

Every March, 800 Pinot geeks descend on the sleepy town of Shell Beach and get ziggy over Pinot Noir. There are instructive seminars given by the winegrower icons of Pinot Noir from all over the world. No continuing education credit is offered, but attendees take these sessions very seriously. Of course the tasting of Pinot Noir is de rigueur at these symposia. Scoring and judging of Pinot Noir is strictly forbidden. This is, after all, a celebration of the endless variations and all that is magical about Pinot Noir.

The event is essentially a triathlon and attendees need to be in their best spitting mode to survive the three day bacchanal. Many devotees gather on Thursday night (see report on the Chapel of Bourgogne to follow) to warm-up their palates. Friday is devoted to seminars, lunch with more Pinot, afternoon walk-around tastings with 129 Pinot Noir producers (pouring their current offerings and often many special library wines) and an evening Gala Dinner & Celebration at which Pinot flows like water. The next day, Saturday, offers a similar menu including a special tasting with a featured Domaine from Burgundy. Saturday wraps up at Au Bon Climat Winery with a Santa Barbara-style Paulee Dinner, where every one brings their special bottles of Pinot to share and large-formats are commonplace.

In the strictest sense a "wine geek" is so enamored with wine that he can bore others to death. But Pinot geeks are more "wine people" in the sense that they are not pretentious. They come together at this event to share their passion, exchange drinking experiences, and fuel their enthusiasm. There are now twelve major festivals in the world exclusively devoted to Pinot Noir (no other varietal has more than one and Cabernet Sauvignon has none). This issue of the PinotFile will feature the highlights of the recent 6th Annual World of Pinot Noir. I sampled nearly 200 Pinot Noirs and lived to tell about so here I go.

Bien Nacido Vineyard: Santa Maria Valley's Pinot Noir Heritage

A short bus ride brought a group of us out to Bien Nacido Vineyard to listen to a panel of local winegrowers with over 100 years of accumulated winemaking experience discuss the special attributes of this heritage vineyard. Undaunted by the rain that pelted the tent on the property, attendees were captivated as the history of this magnificent vineyard was told by James Ontiveros.



James is currently the Director of Sales and Marketing for Bien Nacido Vineyard, Solomon Hills Vineyard, French Camp Vineyard, the Central Coast Wine Services and the Paso Robles Wine Services. He is a native of the Santa Maria Valley and represents the ninth generation of a family that once owned the land grant on which Bien Nacido Vineyard is located. In 1837, a Spanish land grant was made to Tomas Olivera by Juan Bautista Alvarado, then Gobernador of Alta California. This grant included 9,000 acres which were watered by Tepusquet Creek. Tomas Olivera sold Rancho Tepusquet in 1855 to his son-in-law, Don Juan Pacifico Ontiveros who constructed an adobe on the property in 1857 and moved to the ranch. He raised horses, cattle, sheep, grains and grapes. Over the subsequent years, his heirs divided the property until only fourteen hundred acres remained surrounding the Ontiveros Adobe. The Adobe remains today as one of the few privately-owned adobes in California.



In 1969, the Millers, a fifth generation California farming family, purchased the property. At the time, there were sparse plantings of grapes up and down the California coast. In the early 1970s, the Millers realized that the soils and climate were perfect for growing grapes. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Merlot were planted in 1973. A couple of years earlier, Sanford and Benedict Vineyard had been planted in what is now the Ste. Rita Hills AVA and the two vineyards became the cornerstones of the Santa Barbara County wine industry. The world-class grapes that came from these two vineyards

proved that this was to be a major wine-producing region. Bien Nacido and Sanford & Benedict have become brands, a seal of quality.

The ranch had always been known as Rancho Tepusquet, but the Millers chose the name, “Bien Nacido Vineyards of Rancho Tepusquet” for the vineyard operation. Bien Nacido is Spanish for “been born well.” Today Bien Nacido Vineyards consists of over 900 acres, of which over 300 acres are planted to Chardonnay, over 250 to Pinot Noir, and a number of acres to Pinot Blanc, Syrah and Merlot. Since 1992, there have been numerous experimental plantings of several other varietals and new clones of Pinot Noir. Over forty wineries buy some portion of the grapes harvested here and of these, most feature the vineyard name on their labels. Some notable Pinot Noir wineries include Au Bon Climat, Bernardus, Bonaccorsi, Byron, David Bruce, Foley Estates, Ken Brown, Longoria, Ojai Vineyards, Rusack, Fess Parker, Foxen, Hitching Post, Stephen Ross, Tantara, Testarossa, Wild Horse and Whitcraft. Generally, grapes are sold by the row, not by the ton. Winemakers have single blocks (about 10 acres) or rows in certain blocks and keep these specific plantings over many years. Each block is custom-farmed according to the needs of the winemaker. The net result is that there can be considerable variation in Bien Nacido wines that reflect the winemaker. There are currently 20 blocks in production with 5 new blocks being developed in the hillsides that will complete the available plant able land.

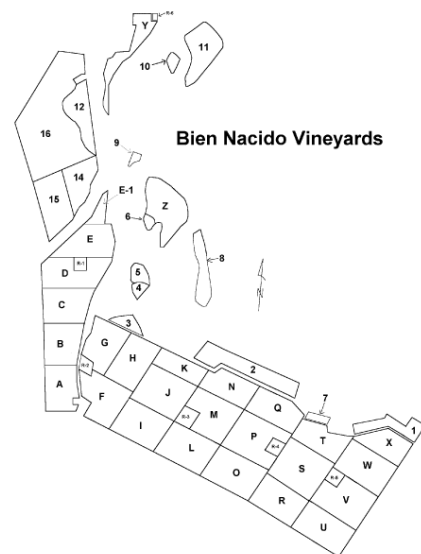
Bien Nacido Vineyards is on an elevated benchland near the town of Santa Maria. Seventeen miles to the west is the Pacific ocean and to the east are the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains. The vineyard enjoys cool evenings and mornings due to the maritime influence and are inland just enough to have warm days tempered by afternoon cool ocean breezes. The combination leads to perfect ripening of cool-climate grapes like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Bien Nacido Vineyards is the largest California planting of certified mother vines from UC Davis. It is one of the major viticultural nurseries in the state for certified, varietal budwood. The vineyard was one of the first to use galvanized steel stakes and guide wires for trellising. Both Au Bon Climat and Qupe Wineries have facilities on the property and a third facility is leased to Jeff Fink and Bill Cates of Tantara Winery.

Bob Miller was a visionary who knew the importance of nurturing the small winemakers. Central Coast Wine Services was built by him in 1989 in Santa Maria to assist boutique wineries. The huge facility (220,000 sq-ft) has become a dormitory for over 25 small wineries who share equipment, storage and lab analysis. A similar facility is now open in Paso Robles.

The panel for “Bien Nacido Vineyard - A Tribute” consisted of Lane Tanner, Lane Tanner Winery, Stephen Dooley, Stephen Ross Wine Cellars, Jeffrey Fink, Tantara Winery, Dick Dore, Foxen Vineyard, and Jim Clendenen, Au Bon Climat. All panel members have worked with original Bien Nacido plantings.

Lane Tanner: Lane has sourced fruit from Bien Nacido since 1990. She is the most “senior” winemaker at Central Coast Wine Services. She picks early (often two weeks before others), uses little new oak, and strives for gentility. **2003 Lane Tanner Winery Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir** (magnum) - N block (Martini clone planted on own rootstock in 1973). An elegant Pinot with bright fruit, a hint of white pepper and silky tannins. **1993 Lane Tanner Winery Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir** (magnum) - a very charming older wine that retains an attractive fruity nose and notable citrus elements. The grapes were picked on August 31, 1993 - the day of the Blue Moon. “The fairies danced and laughed in the canopy, as they drank the dew off of the ripe grapes, their gossamer wings shim-



shimmering under the full blue moon. Perhaps they danced on these grapes... ” What a treat!

Stephen Dooley: He began using Bien Nacido grapes from Block G in 1995 and more recently has incorporated some newer Dijon clone plantings into his Pinot Noir from the vineyard. The Pinot Noirs he crafts from Bien Nacido have a distinctive peppery nuance and are silky, soft and age well. **2004 Stephen Ross Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir** - Block N clone 115 young vines and Block G clone old vines. A bigger style with luscious fruit and spice, generous tannins. **2000 Stephen Ross Bien Nacido Vineyard Pinot Noir** - color fading slightly, subdued nose, fruits tending toward prune.

Jeffrey Fink: He has made Pinot Noir from Bien Nacido since 1992. **2003 Tantara Winery Bien Nacido Adobe Pinot Noir** - plenty of spice, a dusting of black pepper, balanced, very likeable. **2000 Tantara Winery Bien Nacido Old Vines Pinot Noir** - own-rooted Pommard clone 4 planted in 1973. A leaner, rustic wine with notable wood, mineral and leather notes.

Dick Dore: First Bien Nacido vineyard designate was in 1993. **2004 Foxen Vineyard Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 8 Pinot Noir** - Block 8 is 12 acres, planted to 5 clones and farmed exclusively for Foxen. Block 8 is Bien Nacido Vineyard’s highest and steepest block. Generous sweet fruit, very ripe style, noticeable tannins on finish. **2002 Foxen Vineyard Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 8** - This wine shows the effects of aging as the tannins are very soft and well-integrated. The wine is balanced and a pleasure to sip.

Jim Clendenen: Jim started out making wine in a chicken shed on Los Alamos Vineyards with Bob Lindquist. It was when Bob Miller built a 5,000 square foot facility on Bien Nacido grounds for Jim and Bob that their winemaking career took off. Jim is a proponent of high acid wines that go with food. He is adamantly opposed to some of the current styles of Pinot Noir that appeal to novice drinkers, or to critics. “ Nobody can tell me a 15 percent, 4-gram acid wine is food compatible. It’s not. You just take a sip with food and all of a sudden you get this wash of alcohol.” **2003 Au Bon Climat Santa Maria Valley Knox Alexander Pinot Noir** - a terrific understated wine that is elegant and well-composed. **2000 Au Bon Climat Santa Maria Valley Knox Alexander Pinot Noir** - plenty of acid for sure but not particularly appealing without some food.

What is the Bien Nacido flavor profile? The consensus of the panel was flavors of red fruits (cherry, raspberry), spice (cardamon, cinnamon stick, clove, white or black pepper). The tannins are fine and acidity is ideal to pair with food. The older plantings show more red fruits, acidity, and rusticity, while the newer plantings tend to show more herbal components with noticeable tannin and more black fruits.



Boys Night Out

Thursday night before the official start of the World of Pinot Noir, several Pinot geeks and geeks-in-training gathered to eat and drink Pinot together. There were a few ladies joining the festivities early in the evening, but by the time the boisterous choir sang at the Chapel of Bourgogne, there was only one lady left standing.

The as yet untitled group of 16 gathered at Rosa's Restaurante Italiano in Pismo Beach. Everyone brought one or more interesting bottles of Pinot and I list them here, not to brag about what we drank and you didn't, but to show the caliber of wines that Pinot lovers are willing to share. The lineup: **2002 Patz & Hall Burnside Vinyard Sonoma Pinot Noir, 2003 Patz & Hall Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 1993 J. Rochioli West Block RRV Pinot Noir, 1999 J. Rochioli River Block RRV Pinot Noir, 1991 Gary Farrell Allen Vineyard RRV Pinot Noir, 2003 Aubert Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 1999 Seghesio Family Vineyard Keyhole Ranch RRV Pinot Noir, 2001 Littorai Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, 2002 Champion Sarmiento Vineyard SLH Pinot Noir, 2003 White Rose Vineyard Quiotee's Lair Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, 2003 White Rose Vineyard Michelle Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, 2002 McKinley Ladd Hill Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, 1988 Domaine Drouhin-Laroze Chapelle Chambertin, and 1997 Domaine Comte Georges de Vogue Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru.**



The boys returned to the Cliffs Resort (the site of the World of Pinot Noir) and took over the resort's directors meeting room. Order was called at the Chapel of Bourgogne (also named the Burgfest) and some serious Pinot worshipping began. The night's theme was Burgundy. At the time of release, the 1990 vintage was heralded as one of the greatest ever for Burgundy. Yields were high and the summer sunshine insured complete ripeness. "The best since 1959; the best since 1947" were accolades thrown about. Years of experience with this vintage has tempered the acclaim. World-renown authority of Burgundy, Allen Meadows (aka Burghound), feels that 1990 is not a great vintage. He judges a great vintage by the number of masterpieces produced and based on this criterion, 1990 does not rate such high marks. "There is a separation of tannins and aromas as the wines have matured and they will never get better." "Drink up," he recommends, so we did.

1990 Cheillon Nuits-St-Georges “Les Perrieres” - Hi-tone strawberry nose, light-bodied, elegant, rather simple.

1990 Cheillon Nuits-St-Georges “Les Saint Georges” - Red licorice in the nose. Flavors dominated by sherry. Wine is madeirized.

1990 Frederic Esmonin Griottes-Chambertin - Initially a funky, barnyard nose which blows off. Nice fruit compote but not exciting.

1990 Frederic Esmonin Ruchottes-Chambertin - Intense dark fruits are featured but the wine is linear, tannic and flabby.

1990 La Pousse d’Or Volnay 1er Les Caillerets “Clos Des 60 Oeurvees” - An oaky, funky, earthy and fruity Burgundy with plenty of acid. A favorite that has a lot of pleasure to offer.

1990 Louis Jadot Corton Pougets - A classy wine which probably hasn’t hit its peak. Still some alcohol on the nose, a little rustic. Good heart of dark cherries.

1990 Louis Jadot Chambertin Clos de Beze - A lovely Burgundy stink and appealing spice on the nose. A feminine and elegant wine with power.

1978 Domaine Leroy Clos de Vougeot - A real treat. Cherries, tea notes, minerality. Soft and light on its feet.

1985 Faiveley Clos de la Roche - Hint of dirty sock and old book. Maybe a touch of TCA. Very luscious with a silky texture. Some interesting flavors here like fig and smoked bacon.

1990 Louis Remy Clos de la Roche - A very charming mélange of red fruits and oak.

1990 Domaine Leroy Chambolle-Musigny “Les Fremieres” An attractive cherry bomb nose. Generous fruit and plenty of tannins. I could drink the whole bottle.

1990 Domaine Leroy Latricieres-Chambertin - Very similar style to the Leroy Chambolle. Plenty of fruit and wood in the nose and on the palate. Maybe too much wood.

1990 Domaine Comte de Vogue Musigny - Not like other bottles of this wine I have enjoyed. The nose is stewed and licorice-laden. This is a big dude with plenty of anise (think Good & Plenty) and beefiness.

1990 DRC Grands-Echezeaux - A luscious nose of sweet strawberries. The aromatics are the best of the entire lineup. The balance is exquisite. A favorite of the night.

1990 Domaine Dujac Gevrey-Chambertin “Les Combottes” - Folks this is why a Pinot geek searches and searches for that Burgundy epiphany-inducing experience. At this ball, this wine was clearly the debutante. The aromatics were full of cherries, spice and floral accents and just ridiculous. Not only that, the wine kept pumping out the wondrous aromas without degradation. The flavors were outrageous with plenty of baking spice, root beer and cherry cola. I could still taste this wine the next day.





The Wines of Maison Louis Jadot

Saturday morning there was a buzz in the hallways as many Burgundy lovers, fortified by caffeine, filed into a large room to hear Allen Meadows (aka Burghound) and winemaker Jacques Lardière lead a tasting of wines from Maison Louis Jadot. This was quite a spirited event with Allen providing his usual keen insight into the wines and appearing almost steady next to Jacques who was moving his arms in all directions as he passionately discussed his wines and enthusiastically responded to questions from the audience. Jacques has been at Louis Jadot since 1970 and brings an unrivaled depth of experience to any discussion of Burgundy and Louis Jadot wines.

Allen Meadows became seriously interested in Burgundy in 1976. He retired in 2000 after a very successful career in the financial world, planning to write a book on Burgundy. Like many men who retire, he found that he had too much time on his hands and his wife one day told him, "Please find something to do." At the time desktop publishing was thriving and people were willing to use the internet to satisfy their interests. So, instead of writing a book, he started an internet-driven wine quarterly review site called Burghound.com. The goal was to appeal to passionate people who collect Burgundy. It was the first of its kind to offer specialized coverage of a specific wine region. The first issue was released in January, 2001. The site became an instant success and has many subscribers the world over, at least forty countries at last count. Allen knows Burgundy. He spends almost four months a year in Burgundy and visits over 300 domains during that time. 2006 marks his 27th year of visiting the region and its producers. He has become world-renowned as an authority and speaker on Burgundy and is often on the road giving seminars and conducting tastings on Burgundy.

The lineup of wines was unusual in that there were three grand crus from three stellar vintages: Louis Jadot Corton-Pougets, Chappelle-Chambertin and Bonnes-Mares from 1990, 1999 and 2002. I have included pertinent comments by both speakers on the wines. Allen Meadows is a confirmed "terroirist" and believes if you spend any serious time in Burgundy you will be convinced of the notion of terroir. These three grand crus represent distinctly different terroirs and this was the heart of the discussion.

Corton-Pougets Aloxe-Corton is an "Alice in Wonderland" commune in that anything and everything is allowed. It consists of a total of 160 hectares, with both red and white grand crus and has the unusual distinction of having over half its area covered in grand cru vineyards. A total of 19 climates take the Corton grand cru appellation for red wines and five among these take the Corton-Charlemagne grand cru appellation for white wines as well as the Corton grand cru appellation for red wines. There are nine premier crus. Over 99 percent of the premier crus and village wines are red. Total average production is 48,000 cases. Corton is one of those terroirs that has fallen out of fashion over time. Some feel it should be downgraded to premier cru.

Vines have been planted in Aloxe since at least 775, when Charlemagne bequeathed his vines to the Abbey of Saulieu in recompense for the pillage of their monastery at the hands of the Saracens. The commune only added the name of its famous Corton vineyard to its own in 1862, becoming Aloxe-Corton.

The problem with Corton is that it takes a very long time to become sublime - at least 20-25 years. Initially it is robust without elegance or finesse. It has no modern style when young. In keeping with this theme, I found all three vintages rather rustic and unattractive, especially the young 2002.



The aromatics were closed and the deep, luscious berry fruit was hidden by oak and tannins. The 1990 vintage was more approachable and showing more charm but it clearly was not as inviting as the other two grand crus in the tasting. Pougnet typically is a more elegant expression of Corton.

Chapelle-Chambertin This vineyard was originally the property of the Abbey de Beze who constructed a chapel in 1155 at the edge of the vineyard. The chapel was destroyed during the French Revolution, but was rebuilt. The vineyard land was considered so valuable that eventually it was burned to the ground to get an additional .2 acres of vines.

Gevrey-Chambertin is the northernmost of the great communes of the Cote de Nuits. It produces 182,351 cases of wine annually, all of which is red. There are 26 premier crus and 8 grand crus.

Chapelle-Chambertin is the lightest and most feminine of Gevrey's grand crus, characterized by exceptional delicacy rather than by velvety full body. It is not naturally powerful or muscular like, say, Chambertin Clos de Beze. The vines here are very old so over cropping is not an issue. Due to its balance it can age a long time.

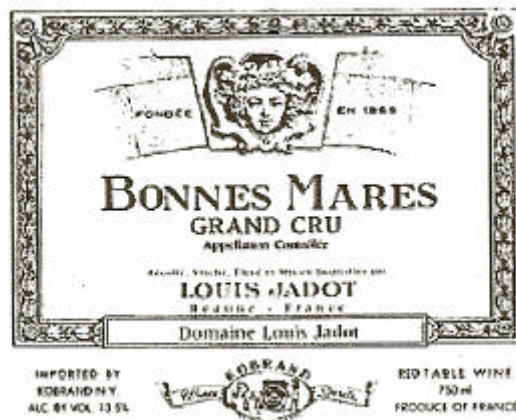
I found the wines, especially the 1999, exhibited a perfumey aroma of flowers and red fruits. The mouth feel was very soft and silky. The 1990 finished with notable tannins and I felt was out of balance compared to the younger vintages. This is a Burgundy for lovers of California Pinot Noir made in an elegant style.



Bonnes-Marres Bonnes-Mares, like Corton, does not give up its genius quickly. You must be prepared to put it in your cellar and forget about it for at least ten years. Twenty-five years won't hurt. The wine features a strong tannic spine which requires years to integrate.

Bonnes-Mares lies in the communes of both Morey-Saint-Denis (10%) and Chambolle-Musigny (90%). The vineyard is 37 acres located at the edge of Chambolle-Musigny. Jadot's Bonnes-Mares is unique in that it is made from grapes from both communes. It is thought to be named for the "Mares" goddesses of the harvest. The vines in Chambolle-Musigny are something of a late comer to viticulture in France, having been planted in vines during the 1200s by the monks of Vougeot. In this vineyard, the calcium content of the soil, which gives the wines of Chambolle-Musigny their great delicacy, is less pronounced, accounting for the robustness of Bonnes-Mares.

The Bonnes-Mares lineup featured wines with tremendous concentration and structure. The red and black fruit is almost teeth-staining. Aromas are captivating. The finishes are long and memorable. The 1999 vintage was the most outstanding. The tannins in the 1990 vintage were still huge.



A few comments were made about the three vintages. 2002 proved, as Allen said, that "God is a Burgundian." The storms near harvest came to the edge of the Maconnais and stopped. North winds subsequently dried the vines, decreased the rot and led to a miracle vintage. 1999 was also a miracle



vintage. It was one of the years where quantity and quality went hand in hand. The weather was hot near harvest producing tiny bunches and berries and excellent phenolic maturity resulted at high yields. The wines from 1999 drank well from the beginning and will drink well their entire life. The 1990 vintage is not a favorite of Allens. He feels it is not a great vintage, showing separation of tannins and aromas with maturity. Burgundies from 1990 need to be drunk now as they will most certainly not get any better.

Interesting commentary was made regarding the time in a Burgundy's life when it shows its terroir. Allen pointed out that terroir visibility is dependent on the producer and the vintage but generally it is difficult and confusing to identify terroir in the first two years. It becomes fairly easy out to 10-15 years. After 15 years, it becomes more difficult as Pinot Noir takes on forest floor nuances. You can still recognize terroir in old wines if you know the "markers" and if the winemaking respects the markers. The aromas fade with time, but the quality of tannins is an important marker. The "skeleton" of the wine still shows.

Finally, both Allen and Jacques agreed that Burgundy tastes better out of magnums. Unfortunately magnums are relatively rare from Burgundy. I broached this subject briefly in the last issue of the *PinotFile* and the desirability of magnum format seems to be a recurring truth.

The session ended with a tasty lunch prepared by José Dahan (Et Voila Restaurant) and Frank Ostini (Hitching Post) and accompanied by two more Jadot wines: 2002 Pommard Clos de la Commaraine and 2002 Beaune Bressandes Blanc. The menu: Grilled shrimp and scallops with rouille "a la Tetou", Roasted duck margret with blackberry gastrique, braised ginger greens and sesame soba noddles, and Pomegranate sorbet with orange cranberry cake and tangerine sauce. All in all it was one heck of way to spend a Saturday morning.



Pinot Noir Tasting By The Sea

On the grounds of the Cliffs Hotel a huge tent is erected to showcase the Pinot Noirs of 129 wineries. The walk-around tasting is held on two separate afternoons to accommodate all of the producers. Light hors d'oeuvres and cheeses from The Cheese Shop in Carmel completed the picture. Walking into



this tent, one of the attendees remarked, is “like being locked in a huge room with 50 Maria Sharapovas.” It is truly sensory overload. It was impossible to sample everything with some producers offering four, even seven wines. One thing that was notable was the popularity of Kosta Browne. On Saturday afternoon, pinotphiles were lined up five deep as Michael and Dan poured seven of their wines. A number of interesting library wines were offered by some wineries. The entire world was represented with wineries from Chile, New Zealand, Tasmania (Australia), Switzerland and Slovenia. There wasn't a bad Pinot in the tent - the consistent quality of Pinot Noir from good producers is mind-boggling and a real tribute to the progress that has been made with this varietal in countries outside of France in the last 20 years. I have listed some of my discoveries and favorites tasted over the two days.

2004 Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards El Encantada Vineyard Pinot Noir \$45. Richard Sanford's new label. The vineyard was planted in 2000 in the Sta. Hills AVA. 100 acres are organically farmed. This bottling represents three of the “best” clones planted and is the first release from the vineyard. www.almarosawinery.com, 803-688-9090.

2000 Arcadian Winery Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Joe Davis's Pinot Noirs are made to last and need a few years to blossom. This beauty has it its stride and is drinking perfectly now. The best example of Garys' Vineyard Pinot Noir I tasted at the event. www.arcadianwinery.com, 805-688-1876.

2004 Belle Glos Taylor Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$45. Belle Glos produces single-vineyard Pinot Noirs from three diverse California appellations: Santa Maria Valley, Sonoma Coast and Santa Lucia Highlands. Joseph J. Wagner of the Caymus clan is the winemaker. The Taylor Lane is the sexiest bottle of the three. Plenty of charm here with a good dose of oak. www.belleglos.com, 707-963-4204

2002 Belle Pente Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Noir From Jil & Brian O'Donnell's 16 acre organic and biodynamic vineyard in the Willamette Valley. The wine is made from the best blocks. Reviewed in the last issue of the *PinotFile*. Fruity aromatics, plenty of spice, lovely finish. www.bellepente.com, 503-852-9500.

2004 Bonaccorsi Wine Company Fiddlestix Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir This winery was started by Michael and Jenne lee Bonaccorsi in 1999 and even with Michael's passing in 2004, the winery has continued to produce high quality wines. The Fiddlestix Vineyard has become synonymous with exceptional Pinot Noir. This wine is brimming with high tone red and black fruits. The texture is silky with fine-grained tannins. www.bonawine.net, 310-994-3207.

2005 Cargasacchi-Point Concepcion Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir (barrel sample). Peter Cargasacchi farms an established and respected vineyard in the Santa Rita Hills. This wine, although not completely finished, shows great potential. Peter believes in the appropriate pairing of food and wine at mealtime and this Pinot is perfectly composed for the table. www.Pointconcepcionwines.com, 805-736-7763.

2003 Copeland Creek Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir \$30. Don Baumhefner uses his years of experience in the wine industry including over ten years at Josphe Swan Vineyards to farm his Sonoma Coast vineyard planted to Dijon clones 114, 115, 777 and 828 and the legendary Swan clone. He crafts a beautiful table wine that would be a welcome staple in any one's dining room. The most distinctive feature of his Pinot Noir is oodles of spice and this happens to turns me on. www.copelandcreekvineyards.com, 707-765-5997.

2003 Cuvaision Estate Wines Carneros Pinot Noir The 100% estate grown wine is sourced from 42 acres of Pinot Noir representing 11 different clones. A state-of-the-art winery has opened on the estate and the wines should only get better. This Pinot is well balanced and comfortable like an old teddy bear. The Reserve or Select bottling is too big and oaky for my tastes. Ww.cuvaision.com, 707-942-6266.

2002 Dehlinger Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir It was surprising to see Dehlinger participate in an event like this. They are part of the "old-guard" of Russian River Valley producers who have made consistently excellent examples of Pinot Noir from this region. Tom Dehlinger manages the winery's 45-acre vineyard. This wine is a perfect example of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. It explodes with cinnamon, cola, Bing cherries and toast. Silky as all get out. Most of the wine is sold on a mailing list. See www.dehlingerwinery.com, 707-823-2378.

2004 DeLoach 30th Anniversary Cuvée Russian River Valley Pinot Noir \$45. De Loach was purchased out of bankruptcy by Boisset America who are bringing the Pinot Noir program up to lofty status. Greg LaFollette is the winemaker. A new tasting room and visitors center has opened. This cuvee is the last vintage from the home ranch vineyards in front of the winery. The vines have been torn out and will be replanted this year using biodynamic farming. This Pinot is a real treasure and a collector's dream. The nose is very floral, the fruits are classic Pinot Noir and the package is perfectly integrated. www.deloachvineyards.com, 800-441-9298.



2002 Fiddlehead Cellars "Doyle" Fiddlestix Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir Kathy Joseph purchased 133 acres of barren hillside in 1996 across the road from Sanford & Benedict Vineyard. She created a vineyard company with Beringer to develop and farm the site. This bottling is very limited and composed of only the best barrels from an outstanding vintage (the wine is not made in every vintage). At the Gala Dinner I couldn't get enough of this wine which was my favorite of the 16 wines I sampled that evening. The exact tasting details are hazy but I can tell you this Pinot was damn good.

2004 Flowers Vineyard & Winery Frances Thompson Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir This is the first release from this estate vineyard and it is a killer. The Flowers are pioneer winegrowers in the rough and rugged Sonoma Coast AVA. They have had several winemakers but the quality has always been there. A number of wines have been deeply-colored and extracted but from recent vintages I have seen a lighter touch. This release is one to buy and cellar. www.flowerswinery.com, 707-847-3661.

2003 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$50. Goldeneye has been producing excellent Pinot Noirs since 1997. They have purchased a few vineyards in the Anderson Valley and now have access to a large palate of vines including 19 different clones on 11 different rootstocks. A quintessential cool climate Pinot Noir with bright fruit and bracing acidity. Excellent balance and plenty of zip and zing. The wine has just been released and is available in magnums. www.goldeneyewinery.com, 800-208-0438.

2004 Inman Family Wines Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Kathleen Inman along with consulting winemaker Kevin Hamil crafts small amounts of Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir from the estate Olivet Grange Vineyard on Olivet Road in the Russian River Valley. The clones here are all Burgundian - 114, 115, 667 and 727. Farming is sustainable and organic. The goal here is Pinot Noir with moderate alcohol and higher acidity to complement food and this vintage aptly accomplishes that goal. Plenty of classic Pinot fruit but well-composed and not overblown. The aromatics alone will hook you on this wine. 222.inmanfamilywines.com, 707-395-0689.

2003 Jack Creek Cellars York Mountain Pinot Noir This well-established Pinot Noir vineyard near the town of Cambria receives favorable cooling from its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. This second vintage was reviewed previously in the *PinotFile* and I wanted to retaste it to confirm my previously favorable impression. It is still right-on. A very small producer making hand-crafted Pinot Noir from an excellent micro-climate. www.jackcreekcellars.com, 805-226-8283.

2004 Ken Brown Wines Clos Pepe Vineyard Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir Ken Brown is one of Santa Barbara's pioneering winemakers who trained many other prominent winemakers in the region. I loved his 2003 Clos Pepe but the 2004 is even better if you like elegance. The 2003, Ken says, "is like a Cab, but what a ride!" The grapes from this vineyard just seem to be fortified with steroids but with the 2004 vintage Ken has tamed the beast. A flat-out complete Pinot Noir that is too good to be true. www.kenbrownwines.com, 805-448-3791.

2004 Londer Vineyards Estate Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir \$48. The first year from this small estate vineyard nurtured by Larry and Shirley Londer. The winemaker is Greg LaFollette. This Pinot shows a lot of character and I would like to spend an evening with it. I also tasted the 2004 Anderson Valley and Keefer Ranch bottlings and they were equally rewarding. www.londervineyards.com, 707-895-3900.

2001 Movia Dobrovo, Slovenia Pinot Noir The Movia estate has been in existence since the year 1700. It was purchased by the Kristancic family in 1820 and is currently run by Ales Kristancic who has notable flair and creativity. The vineyard is located on the western border of the Adriatic sea. This Pinot Noir was very interesting and quite good. There was plentiful dark sweet fruits including strawberry and blackberry on a well-structured platform. It was well-composed and juicy. The wine has something of a cult following and is expensive. Its ability to age is legendary. www.moviasl.com.

2004 Native Nine Rancho Ontiveros Vineyards Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir \$48 A very small limited production Pinot Noir crafted by James Ontiveros (see Bien Nacido Vineyards). Clones are 2A, Pommard, Benedict and Swan. 60% whole cluster. 198 six bottle cases. My notes say WOW and WOW again. Great fruit purity. Astonishing spiciness and complexity. A Maria Sharapova style Pinot Noir. Website is under construction, 805-837-1991.



2003 Paul Lato Wines Duende Gold Coast Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir \$32. Not to be confused with actor Jared Lato who is dating Lindsay Lohan. Paul says he was born to make Pinot Noir. After a decade as a sommelier in Toronto, Canada, this Polish ex-pat came to California and got a job working for the Miller family. He bunked at the Bien Nacido Vineyard and started making a little Pinot on the side. The Gold Coast Vineyard Pinot is from old Martini clone vines in Santa Maria Valley. Paul looks to France for inspiration but strives to make California wines. The term duende is a flamenco term that means someone who is playing with inspiration. Talk to Paul and you will feel his passion. His Pinot Noir has passion too. The wine has an elegant and approachable style with a lingering finish of bracing acidity. The 2004 vintage (70 cases) is available as futures from winecask.com. [Www.paullatowines.com](http://www.paullatowines.com), 805-260-3210.

2003 Pey-Marin Vineyards "Trois Filles" Marin County Pinot Noir I have been a fan of these very small production Pinot Noirs from low-yielding Burgundian clones in the marginal growing region of Marin County. The Peys craft a Pinot in the style I prefer - appealing aromatics, attractive fruits and spice with mineral nuances and zippy acidity. [Www.marinwines.com](http://www.marinwines.com), 415-455-9463.



2002 Talisman Cellars Truchard Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir Scott Rich learned his trade at Etude and now selects special vineyards for their unique site characteristics to make Pinot Noirs that reflect their distinctive terroirs. This Pinot is very seductive. The style is soft and restrained but there is plenty of pleasure packed in. [Www.talismanwine.com](http://www.talismanwine.com), 707-258-5722.

2004 Tantara Silacci Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir \$52. This ambitious producer has a long history at the Bien Nacido Vineyard. In 2006 Tantara will be releasing 11 different vineyard-designate and one Santa Maria Valley blend 2004 Pinot Noirs. The Silacci is brimming with black cherry fruit with some nutmeg and wild herbs thrown in for good measure. Balanced, exquisite and pure. I also enjoyed the **2003 Tantara Bien Nacido Vineyard Adobe Pinot Noir**. [Www.tantarawinery.com](http://www.tantarawinery.com), 805-938-5050.

2003 The Donum Estate Carneros Pinot Noir Winegrower Anne Moller-Racke has tended the vines on this 250 acre estate for more than 20 years. The fruit grown here is used by winemaker, Kenneth Juhasz, to produce both the Donum Pinot Noir and the wines of Robert Stemmler. The 2003 Donum is just flat-out great Pinot. Rich, creamy and delicious. My friend Art can get carried away and liked the wine so much he wanted to sell his house and move to the vineyard. Small producer, under the radar. [Www.thedonumestate.com](http://www.thedonumestate.com), 707-939-2290.



