



# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

Volume 8, Issue 40 July 1, 2011

If you drink no  
Noir, you Pinot  
Noir

## Andersonoir Valley Pinot Noir Festival

As the winemakers in the Anderson Valley pushed the nightmarish 2008 vintage back into their distant memory, they found cause to celebrate the stellar 2009 wines. The 14th Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival presented the first opportunity for many to sample the 2009 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs. Some producers were reluctant to offer their 2009 wines, fearing that they needed more time in the bottle to show well and substituted their excellent 2007 vintage Pinot Noirs. Nearly every 2007 vintage Pinot Noir available at the Grand Tasting has been previously reviewed in the *PinotFile* and will not be discussed further here.

Several 2009 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs were reviewed in Volume 8, Issue 35 of the *PinotFile* including Balo Vineyard, Black Kite "Kite's Rest," and Couloir Wines. I referred to these wines as redemption for the disastrous events of the 2008 vintage that led many producers to sell off their entire production in bulk.

Veteran Anderson Valley winemaker, Bob Klindt (Claudia Springs Winery, Harmonique), called 2009 "a typical growing season in the Anderson Valley." Larry Londer of Londer Vineyards said, "The quality of the 2009 vintage in the Anderson Valley parallels the 2007 vintage, and may surpass it." Winter rains were lighter than usual, and a mid-May heat wave brought high temperatures for the second consecutive year. Bud break was late and spring was generally cool but not accompanied by frost. The summer was moderate and relatively cool allowing slow ripening and a prolonged harvest which began in mid-September and finished the last week of October. A late September heat wave brought grapes quickly to optimum ripeness and a large October storm provided a challenge that most vintners avoided.



On Saturday morning, before the Grand Tasting at Goldeneye, I sampled in quiet a number of 2009 Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs at Schraffenberg Cellars. Although young, many wines were very appealing and approachable. Quality was consistently very high indicating that 2009 is a spectacular vintage for Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. This is a vintage you can stock up on with confidence.

**2009 Artevino (Maple Creek Winery) Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.37, 150 cases, \$26. Released April 1, 2011. Grapes from the Greenwood Ridge Vineyard. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, graham and spice. Rich, earth-kissed black cherry core with oak in the background, mild tannins and a touch of warming alcohol peaking out on the finish. Lacks an acid grip. Decent.*

**2009 Baxter Run Dog Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir.** 14.3% alc., pH 3.53, 110 cases, \$45. Available for futures purchase now, formal release November 2011. A 1-acre vineyard in Boonville planted in 1999 and managed by the Baxters. Nestled against the cool western hills allowing the vineyard to receive the morning sun, but avoid the harsh afternoon heat. Yields 1.9 tons per acre. Pommard 5 clone. Native fermentation, elevage in neutral French oak barrels, unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Red fruits are featured on the nose and palate. Lovely soft texture and bright acidity on the finish. Plenty of charm now, but will benefit from another year or two in bottle. Very good.*

**2009 Breggo Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.55, 2,183 cases, \$38. Released April 1, 2011. A blend of numerous clones from Donnelly Creek, Savoy and Wiley vineyards. 5-7 day cold soak, 9-day native primary fermentation, 3-7 day extended maceration. Aged 10 months in 44% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color with a slight haze in the glass. Enticing aromas of ripe black raspberries, cherry preserves, spice and brioche which are echoed on the palate in a discreetly concentrated fashion, finishing with mild dry tannins, a hint of oak and brier and a good lift of acidity. Good (+).*

**2009 Claudia Springs Klindt Vineyard Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.61, 245 cases, #32. Released May 21, 2011. The 8.25-acre Klindt Vineyard is in the deep end of the Anderson Valley and planted to 35% Pommard 4 and 5, 20% each of 113, 115, 777, and 667 filling in the remainder. 10% whole cluster. Native fermentation lasting 12 days. All clones fermented separately, blended the following summer and put back into barrels to marry for another 7 months before bottling. *Moderately light reddish-purple color and clear in the glass. Lovely scent of fresh red cherries and Asian 5-spice. Bright and juicy on the palate, featuring an elegant array of red Pinot fruits, supple tannins and a long finish with a refreshing nerve of acidity. Very good (+).*



**2009 Drew Fog-Eater Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 13.6% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.66, 370 cases, \$40. Release June, 2011. A blend from two organically farmed sites: 60% Balo Vineyard (777, 828, Martini), 40% Monument Tree Vineyard (667, 115, 114). 30% whole cluster, aged 11 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherries and blueberries with a hint of spice. Flavors of red plums and black cherries with a subtle note of oak and stem. Well-suited tannic backbone. Still young and undeveloped. Good.*

**2009 Elke Vineyards Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.9, TA 0.65, 840 cases, \$34. 5 clones of Pinot Noir are grown in this vineyard located just outside the town of Boonville. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak barrels. Unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color with a slight haze in the glass. Well-perfumed with vibrant scents of dark stone fruits, leather and oak. Very smoothly textured on the palate with a tasty core of plums, black raspberries and a brewed tea note. Well-proportioned t n' a. Still a Lolita in need of a few years of cellaring. Very good.*

**2009 Expression Annahala Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 220 cases, \$48. Released April 2011. 100% de-stemmed, aged in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color with slight haze in the glass. Appealing nose that is flush with fruits including fresh berries and plums. Medium-bodied flavors of darker berries wrapped in polished tannins with noticeable oak in the background. Will need some time in the cellar to better integrate the oak. Good (+).*

**2007 Foursight "All In" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 407 cases, \$46. Released spring 2010. A combination of all the clones in the estate vineyard (777, 114, 115, Pommard 5). 80% de-stemmed, wild yeast fermented both primary and malolactic. Aged in 20% new, 31% 2-year-old and 44% neutral French oak

barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color and clear in the glass. A nicely composed wine that has benefited from time in the bottle. Fruity aromas of fresh berry compote carry over on the palate. Juicy, silky and seamless with plenty of charm. Very good.*

**2009 Fulcrum Wine Londer Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 149 cases, \$52. Clones 115 and Swan. Release June 16, 2011. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Bottle aged 6 months. *Very tight now with imposing tannins. Aromas of brier, forest floor, black cherries and dark berries. Earthy and brooding on the palate with mildly gritty tannins and an underpinning of oak. Needs at least a year more in bottle. Good.*

**2009 Handley Cellars RSM Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc. pH 3.68, TA 0.53, 266 cases, \$52. Released May 2011. From an exceptional vintage. The vineyard was planted in 2000 to primarily clone 115. 100% de-stemmed, 40% whole berry fermentation, inoculated with Rockpile yeast isolate to enhance mineral flavors association with the unique vineyard. Aged on the lees for 10 months in 37% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color and slight haze in the glass. Striking aromas of black cherries, dark red berry preserves, toffee and toast. Delicious medium-weight core of perfectly ripe black cherries, black raspberries and mocha java. Silky smooth on the palate with a big fruit-laden aromatic finish that lingers. Oak-driven features will integrate over time. A first-rate wine of uncommon charm that is terrific now and will age gracefully. Plan a dinner around this wine in another year or two. The star of this tasting. Very good (+).*



**2006 Harmonique Elegancé Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.65, 675 cases, \$36.50. The winery's current releases are from the 2006 vintage. Released May 20, 2011. A blend of four vineyard sources: 50% from 25-year-old Conzelman Vineyard, 21% from Cerise Vineyard, 16.5% from Wiley Vineyard, and 12.5% from the Klindt Vineyard. Seven Pinot Noir clones. *Moderate reddish-purple color and clear in the glass. Very enticing perfume of black cherries, cola and sandalwood. Discreet and elegant array of flavors including black cherries and saffras with juicy cherry skins dancing on the finish. Polished tannins and nervy acidity allow for hi-collar drinking. Perfect now. Very good.*

**2009 Harrington Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.63, 261 cases, \$40. Release September 1, 2011. Wiley Vineyard is one of the westernmost Anderson Valley vineyards. Located in the deep end, it is often the last Pinot Noir vineyard harvested in the Anderson Valley. Sourced primarily from the 30-year-old Pommard block (90% Pommard, 10% 777). Aged 10 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color and clear in the glass. Very nicely perfumed with bright aromas of strawberries and sandalwood. Soft and smooth on the palate with medium-weight flavors of dark red berries, savory herbs, oak and earthy mushrooms. A thoroughly charming wine yet to reach its full potential but approachable now. Very good.*

**2009 Londer Vineyards Paraboll Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.54, 379 cases, \$54. Sourced from Ferrington and Valley Foothills vineyards. Clones are Pommard and Roederer 23. Aged in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple hue and clear in the glass. Usually a rugged, masculine wine that often needs several years for best enjoyment. This vintage, however, is more refined and showy early on. Very appealing nose offering aromas of exotic berries, plum and forest floor. Well-endowed with delicious earth-kissed dark fruit and substantial tannins, yet displays an elegance due to the silkiness of the tannins and the textural seductiveness offered by the alcohol. Very good.*

**2009 MacPhail Family Wines Toulouse Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.86, TA 0.54, 267 cases, \$49. Released fall 2010. 100% de-stemmed, indigenous and inoculated yeast primary fermentation, native malolactic fermentation in barrel, batonnage every week for 3 months, aged 11 months in 60% new and 40% 1 and 2-year-old French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate purple color in the glass. A big-boned wine with flashy dark berry and black cherry fruit that is quite tasty but is overshadowed by oak. The nose displays primarily oak-driven aromas of toast, toffee and caramel. Decent.*

**2009 Navarro Vineyards Deep End Blend Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**

14.2% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.69, 979 cases, \$49. Release August 1, 2011. *Medium reddish-purple color and clear in the glass. Shy, but spirited aromas of cherries and berries. Layers of fruit flavor cascade over the palate revealing notes of plums, cherries and berries. Smoothly textured with gossamer tannins. A well-crafted wine that aims to please. Very good (+).*



**2009 Saintsbury Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 703 cases, \$45. Release June 1, 2011. The only Saintsbury Vineyard Series wine from outside Carneros. Cerise is located on the steep slopes of the southwestern facing hills just north of the town of Boonville. 37 acres are planted on the 200-acre site. Clones 115, 777 and Pommard. Aged 10 months in 24% new and 27% 1 and 2-year-old French oak barrels.

*Moderately deep reddish-purple color showing a slight haze in the glass. Appealing aromatic mix of red and blue berries on the nose. Rich, intense, earthy and darkly fruited, yet displaying a lithe and silky texture due to restrained tannins. The plum and berry fruit is striking and persists on the generous finish. Very approachable now. Very good.*

**2009 Toulouse Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.89, TA 0.54, 1,650 cases, \$42.

Released May 1, 2011. Clones 115, 667, 777 and 2A. *Light garnet in color and clear in the glass. Aromas of super-ripe fruit including raisin and root beer which carry over on the palate along with baking spice and pepper notes. Supple tannins and bright acidity on the finish. Decent.*

**2009 Twomey Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.62, 1,782 cases, \$50.

Released April 30, 2011. Sourced from Ferrington, Savoy and Monument Tree vineyards. Twomey purchased the Monument Tree Vineyard in 2010. 7-day cold soak, indigenous yeast fermentations, some whole cluster, aged 15 months on the lees in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color and clear in the glass. Attractive aromas of berry preserves, baking spices, petrichlor and gently toasted oak. A graceful wine with layers of lithe cherry and raspberry fruit that dance on the lengthy finish. Quite drinkable now. Very good (+).*

A number of other wines were sampled briefly at the Grand Tasting. Here are a few quick impressions.



**Balo Vineyards** Tim and Michelle Mullins have been growing and selling grapes in Anderson Valley since their first crop in 2003. The 8-acre vineyard is across the street from Goldeneye and a new winery and tasting room

is under construction on the site. In 2009, the Mullins began producing their own wine under the Balo Vineyards label under the direction of noted winemaker Jason Drew. This is a producer to watch. Love the website handle: [www.killerpinot.com](http://www.killerpinot.com).

**Baxter** Phil L. Baxter, Sr., and Phil T. G. Baxter, Jr., teamed up in 2002, pooling fifty years of experience to produce single vineyard wines under the Baxter label. Father and son work together in a ridge top location above the Anderson Valley, now joined by Claire, Phil Jr's English wife. All the 2009 Baxter wines impressed me including barrel samples of 2009 Langley Vineyard and a tiny lot of 100% whole cluster Pinot Noir. Winemaker Phil Baxter avoids new oak completely, creating wines of great fruit purity.

**Black Kite Cellars** Rebecca Green submitted for review two limited production 2009 Pinot Noirs from Black Kite Vineyard. Both the Stony Terrace and River Turn Pinot Noirs remind me of a curvaceous woman clothed head to foot in black leather with discrete and strategic openings. The wines are distinguished by elevation, soils and trellis type. Both blocks are planted to Pommard clone. The 2009 Black Kite "Kite's Rest" Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir was reviewed very favorably recently (*PinotFile*, [www.princeofpinot.com/winery/530/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/winery/530/)). A third Black Kite Pinot Noir, "Redwoods Edge Block," is not ready for prime time yet. Black Kite Cellars produces less than 1,500 cases of single vineyard and block-designated Pinot Noir annually,

**2009 Black Kite "River Turn Block" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, 160 cases, \$52. Aged 11 months in 66% new and 33% 1-year-old French oak barrels. Decanting for two hours or hold for 5-7 years is recommended. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding nose with shy aromas of dark cherries and berries, lumber yard and oak. Big-boned, fruit-driven and earthy with an elegant personality despite the rich fruit core. The velvety mouth feel is very seductive. Only hinting at its potential now. Much better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Give this wine a few years in the cellar. Very good.*



**2009 Black Kite "Stony Terrace Block" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, 230 cases, \$52. *Moderate reddish-purple hue in the glass. The aromas really grab your attention and pick up interest in the glass over time revealing notes of black cherries, raspberry syrup, wood spice, and wooded forest. Tasty core of black cherries, blackberries, sassafras, and faint oak highlights. Soft and creamy on the palate with ripe black cherry flavor persisting forever on the noteworthy finish. A special wine, which despite its hefty alcohol, manages to stay in balance and offers immense pleasure. Should be a respectable short term age worthy candidate.*

**Drew** Jason Drew is crafting consistently fine Pinot Noirs from his winery on Mendocino Ridge above the Anderson Valley. His 2009 Valenti Vineyard Pinot Noir from the Mendocino Ridge AVA was a knockout. I have never had a bad wine from Jason.

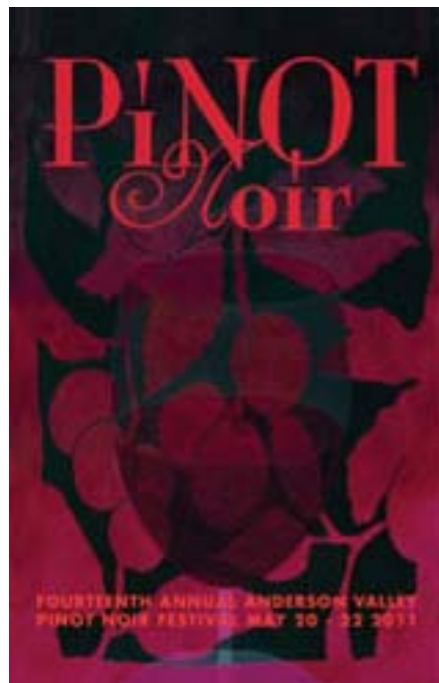
**Esterlina Vineyards & Winery** Lynn Krauseman has been recently appointed as winemaker for Esterlina and its affiliate brands, Everett Ridge and Diabiltá. Krauseman has been the winemaker at Williams Selyem for the past six years and before that worked at Clos du Bois, Freemark Abbey Winery, Robert Mondavi Winery, and Cloudy Bay Wines in New Zealand. Barrel samples of 2009 Esterlina Estate Pinot Noir and 2009 Esterlina Estate Reserva Pinot Noir were both outstanding with the Estate more forward and approachable and the Reserve needing considerable time for full development. A top flight producer in the Anderson Valley and a special winery to visit.

**Harmonique** Moira Conzelman (photo below) was on hand for the event as usual and was pouring the just-released three 2006 Harmonique Pinot Noirs: "The Noble One," "Elegancé" and "Delicacé." Harmonique draws on excellent vineyard sources within the Anderson Valley including the old vine Conzelman Vineyard. Veteran winemaker Robert Klindt oversees production. Older vintages back to 2003 are still available on the website at [www.harmoniquewine.com](http://www.harmoniquewine.com).



**Londer Vineyards** 2009 is a break out year for Londer who chose to declassify and sell all 2008 production in bulk. I have had the Londer Vineyard Pinot Noir from Couloir and it was exceptional. Londer's 2009 Estate Pinot Noir and 2009 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir were both impressive wines with the Ferrington drinking spectacularly now.

At each of the recent Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festivals, local artist Gerald Reis paints original art to commemorate the Festival. The original paintings are auctioned at each event and prints of the originals are available for purchase from the artist. Each print is reproduced from the original on fine archival paper. Visit the website at [www.reisdesign.com](http://www.reisdesign.com) to view and acquire the prints. This year's painting is shown below.



For more information on the Anderson Valley, including its history, growers and wineries, visit the website: [www.avwines.com](http://www.avwines.com). Also, well over 30 major California Pinot Noir producers located outside the Anderson Valley appellation source grapes from the Anderson Valley including Anthill Farms, Adrian Fog, Arista Winery, Barnett, Benovia, Brogan Cellars, Cakebread Cellars, Castle Rock, Copain Wines, Couloir Wines, Fulcrum Wines, Gros Ventre Cellars, Harrington, Hartford Family Wines, Kutch Wines, La Crema, LIOCO, Littorai, Lulu, MacPhail Family Wines, Papapietro-Perry, Radio-Coteau, Roessler Cellars, Rhys Vineyards, Saintsbury, Skewis, Tudor, Twomey, Waits-Mast Family Cellars, Whitcraft, Williams-Selyem and Woodenhead.

# Arcadian: A Classic Sense of Pinot Noir

If you like your Pinot Noir elegant, balanced, relatively low in alcohol, well-aged upon release, and cellar worthy, read on. If you prefer “bimbo” Pinot Noir with high scores and sweet fruit flavors, Arcadian wines are not for you.

Winegrower, winemaker and proprietor of Arcadian Winery, Joe Davis, is somewhat of an iconoclast among today’s popular and high-scoring California producers of Pinot Noir. Stylistically, he has always been steadfast in his vision of what Pinot Noir should be, and his target consumers are connoisseurs of Pinot Noir, often Burgundy drinkers, who prefer the classic style of Pinot Noir with consummate age ability. Writer Dennis Schaefer said, “Almost every winemaker who makes Pinot Noir professes to follow the Burgundian model. And, more or less that’s true. But with some winemakers, the ‘less’ part is apparent, and plenty of shortcuts may be employed. With winemaker Joe Davis, everything is always ‘more’ Burgundian.”

Davis sums up his philosophy as follows. “The tendency to harvest very ripe and sometimes over ripe grapes to produce a highly extracted wine with deep color and intensity and yes, high alcohol, has become the norm and has met with both critical and consumer success. While I applaud my colleagues for their successes, I do not subscribe to their theories that this is the best way to make Pinot Noir here in California. Rather, I am looking for much more elegance and balance. I chose to harvest with much more modest sugar levels and much higher natural acidity. The belief that my wines will continue to evolve in the bottle for years to come and this continued evolution will ultimately produce a much more interesting wine is what drives my philosophy of winegrowing.”

Joe carefully manages all of his vineyard sources, doing the tough work before the grapes even arrive in the winery. He is fanatical about meticulous sorting of his incoming grapes. He prefers lower alcohols, bright acidity, well-honed tannins and avoids any funny business in the winery such as watering back or acid and enzyme additions. Joe’s time spent in Burgundy at Domaine Dujac has led him to become a firm proponent of whole cluster fermentations, believing that stems offer a distinctive character and complexity to Pinot Noir without detracting from its site-specific origins. Typically, Joe uses 50%-75% whole cluster. He performs *pigeage* (foot treading) 3 to 5 times a day to gently extract color, tannins and richness. *Pigeage* introduces oxygen to the yeast, helps keep the shearing of stems and crushing of seeds to a minimum, and maintains the vintners sensory relationship with the wine. The wines finish fermentation in barrel, are aged for up to 22 months, bottled unfiltered, and then further aged for another 14 to 18 months before release. His current releases are from the 2005 and 2006 vintages. What other winery in California is offering the 2005 vintage of Pinot Noir as a current release?



When you look at Joe, its no surprise that after growing up in Monterey, California, he attended the University of Washington on a football scholarship where he studied chemistry. Unfortunately, knee injuries prevented him from a successful athletic career. Fortuitously, he happened to get a job in a wine shop in Seattle during his undergraduate years. He remembers drinking a number of different wines such as Acacia Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon from Jordan and Robert Mondavi, but began to gravitate to Pinot Noir. It was one wine in particular that proved to be epiphanic. In 1982, an appreciative customer brought Joe a bottle of 1978 Domaine Dujac Clos de la Roche. He opened the bottle with the customer after the store closed and described it as a “levitating” experience, and a wine that he has been chasing his whole career.

Joe enrolled in medical school, but to the dismay of his family, dropped out to pursue graduate studies in enology at University of California Davis. After graduation in 1984, he became the Assistant Winemaker at Morgan Winery in Salinas under owner and winemaker Daniel Morgan Lee and the following year became the Winemaker. His winemaking skills matured over the next ten years at Morgan where he crafted Chardonnay and developed a Pinot Noir production plan for the winery, crafting Morgan Pinot Noirs with uncommon longevity and critical praise. After his time at Morgan, Joe traveled to Burgundy and worked at Domaine Dujac. It was here that he learned to carefully manage vineyards. Upon his return in 1996, he founded Arcadian Winery, releasing his first vintage of Chardonnay to impressive reviews. The winery is now located in Lompoc.

The name Arcadian is a reference to Dionysys, the God of wine and divine intoxication, who lived in Arcadia around 5,000 B.C.. Greek mythology stipulates that he planted the first grapevines and made the first wine. An Arcadian is one who hails from this place and is often referred to as one who lives a simple, peaceful and pastoral life.

Arcadian owns no vineyards, but sources grapes from prestigious vineyards in the Santa Rita Hills, Santa Maria Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands that he has worked with in multiple vintages. He was the first to produce a vineyard-designate Pinot Noir from Pisoni Vineyard (Joe with Gary Pisoni below)



Production is about 8,000 cases annually of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. The wines are sold through a mailing list, on the website at [www.arcadianwinery.com](http://www.arcadianwinery.com), and through limited retail distribution. The wines are not inexpensive, but they have already been well-aged. A Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay, and several Syrahs are also available. Tours and extensive tastings are available by appointment (805-688-8799) at the winery or in Solvang (see website for addresses).

I recently sampled most of the 2005 vintage Arcadian Pinot Noirs. Davis considers 2005 to be one of the greatest vintages on the Central Coast. 2005 was a rainy growing season, with as much as 39 inches falling on the vineyards in the Central Coast. The overall result was that fruit was harvested with much better balance and higher natural acidity with excellent juice to skin ratios. Many Central Coast vineyards enjoyed large harvests as well because of the better overall set



The 2005 Arcadian wines are extremely well-crafted and well-mannered and have benefited from the additional time in bottle. The oak is well integrated, the tannins have mellowed, and the textures are smooth and comforting. That said, I would still decant all but the Jill's Cuvée before drinking as I found these wines at their best a day or two after opening. This is a very charming lineup of wines that you can savor for at least another ten years. I did not taste the 2005 Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir, 2005 Gold Coast Pinot Noir, 2005 Clos Pepe Vineyard Pinot Noir, 2005 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir or the 2005 Francesca Pinot Noir, all of which are still available from the winery.

**2006 Arcadian Jill's Cuvée Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., unreleased. Produced in honor of Davis' spouse, Jill. Clone 667. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Hi-brow aromas of black cherries, berry preserves, herbs and seasoned oak, fading a bit over time in the glass. Bright berry essence saturates the mid palate persisting on the black cherry driven finish that has a spark of acidity. Undertones of pomegranate, spice and savory herbs add interest. A solid wine with supple tannins and an appealing satiny texture that can be enjoyed now. Very good.*

**2005 Arcadian Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.44, TA 0.67, 226 cases, \$56. A challenging older vineyard to farm. Planted in 1970, now owned by Talbott Winery. Martini and upright clone (Pinot Droid). Aged 14 months in 40% new 3-year-old extra-tight-grain Sirugue French oak barrels. Aged 14 months in bottle. Unfined and unfiltered. Dedicated to Dan Lee (Morgan Vineyard). *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. A distinctive wine displaying very ripe fruit flavors that is typical for this vineyard in my experience. Aromas of macerated cherries and red raspberries with hints of melon, red currants, marzipan and oak. The flavors veer to darker fruits including black cherries and dark red berries displaying a very ripe, even porto profile. Hints of Asian 5-spice and oak add interest. Seamless with soft tannins and easy drinkability. Good.*



**2005 Arcadian Dierberg Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.39, TA 0.65, 116 cases, \$65. The vineyard was planted in 1997 to Dijon 115, 667 and 777 as well as Martini clone and a Champagne clone 31. Alluvial sand and clay loam soils. Cold soak is followed by fermentation in small open-top vats. Primary and secondary fermentation are completed in barrel. Aged 22 months in 3-year-old extra-tight-grain Sirugue French oak barrels, 40% of which were new. Aged 14 months in bottle. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish-purple robe in the glass. The nose is layered with aromas that include fresh black cherries, spice, white pepper, anise and oak. Discreetly concentrated core of black cherry and blackberry fruit wrapped in fine-grain tannins and displaying an appealing earthiness. Finishes with persistence and silkiness. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Best Pinot Noir I have ever had from this vineyard.*



**2005 Arcadian Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.68, 91 cases, \$95. Sourced from a coveted parcel on the ranch at the top of the main block containing the steepest slope. These are some of the oldest vines on the property. Davis is typically the first to pick at Pisoni Vineyard. 3-day cold soak, 12 day fermentation, inoculated yeast, aged in 40% new 3-year-old extra-tight-grain French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy but pleasing aromas of dark red berries and subtle oak. Tasty core of dark red fruits that are juicy and crisp, finishing a tiny bit shallow with a refreshing grip of acidity and polished tannins. A seamless wine that was still charming two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A unique elegant and restrained style of Pisoni Vineyard Pinot Noir. Very good.*





**2005 Arcadian Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.71, 183cases, \$60. Davis has been making wine from this vineyard since 2001. Sourced from Block 1 planted in 1998 and Block 2 planted in 1999. Clones 113, 115, 667, 777. 70% whole cluster. Yields were 1.75 tons per acre. Aged 22 months in 40% 3 year-old extra-tight-grain Sirugue French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish-purple hue in the glass. Enticing array of scents including dark berry preserves, toast and forest floor. The most tannic wine among those tasted here but balanced nicely by the intense and vibrant black cherry and dark red berry fruit. Davis fights to tame this vineyard which can be aggressive. Drank much better the next day and was spectacular two days after opening from an re-corked bottle. Approachable now, but will be cause for celebration several years from now.*



The following wine had been in my cellar since release.

**2001 Arcadian Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc.. 42 acres planted with cuttings from Pisoni Vineyard. Average sugars at harvest were 23.5 Brix. 100% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 22 months in French oak bottles and an additional 14 months in bottle before release. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass with no brickish changes. Aged aromas of currants, raisins, kid glove and redwood. Medium weighted and ephemeral on the palate with slightly roasted dark fruit flavors and undertones of fig and soy. Supple tannins and bright acidity. This wine has held up beautifully: a sign that it was well-made. Very good.*

# Inman Family Wines: Sensitive Farming & Winemaking

Englishman Simon Inman was visiting Napa Valley when he stopped at Napa Creek Winery's tasting room and became enchanted with Kathleen McGowan, a college student working the first day of her summer job at the winery. He discreetly wrote a letter to the owner of Napa Creek Winery asking him to pass along a second letter to the "assistant" to whom he had spoken with briefly in the tasting room. Two years later, Simon and Kathleen were married.

After living in England for fifteen years, the Inmans acquired a passion for New World and Old World Pinot Noir. In 1998, they left behind their careers in England and arrived in California. After searching for a year, they discovered a farm owned since the 1880s by the Greeott family at the junction of Olivet and Piner Roads in the Russian River Valley. The Inmans bought the property and named it Olivet Grange Vineyard, after the family's English country home, The Grange at Elvington, and its location on Olivet Road. Because of a challenge from Australia's famous label, Grange, beginning in 2005, the Inmans have had to display OGV instead of Olivet Grange Vineyard on their front label.

In 2000, 7.2 acres of Pinot Noir, clones 114, 115, 667 and 777, and Pinot Gris, clone 145, were planted using carefully selected rootstocks appropriate to the Russian River Valley location. Today, the vineyard consists of 10.45 acres and includes Pinot Noir clone 828. From the onset, Kathleen has been the vineyard manager, winemaker, salesperson, accountant and General Manager. Family members help out when they can, including Simon who also is a practicing lawyer. You have to really hand it to this hard working woman who has built a winery of repute from scratch while still managing a family and raising two daughters.



Farming is strictly organic and sustainable with the aim of promoting a healthy ecosystem. Compost, referred to as "Four-Course Compost," derives from table scraps from high-end San Francisco restaurants and hotels. Worm castings are used to create a bio-fertilizer that is delivered by the vineyard's drip irrigation system. Eco-friendly practices extend to the wine labels, recyclable packaging, reduction of waste, and use of renewable sources of energy in the winery.



In September, 2010, the Inmans opened a new winery on their property. An ecologically friendly tasting room is the center point. All the wood for the cabinets and tasting bar were salvaged from the old barn that was taken down to allow the new winery to be built. All the power need for the winery is supplied by solar panels. The tasting room is open Thursday through Sunday from 11:00 to 4:00. A private tasting and vineyard tour with owner and winemaker Kathleen Inman is available by appointment (707-293-9576). For visitors with electric automobiles, Inman winery has Sonoma County's first privately owned public charging station drawing from the electricity produced by the winery's solar panels.



Three Pinot Noirs are produced: a Russian River Valley appellation blend, the OGV Olivet Grange Vineyard Estate Pinot Noir, and a vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Thorn Ridge Ranch in the Russian River Valley. An outstanding Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir Rosé (“Endless Crush”), both among the best from California, and a

Russian River Valley Chardonnay are also offered. The wines are sold through a Wine Club and online at [www.inmanfamilywines.com](http://www.inmanfamilywines.com).

Natural winemaking is emphasized with the goal of displaying the unique vineyard sites from which the wines are produced. Fruit is picked relatively early allowing for naturally low to moderate alcohol levels and high natural acidity. Grapes are 100% de-stemmed. Fermentations are driven with native yeasts, with the addition of organic yeast only when necessary. Usually no water, acid, enzymes or tannin preparations are added.

A three-bedroom farmhouse on the estate, the Olivet Grange Farmhouse, is available for rent and is a lovely place to stay while touring the Russian River Valley. I can personally attest to its comfortable accommodations having stayed there myself.




I recently tasted through a mini-vertical of many of the Pinot Noirs produced at Inman Family Wines since the 2003 inaugural vintage. I personally enjoy the style: elegant with lower alcohols and bright acidity consistent in each vintage but with flavor and intensity reflecting vintage variation. The wines could be described as more feminine, but they are not wimpy, with good color and a firm tannic backbone for age ability. Because of the moderate tannins, decanting is usually suggested. I found the wines tasted better when opened in the morning and re-tasted later in the day. The older vintages were still drinking beautifully and should last several more years due to their admirable balance. I found the 2004 and 2006 vintages similar and the 2005 and 2008 vintages somewhat alike. Kathleen is refining her wines as she acquires more familiarity with her vineyard and the 2008 Pinot Noir and 2010 Rosé are world-class and among the best I have had this year from the Russian River Valley. Kathleen has been committed to screw caps for all her wines essential since the winery launched.

The 2006 (limited quantities) and 2007 OGV Pinot Noirs are available directly from the winery. The popular 2010 Pinot Gris has been released (\$30) and the 2010 Endless Crush Rosé is selling quickly. I tasted both the 2007 and 2008 Thorn Ridge Ranch Pinot Noir at the winery. The 2007 vintage (14.1% alc., \$52) has a plethora of dark fruit with a satisfying earth and herbal accent. The 2008 vintage carries the same theme with less oak influence and is very exciting. The Thorn Ridge Ranch bottlings offer an appealing contrast to the OGV bottlings with their darker fruit profile, minerality and a touch more tannin.

**2008 Inman Family Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., 64 cases, \$30, screw cap. Sourced from neighboring vineyards. Native fermentation, aged in 50% stainless steel and 50% French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Light straw color in the glass. Shy, but pleasing aromas of lemon meringue, white peaches, straw and subtle oak. Well-composed and layered with flavors of baked green apples, lemon curd, pear, brioche and oak. Slightly creamy with bright acidity. Good (+).*



 **2010 Inman Family OGV "Endless Crush" Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 12.3% alc., pH 3.24, TA 0.75, residual sugar 0.04. \$30, screw cap. This is a rosé made intentionally, not a saignée. Estate fruit. Aged and fermented in stainless steel. First produced in 2004 to commemorate the Inman's 20th wedding anniversary, it is now produced every other year. *Light pink coral color in the glass. Intense aromas of red berries and blood oranges. Juicy, brisk and discreetly concentrated flavors of strawberries, raspberries and orange zest with a pleasingly refreshing finish. Among the best rosés made in California and highly recommended.*



**2003 Inman Family Olivet Grange Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc.. First release. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, cut grass and dried herbs becoming more fruity over time in the glass. Fairly intense core of black cherry fruit with hints of tea and anise. Smooth on the palate with firm tannins and a crisp, slightly astringent finish. Good.*

**2004 Inman Family Olivet Grange Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., screw cap. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Terrific aromatic presence with scents of Bing cherries, strawberries and baking spices. Delicious essence of red cherries with undertones of savory herbs and tar. Elegant and nicely balanced with some persistence on the finish. The lightest in weight of the wines in this tasting. Typical Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Very good.*



**2005 Inman Family OGV Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., screw cap. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, black raspberries, pine and herbs. Darker red fruited in an elegant style with mild tannins and some persistence on the dry finish which leaves an aromatic impression of fresh herbs. A tad shallow on the mid palate and finish. Good (+).*

**2006 Inman Family OGV Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$56, pH 3.80, screw cap. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Ripe dark red berries and cherries are featured on the shy nose. Vivid fruit core with complimentary flavors of blueberries, pomegranate and citrus, wrapped in moderately firm tannins. Silky textured and very charming. Very good.*

**2006 Inman Family Thorn Road Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., \$52, screw cap. From Ted Klopp's ranch located between Sebastopol and Occidental. Goldridge soil, clones 667, 777, Pommard and Swan. *Moderate purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark berries, BBQ, boot leather and oak. Robust and intense dark fruit flavors of plum and cassis with supple tannins and bright acidity on the finish. A bulldozer wine with fancy rims. A completely different expression of Pinot Noir from the OGV series due to the Pommard and Swan clones and cool site. Good.*



**2007 Inman Family OGV Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.70, \$56, screw cap. 100% de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak, native and inoculated fermentation. Aged 17 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Red-fruited nose with aromas of ripe strawberries, spice box, brier and subtle oak. A demure wine with plenty of vim and vigor. Bright, hi-tone flavors of strawberries, cranberries and raspberries with undertones of clove and seasoned oak. Elegant and satiny with a firm tannic backbone ideal for aging.*



**2008 Inman Family Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., \$45, screw cap. Release August 2011. A blend of three vineyards. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. An enticing wine driven by black cherry and cola aromas and flavors with subtle undertones of red licorice and vanillin. Medium-weighted with supple tannins, smoothly textured and a juicy finish. A very nice representation of the appellation and a perfect daily drinker. Good (+).*



**2008 Inman Family OGV Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., \$56, screw cap. Release August 2011. First OGV with over 14% alc. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Demure, but attractive aromas of dark red berries and cherries with a hint of spice. Delicious medium-weight core of perfectly ripe dark red stone fruits with a subtle note of graham and rhubarb. A serious, hi-collared, and impeccably balanced wine with intense flavor, yet remaining crisp from bright acidity, and finishing with memorable aromatic persistence. Will continue to improve in the bottle for a few years as the tannins assume more polish and the oak settles in.*



# Pinots to Covet

## Belle Glos

This label is one of four brands produced by the Wagner family (including Caymus, Mer Soleil and Conundrum). Chuck Wagner's son, Joseph, handles the viticulture and winemaking for this label which honors Joseph Wagner's grandmother, Loma Belle Glos. The first release was in 2001. Three vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs are produced: Taylor Lane Vineyard (Sonoma Coast), Las Alturas Vineyard (Santa Lucia Highlands) and Clark and Telephone Vineyard (Santa Maria Valley). The bottles are among the most charming in the business, offering a long neck dipped in generous wax. A strip tab allows removal of the wax on top (this is not easy to do and should not be attempted by women with long nails). A value-priced bottling, Meiomì, is a blend from all the vineyards and is a popular restaurant wine. The wines are widely distributed in the retail market. The website is [www.belleglos.com](http://www.belleglos.com). I did not find the 2009 releases as appealing as the recent two vintages but there is a good chance they will improve with more time in the bottle. The style of the wines is masculine and dark fruit-centric.

**2009 Belle Glos Taylor Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$35. 10 acres, yield 1.1 tons per acre, Goldridge loam soil, Dijon clones. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry cobbler, cassis, wet stones and crusty bread. Fairly intense and burly featuring black stone fruits and dark berries with aggressive tannins and a rich mouth feel. Needs time to soften and integrate the tannins. Decent.*

**2009 Belle Glos Las Alturas Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., \$35. This vineyard is located in the southernmost part of the Santa Lucia Highlands which is warmer and exposed to tamer winds than the vineyards in the North. 30.2 acres, yield 1.89 tons per acre. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Fruity nose featuring black plum and berry jam aromas with hints of oak and spice. Oak takes over with time in the glass. Intense fruit core offering flavors of dark raspberry pie filling, plum reduction sauce and oak. Juicy and mouth coating with a soft underbelly and a dry finish. Will benefit from more time in the cellar. Good (+).*

**2009 Belle Glos Clark & Telephone Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., \$35. 76 acres including own-rooted Martini clone dating to 1972. Yield 1.73 tons per acre. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels. *Dark reddish-purple in the glass. Opens slowly in the glass revealing aromas of black stone fruits, herbs, spice and oak. A burly, husky wine with a generous core of dark Pinot fruits accented by notes of anise and vanilla. The texture is silky, the tannins are reserved, and the wine finishes with generous oak-imbued fruit. Good.*





## Bonneau Wines & Vineyard

August and Catherine Bonneau, who were originally from Bordeaux, bought 70 acres of land south of the town of Sonoma in 1921. The Bonneaus farmed the land, ran a dairy, and operated a small country store and delicatessen at the corner of Bonneau Rd and Arnold Dr. (Highway 121). In 1988, their daughter, Yvonne, planted 30 acres of Chardonnay on the property, enlisted the Sangiacomos to farm the vineyard, and began supplying well-known wineries in the region. In 2002, Yvonne's son, John Bambury, introduced Bonneau Wines with the release of a 2002 Estate Los Carneros Chardonnay. Since then the winery has expanded into other red wines sourced from vineyards in Sonoma, Napa and Amador counties. The Pinot Noir program began in 2008 with grapes sourced from a Sangiacomo vineyard nearby off Bonneau Road. John is the Director of Winemaking, working with consultant John Tracy at the old Kosta Browne space at Deerfield Ranch Winery in Kenwood. I sampled the following wines with John at Bonneau's corner, a tasting room and family operated delicatessen (The Carneros Deli, open 10:00 to 6:00 daily). The Bonneau wines are also available for tasting at Cellars of Sonoma in Santa Rosa. The wines are also sold on the website at [www.bonneauwine.com](http://www.bonneauwine.com). All wines are reasonably priced considering the high quality.



**2009 Bonneau Sangiacomo Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$36. A combination of Petaluma Gap and Carneros fruit. 100% de-stemmed, aged in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately intense reddish-purple color in the glass. Reserved dark red fruit aromas leading to a discreetly intense core of dark red berry and black cherry flavors, finishing on a high note with rich red berries. Elegant in manner with supple tannins and a good vein of acidity. Very good (+).*



**2008 Bonneau Los Carneros Sangiacomo Vineyards Pinot Noir** 13.6% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.58, 300 cases, \$34. Clone 115, and small amount of Martini and 777. Aged 16 months in 40% new 36 month air-dried, very tight-grain French oak barrels. Sourced from a Sangiacomo vineyard planted in 1986. *An elegant Pinot Noir offering delicate aromas of red berries, cherries and rose petals. Lighter weighted but charming flavors of red cherries and cranberries, finishing crisp and clean. Very good.*



**2008 Bonneau Catherine's Vineyard Los Carneros Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 900 cases, \$30. Clone 4. Aged 10 months in 55% new French oak barrels, 100% MLF. *Rich and spicy with aromas of citrus and hay and flavors of lemon curd and Asian pear with notable caramel from oak. Good.*



**2009 Bonneau Catherine's Vineyard Los Carneros Chardonnay** \$28. Similar to the 2008 vintage except aged in 33% new French oak barrels. *I prefer this rendition of the vineyard with brighter citrus and white stone fruit, some minerality, brighter acidity and less oak influence. Very good.*



**2009 Bonneau Nectar de Carneros Demi-Sec Chardonnay** 11.6% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.68, RS 9 g/100ml, \$15 (375 ml). A unique wine that is quite popular. Produced without malolactic fermentation in stainless steel tanks and bottled early in 2010. From Catherine Bonneau Vineyard. Harvested at 28.4° Brix, 100% natural yeast fermentation. Gold Medal at San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. *A Vouvray style wine featuring moderate sweetness and appealing flavors of white stone fruits, honey and roasted nuts. Very good.*



## Brogan Cellars

Margi Wierenga initially worked out of a bare-bones, makeshift winery arranged under a carport roof in Sonoma County's Dry Creek Valley. You will find there's a sense of déjà vu at Brogan Cellars, and for a good reason. Besides sharing father Burt Williams' hearty laugh and passion for Pinot Noir, she has pursued a similar course in her winemaking career. Margi was a teenager when her father, Burt Williams, started making the first Williams Selyem wines in a basement beneath their garage in the late 1970s. For several years she worked as a volunteer at her father's winery housed in a garage in Fulton before taking a paid position in 1993 at the Westside Road Allen Ranch facility. In between, she worked in different capacities at Hop Kiln Winery. In 1998, she decided to follow in her father's footsteps and start her own winery.

Brogan Cellars, named after Margaret's ("Margi's") paternal grandmother, has all the earmarks of a mom and pop operation. "It was a bootstrap business run on a lean \$75,000 start up budget," she says. Her husband, Mike, who owns a refrigeration company, is a handy man who rigged up her winemaking equipment. They use small old dairy vats for fermenters and purchased most of the other equipment second hand, including a tiny crusher. The barrel-aging room, office and tasting area are in a tight, 800 square-foot converted garage that Wierenga was happy to call home until 2002, when additional space was obtained in Hopland, 30 miles north of Healdsburg, where the winemaking now takes place. In 2004, Margi and Mike's son James joined Brogan, adding a third generation to the family business. Customers, too, become family at Brogan. During the harvest, many still volunteer to help with the crush.

Margi crafts age worthy Pinot Noirs from premium vineyards in the Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast and Anderson Valley (her father's Morning Dew Ranch, referred to on the labels as "My Father's Vineyard"). At times she produces other varietals as well. Most of the wine (less than 2,000 cases annually) is sold to an eager mailing list the old fashioned way: by a mail-in or fax-in order form. Tasting is by appointment. 707-473-0211. The website is [www.brogancellars.com](http://www.brogancellars.com).

Margi noted in her release newsletter that the 2009 vintage produced "stunning, very dense wines with deep fruit and complexity." Yields were low so production was limited with each bottling totaling 75 cases or less. She estimates that the wines will age for 10-15 years. I recently tasted the Spring 2011 releases from the 2009 vintage. These are richly fruited and darkly colored wines that make a statement. Despite their full-bodied character, they retain a welcoming balance and silky presence. Do not be in a rush to open these.

**2009 Brogan Cellars Hansen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., \$65. *Very dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. This is a curious wine that will not have universal appeal. The vineyard is located next to a dairy and the wine reflects this. It always shows a smoky character and noticeable barnyard on the nose. I pick up old wood, tar and earthy aromas and flavors overlying a core of black cherry fruit. Margi says the barnyard characters get more complex over time and that some customers find this terroir-driven wine to be one of their favorites in the Brogan Cellars lineup. Very soft and smooth with mild tannins. Decent.*

**2009 Brogan Cellars Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., \$75. A blend of two vineyards to the east of the Russian River including the Helio Doro Block of Buena Tierra Vineyard. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Nice array of scents including Bing cherries, baking spices and marzipan. Richly endowed with copious and liquor-like very ripe flavors of framboise, black cherries and sassafras. Dense and palate-staining, and a bit virile for me now, yet offering supple tannins, an appealingly smooth mouth feel and stunning persistence on the fruity finish. Not for wimps. May shed some heft with several years in the bottle. Very good.*





### **2009 Brogan Cellars My Father's Vineyard Shula's Pond**

**Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$70. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy but pleasant aromas of black raspberry tart, dark chocolate and dark red rose petals. Delicious medium-weight flavors of cherry pie filling, cola and mocha. A stunning wine with polished tannins and plenty of pizzazz that tasted even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. This vineyard is really coming in to its own. Margi's favorite from My Father's Vineyard to date and mine too. She expects this wine to age 10-12 years.*



### **2009 Brogan Cellars My Father's Vineyard Margi's Reserve Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**

13.8% alc., \$65. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding aromas of black stone fruits, cassis and oak. Flavors of dark red and black fruits flood the mid palate, brightened by lively acidity, and leaving a lasting impression on the generous finish. Sporting generous grippy tannins that need time to integrate and soften. A smooth and satiny texture is appealing. Wait a few years on this one. Very good.*

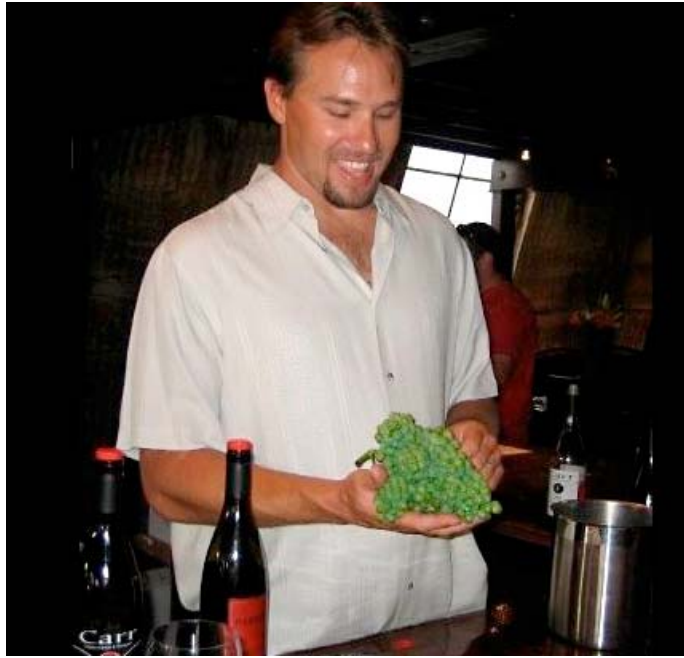


**2009 Brogan Cellars Two Brothers Cuveé Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$55. Sourced from three vineyards by Margi's two sons, James and Bobby, who helped create the blend. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red berries, black cherries, cigar and seasoned oak. A feminine, lighter-styled wine with mildly rich flavors of dark red raspberries, Bing cherries and spice with an oaky, tarry note in the background that should resolve with aging. Decent.*

## **Carr Vineyards & Winery**

This urban Santa Barbara winery has been releasing consistently solid Pinot Noirs from vineyards that Ryan Carr personally oversees through his vineyard management and development company. He is also the owner and winemaker for Carr. The winery's first vintage was produced in Carr's home garage in 1999. Today, Carr produces 3,000 cases of several varietals including Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Syrah, Grenache and Cabernet Franc with a focus on Pinot Noir from Sta. Rita Hills fruit. The Carr tasting room and Wine Bar is open daily and includes wines by the glass, by flight and on tap. Visit the website, [www.carrwinery.com](http://www.carrwinery.com), for online sales of Carr wines. Ryan's spouse, Jessica, handles sales and marketing.

I recently sampled the latest 2009 Carr Pinot Noirs. This vintage offered more elegance, charm and refinement than 2008 with an impressive velvety mouth feel on all the wines. All the wines are fruit-driven, moderately intense and approachable now, especially the Three Vineyards bottling which should be consumed within a couple of years. I suspect the vineyard-designated wines will drink their best within 2-3 years and age another 4-5 years.



**2009 Carr Three Vineyards Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 298 cases, \$45. A blend of grapes from Kessler-Haak, Yard and Turner vineyards. Clones 113, 777, 114, 2A and Pommard. Aged 12 months in French oak barrels. *Attractive aromas of fresh red and black fruits with a hint of vanilla cream and toasted oak improving in the glass over time. Medium-weight core of earthy plum and mixed berry fruit backed by mild firm tannins. A solid wine that lacks a little intensity and definition, but is well-made and perfectly fine for daily drinking. Good.*

**2009 Carr Turner Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 249 cases, \$45. Planted in 2000 by Ryan Carr. 15 acres of Pinot Noir. Yields just over 2 tons per acre. Clones 113, 777 and Pommard. Aged 12 months in French oak barrels. *Complex nose offering aromas of black raspberry pie filling, black cherry, leather glove and earth. Light on its feet with a discreetly concentrated essence of mixed red and black berries, added flavors of brewed tea and plums, with moderate ripe fruit tannins, well-integrated oak, a velvety texture and impressive presence on the lingering finish. Very good.*



**2009 Carr Kessler-Haak Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.5%, 172 cases, \$50. This vineyard was planted in 2005 and has 26 acres of Pinot Noir. Yields were 1.5 tons per acre. Clones 114, 2A and Pommard. Aged 12 months in French oak barrels. *Demure aromas of black raspberries and dark strawberries with a kiss of spice, forest floor and oak. A symphony of delicious black raspberry, rhubarb and plum flavors that really attract your attention. Tannins are well-proportioned and the mouthfeel is all silk and satin. A tasty, seamless wine that really attracts your attention.*



## Copain Wines

Wells Guthrie began his wine career working at the Wine Spectator's San Francisco office as a tasting coordinator. He fell in love with Syrah and moved to the Northern Rhone, working for Chapoutier for two seasons and spending time as well with Jean Louis Chave. Wells then returned to work at Turley Wine Cellars. Today, Wells crafts Pinot Noir, Rhone varietals and Zinfandel at Copain Wine Cellars sourced primarily from

Mendocino County vineyards. Copain Pinot Noirs in the early years were bold and extracted, but since 2007, Wells has chosen a more elegant, lower alcohol, nuanced style that I find more appealing. The offerings are Tous Ensemble Blends (early drinking blends from vineyards in Mendocino County: Rosé, Viognier, Pinot Noir and Syrah), Les Voisons Blends (more distinctive, unique Pinot Noir and Syrah blends from vineyards in Anderson Valley and Yorkville Highlands) and single vineyard wines (allocated to mailing list). Tasting is by appointment. The wines are sold primarily through the website and mailing list with some retail distribution. Visit [www.copainwines.com](http://www.copainwines.com). The winery's tasting room in the Russian River Valley is open Thursday through Sunday and other days by appointment.

**2009 Copain "Tous Ensemble" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 12.9% alc., \$28. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding nose offering hints of ripe dark fruits, brioche and oak. Generous core of tasty black stone fruits and dark berries wrapped in fine tannins and offering a satiny mouthfeel. A solid fruit-driven wine. Good.*



**2009 Copain "Les Voisons" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 13.3% alc., \$40. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Complex aromatic profile featuring scents of dark red berries, black cherries, and warm chocolate croissant. The black raspberry and black cherry fruit has impressive vim and vigor, making a statement on the mid palate and sustaining through the remarkably long finish. An underpinning of dark chocolate and a hint of grapefruit add interest. Easy to be seduced by the perfectly ripe fruit and tender silkiness of this wine.*

## The Donum Estate

Donum translates from the Latin to "gift or donation" and refers to grapes as a gift of the land. The Estate is devoted solely to Carneros Estate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and a Russian River Valley Estate Pinot Noir (from the 11-acre Nugent Vineyard Racke planted in the mid 1990s). Winegrower and President, Anne Moller-Racke, was the Vineyard Manager for Buena Vista Carneros for many years. With the sale of Buena Vista in 2001, Anne split off 200 acres of the Buena Vista Estate to form The Donum Estate as well as to grow grapes and produce wine under the rejuvenated Robert Stemmler Winery label. The Donum Vineyard consists of 70 acres and contains several clonal selections including Calera, Hanzell, Swan and a Roederer selection known as the Donum "clone." Donum also farms the nearby 20-acre Ferguson Vineyard, planted to Martini clone in 1974 by Thomas Ferguson. Special bottlings from the Donum Vineyard have included West Slope, East Slope and Thomas (Ferguson Vineyard). The winemaker is talented Kenneth Juhasz (YOU haas) who mentored under Ken Bernards (Ancien). He became the winemaker for both The Donum Estate and Robert Stemmler Winery in 2005. The Donum Estate wines are sold through a mailing list and an online store at [www.thedonumestate.com](http://www.thedonumestate.com). 2005-2007 vintages of Donum Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir are still available in limited quantities. The winery is not open to the public, but occasional Open Houses are offered.

The 2008 vintage was marked by two major frosts that caused major damage in Donum's vineyards. The Russian River Valley vineyard lost two-thirds of its crop to frost, and in Carneros about 20% was lost. The vines weathered some heat spikes and cool temperatures in mid and late September allowed good hang time.

Donum Estate is now producing remarkably beautiful examples of Carneros Pinot Noir. The 2008 lineup of Pinot Noirs show more elegance and refinement than previous vintages and all are impeccably crafted. The wines are bold in style due to extended maceration and relatively high new oak elevage and will benefit from decanting. If you want to taste what Carneros is all about now, these connoisseurs' wines are a perfect place to start.

**2008 Donum Estate Grown Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., \$65. *Moderately dark reddish-purple in the glass. Initially offers pleasing scents of Bing cherries, sassafras, spice and oak, losing some charm over time in the glass and showing a hint of alcoholic heat. Moderately rich core of tasty cherries with accents of cola, spice and smoke. Silky with restrained tannins and a bright ping of acidity on the finish. Ready to drink now. Good.*

**2008 Donum Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., \$65. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose really draws you into the glass. Enticing aromas of ripe berry preserves, black cherries, brewed tea, forest floor, and oak cask. Medium-weight flavors of black raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries with an appealing earthy and cola accent. The fruit has a bright and refreshing character, lingering on the crisp finish. This wine is definitely more elegant and lighter weighted than previous vintages but I find it equally appealing and interesting because of its strong portrayal of the vintage. Very good.



**2008 Donum Estate Grown West Slope Carneros Pinot Noir**

14.4% alc., pH 3.51, TA 0.69, 170 cases, \$85. From a special 5.5-acre site at the Donum Ranch planted to the Roederer selection that has been the mainstay of the Donum Carneros Pinot Noir. In some vintages, it becomes more complex when blended with a small amount of old Martini selection but in 2007 and 2008 it is a stand-alone wine from the West Slope. 100% de-stemmed, 10% saignee immediately after crushing, 6-day cold soak, inoculated primary fermentation, three week extended maceration. Aged 16 months in 75% new French oak barrels including Francois Freres. Moderate garnet in color in the glass. Lovely aromatic profile of fresh berry tart, wood spice, and redwood bark. Ambrosial flavors of dark red cherries and berries with a hint of sandalwood and Asian spice. Very classy, elegant juice, with amazing aromatic persistence on the lavish finish. Perfectly integrated tannins and bright acidity make for satisfying drinkability now. Still great two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating this wine will age beautifully.



**2008 Donum Estate Grown Thomas Carneros Pinot Noir**

14.4% alc., pH 3.34, TA 0.75, 101 cases, \$100. This special release is named for Thomas Ferguson, the owner of Ferguson Block, a 1974 planting of Martini selection Pinot Noir. In 2008, Mr. Ferguson celebrated his 100th birthday. 100% de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak, native primary fermentation, 3 manipulations daily including punch downs and pump overs. A selection of best barrels. Aged 16 months in 100% 1-year-old Billon French oak barrels. The lightest in color of the 2008 Donum wines reviewed here. This wine is currently rustic and rugged, but what potential. Aromas of black cherry, wood smoke, old leather and oak. Intense and mouth coating fruit that really grabs your attention upon entry. Dark berries and cherries are featured that are fresh, vivid, soil-infused, tarry and smoky. The bright acidity leads you to take another sip and the big finish has Grand Cru persistence. A unique expression of terroir and clonal selection that needs a few years to find its footing, but will last many years beyond this.



## Gros Ventre Cellars

A new producer of small lot Pinot Noir from cool climate vineyards in Sonoma and Mendocino counties. The inaugural releases were from the 2009 vintage totaling 300 cases. The winery is off to a smart beginning. Chris and Sarah Pittenger launched the idea of a winery on the banks of Gros Ventre River near Jackson Hole where they met in 2003. Gros Ventre (grō' vânt') translates in French to "Big Belly," and the name for the new winery not only refers to this romantic meeting, but to Sarah's pregnant belly during the 2009 vintage and their son, John Henry, who was born the same year. Chris Pittenger worked at noted wine retailer, Wally's in Los Angeles, later becoming a sommelier, and finally developing his winemaking skills at Biale, Torbreck, Williams Selyem and Marcassin. The six vintages spent at these wineries gave him a solid background for working with Pinot Noir. Gros Ventre wines are available through a mailing list and the winery's online store at [www.grosventrecellars.com](http://www.grosventrecellars.com).



**2009 Gros Ventre Baranoff Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

14.4% alc., 50 cases, \$44. From a 3-acre vineyard in the heart of Sebastopol. This wine is a blend of the 7 Pinot Noir clones on the site: Calera, Swan, 113, 115, 459, 667 and 777. The clones were co-fermented and aged together on their lees. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red berries and black cherries with a hint of baking spices, oak and lavender. Even with decanting the wine is a bit closed, but opens some in the glass over time. Crisp and vivid core of Bing cherry and strawberry fruit with a swirl of cola and oak. Medium weighted with nice balance and finesse, and offering a lengthy finish. Drank beautifully two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. No hurry on this one. Very good.*



**2009 Gros Ventre Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**

14.0% alc., 151 cases, \$44. A combination of Pommard 5 (one-third) and 2A (two-thirds) clones from this steeply sloped vineyard overlooking the Anderson Valley. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding black fruits with a hint of sweet oak on the nose which opens slowly in the glass. Delicious core of perfectly ripe and well-bred black and purple Pinot fruits. A little savory, spicy and earthy. Ideal weight, balance and flavor intensity with a generous finish marked by brisk acidity. A complete wine that shows breeding. Decant if you open a bottle now, but patience will bring further rewards.*



**2009 Gros Ventre First Born Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., 101 cases, \$50. A flagship cuveé representing the best lots of a vintage. This bottling is dominated by fruit sourced from an unnamed vineyard along the true Sonoma Coast. *Dark and densely colored in the glass. The nose leaps out from the glass with of scents of spiced black cherries, raspberries, plums and faint herbal oak. Rich and intense, saturating the palate with plush sweet fruits that find every nook and cranny in the mouth. Lively natural acidity maintains the wine's vitality and supple tannins make for smooth, seductive drinking. This wine is a little too busy for me but it will find many fans. Decanting is obligatory. Very good.*



## Kent Rasmussen Winery

Kent Rasmussen is not a highly visible Pinot Noir winemaker but he is highly respected among those in the know when it comes to Carneros Pinot Noir. A University of California Davis graduate, he developed his winemaking skills at Robert Mondavi Winery, Domaine Chandon, Stellenbosch in South Africa, and Saltram's Wine Estate in Australia. In 1979, he planted 6 acres of Pinot Noir in Carneros, at a time when there were few vineyards in the region. He gradually increased his plantings and gained early recognition with Pinot Noir from his estate vineyard beginning in 1986. Winemaking, which began modestly in a tractor shed barrel room on Cuttings Wharf Road in Napa Carneros, is currently performed in St. Helena. Kent Rasmussen Winery may be the only continuous producer of Napa Carneros Pinot Noir from a single vineyard and by a single vintner for over 25 years. Rasmussen also has a Pinot Noir clone named after him. Rasmussen produces several varietals along with Pinot Noir and a sister label, Ramsey, started in 1989 using his wife's maiden name, offers value priced wines aimed for the restaurant and retail market. A third label, Esoterica, is built around Petite Sirah. Grapes are either estate grown or under long-term contract with established growers. Tours and tasting are available by appointment at the winery on the Silverado Trail in St. Helena (707-963-5667). I am embarrassed that I have not sampled more of Rasmussen's "Purely Poetic" Pinot Noirs as the one reviewed below was outstanding.



**2007 Kent Rasmussen Winery Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.55, \$40. Grapes for this vintage were picked at night for the first time and at a much lower sugar level than recent vintages. Kent feels that the 2007 "is one of the most complex and long lived Pinot Noirs that I have ever made." Aged in 40% new and 6-% once-used Hungarian oak barrels. *Moderate light in color with a reddish tone in the glass. Aromas of cherry cobbler and sassafras. Delicious and elegant with a bright core of black cherry fruit accented with a kiss of toasty oak and mocha. Ephemeral in style with supple tannins, impeccable balance, and oozing pinotosity. This is a wine that impresses with style and doesn't knock you over with fruit. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A wine winemakers dream of making.*



## La Rochelle Winery

Livermore, California, would not be high on any one's Pinot Noir list, but La Rochelle Winery is Livermore's best kept Pinot secret, specializing in 4,000 cases of small lots of Pinot Noir from leased vineyards. Founder Steven Kent Mirassou acquired the label from the Mirassou family in 2005 and moved the base of operations to Livermore. The winemaker, Tom Stutz, who has more than 25 years of Pinot Noir winemaking experience, crafts several Pinot Noirs sourced from multiple appellations in California and Oregon. The portfolio of wines include whites, sparkling wines, rosés, appellation wines (Pinot Noirs from Santa Lucia Highlands and Santa Cruz Mountains), single-vineyard wines (Pinot Noir from San Vicente Vineyard in Monterey, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands, and a Pinot Meunier from Four Sisters Vineyards on the Sonoma Coast) and Pinot Noir Program exclusives available to wine club members only. A tasting room is open each afternoon in the Livermore Valley and the wines are also sold through the winery's online store at [www.lrwine.com](http://www.lrwine.com).



**2010 La Rochelle Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Rosé** 13.2% alc., 157 cases, \$22, screw cap. Released April 16, 2011. Pommard and Mariafeld clones. *Pretty pinkish coral color in the glass. Very pleasing aromas of blood oranges, bananas, strawberries and pink lemonade. Crisp and tangy on the palate with a tasty array of red berry, guava, melon and orange flavors. I really liked this wine, put the partially emptied bottle in the refrigerator, and polished it off over the next two days. I don't often get excited by a rosé, but this one caught my eye. I am buying some of this perfect summer afternoon drink for myself.*







**2009 La Rochelle Four Sisters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Meunier** 14.0% alc., 70 cases, \$38. Released May 1, 2011.

Winemaker Tom Stutz. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Really attractive nose offering an array of aromas including black cherries, wild dark berries and a hint of vanilla, holding up nicely over time in the glass. Very tasty core of dark red cherries and berries with accents of spice, oak and vanillin. Medium-weighted with plenty of finesse, restrained tannins and good acidity, finishing light, clean and smooth. A bit off the beaten track and for that reason very enticing.*



**2008 La Rochelle La Cruz Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 15.3% alc., 171 cases, \$48. Released January 22, 2011. Clones 115, 667 and 828. *Moderately deep reddish-purple hue in the glass. Brooding aromas of black cherries, black tea, oak and Asian 5-spice. Rich and intense core of darker stone fruits and berries with slight underlying oak flavor. Plenty of fruit but lacks nuance and character. Decent.*

## Longoria

Rick Longoria is a veteran winemaker in Santa Barbara County who first appeared in the region in 1976 after spending two years at Buena Vista Winery in Carneros where he developed a friendship with Andre Tchelistcheff. Currently, he crafts 3,500 cases of several varietals from his winery in Lompoc under the Longoria label which dates to 1982. He sources grapes from his 8-acre estate Fe Ciega Vineyard, Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard, Bien Nacido Vineyard and the Sanford & Benedict Vineyard. A tasting room is open daily in Los Olivos. Wines are available for purchase online at [www.longoria.com](http://www.longoria.com).

I recently sampled the first of the 2009 Longoria Pinot Noirs. The vintage offered ideal weather and balanced crop levels. The wines are nicely crafted in a sweetly fruited style with the Rancho Santa Rosa bottling showing the most restraint and charm.

**2009 Longoria Lovely Rita Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.55, 355 cases, \$32. A blend of clones 115, 667 and Pommard from the Fe Ciega Vineyard. Since 667 is the most intense and tannic clone, it was fermented in a Ganimedes tank from Italy that uses carbon dioxide created by the fermentation to gently pump over the juice without any breaking of the skins or seeds resulting in softer tannins. The tank also allows peak temperature to be controlled enhancing the aromatics. Aged 11 months in 25% new French oak barrels and aged 6 months in bottle before release. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Appealing perfume of dark berries and plums with a hint of pine, vanillin and spice. Moderately rich in intensity with pleasing array of sweet dark fruits and flavors of mushu plum sauce and slight red licorice and pine pitch. Smooth on the palate with reserved tannins. Highly drinkable now. Good (+).*



**2009 Longoria Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.58, 150 cases, \$45. 100% de-stemmed, 4-day cold soak, inoculated fermentation, 18 days on skins, aged 10 months in 30% new French oak barrels. Lightly fine and filtered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of brier, sage, coffee and mocha. Long in the mouth with tasteful darker berries and cherries that are dominated by oak-driven flavors including coffee and mocha. Smoothly textured with moderate ripe fruit tannins. A little fruitier the following day but still sporting prominent coffee flavor from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Oak should integrate with cellaring, but at this time I can only rate the wine as Decent.*

**2009 Longoria Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.58, 110 cases, \$45. Clone 667. 3-day cold soak, inoculated fermentation, 12% whole clusters in one bin, aged in 30% new French oak barrels. Fined and filtered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Fruity nose featuring dark red berries and cherries and a hint of oak. Delicious core of discreetly rich strawberry, black raspberry and black cherry fruits with a subtle hint of citrus peel in the background. The most seamless, feminine and satiny wine of the 2009s tasted. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Ready for current drinking. Very good.*



## Sonoma Coast Vineyards

John and Barbara Drady founded this label with the 2002 vintage concentrating on wines sourced from the extreme or true Sonoma Coast. The winemaker is veteran Anthony Austin who has experienced 35 vintages in California. A University of California Davis graduate, Austin studied under the great Andre Tchelistcheff. He help found and directed the first crush at Firestone Winery in 1976, the first modern-day commercial winery in the Santa Barbara region. After leaving Firestone in 1981 to establish his own label, Austin Cellars, he crafted two legendary Pinot Noirs in 1982 from Sierra Madre Vineyard and Bien Nacido Vineyard.

Sonoma Coast Vineyards was sold in 2007 to Vintage Wine Estates, with John Drady staying on as a managing partner and Austin continuing as winemaker. The label was changed, but extreme Sonoma Coast vineyard sources remained intact. The emphasis is on vineyard-designated wines with several single vineyard Pinot Noirs, a Blanc de Noir, two single vineyard Chardonnays, a Sonoma Coast Chardonnay, a single vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, and a single vineyard Syrah. The wines are available through the website store at [www.sonomacoastvineyards.com](http://www.sonomacoastvineyards.com). Tasting is offered at Vintage Wine Estates Tasting Room in downtown Healdsburg.

The Sonoma Coast Vineyards Pinot Noirs are vinified in an extracted style using long cold soaks and generous new oak treatment.

**2007 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Balistreri Family Vineyard Freestone View Block Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.50, 342 cases, \$75. Released June 2010. Clones 114, 115, 667, 777 and 828. 20% whole cluster, extended 10-day cold soak, hand punch downs, inoculated to finish fermentation, aged 18 months in 70% new 36 month air-dried Sirugue French oak barrels. Lightly fined and filtered. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. With coaxing, red and black fruit aromas emerge set off by scents of forest floor and oak. Nicely composed with well-mannered tannins embracing a tasty medium-weight core of black cherries and black raspberries with an earthy undertone and a kiss of mocha, finishing with a slight grip of citrus on the big finish. A smooth mouth feel completes the experience. An interesting wine that changes in the glass over time. Decanting suggested if you open a bottle now. Very good.*



**2008 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Petersen Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.60, 185 cases, \$50. Released October 2010. This vineyard was planted in 1999 and is located in the far southwestern corner of Sebastopol. Soil type is Goldridge sandy loam. 20-25% whole cluster. Clones 115, 667 and 777. 10-day cold soak, hand punch downs, inoculated to complete fermentation. Aged 17 months in 65% new 36 month air-dried Sirugue French oak barrels. Lightly fined and filtered. *Lovely aromas of red and black berries, spice, rose petals and moss. Flavors of plum, blueberry and blackberry offered in an elegant style with supple tannins and admirable persistence on the stylish finish. Impeccable balance suggests age ability. Very good.*

**2008 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Balistreri Vineyard Bodega Ridge Block Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.62, 117 cases, \$50. Inaugural release of this wine. Sourced from the western parcel of the Balistreri Vineyard located in Freestone overlooking the town of Bodega. Soil type is Goldridge. Clones 114, 777 and 828. 20%-25% whole cluster. 10-day cold soak, hand punch downs, inoculated to finish fermentation. Aged 18 months in 65% 36 months air-dried Sirugue French oak barrels. Lightly fined and filtered. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of plum sauce, exotic spices, black currants, dark chocolate and seasoned oak. Intense core of sweet black cherry cola flavor persisting on the fruit-driven finish which leaves a*

*subtle hint of tar in its wake. Smooth in texture, with good tannic support. A fruit lovers wine that is similar to the 2007 Balistreri Family Vineyard bottling but veers to riper flavors. Good.*

**2007 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Sea Fog Cuveé Sonoma Coast Blanc de Noirs Sparkling Wine** 12.8% alc., pH 3.08, Residual sugar 1.8 g/L, 480 cases, \$25. Sourced from several vineyards adjacent the coast enveloped in fog daily resulting in a high acid profile ideal for producing *méthode champenoise* sparkling wine. 92% Pinot Noir, 8% Chardonnay. Aged *sur lees* in bottle for 32 months. Disgorged June 2010. *Delicate light apricot color. Fine bead, pleasing aromas of blood oranges, red berries and yeast. Moderately rich flavored featuring layered notes of citrus, red berries, pear, cherry skins and yeast with a mineral underpinning. Bright, crisp and refreshing. Very good.*

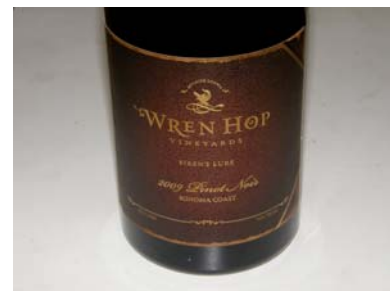


## Wren Hop Vineyards

A new family winery owned by partners James McDonough and his father James McDonough, Sr., who are both wine geeks. James notes, "Some families play Monopoly, this family would rather debate rootstock and French barrel selection." The winemaker is former syndicated wine columnist Russell Bevan (Bevan Cellars, Showket Vineyards, Drystack Cellars, Harbison Wines), the viticulturist is Greg Bjornstad, and the estate vineyard management is under the direction of Glenn Alexander of Bacchus Vineyard Management. McDonough has assembled an impressive team and his website and wine labels are very professional and provocative. As the website points out, the wren, not the eagle was the King of birds in ancient times. Each of the wines tells of a mythic tale of the wren. The inaugural wines come from the 2009 vintage. The wines are sold through a mailing list and an online store at [www.wrenhop.com](http://www.wrenhop.com). Besides the wines reviewed below, there is a 2009 Estate Omens & Prophecy Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$60). A winery to watch. Listen to Russell Bevan on Grape Radio: <http://www.graperadio.com/archives/2008/07/14/talking-wine-with-russell-bevans/>.



**2009 Wren Hop Vineyards Siren's Lure Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 212 cases, \$54. *Moderate reddish-purple color and slight haze in the glass. Complex aromatic profile offering bright scents of dark red berries and cherries, dusty road, seasoned oak, spice and cut flowers. Moderately rich core of dark red cherries and raspberries with a hint of mocha, vanillin, spice and savory dried herbs. Interesting, layered and seamless. Holds up beautifully in the glass over an hour's time. Still great the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very impressive debut.*



**2009 Wren Hop Vineyards Shipwreck Sailor Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 202 cases, \$42. *Straw color with slight haze in the glass. Shy white stone fruits and buttered brioche on the nose. Fairly intense flavors of white peaches, melon, citrus and oak, all combined in a creamy, rich style that lingers on the flamboyant finish. Good (+).*

# Pinots of Distinction



**2009 Bjørnstad Hellenthal Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pre-release. *Moderate reddish-purple color with slight haze (unfiltered) in the glass. Earthy black stone fruit and berry aromas and flavors predominate with an exotic bent. Well-mannered sinewy tannins beautifully frame the fruit and the whole package is seamless. This wine has that rugged, musky, wild appeal common to true Sonoma Coast bottlings and is a joy to drink. Hellenthal Vineyard Pinot Noir typically takes a few years to reach its full expression and this wine should follow that theme although it is hard to resist now. Source: mailing list, website.*



**2009 Bjørnstad Van Der Kamp Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pre-release. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding nose offering shy aromas of blackberries and cassis with a touch of toasty oak. Another beautifully crafted wine with a luscious core of berry flavors, well-integrated oak, supple tannins, satiny mouth feel and a hint of savory herbs on the silky finish. Mountain Pinots can sometimes be daunting, but this one is unplugged and very charming. I suspect cellaring will bring the nose to life. Source: mailing list and website.*



**2009 Cartha Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$26. *Deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely scented with aromas of dark stone fruits and ollaliberies, spice and a complimentary touch of oak. Richly endowed with a striking dark fruit core accented with flavors of anise, tea and smoky oak all robed in modest tannins. The fruit really attracts your attention and the smooth mouth feel is very seductive. Very good (+).*

**2008 Dept C Vista Verde Vineyard San Benito County Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.55, \$40. This producer crafts small lots of Pinot Noir from family farmed vineyards. Pommard clone from a vineyard block planted in 1988. 10% whole cluster. Aged in 20% new oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding nose with demure scent of black cherry and oak. Nicely flavored with discreetly concentrated black cherry and raspberry essence supported by restrained oak. Supple tannins with a dry finish. Source: website. Good.*

**2009 Dept C Paraiso Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, \$35. Clone 777, de-stemmed. Aged in second year and neutral oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red cherries and berries with a hint of toasty oak, fading in the glass over time. A delicate wine with demure flavors of cherries and strawberries and subtle oak. Decent.*

**2009 En Route Les Pommiers Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$60. From the partners of Far Niente. A blend of grapes from Graton Vineyard, Amber Ridge Vineyard and Manzana Vineyard and includes Pommard 5 clone, a variety of Dijon clones, and heritage selections. Andrew Delos is the winemaker. Aged 11 months in 50% new, 35% once-used and 15% twice-used French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lovely array of aromas including Bing cherries, strawberry shortcake, sandalwood and vanillin. Medium weighted flavors of fresh redder cherries and berries with supportive oak in the background carrying through to the finish. A seamless and elegant wine with supple tannins and easy approachability although further cellaring will allow for better integration of the oak. Source: mailing list and retail. Very good.*



**2007 Eric Kent Freestone Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc.. *Moderate reddish-purple color in glass. The nose offers considerable pleasure as it emerges over time in the glass showing bright aromas of dark red stone fruits and striking spice box perfume. Very soft and smooth in the mouth with moderately intense flavors of redder fruits, offering a pleasing elegance and balanced tannins. Some aromatic persistence on the finish adds to the pleasure. Source: sold out. Very good (+).*





**2009 Eric Kent Small Town Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., 288 cases, \$45. From 65% Freestone Vineyard and 35% Roberts Road Vineyard in the Petaluma Gap. Label photograph from Rofe Horn. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Shy but very pleasant perfume of dark red berries, black cherries, Asian spice and cola, becoming more expressive in the glass over time. Vigorous with dark red fruit flavor, complimented by notes of saffras and spice including clove. Possessing plenty of character with svelte tannins and welcoming acidity on the generous finish. Really spectacular two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Best Pinot ever from Eric Kent.* Source: mailing list and retail.



**2008 Esterlina Cole Ranch Reserve Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pre-release. From California's smallest appellation (253 acres) owned by the Sterling Family, proprietors of Esterlina. The appellation is located west of Ukiah on Highway 253 within the Mendocino appellation. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Terrific aromas of spicy black cherry, black raspberry and rose petal. Beautiful dark berry fruit accented by notes of earth, cola and oak. Plenty of fine-grain tannins nicely support the hearty fruit core. Picks up intensity over time in the glass. A very classy wine that should improve in the cellar.* Source: website. Very good.



**2009 Esterlina Cole Ranch Reserve Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pre-release. *Moderate reddish-purple hue in the glass. The aromatic profile is similar to the 2008 vintage of this wine but more reserved. Aromas of spiced black cherries and blackberries. Lovely mid palate array of fruit including black cherries and black raspberries with hints of spice and vanilla. Silky and crisp with restrained tannins and a welcoming acid lift on the fruit-filled finish. I kept coming back to this wine. Still a youngster, but already spectacular.* Source: website and wine club.



**2009 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 154 cases, \$54. Release June 16, 2011. Aged 15 months in 33% new French oak barrels and 6 months in bottle. *Moderate ruby color in the glass. This wine aims to please with aromas of dark cherries and berries, anise, and spice and similar flavors with an earthy, savory undertone. Medium weighted and moderately dense with a well-honed tannic backbone and a seductive silkiness. Much better with brighter fruit flavors the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Decant if you open now, but patience will bring more rewards.* Source: mailing list and website. Very good (+).



**2008 Ghostwriter Aptos Creek Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., \$40. *Moderately dark purple color in the glass. Perfume of plum pudding, cardamon and oak spice. Riper, sappy fruit flavors of black plums, plum sauce and blackberries in a medium to full-bodied style. Admirable finesse and smoothness on the palate with moderate tannins, complimentary oak and some persistence on the finish.* Source: website and retail. Good (+).




**2009 Gracianna Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 290 cases, \$48. Released May 2011. From the Amador Family who have been ranching in Sonoma County for generations. Young Trini Amador, IV, began making wine at age 15 in his family garage, and went on to earn a degree in enology and viticulture. Winemaking was traditional with aging in French oak barrels for 11 months. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of red cherries and strawberries backed by complimentary oak. A lighter, elegant offering centered on cherry flavor with accents of cola, sassafras, vanilla, spice and herbs. Picks up interest over time in the glass becoming more vivid and praiseworthy. Gentle and easy to drink.* Source: website. Very good.




**2009 J. Lohr Fog's Ranch Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.57, 1,113 cases, \$35. Pommard 4 and Clone 777, with small amounts of 115 and 667. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, inoculated primary and secondary fermentations, aged 8 months in 60% new and 40% third fill French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Fruit-forward nose with bright aromas of black cherries, plum reduction sauce, spice and vanillin. Well-endowed with generous sweet black stone and blackberry fruit with a prominent accent of oak and a hint of brewed tea. The mouthfeel is velvety and the tannins are supple. Finishes with a little alcoholic heat. Will benefit from another year in the bottle to further integrate the oak.* Source: websites, tasting rooms, retail. Good.

**2008 Lynmar Estate Quail Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.62, 729 cases, \$60. Composed of 14 clones including old Swan vines. De-stemmed, 7-10 day cold soak, native yeast fermentations, total skin contact 14-18 days, basket pressed, aging on light to full lees for 15 months in 55% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. Winemakers Hugh Chapelle and Bibiana Gonzalez Rave; consulting winemaker Paul Hobbs. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is very seductive with a perfume of fresh cherries and berries, spice and graham. Delicious essence of black cherry tart with hints of cola and Dr. Pepper and noticeable oak presence. Smooth on the palate with polished tannins and a lingering finish. A bold wine that is drinking beautifully now, but will last 7-10 years with proper cellaring.* Source: tasting room, website, some retail. Very good.



 **2009 Nugguccier Cellars Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.68. 38 cases, \$25. Inaugural release from Russ and Nancy Briley. Sourced from Riverbench Vineyard. Martini clone. Name is pronounced "New ga shay," and is a combination of the owners' two dogs' names: Nugget and Gucci. Vinified with consultant Mike Brown of Cantara Cellars at RNB Wineworks in Camarillo, CA. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of strawberries and rose garden. An elegant and easy drinking wine offering demure flavors of red berries and cherries with a hint of spice and sandalwood. Soft on the palate with supple but noticeable tannins, offering commendable balance. Unusually light and red fruited (not in a negative sense) for a Martini clone Pinot Noir.* Source: website. Good (+).



 **2009 Patianna Organic Vineyards Mendocino Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., \$19.99, screw cap. Made from organic grapes grown in certified organic vineyards. Proprietor is Patti Ann Fetzer, the first woman in the Fetzer clan to launch her own label. *Moderate reddish-purple hue in the glass. Initially the nose offers bright aromas of dark berries and black cherries with a touch of oak, fading a bit over time in the glass. Fairly intense flavors of very ripe black cherries and berries with an underpinning of oak and herbs adding a savory note. The fruit is framed by well-mannered dry tannins and supported by a solid acid backbone. Impressive persistence on the slippery finish.* Source: website, retail. Good.

**2009 Patz & Hall Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$42. Released September 2010. Sourced from Gap's Crown Vineyard (Petaluma Gap) as well as fruit from growers including the Dutton Brothers, William Hill, the Martinelli family, Charlie Chenoweth and Steve Hill. Wild and cultured fermentation. Aged in 40% new Burgundian French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of black fruits including plum with complimentary oak spice. Moderately intense and tasty array of black fruits, caressed by mild grippy tannins, exhibiting a vibrancy on the generous finish. A smooth, almost milky, texture is pleasing. Seamless and well-crafted. Year in and year out (since the first Sonoma Coast release in 1995) this is a dependable Sonoma Coast bottling that is favored by sommeliers.* Source: website and retail. Very good.



**2007 Scherrer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$32. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely appointed nose with aromas of black cherries, dried rose petals, framboise and Moroccan spices. The aromas are strikingly fruity and become more spiced over time in the glass. Rich core of black cherries, dark strawberries, black raspberries, with baking spice and herbs in the background, framed by supple tannins. The flamboyant finish clings to the palate. A voluptuous wine from a superb vintage that has staying power in the glass and is hard to resist.* Source: website, mailing list, retail. Very good.



**2008 Schug Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., \$24. *Moderately light ruby color in the glass. The nose is dominated by aromas of oak, smoke and herbs with cherries and berries in the background. A darker fruited wine that is more savory than fruity with prominent smoky oak initially. Much better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle showing more vibrant fruit and less oak. Very "Burgundian" in style. A silky texture makes for easy drinking and the bright acidity lifts the finish.* Good.

**2009 Valerie's Vineyard One Acre Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 75 cases, \$40. From a small vineyard in the southern Sonoma Valley farmed by three families. Produced and bottled at B.R. Cohn Winery. Aged 18 months in new and twice-used French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Lovely aromas of ripe cherries, red plums and Provencal herbs. Moderately light in weight with "crunchy" red cherry and red raspberry flavors and a sidecar of savory herbs, cola, raisin and vanillin. Picks up character and intensity in the glass over time but veers a little to the raisiny, porto side. Admirable finesse and a zippy lift of acid on the refreshing finish. A lighter weighted, redder-fruited vintage for this vineyard.* Source: website and Hi-Time Cellars in Costa Mesa, CA. Good.



**2009 Waxwing Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 82 cases, \$30. Released April 2011. A blend of two Sonoma Coast vineyards: Toboni and Flocchini. Clones are Pommard, 115 and Swan. Aged 14 months in once-used French oak barrels.

*Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely composed array of aromas including black cherries, baking spices and sandalwood. Mouth watering cherry and raspberry fruits accented with the slightest oak spice and vanillin finishing bright and crisp with a mineral note. Elegant with silky fine-grain tannins. This is a very easy drinking, food-friendly wine that I could drink all night long. Best yet from owner and proprietor Scott Sisemore who is shifting his focus from Russian River Valley to Sonoma Coast fruit.* Source: website.



**2009 Windsor Sonoma Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 496 cases, \$30. *Medium garnet color in the glass. Lovely and complex nose offering bright scents of black cherries, black raspberries, spice, pine and sandalwood. A blast of cherries saturates the mid palate maintaining an impressive intensity on the long finish. A touch of cola, pine, oak and roasted nut flavors add interest.*

*Moderate intensity with fine dry tannins. Plenty of Pinot pleasure at the right price.* Source: website and retail. Very good.



# Chardonnays of Interest

I came across an interesting article in *Science* (Vol 285, September 3, 1999) titled, "Historical Genetics: The Parentage of Chardonnay, Gamay and Other Wine Grapes of Northeastern France," written by John Bowers, Jean-Michel Boursiquot, Patrice This, Kieu Chu, Henrik Johansson, and Carole Meredith (several authors were from University of California Davis). 322 cultivars of *Vitis vinifera* taken from the vineyards at University of California Davis and the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique at Domaine de Vassal, near Montpellier, France were analyzed.

16 cultivars, including Chardonnay, had genotypes consistent with their being the progeny of a single pair of parents: 'Pinot' and 'Gouais blanc.' This study was important because it had been speculated that Chardonnay might have been of foreign rather than French origin, possibly coming from the Middle East.

The determination that 16 varieties are the progeny of 'Pinot' is not surprising since the grape has been in Burgundy for a very long time. The authors point to references to a variety that was probably 'Pinot' that go back as far as the Roman agricultural writer Columella in the first century A.D. They speculate 'Pinot' may have been in the Burgundy region at the time of the Roman conquest. What was surprising, however, is that the other parent was 'Gouais blanc,' a mediocre variety with yellow-gold berries that is no longer planted in France. The authors point out 'Gouais blanc' was at one time planted throughout northeastern France, but in less desirable sites, with the best sites reserved for 'Pinot.' It is likely 'Gouais blanc' was introduced to France from an eastern European origin, possibly by the third century Roman emperor Probus.

Because 'Pinot' and 'Gouais blanc' were planted throughout northeastern France in proximity, it is probable that the crosses occurred here, although other crosses may have occurred in disparate regions of Europe as well.

The parent of the dark-berried cultivars, including 'Gamay noir,' was probably 'Pinot Noir.' Some of the light-colored progeny may have had 'Pinot gris' or 'Pinot blanc' as a parent.

The following Chardonnays were tasted recently. None are "naked" (produced without oak or MLF).

## Bjørnstad Cellars

Greg Bjørnstad ("Byurn-sted" is Norwegian for "bear place") has an impressive resume as an accomplished viticulturist, including international vineyard consulting. His well-known clients have included duMOL, Hirsch, Kistler, Kosta Browne, Paul Hobbs, Pisoni and Scott Paul. In 2005 he founded his eponymous label concentrating on vineyard-designated Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from vineyards that he has personally worked with for many years. Winemaking is non-interventional in its purist form. The Chardonnay pressing regime is dictated by the vintage and condition of the fruit as to choice of whole cluster or de-stemmed. Native yeast fermentation is employed with most clones. Aging is carried out on the lees in barrel with about 50% new French oak. 100% MLF, unfiltered and unfiltered. Chardonnay sources include Ritchie Vineyard (Russian River Valley), Barbed Oak Vineyard (Bennett Valley), and Keefer Ranch (Green Valley) which makes up most of the Sonoma County bottling. Total average production is 800 cases. I was very impressed with the 2007 vintage Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs and can recommend Greg's wines without reservation. The 2009 Chardonnays reviewed here are all beautifully crafted with charming restraint impeccable balance and extremely well integrated oak. The wines are sold primarily through a mailing list and online ([www.bjornstadcellars.com](http://www.bjornstadcellars.com)).

**2009 Bjørnstad Cellars Sonoma County Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., Unreleased. *Straw color with slight haze (unfiltered) in the glass. Shy aromas of citrus peel, brioche, brown butter and stainless. Demurely flavored with notes of lemons, white peaches and buttered brioche. Slightly creamy in texture. A solid offering. Good.*





**2009 Bjørnstad Cellars Barbed Oak Vineyard Bennett Valley Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., Unreleased. *Golden straw color with slight haze (unfiltered) in the glass. Terrific nose offering scents of petrichor, crabapple and poached apple. Varied flavors including peaches, bananas foster, brown butter, roasted nuts and a hint of citrus. A uniquely flavored wine with a slightly creamy texture, finishing with a bright lift of acidity and impressive persistence of fruit.*



**2009 Bjørnstad Cellars Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., Unreleased. *Yellow-straw color with slight haze (unfiltered) in the glass. Appealing aromas of apples, roasted almonds, and subtle butter accent. Delicious core of crisp green apples, marzipan and spice. Discreet but flavorful with bright acidity that drives one to take another sip. A superb rendition from this iconic Russian River Valley Chardonnay vineyard.*



## Patz & Hall

Patz & Hall have been producing premium Chardonnay since 1988 and Pinot Noir since 1995. The winery is a joint effort between winemakers James Hall and Anne Moses and the sales and marketing team of Donald and Heather Patz. The portfolio includes two Sonoma Coast cuvées (a Chardonnay and a Pinot Noir) and a selection of vineyard-designate bottlings from several winegrowing regions. The grapes for each program are treated exactly the same in the vineyard and in the winery; the difference is the way they imagine the wines. The Sonoma Coast Chardonnay has a significant amount of fruit from Gap's Crown Vineyard as well as other growers such as the Martinelli family, Charlie Chenoweth and Steve Hill. The Dutton Ranch Chardonnay has been a vineyard-designate since 1998. This wine incorporates the oldest vines farmed by the Duttons, dating to 1969 and the average vine age for this blend is about 20 years. The Hudson Vineyard Chardonnay is in its fifth vintage. Farmer Lee Hudson shares a special block of Hudson Vineyard planted to Hudson-Wente and Dijon 95 clones. The Chardonnays are characterized by well-mannered primary oak and toast related aromas and flavors. The wines are sold through the website with the Sonoma Coast wines entering the retail and restaurant marketplace. The winery has a tasting salon in Napa (visit [www.patzhall.com](http://www.patzhall.com)).

**2009 Patz & Hall Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., \$35. Released March 2011. A blend of fruit from Gap's Crown Vineyard, Durell Vineyard, Dutton Ranch and Zio Tony Ranch. Whole cluster pressed, wild and cultured yeast fermentations, aged *sur lie* with weekly stirring, 100% MLF, aged in 40% new Burgundian French oak barrels. *Light straw color in the glass. Faint scent of citrus fruits and pear with a noticeable oak presence. Tasty core of lightly fruited flavors of baked pear, lemon, green apple and brioche, finishing with high-strung acidity, austere fruit and generous toasted oak. Decent.*

**2009 Patz & Hall Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., \$39. Released November 2010. A blend of California heritage clones and selections including Robert Young, Rued, Hyde-Wente, UC Davis clone 4 and Spring Mountain. Whole cluster pressed, wild and cultured fermentations, aged *sur lie* with weekly stirring, 100% MLF, aged in 40% new Burgundian oak barrels. *Light straw color in the glass. Scent of lemon curd, banana, roasted nuts and wet grass. Moderately rich core of white peach, pear, green apple and oak flavors, sprightly on the palate with a bright and refreshing finish marked by toasted oak. Good.*

**2009 Patz & Hall Hudson Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., \$55. Released March 2011. From a unique block in the Hudson Vineyard that allows longer hangtime. The Hudson Vineyard was founded in the 1980s by Lee Hudson and is considered one of the most prized sources of Chardonnay in Carneros. Whole cluster pressed, 100% indigenous yeast fermentations, aged *sur lie* with weekly stirring, 100% MLF, aged in 40% new Burgundian French oak barrels. Unfiltered. *Light straw color in the glass. Shy aromas of pear, brioche and petrichor. Delicious essence of baked apples with accents of pear jam, baking spice and toasty oak. Juicy and mouth filling, bright and clean, with a refreshing grip of acidity on the long finish. A wine of high pedigree that has the balance to last many years in the cellar. Very good.*



**2009 Gracianna Suzanne's Blend Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., 148 cases, \$34. Released May 2011. The Amador Family of Sonoma County named their brand after their French Basque great-great grandmother, Gracianna Lasaga. This wine was made from fruit by a well-known Russian River grower. Unfined and unfiltered. *Straw color and clear in the glass. Shy but pleasing aromas of lemon zest, pear, white peach and hay. Modestly crisp and slightly creamy with flavors of baked pear, toasted bread and fresh herbs, finishing with a good acid snap. Good.*

**2009 Knez Winery Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay** 14.0% alc., \$30. A new producer who now owns Demuth and Cerise vineyards in the Anderson Valley. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Aromas of stewed apple. Flavor of apple with a slight medicinal note. Lacks flavor intensity, brightness and interest. I have had incredible Chardonnays from this vineyard but this wine falls short. Decent at best.*



**2008 Lynmar Estate Quail Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.3% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.59, 694 cases, \$40. 100% estate grown and bottled from the 42-acre Quail Hill Vineyard. Whole cluster pressed, 45% new French oak barrels, mostly native yeast fermentations, aged on the lees with weekly stirring, 100% MLF, aged 15 months. Winemaker Hugh Chapelle. *Light straw color in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, vanilla custard, seasoned oak, buttered toast and Cracker Jack. Very tasty fruit core featuring prominent pear flavor with notes of white peach, creme brulee and tasty oak, finishing dry with a hint of caramel. Soft in the mouth, even slightly creamy. A thoroughly enjoyable wine that improves in the glass over time.*



# No Need to Blush When Drinking Rosé

Pinot Noir Rosé is a favorite of mine, particularly as the weather warms in the dog days of summer. No need to blush or feel embarrassed to admit you like dry Rosé for it is one of the world's most versatile food companions. Dry Rosé has become *de rigueur* in restaurants in Paris (often as Pinot Noir versions from Sancerre or Grenache from southern France), Spain (where it is often made from Tempranillo and called *rosado*), Italy (often crafted from Sangiovese and called *rosato*), and picnic tables here in the United States. (from red grapes that a winery specializes in, but often Pinot Noir). There are many devotees, a number of which are members of Rosé Avengers and Producers (RAP), founded in 2005 to preach against wine racism and right the wrongs done to dry Rosé ([www.rapwine.com](http://www.rapwine.com)). The organization holds Pink Out! gatherings to celebrate fine Rosé.



Pink-hued wines made from Pinot Noir go by many names including Rosé, blush, and vin gris, with the term 'blush wine' coming into popularity in the 1970s. Rosé is the French word for pink. Vin gris (van GREE) is French for gray wine. The French refer to dark-skinned grapes as black or noir and grapes that are somewhere in between black and white as gris. There are no pink grapes (grapes with pink skins) per se, but red-skinned grapes can produce wine that is dark red, pink or white. Rosé can be made from any red grape, but Pinot Noir Rosé from California and Oregon is very popular.

Rosé wines are not new, having introduced many neophytes to wine over the last fifty years. Slightly sweet Mateus and Lancers Rosés were a favored quaff of young people of my baby boomer generation. Jay McInerney (*Bacchus & Me* 2002) remarked: "Back in the summer of 1973 I probably derived just as much pleasure from that first bottle of Mateus as I have from any number of first-growth clarets since. Maybe more. I had just acquired my driver's license, I was in the company of my first love; the night and, beyond it, the entire summer stretched out ahead of me like a river full of fat, silvery pink-fleshed fish. And that was what the wine tasted like. It tasted like summer." More recently white Zinfandel, which is the third best-selling varietal wine in California, has filled the role. These slightly sweet rosés appeal to the American soda pop palate, but often lead to interest in serious, bone-dry versions which have become increasingly popular.

Rosé is intended to be drunk immediately while it is fresh, although serious examples may improve in the bottle for a year or two. There are three methods of production. The first, adding red wine to white wine, has fallen out of vogue and is mainly reserved for sparkling rosés. The second approach involves lightly crushing the grapes, chilling them, and cold macerating them for up to 48 hours. The juice is then drained off and fermented in stainless steel in a manner similar to the production of white wine. The third method, *saignée*, eliminates the cold soak. Whole or crushed grapes go into a fermentation vat, the color is periodically checked, and the free run juice is drained or bled off to finish fermentation in a separate tank. In the last two methods, fermentation is completed without further skin contact, leaving the most of the color, flavor compounds and tannins in the skin behind. The juice is typically bottled shortly after fermentation with no oak barrel aging.

Pinot Noir Rosé is best served slightly chilled at 55°F (warmer than refrigerator temperature of around 35°F). No contemplation is needed, for these wines are to be enjoyed for their refreshing charm. Many examples are bottled in screw cap. Unfinished bottles can be closed and kept in the cellar or refrigerator for a few days without significant loss of flavor.

Unfortunately, wineries do not produce Pinot Noir Rosé in significant quantities, despite its popularity. Pinot Noir grapes are expensive, vinification can be costly when a serious Rosé is crafted, and yet the wines demand only a half or a third of the price of a premium Pinot Noir. The wines reviewed below, ranged in price from to \$15 to \$30. The wines are typically released in the spring of the year following harvest and disappear rapidly from the marketplace.

The packaging of Rosé is often quite alluring. Unusual bottle shapes and colorful labels are frequent. Names can be creative (“Pink Belly,” “Kinky Pink,” “Endless Crush,” “Pink Fiddle”). Colors can range from a faint apricot to a deep strawberry red, reflecting the length of contact between the wine and the skins (In photo below from upper left clockwise: Ellipsis, Ott, and Calera). The aromas are often shy and not particularly complex. Unlike Pinot Noir, where much of the enjoyment comes from smelling the wine, the pleasure of rosé comes from the bright flavors more than the perfume. Tannins are minimal, making the wines a perfect accompaniment to summer fare including hot dogs, sausages, hamburgers, grilled chicken and seafood, chicken salad, crab or shrimp Louis, and my favorite, a BLT sandwich.



Two Rosés that stood out are reviewed elsewhere in this issue: **2010 Inman Family Endless Crush Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Rosé** and **2010 La Rochelle Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Rosé**. I added a French Rosé to this tasting for comparison.

**2010 Calera 35th Anniversary Central Coast Vin Gris of Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$16. 60% San Ysidro Vineyard (Santa Clara County) and 40% Doctor's Vineyard (Monterey County). *Deep strawberry color in the glass. Scent of red berries and red plums. Drinks more like a lighter-weighted Pinot Noir than a Rosé with fairly hearty flavors of red berries, cherries and subtle herbal oak, finishing with on a dry, crisp note. Source: website and retail. Decent.*

**2010 Cartha Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir Rosé** 12.9% alc., \$15. *Light pink coral color in the glass. Shy nose offering demure aromas of blueberries, pear and wet rock. Restrained and soft in the mouth with subtle flavors of red berries, peaches and herbs with a lively kick of acidity in the background. A pleasant, but simple wine. Good.*





**2009 Domaines Ott Côtes de Provence Chateau De Selle Rosé** 13.5% alc., \$21. Imported by Maisons Marques & Domaines Oakland, CA. *Cool bottle shape. Very light orange color - more orange than California versions. Aromas of slate, cut flowers and almond paste. Restrained flavors of oranges, apricots, nutmeg, nuts and caramel. A very classy wine that shows less emphasis on fruit than California versions of Rosé. Very smooth and dry on the palate. I really liked this wine and saved it for later drinking.*



**2010 Ellipsis Wine Company Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., \$15, screw cap. *Pale pink with a very slight spritz upon pouring. Lovely array of fresh scents including strawberries, watermelon, rose petals, wild flowers and nuts. Crisp, bright and dry with flavors of red berries and blood oranges and a slight grassy, herbal note in the background. An edgy wine that is everything a Rosé should be. Source: website (e-mail inquiry) and retail (Raley's Markets, Sonoma County).*



**2009 Emtu Labyrinth Vineyard Sonoma County Rosé of Merlot** 12.4% alc.. All profits support humanitarian projects. Last Rosé as Merlot vines have been grafted over to Chardonnay. *Pale burnished orange color in the glass. Slight spritz initially. Scent of red plum, ripe berries and marzipan. Smooth and light with mature flavors echoing the nose with an added underpinning of brioche. Lacks a bit of liveliness on the finish. Source: winery. Decent (+).*

**2010 Etude Estate Grown Carneros Rosé** 13.8% alc., \$16. *Pale pinkish-orange color in the glass. Very shy nose with faint aromas of red berries, citrus and new hay. Light and shallow with a core of red berry and orange peel flavor and a welcoming tang on the finish. Source: winery and retail. Decent.*

**2010 Lynmar Estate Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.67, 340 cases, \$25, screw cap. *Light red rose color in the glass. Shy but pleasing aromas of red berries, cherries and summer herbs. Moderately intense and creamy for a Rosé with bright flavors of raspberries and strawberries that linger on the finish. A polished wine of great interest. Source: website and winery. Very good.*

**2010 MacPhail Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$17. *Light reddish-orange color in the glass. Aromas of oak, herbs and barnyard. Fairly intense flavors of alpine strawberries with hints of licorice and savory herbs, and a prominent tug of oak. Lacks finesse, freshness and brightness. Source: winery and retail. Decent.*



**2010 Robert Sinskey Vineyards Los Carneros Vin Gris of Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$26. Tall Riesling style bottle. *Medium salmon color in the glass. Very aromatic with scents of orange zest, melon, strawberry and summer bouquet. Moderate in weight with appealing flavors of blood oranges, cherries and red berries. A crisp and clean wine that will work beautifully on the summer table. One of California's best producers of Rosé. Source: website and limited retail.*



# Pinot Briefs

**Vinify Wine Services Home to Many Pinot Producers** Vinify Winery in Santa Rosa is a modern custom crush facility housing a number of boutique Pinot Noir vintners. An in-house collective tasting salon will be opening soon and the first ever Vinify Winery Collective Tasting & Sales Event was held on June 11 for the trade and public. Notable producers of Pinot Noir at Vinify include: Baker Lane, Bjornstad Cellars, Lattanzio Winery, Sojourn Cellars, Barbed Oak Vineyards, Argot Wines, Desmond Wines, Frostwarch Vineyard & Winery, Olson Ogden Wines, Gracianna Winery, Vaughn Duffy Wines, Wren Hop Vineyards & Winery, and Kanzler Vineyards.

**Pinot Dieback in Sonoma in 2011** A strange syndrome affecting Sonoma Pinot Noir this spring in which top leaves curl and burn off similar to sulfur burn. Termed "Pinot dieback" or "Pinot leaf curl," it has been considered a more extreme version of a milder leaf curl common with Pinot Noir in cool weather. Clones 115, 777 and Pommard are most affected. The dieback is a physiologic change and not insect-induced. Leaves have been observed growing back and it is thought that the problem will not affect the overall crop.

**The Wine House Pinot Noir Futures** The Wine House in Los Angeles holds a Santa Barbara Futures tasting each year. An exclusive pre-arrival sale is still going on until June 30 for those who did not attend. Good values on Pinot Noirs from Ampelos, Cargasacchi, Clos Pepe, Costa de Oro, Flying Goat, Foxen, La Fenetre, Lea, Melville, Ojai Vineyard, Paul Lato, Point Concepcion, and Samsara. Visit [www.winehouse.com](http://www.winehouse.com).

**Hotel Healdsburg Partners with Williams Selyem** A "Behind the Scenes with Williams Selyem" package offers a chance to visit the winery which is closed to the public. The package includes a Deluxe Guest Room, a welcome bottle of 2005 Williams Selyem Blanc de Noir, and tour and tasting at the new Williams Selyem Winery, and a chef's tasting menu dinner for two at Dry Creek Kitchen. Available June 1 - October 21, 2011. Contact the Concierge Desk at 707-922-5249 or e-mail [concierge@hotelhealdsburg.com](mailto:concierge@hotelhealdsburg.com).

**Recent Wine Business Monthly Closure Survey** Natural cork is still the dominant closure for 750ml wine bottles among the wineries surveyed in California, Washington, Oregon, New York and Virginia. Screw caps have now reached parity with technical corks and synthetic closures. Synthetic closures are primarily used by large wineries. Closures like Vino-Seal, Vino-Lok and Zork are not widely employed but their usage is increasing. Amorin, the cork supplier, has reported recently that 70% of wines are closed with cork stoppers, 16% with metal screw caps and 14% with plastic. Aluminum screw caps can be recycled, and plastic stoppers can be as well if they are marked with a chasing arrows symbol. Natural cork cannot go in the recycling bin and is not compostable. Wine drinkers can recycle real cork stoppers through ReCork or Terracycle.

**Crushpad Moves Headquarters from Napa Valley to Sonoma** Foley Family Wines, the parent company of Sebastiani and a major investor in Crushpad, has struck a financial deal to allow Crushpad to move its primary winemaking facility to a portion of the historic Sebastiani Winery in downtown Sonoma. Crushpad plans to open a tasting bar at this new location later this year, allowing more than 100 Crushpad clients to offer their wines for sale. Crushpad also plans to have interactive wine education stations, and host pouring seminars and events in the new location. Clients will still be able to make wine in the Napa Valley at Bin to Bottle. Crushpad has produced more than 5,000 wines since its founding in 2004 in San Francisco (1 out of every 100 wines sold in the US). A full list of vineyards available for prospective winemakers is listed at [www.crushpadwine.com/vineyardlist](http://www.crushpadwine.com/vineyardlist). I will be visiting the new headquarters in June to taste a number of Pinot Noirs vinified at Crushpad and will report on my experience in a future issue.

**Portland Urban Wineries** A new association has formed to increase the visibility of Portland urban wineries that include Grochau Cellars, Hip Chicks Do Wine, Vincent Wine Company, Helioterra Wines, ENSO Winery and Seven Bridges Winery. Urban wineries are becoming the modern day "garagistes," and are quite popular among urbanites. The organization's first tasting event, PDX Urban Wineries Premier was held June 12 at The Slate in Portland. Visit [www.pdxurbanwineries.com](http://www.pdxurbanwineries.com).

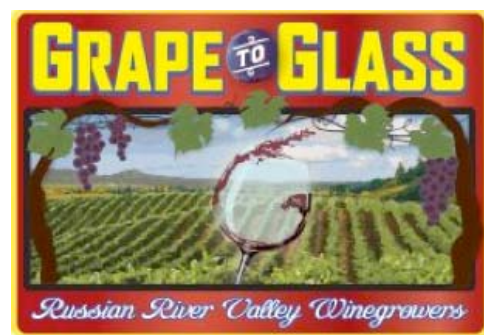
**Carlton's Walk in the Park** This event benefits local charities and offers gourmet foods from local restaurants, fine wines, talented musicians, and colorful art. Notable Yamhill-Carlton participating wineries include Anne Amie, Belle Pente, Carlton Winemaker's Studio, Elk Cove Cellars, The Four Graces, Luminous Hills-7 of Hearts, Penner-Ash, Scott Paul Wines, Solena Cellars, and Soter Vineyard. Held at Wennerberg Park in the quaint town of Carlton, Oregon, on Saturday, July 23 and Sunday, July 24. Admission is only \$15. Visit [www.carltonswalkinthepark.com](http://www.carltonswalkinthepark.com) for more information.



**Farm Dinners** There are currently two major traveling farm dinner organizations that set up tables outside in a farm or vineyard, occasionally in a barn or greenhouse, source food from local purveyors and artisans, and serve a wine-paired feast. Ingredients are determined by what is fresh the day of the dinner. Farm to Fork Events is located in Oregon and was founded by Chef Matthew Domingo. Big Table Farm in Gaston will be the featured winery at an August 20, 2011 dinner. For a list of this season's dinners, visit the website at [www.farmtoforkevents.com](http://www.farmtoforkevents.com). The same idea has become extremely popular in California where Outstanding in the Field conducts wine-paired dinners at farms throughout the state as well as the nation. The OITF crew revitalized a 1953 red and white tour bus that carries the team of Caleb Coe, Jeremy Fenske and Elaine Skinner and others from site to site. Meals are prepared by celebrated chefs of the region. Farmers, producers, culinary artisans and diners share the long table. OITF was launched in 1999 by chef and artist Jim Denevan. Some people have been known to follow the bus around, attending several dinners in succession. For this year's list of dinners (many of which are sold out), visit [www.outstandinginthefield.com](http://www.outstandinginthefield.com).

**Startling Facts to Ponder** The *Wine Enthusiast* reported the following general statistics in the May, 2011 issue. Millennials offer a huge wine market as half the world's population are under 30 years of age. 96% of Millennials belong to a social network, and Facebook would have the world's third largest population after China and India. 67% of Millennials get wine information online, compared to 47% of Boomers. 30% of Millennials and 61% of GenX are tweeting about wine. At the 33rd Annual Russian River Valley Barrel Tasting held over two weekends in March 2011, Millennials made up a large portion of the estimated 27,000 people who attended.

**Many Summer Wine Events in West** July 12: Sonoma in the City, San Francisco ([www.sonomawine.com](http://www.sonomawine.com)); July 14: Forks & Corks, City Scape in Phoenix, AZ ([www.forksandcorks.com](http://www.forksandcorks.com)); July 16: Passport to Wineries of Santa Cruz Mtns ([www.scmwa.com](http://www.scmwa.com)); July 21: Taste of Terroir - Livermore Valley Wine & Food Experience, Pleasanton ([www.lvwine.org](http://www.lvwine.org)); July 22-23: Chardonnay Symposium, Santa Maria ([www.thechardonnaysymposium.com](http://www.thechardonnaysymposium.com)); Aug 1-7: San Francisco Chefs 2011, San Francisco's premier food, wine and spirits week, Union Square ([www.sfchefs2011.com](http://www.sfchefs2011.com)); Aug 12-14: Wine & Fire, 10th Anniversary of Sta. Rita Hills AVA ([www.staritahills.com](http://www.staritahills.com)); Aug 19-21, Grape to Glass, Russian River Valley ([www.rrvv.org](http://www.rrvv.org)); Sept 3: Taste of Sonoma, MacMurray Ranch, Healdsburg ([www.sonomawinecountryweekend.com](http://www.sonomawinecountryweekend.com)).



**Adelsheim "Best of Vintage" Pinot Noir** A prestige cuvée, "Vintage 29," represents the epitome of the Adelsheim Vineyard and will not be made in every year. The first release is from 3½ barrels of Pinot Noir from the 2006 vintage. 972 bottles are available from the winery at \$140/bottle. A 3-bottle vertical of 2008 Vintage 31 and 2009 Vintage 32 is available for \$500. Visit [www.adelsheim.com](http://www.adelsheim.com).

**6th International Wine & Heart Health Summit** This biannual event is being held in Oregon for the first time in the heart of the Willamette Valley at the Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg. I look forward to this conference as it brings together winemakers, winery owners, physicians, and researchers from around the world to discuss and exchange ideas about wine and health and the biology of wine. This year's event includes private winery tours, special tastings, and a black tie wine dinner and auction featuring auctioneer Matt Kramer. Honorary Co-Chairman is Donald R. Olson, MD, FACS, founder and owner of Torii Mor Winery in Dundee, Oregon. Visit [www.winesummit.com](http://www.winesummit.com) to see the full program.



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**Moderate Alcohol Decreases Risk of Dementia** A recent study from Germany has shown that moderate intake of alcohol protects against dementia in people over the age of 75. The daily consumption of alcohol decreases the risk of dementia by nearly 30 per cent compared to nondrinkers and the risk is another 30 percent lower for people who imbibe one to two standard drinks a day. The study also found that the risk of Alzheimer's Disease, a specific form of dementia, is similarly reduced with light to moderate alcohol consumption. Other scientific researchers have considered this study to be vary valid, even after controlling for factors such as better education, absence of depression, more social contact and not living alone. The study also confirmed what other similar research has demonstrated, namely, that the beneficial effects of light to moderate alcohol consumption for those with dementia are significantly increased in wine drinkers compared to those who drank beer or spirits.

**New Wine Label Laws in Canada - US Next?** Beginning in 2012, a new Canadian labeling law requires that both domestic and imported wines that contain proteins that might cause allergy display a warning label that states, "Contains eggs, fish, or dairy," as well as sulfite information. The labeling only applies to wines that have potential allergens remaining in the finished wine, that is, wines that are fined but not filtered. A similar law was proposed in 2006 in the United States but has not been enacted and remains voluntary. Opponents of this labeling requirement point out that allergic reactions to fining agents such as isinglass, albumin and casein are extremely rare and those with serious food allergies should probably avoid wine completely anyway.



**West Sonoma County Wineries** Eleven wineries within 11 miles now offering many events. Wineries include 1-Balsetto Vineyards & Winery, 2-Dutton Estate Winery, 3-Dutton-Goldfield Winery, 4-Freestone Vineyards, 5-Graton Ridge Cellars, 6-Hanna Winery & Vineyards, 7-Iron Horse Vineyards, 8-Miramar Estate Vineyards & Winery 9-Red Car Winery, 10-Russian River Vineyards, and 11-Taft Street Winery.



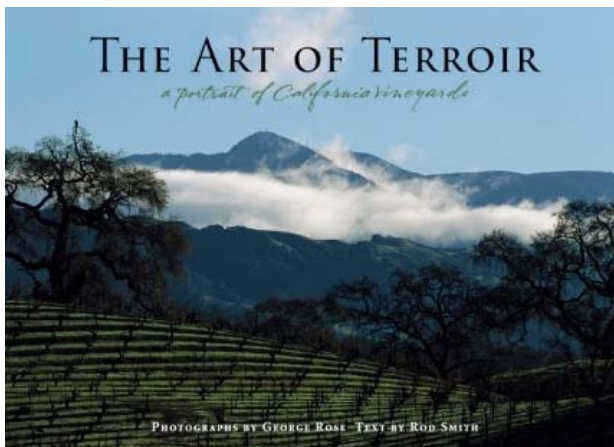
**R<sup>2</sup> Wine Company Opens Tasting Room** Roger Roessler, who founded Roessler Cellars, and brother, Richard who has been part of the winemaking team at Roessler Cellars, have opened a tasting room for their new label, R<sup>2</sup> (R squared) at 653 Broadway in Sonoma. Grand Opening Week was June 10-17. R<sup>2</sup> Wine Company offers single vineyard and appellation blended value wines including Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Rhone Red and Rhone White, Grenache Blanc and Rosé. In addition, limited production wines are sold only through the tasting room and to wine club members. Visit the website at [www.r2winecompany.com](http://www.r2winecompany.com).

**WOW Wine Festival** West Sonoma County Vintners (not to be confused with West Sonoma County Wineries above) is having an inaugural event, the West of West (WOW) Wine Festival August 5-7, 2011, in Occidental. The highlights on Saturday are a seminar on older Pinot Noirs with Burt Williams and Ted Lemon, a Grand Tasting of wineries in the association, and a Whole Hog Feast with season 3 Iron Chef contestant Duski Estate of ZaZu Restaurant. Open houses will be held Sunday at all participating wineries including Peay, Red Car, Littorai, Failla, Freeman, Freestone, Flowers, Martinelli, Cobb, Hirsch, Miramar Torres, Patz & Hall, Ramey, Boheme, Ceritas, Evening Land, Benziger, Fort Ross, Small Vines, Benovia, Chasseur, Lioco and Whetstone. For information and tickets, visit [www.westsonomacoast.com](http://www.westsonomacoast.com).

**2008 DRC Retail Prices** Brother, can you spare several hundred c-notes? Echezeaux - \$650, Grands Echezeaux - \$825, La Tache - \$1,700, Montrachet - \$2,850, and Romanee-Conti - \$9,000.

**Sta. Rita Hills Wine & Fire 2011** The Sta. Rita Hills AVA is celebrating its 10th Anniversary with a revival of the Wine & Fire event, August 12-14, 2011. On Friday, August 12, tastings in locations on the eastern and western boundaries of the region are offered. Saturday morning will feature an in-depth tasting with the important winemakers and wines of the past decade, and a look at the future of the Sta. Rita Hills. The seminar will be held at Rancho El Jabali, Richard and Thekla Sanford's heritage vineyard. Panelists will include Richard Sanford, Rick Longoria, Bruno D'Alfonso and Kathy Joseph as well as upcoming winemakers, who will each select a wine that they believe is their best representation of the AVA over the past ten years. Saturday evening there will be a wine tasting reception in the courtyard of the historic La Purisma Mission in Lompoc that will include fire-grilled foods. Winery members of the Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance will be open to all visitors through the weekend. A full listing of events will be posted on the Sta. Rita Hills Winegrowers Alliance website ([www.staritahills.com](http://www.staritahills.com)).

**George Rose Photography** For decades George Rose has covered Hollywood, sports stars, Western landscapes and wine country. He led a remarkable career at the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Time Magazine*. In 1990, he traded a career in photojournalism for wine, focusing on wine country photography. Currently, Rose is Public Relations Director at J Vineyards & Winery. Visit the website at [www.georgerose.com](http://www.georgerose.com) to order the book "The Art of Terroir," or to purchase other wine country photography and fine art prints.



**Sogno del Fiore 6th Annual Wine Tasting Dinner** Jerry Fiore hosts this annual event at his beautiful home in the Santa Ynez Valley (2045 North Refugio Rd., Santa Ynez) on Saturday, August 20, 2011. Benefiting People Helping People and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, "The Gathering II" includes a Champagne reception, wine tasting with prominent California wineries, and food from recognized chefs in Santa Barbara County. Featured Pinot Noir wineries include Arcadian, Carr Vineyards & Winery, Kosta Browne, Melville, Paul Hobbs, Pisoni, Roar, Sinor-LaVallee, Seagrape Wine Company, and Siduri. Featured chefs are from The Ballard Inn, The Brothers Restaurant at Matteo's Tavern, Chef Rick's Ultimately Fine Foods, Full of Life Flatbread and Trattoria Uliveto. Tickets are \$145 per person with a discount for Friends of Friends Wine Club Members (see [www.sognodelfiore.com](http://www.sognodelfiore.com)).

**Pinot Family Reunion** The 7th Annual Pinot Family Reunion will be held Sunday, July 10, 2011, at John Ash & Co. at Vintners Inn in Santa Rosa. The event includes a Wine & Food Tasting from 1:00-4:00 (\$50) followed by a Family Style Dinner at 5:00 (\$120 all inclusive). Proceeds benefit the Sutter North Bay Woman's Breast Care Center and the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Sonoma County. Participating Pinot Noir vintners include: Alysian, Amphora, Benovia, Dionysus, Emeritus, Ferrari-Carano, Gracianna, Graton Ridge Cellars, Hartford, Holdredge, Iron Horse, James Family Cellars, John Tyler, Kokomo, Kosta-Browne, La Crema, Lazy Creek, Littorai, MacMurray Ranch, MacPhail, Martin Ray, Martinelli, Merry Edwards, Moshin, Old World Winery, Orogeny, Paradise Ridge Winery, Paul Hobbs, Roessler Cellars, Siduri, Small Vines Wines, Suacci-Carcierre, T.R. Elliott, and Trecini Winery. Visit [www.vintnersinn.com](http://www.vintnersinn.com) for information and tickets.

**Wally's 8th Annual Central Coast Wine & Food Celebration** This annual event will be held Sunday, July 31, 2011, from 1:00 to 4:00 at Wally's (a wine retailer) in West Los Angeles. The Michael Bonaccorsi Scholarship Fund at University of California Davis Department of Enology is the benefactor. Many notable Central Coast wineries will be pouring along with signature dishes from renowned restaurants including Hitching Post II, Spago Beverly Hills, CUT, Bouchon Beverly Hills, Lucques/A.O.C./Tavern, The Hungry Cat, Osteria & Pizzeria Mozza, Bouchon Santa Barbara, The Wine Cask, La Brea Bakery, Jar, Melisse, and Chef Rick's Santa Maria. A silent auction includes special wines, winemaker-led-tours, tastings, luncheons and dinners, and travel packages. Tickets are \$95 (\$149 for VIP ticket). Visit [www.wallywine.com](http://www.wallywine.com).

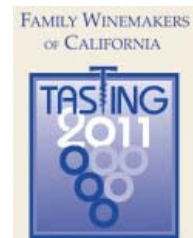


**Oregon Cult Pinot Noir Cruise 2012.** On June 25, 2012, join Oregon winery founders and winemakers including Rollin and Corby Soles of Argyle and ROCO wineries and Dick and Nancy Ponzi of Ponzi Vineyards, on a 10-day cruise from Barcelona to Athens. Visit [www.foodandwinetrails.com](http://www.foodandwinetrails.com) or call 800-367-5348 for details.

**Chehalem Winery has Wine on Tap** To celebrate its 25th harvest anniversary release, Chehalem Winery has started a new program in the Newburg, Oregon tasting room, offering wine on tap. Consumers can buy a 1-liter branded bottle for a \$5 deposit, the fill it up with the 2009 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir or the soon to be released 2010 INOX Chardonnay. The refillable bottles hold significantly more wine than a 750 ml bottle, yet are priced the same. Visit [www.chehalemwines.com](http://www.chehalemwines.com).

**Society of Wine Educators' 2011 Conference** The 35th Annual Conference will take place in Providence, Rhode Island, August 3-5, 2011. Both pre-conference and conference activities will be held on the campus of Johnson & Wales University, the largest educator of hospitality professionals in North America. This year's plenary session will focus on Portugal, including a comparative tasting of fortified wines including Port, Madeira and Moscatel. Over 50 guided lectures and tastings on wine, beer and tea will be offered. A winery tour of Rhode Island will follow the conference. If you are not a member of the Society of Wine Educators, you can still get the member rate to the full Conference by using code PRCON11. Visit [www.societyofwineeducators.org](http://www.societyofwineeducators.org).

**Family Winemakers of California 21st Annual Wine Tasting** The public is invited to the Festival Pavilion Fort Mason Center in San Francisco for this huge annual wine tasting. More than 325 wineries will be pouring a variety of wines at this showcase for small, family owned wineries. This year there will be take away wine sales offered. Visit [www.familywinemakers.org](http://www.familywinemakers.org) for information and tickets. As in 2010, Family Winemakers of California is co-sponsoring a resolution in the California Legislature opposing H.R. 1161.

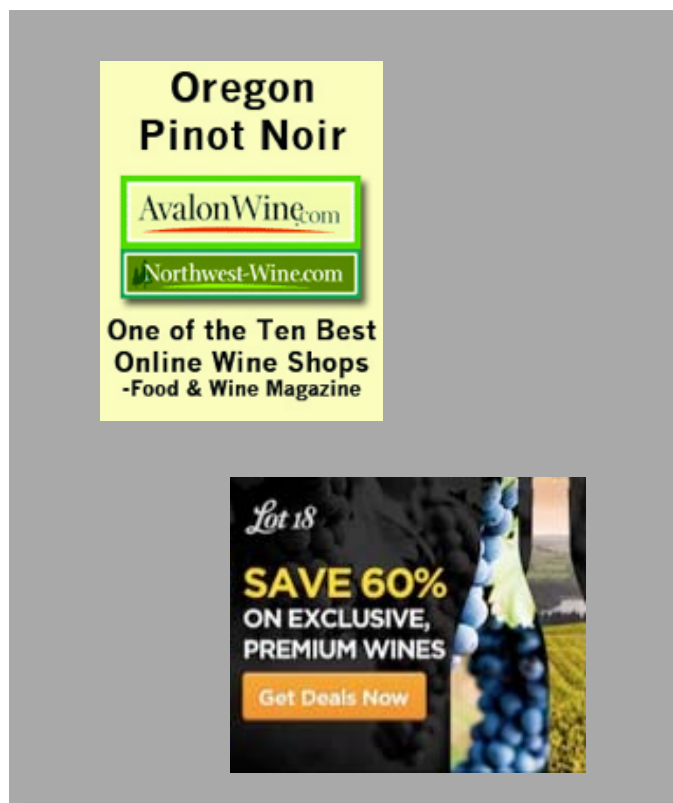


**Sacré bleu! French Drinking Less Wine** A report recently from *The Telegraph* ([www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)) stated that French wine consumption had dropped by three billion bottles to just four billion in two generations. That is equivalent to one bottle per adult each week. 16.5% of the French wine population are regular wine drinkers, but the younger generations are drinking less often regularly with meals and show decreased awareness of the significance of wine in French culture.

**J. Christopher Winery Begins Phase II Construction** The winery and its "Appassionata" Vineyard are a joint venture project between German winegrower, Ernst Loosen, owner of Dr. Loosen and a Pinot Noir lover, and veteran Oregon winemaker, Jay Somers, founder of J. Christopher. Phase I of construction, the underground barrel cellars, was completed in 2010 and Phase II which includes fermentation rooms, crush pad, bottling room and lab space, will be completed in time for the 2011 harvest. At full build-out, the winery will have a production capacity of 8,000 cases of Pinot Noir and 2,000 cases of Sauvignon Blanc and other white wines. The construction is being undertaken with the utmost care and respect for the environment. The adjoining Appassionata Vineyard will be dry farmed and managed using biodynamic principles. The winery is located at 17150 NE Hillside Drive, Newberg, Oregon. For more information, visit [www.LoosenBrosUSA.com](http://www.LoosenBrosUSA.com).

**Napa Valley Mexican-American Vintners Association (NVMAVA)** Mexican-American vintners, growers and wine industry notables have organized NVMAVA, a nonprofit organization formed to promote Napa and Sonoma County wines produced by Mexican-American vintners and the contributions of Mexican-Americans to the California wine industry. To commemorate the founding of NVMAVA, a wine and food event called Bautizo (Spanish for "Christening") will be held on Saturday, July 30, 2011, at Maldonado Vineyards in Calistoga. At the event, the NVMAVA log will be unveiled and attendees will be able to sample wines from member wineries including Alex Sotelo Cellars, Ceja Vineyards, Delgadillo Cellars, Encanto Vineyards, Maldonado Family Vineyards, Marita's Vineyards, Mi Sueño, Renteria Wines, Robledo Family Vineyards, Rios Wine Company and Voces Wines. Napa Valley chefs will offer small bites. Tickets are \$85 per person in advance. Only 200 attendees will be admitted. For tickets and information, visit [www.nvmava.org](http://www.nvmava.org).

**Bronco Wine Company's Charles Shaw Wines Win Top Medals** Charles Shaw wines sell for \$1.99 per bottle (\$2.99 in some states) and over 600,000,000 bottles have been sold at Trader Joe's. The wine has become known as "Two-Buck Chuck." The 2009 California Pinot Grigio won Best of Class/Gold Medal and the 2009 California Shiraz won Double Gold/Best of Class and nine other medals in three major wine competitions (2011 Pacific Rim International Wine Competition, 2011 California State Fair Wine Competition, 2011 Jerry D. Mead's New World International Wine Competition). Several other Charles Shaw wines won lesser medals in 2011. Is it possible they can do it with Pinot Noir?



## Ads Appear in the *PinotFile*

It has always been my intention to refrain from advertisements in the *PinotFile* other than promoting Pinot Noir and other wine related events. Fortunately, the financial rewards of my previous career as an ophthalmologist have allowed me to pursue wine writing in its purest and most independent form. I accept no press junkets to wineries or regions, pay for most of my travel expenses, purchase a significant number of wines I review, and have no financial interest in any winery, wine business, or distributor.

The *PinotFile* is free to subscribers, and although it remains a noble and thoroughly redeeming endeavor, I have chosen to improve my coverage of the ever-expanding Pinot Noir West Coast universe by adding some modest income by permitting wine related advertisers that hold special merit on my site.

**Avalon Wine** ([www.avalonwine.com](http://www.avalonwine.com) or [northwest-wine.com](http://northwest-wine.com)) is a top source for getting your mitts on Noiregon juice. This retailer dates back well over twenty years when it was founded by Jean Yates. She has been well-connected in the Oregon wine industry since its early beginnings and seems to know practically everyone who crafts wine in the state. Her computer background and writing skills lend educational and visual interest to her website. Yates also operates a retail store in the over 100-year-old Corvallis Arms Hotel in downtown Corvallis. Oregon has an open and non discriminatory direct-shipping law allowing Yates to ship wines throughout Oregon and any other state that permits wine shipments. You can even phone Jean personally on her direct line for any special requests or inquires: 541-424-8004. Sign up for frequent e-mail blasts announcing new releases and special offers.

**Lot 18** ([www.lot18.com](http://www.lot18.com)) is a flash wine sales site based in New York City founded by Kevin Fortuna and Philip Jones. The site offers premium wines averaging \$27.95 in price at an average discount of 39% over retail price. The wines are in limited quantities and only offered for a short time. Lot 18 began operations in November 2010, had sales well past \$1 million in April and recently announced they had raised \$10 million from investors to expand. Lot 18 leads the other five leading flash sites in average price per bottle. In other words, they sell relatively higher quality wines including Pinot Noir. Lot 18 is simply an advertising platform for wineries who sell directly to consumers that order through Lot 18. You must join, but are under no obligation to buy, to receive the daily offers by e-mail which are quite informative and include reviews by professional sommeliers and wine critics.