



# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*Pinot Noir  
has a mind  
of its own*

## Ed Kurtzman: Impressive Pinot Resume

*My name is August West  
and I love my Pearly Baker best  
more than my wine  
...more than My wine  
more than my maker  
though he's no friend of mine*

*Half of my life  
I spent doin' time for  
some other fucker's crime  
Other half found me stumbling around  
drunk on burgundy wine*

### **"Wharf Rat"**

Words by Robert Hunter, music by Jerry Garcia (Grateful Dead)\*

There are a number of winemakers in California that have a hand in more than one label, but no Pinot Noir vintner that I know of can match the resume of winemaker Ed Kurtzman. Ed is one of the most laid back winemakers you will ever come across, belying his accomplished skills with Pinot Noir.

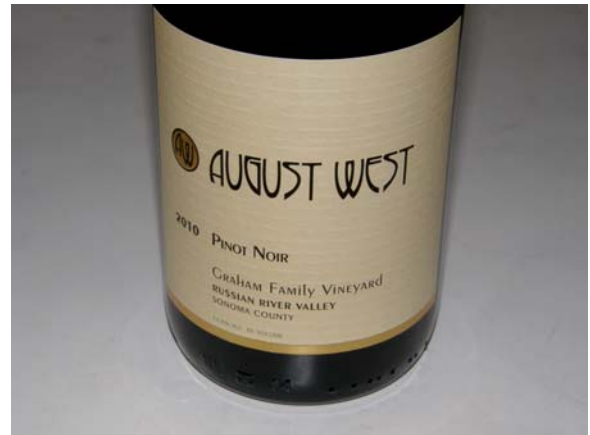
Ed's interest in wine began as an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts in the late 1980s when he worked at a large retail wine store. He later moved to California wine country to work as a wine wholesaler. Realizing his calling, he enrolled in the enology program at California State University at Fresno. Following graduation in 1994, he had winemaking stints at Bernardus (under Don Blackburn), Chalone (along side Dick Graff and Michael Michaud), Fort Ross and Testarossa before settling in San Francisco as the winemaker behind the August West, Freeman, Roar and Sandler Wine Co. labels, and consulting for Von Holt wines.

Through the years, Ed has mentored several other young winemakers including Eric Buffington (Freeman), Augie Hug (Hug Cellars), Jamie Kutch (Kutch Wines), John Fones (Von Holt Wines), Mark Weiner (Twin Oak Cellars), Ray Walker (Maison Ilan), Kyle Loudon (Coterie Cellars), Amy Butler (Edward Sellers Vineyards & Wines), and Andrew P. Vingiello (A.P. Vin).

**August West** is a partnership between winegrower Gary Franscioni, businessperson Howard Graham and winemaker Ed Kurtzman. Founded in 2002, the name, as noted above, is from a Grateful Dead song that Ed is well familiar with. Vineyard designated Pinot Noirs are produced from Rosella's Vineyard and Sierra Mar Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands (farmed by Gary Franscioni, inaugural vintage in 2010, all clone 23 - Mariafeld), and Graham Family Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. There is also a 2010 Russian River Valley appellation Pinot Noir (sourced from Treehouse Vineyard and Graham Family Vineyard, 209 cases, \$30)

\*Garcia's only known artwork titled after a Grateful Dead song lyric was "August West," offered on eBay for \$55,000 in November, 2001. It has been speculated that August West is a Garcia personality since Garcia's birth date was in August. August West may also be symbolic of a derelict's life since August marks the end of summer and the sun sets in the West, marking the end of a day. August West may be a man whose life is ending. From The *Annotated* "Wharf Rat," [www.ucsc.edu](http://www.ucsc.edu).

and a 2010 Santa Lucia Highlands appellation Pinot Noir (a blend of Rosella's and Garys' vineyards, first introduced in 2008, 306 cases, \$30). Chardonnay and Syrah are also offered. The August West wines are sold through an allocation list at [www.augustwestwine.com](http://www.augustwestwine.com) and through limited retail distribution. An updated label appeared with the 2010 vintage (previous label on left, new label on right).



**Sandler Wine Co.** is Ed's personal label (Sandler is Ed's middle name) launched in 2003 with 29 cases of 2003 Dry Creek Zinfandel. Today, Ed crafts small lots of vineyard designated Pinot Noir, Syrah and Zinfandel. The wines are sold through a mailing list at [www.sandlerwine.com](http://www.sandlerwine.com).

August West, Sandler Wine Co. and Roar wines are produced at an urban winery in San Francisco where tasting is available by appointment (415-225-2891).

I recently reviewed the current 2010 releases of Pinot Noir from August West and Sandler Wine Co.. Ed has a real touch with Pinot Noir. The wines are not shy, sporting luscious ripe fruit flavors and moderately high alcohols, but they display dreamy textural qualities and consistently impeccable balance. All the wines tasted were better a day or two after opening indicating they need more time in bottle to fully evolve (1 to 3 years), as well as displaying the potential for longer term aging (10 years).

**2010 August West Graham Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., 162 cases, \$45. Yields 1-1.5 tons per acre. Picked October 1, the latest ever for this vineyard in this cool growing season. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very fragrant with aromas of fresh cherries, red berries, spice and toasty oak. Engaging flavors of black cherries, cola and dark chocolate in a middleweight style. Very smooth on the palate, finishing with respectable fruit intensity on the finish. The very ripe flavor profile reflects a warmer Russian River Valley site. Very good.*



**2010 August West Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., 373 cases, \$45. Picked October 16, latest picking date in 9 vintages. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. The nose is both fruity and savory offering herb-imbued, pie cherry aromas. This wine is a stand out with its tasty core of dark, perfectly ripe red berries caressed by soft tannins, displaying a seductive and satiny mouth feel, and finishing with a bright cut of acidity. Intensely flavored, yet light on its feet. The whole package.*



**2010 August West Sierra Mar Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 122 cases, \$45. Vineyard planted in 2007 making this the first bottling. Swiss clone Mariafeld 23. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of black plum jam and black currants with a bit of stem. Full-bodied and rugged, with a luscious core of dark raspberry and Hoison flavors and an earthy undertone. The fruit is impressive, but currently tightly compressed in tannins. Lacks expression and refinement now and will benefit from more time in the bottle. Good.*



**2010 Sandler Wine Co. Clos Pepe Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of oak-kissed black cherries, brier and a hint of alcohol. Silky smooth on the palate with a moderate heft, offering flavors of dark red cherries and berries with a hint of citrus peel in the background. Mild tannins make for easy drinking now, but best to wait. Much better two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*



**2010 Sandler Wine Co. Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., 2nd bottling from this vineyard. Pommard clone. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Beguiling array of dark stone fruits and berries on the nose accented with cardamom spice. Broad flavors of fresh dark berries with enough tannin to keep the wine in line. A toasty oak accent is complimentary. A seamless wine showing presence without weight. Still terrific two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle demonstrating potential age worthiness.*



**2010 Sandler Wine Co. Keefer Ranch Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., From 1 acre budded over to clone 23, a favorite of winemaker Ed Kurtzman. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Very appealing hi-tone aromas of fresh-picked cherries, baking spice and sawdust. A cherry bombast with gossamer tannins, and a refreshing citrus-kissed cherry note on the finish. This wine really grows on you over time in the glass. Still stellar two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A striking contrast to the Bien Nacido bottling, displaying more vibrancy and acidity, and equally appealing.*

# LaRue Wines

Katy Wilson's first job in the wine industry was during the summer of her college days at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She worked on a large Central Valley vineyard near where she grew up, and recalls, "It was a back breaking experience to say the least! Working in the 100+ degree heat everyday really makes you appreciate working in the Sonoma/Napa area." While still in college, she staffed the tasting room at Eberle Winery in Paso Robles, a very busy spot where she gained sales experience and a knack for dealing with very drunk people!



Katy graduated in 2005 with a double major in Agricultural Business (emphasis on Marketing and International Management) and Enology & Viticulture (concentrating on Wine Business). She then embarked on her winemaking journey. Her first harvest was at Testarossa in Los Gatos with Bill Brousseau who taught her the importance of winery cleanliness. During that harvest, she learned that her younger sister, Courtney, was diagnosed with bone cancer requiring immediate chemotherapy. Coincidentally, Katy was scheduled to leave for a harvest position at Torbreck Wines in the Barrosa Valley of Australia. Although she was reluctant to leave her sister, Katy's family encouraged her to follow her path. She did leave, and although her sister lost her leg to cancer, thankfully she is in remission. Courtney is a professional photographer and contributed all the photographs on Katy's website and assisted in designing her label.

After the harvest in Australia, Katy returned to work at Joseph Phelps in the Napa Valley, and later was off to Craggy Range in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. Upon returning to California, she interviewed for a harvest enologist position with Ross Cobb at Flowers Winery & Vineyards. Katy was reluctant at first to accept the position, given the desolate location of Flowers, but she was soon to fall in love with the true Sonoma Coast. She spent two years at Flowers and became the assistant winemaker just before the 2008 harvest.

To broaden her knowledge and challenge herself, she left Flowers to make wine at Kamen, working under Mark Herold. Comfortable with the "hands-off" approach to winemaking at Flowers, the "interventionist" style of winemaking employed at Kamen furthered her knowledge. When she started at Kamen, Robert Kamen offered her the option of making her own wine at the winery's facility in Sonoma. Soon thereafter, Ross Cobb asked her to share some fruit from the special vineyards he sources for his Cobb Pinot Noirs. Fortuitously, she found an investor among her friends to support her endeavor, and launched the LaRue label with the 2009 harvest. Katy was already familiar with the West Sonoma County vineyards (Rice-Spivak, Emmaline and Joy Road) used in her inaugural LaRue Pinot Noir which contributed to her success.

The name of Katy's label, LaRue, is a tribute to Katy's great-grandmother, Veona LaRue Newell. Veona was a special woman who lived through the Depression and raised four small children. Her middle name, LaRue, is curious and its origin a mystery to Veona.

Katy's winemaking regimen is as follows. The fruit is 100% de-stemmed. After a 5-day cold soak, fermentation begins, and is supplemented by inoculation of cultivated yeast. The wine remains on the skins from 12 to 18 days, depending on the vintage. In 2009, the wine was aged 18 months in 30% new French oak barrels (40% in 2010). All decisions depend on the vintage and the wine and no two wines are crafted in exactly the same way. There are similarities in her style to the wines of Ross Cobb's Cobb Pinot Noirs, with both vinified using minimal intervention. If you enjoy Cobb Pinot Noir, you will like LaRue Pinot Noir.

Tastings are by appointment at the Kamen winemaking facility at 21682 8th Street East, Suite 300, in Sonoma (707-933-8355). Katy has joined the West Sonoma Coast Vintners and will be pouring at this year's West of West Festival. The 2009 LaRue Pinot Noir is sold on the website ([www.laruewines.com](http://www.laruewines.com)) and through limited retail distribution. Magnums are available.

**2009 LaRue Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 300 cases, \$60. A blend of three coastal vineyards near the towns of Occidental and Sebastopol. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Demure aromas of black cherries, plum sauce, violets, hay barn and spice. Intense presence on the palate without weight, offering flavors of black cherries and red and dark berries with an underpinning of savory herbs, finishing with a hint of citrus peel and impressive fruit presence. Very soft and seductive in the mouth with supportive tannins and lively acidity, all in balance. Very good.*



# School House Vineyard

## “Cult Before Cult Was Cool”



School House Vineyard is situated at an unlikely location for Pinot Noir, high on Spring Mountain above St. Helena at the intersection of Langtry and Spring Mountain Roads. It is not easy to find because of the lack of signage, and on my recent visit, owner John M. Gartner came to my rescue and guided me onto the School House Vineyard property with his ATV. The vineyard is named after a one-room 1890s schoolhouse on the property shown in the photo above which was destroyed by fire in the mid-1980s.

The original vines, a mixed field blend, were planted in the 1880s by the Sheehan family, and all the grapes were blended into a single red table wine, jokingly referred to as “California Burgundy.” Today, some of the vines have been replanted and School House Mescolanza is a modern interpretation of the original field blend containing Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Carignane. In 2006, several Rhone varieties were planted in a joint venture with Pride Mountain Vineyards and a second School House Mescolanza blend is offered composed of Syrah, Grenache and Mourvedre. Mescolanza is Spanish for “mixture or medley.” Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are also planted here and the Pinot Noir story, of most interest to me, follows.

John O. Gartner acquired 160 acres on Spring Mountain in 1938. He loved Burgundy and decided to plant Pinot Noir in the School House Vineyard in 1953, acquiring the budwood (rumored to be from Domaine Romanee-Conti) from his friend, John Daniel, the owner of Inglenook Estate. John O. Gartner and John Daniel had been fraternity brothers at Stanford. André Tchelistcheff advised Daniel to pull out his Pinot Noir plantings, believing that the Napa Valley floor soils were too vigorous for Pinot Noir. At the time, many people considered John O. Gartner crazy for planting Pinot Noir on Spring Mountain, but the wines that resulted through the years have vindicated him.

The 1953 School House Vineyard original plantings of Pinot Noir are the oldest in California along with the Ambassador Block at Hanzell which was also planted in 1953 (see photo of School House Vineyard old vines below). The Zellerbachs, who owned Hanzell, and the winemaker at Hanzell, Bob Sessions, were friends of John O. Gartner and traded cases of wine with each other every year.

Chardonnay was planted in the School House Vineyard in the late 1960s, using budwood from Fred McCrea's Stony Hill Vineyard. The dry-farmed vineyard is located in a unique, moderately cool microclimate at 1,500 foot elevation with well-drained soils, allowing the successful coexistence of both cool and warm grape varieties.



Since 1992, the second generation winegrowers, John M. Gartner and Nancy Walker, have farmed the School House Vineyard. They live on the property and John does all the vineyard work by hand. John had been coming to his father's property on practically every weekend since he was born and his viticulture knowledge has come through years of experience and interaction with neighboring winegrowers on Spring Mountain. He had a variety of wines growing up, and recalls his family tasting the wines of Martin Ray as a comparison to their own Pinot Noir. The family was struck by the variability of Ray's wines, and John told me, "They could be very good or very bad, but you could never tell him that." John attended Stanford University like his father, and practiced law in San Francisco for 35 years before retiring to the School House Vineyard property.

When John and Nancy took over the property, it had been neglected for years and the vineyard was overgrown with poison oak, wild roses and brush. Together they managed to take back the property from the woods, working together over ten years to restore its former glory as a viticultural oasis.

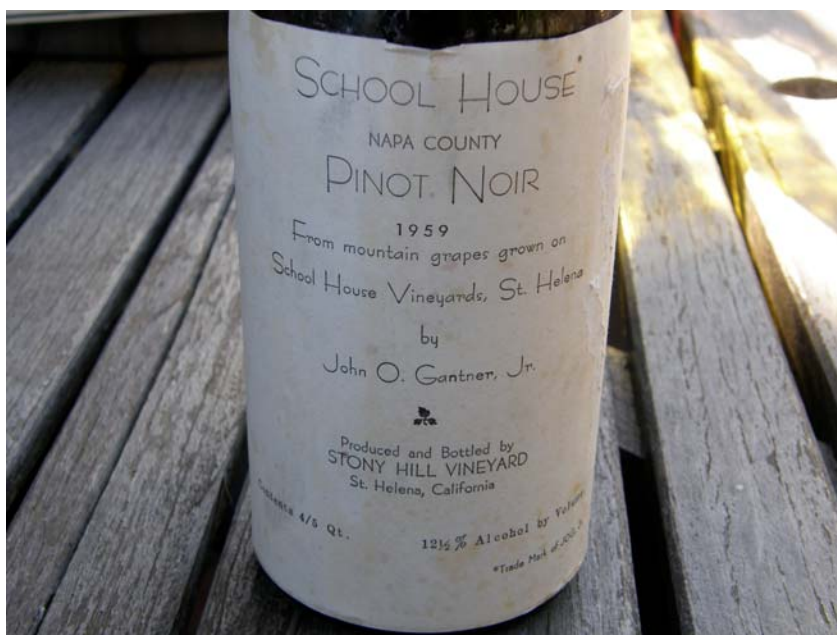
John recalls that he was thirteen years old when his father planted Pinot Noir at School House Vineyard. At the time, there were no operating wineries on Spring Mountain and the spotting of an automobile on the roads was a rarity. To this day, he is very fond of the tranquility at School House Vineyard, although road traffic and noise have perceptibly changed for the worse in recent years. He hasn't been back to San Francisco in a few years.

12 acres of vineyard are farmed including six acres of Pinot Noir, 3.5 acres of Chardonnay, and the remainder a red field blend mix. The original 4 acres of Pinot Noir have been supplemented with 1 acre of now 10-year-old vines and 1 acre of now 6-year-old vines. The original Pinot Noir vines are planted on St. George rootstock, but additional plantings added (often interplanted) within the last 10 years are most on 110R rootstock. John is continuously planting new vines to replace others lost to disease and age (currently 100 vines per year), and there is enough vineyard work to keep him busy year round. Although he notes his work is "never finished," it's obvious he relishes the farming of wine grapes.

The School House Pinot Noir was vinified at Stony Hill from 1957 to 1959, at Buena Vista Sonoma from 1960 to 1968, and over the subsequent years at various wineries where several winemakers were involved including Bo Barrett at Chateau Montelena. The School Mountain Vineyard wines have been crafted at Pride Mountain Vineyards since 1997, initially under the direction of winemaker Bob Foley and now custom crushed by the current Pride winemaking team.

The wines are sold only through a mailing list and the website ([www.schoolhousevineyard.com](http://www.schoolhousevineyard.com)). Tasting is by appointment at the vineyard property (707-963-4240). The hosts are very congenial and welcome visitors to sit on their patio while sampling the wines, enjoying the vista of vines which surround their home. These are not California mainstream Pinot Noirs. There is nothing quite like them and they may not appeal to those who are not experienced Pinot Noir enthusiasts. They are connoisseur's wines that can only be understood and valued in the context of their origin from this historical vineyard. They are terroir-driven and vintage-expressive wines. To truly appreciate them, I would highly recommend visiting the School House Vineyard.

The first School House Vineyard Pinot Noir was released from the 1957 vintage and the 2007 bottling, now sold out, was the 50th from School House Vineyard. John showed me a bottle from his cellar of the 1959 bottling (see photo below) and said that the wine had been opened recently and was drinking amazingly well. A 22 vintage vertical of School House Pinot Noir was conducted in 2006. Despite the variety of wineries and winemakers involved in its production through the years, the wines were found to be remarkably consistent, a testament to the unique terroir of this site, its dry-farmed vines and the lack of nod to modernization. One example would be the fact that John chooses to harvest grapes the old fashioned way: by taste rather than measurement. An excellent history of School House Vineyard is offered by Diana H. Stockton through the Napa Wine Library Association at [www.napawinelibrary.com/reports/2009/summer/gantner](http://www.napawinelibrary.com/reports/2009/summer/gantner).



**2006 School House Vineyard Spring Mountain District Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 15.1% alc., 200 cases, \$80. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color with very slight yellowing of the rim in the glass. The bouquet of secondary characters includes raisin, black olive, old cask and old boot leather. A delicious wine with many layers of flavor including dried cherries, black raspberries, black currants, cola, saffras and spice. Very ripe in fruit character with grainy, supportive tannins and some length on the finish. Very good.*

**2008 School House Vineyard Spring Mountain District Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% 275 cases, \$80. Magnums available. This vintage yielded 3.5 tons picked at about 25.5° Brix. Fermented in open top bins after a light pressing. Matured 18 months in new French oak barrels and hand-bottled. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas dance in and out over time in the glass, but the emphasis is on cherry fruit with hints of tea leaf and oak. Lighter in weight than the 2006 vintage, yet impressively flavorful, featuring intense cherry compote, baking spice and green leaf, with notes of raisin, herbs and minerality. The wine sports a moderately firm tannic backbone and offers an unbelievably long finish that lasts at least a minute. Very good.*





# Recent California Pinot Noir Releases

## Alysian

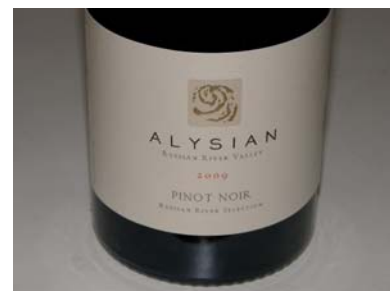
I often get asked, "Who are your favorite California Pinot Noir producers?" I often mention Alysian and I have often received a blank stare in return. Few know the label and know that Gary Farrell is the proprietor and winemaker. Farrell is one of the longest tenured Pinot Noir winemakers in the Russian River Valley. He became the winemaker at Davis Bynum in 1978 but had assisted Davis Bynum with the Pinot Noirs produced at that winery for a few years prior. Farrell crafted the inaugural Pinot Noir for Rochioli Vineyard & Winery, trading winemaking for grapes for his own inaugural release in 1982 of 50 cases of Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Farrell gradually built the reputation of his eponymous brand and in 1998 joined with business partner William Hambrecht to build his own winery on Westside Road. Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery was sold in 2004, passed through several hands and is now owned by the Vincraft Group. The rigors of producing wine in large quantity under corporate ownership took its toll on Farrell and he felt he was losing the close connection to all phases of winemaking. He left Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery permanently in 2006 to produce small lots of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from select Russian River Valley vineyards. Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery still produces excellent Pinot Noir and Chardonnay under the direction of Susan Reed who trained under Gary Farrell, but the winery's offerings carry his name only. Farrell partnered again with William Hambrecht to found Alysian (ah-liss-ee-uhn), a Greek word referring to an endeavor arising from intuitive creativity and artistic resolution. Alysian, which specializes in Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and Chardonnay was quietly launched with the 2007 vintage due to non compete agreements but these expired in 2011 and Farrell has become more of a spokesperson for his label. I met with him for the first time in 2011 to taste his 2008 Pinot Noirs. He is soft spoken, calm and polite with an attractive smile and a golf tan. Farrell has always been shy and never enjoyed a highly visible marketing campaign to attract attention to his wines and he never will. He prefers to let the wines speak for themselves. If you are interested in wines of elegance and balance, wines that exemplify intense flavors at modest extraction levels and lower alcohols, it is time for you to become acquainted with Alysian wines. Farrell's goal is well summarized in a quote from a recent Alysian newsletter: "Thankfully, many consumers and winemakers are beginning to favor a more elegant and refined style of wine. It is not that we seek less flavor, texture or depth; it's simply that we understand abundance and generosity in wine is achievable without excessive extract and alcohol." Visit the website at [www.alysianwines.com](http://www.alysianwines.com) to join the mailing list and obtain current releases.

The 2009 vintage was stellar in California with generous flavors at modest alcohol levels. The growing season was relatively cool and the ripening process was steady delivering very good levels of flavors and acidity at lower sugar levels. The excellent acidities are reflected in the pH and TA readings for the three wines reviewed below. Yields were modest but quality was very high. Farrell feels that 2009 was the most enjoyable grape harvest of his long career. The Alysian appellation blend offering, the Russian River Selection, is unique in that Farrell assembles this wine *before* he creates the vineyard designate wines and is not an afterthought. A number of wineries create appellation blends with poorer quality barrels deemed unacceptable for the winery's finest wines. In contrast, Farrell says, "Our appellation blends are nearly always among our most exciting and alluring wines."

These are wines of pedigree and impeccable balance that scream for food. The ultimate table wines.



**2009 Alysian Russian River Selection Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.41, TA 0.73, 2,231 cases, \$40. Fruit from Rochioli (Pommard), Allen (777), Starr Ridge (115 and 777), Floodgate (Martini and Dijon clones), and Hallberg (Cruz clone and 828). 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 40% new (Francois Frères and Rousseau) and 60% one and two year old French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of Bing cherries, cola and baking spice rise out of the glass, persisting over time. Moderately concentrated flavors of cherries wrapped in supple tannins and framed by bright acidity. Fat in the mouth with a richness only Russian River Valley Pinot Noir can deliver. I love this wine for its pure exuberance. Like cherry pie day at cooking school: cherries, baking spice and very interesting results.*



**2009 Alysian Floodgate Vineyard Rock Hill Russian River Valley**

**Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.705, 159 cases, \$55. Floodgate is located in the heart of the Middle Reach. Rock Hill (Block 16) was planted in 2000 on one of the rockiest knolls on the property resulting in low vigor). Dijon 777. 100% de-stemmed. Wild and cultured yeast fermentation following a 5-day cold soak. Aged 13 months in 45% new (Francois Frères and Rousseau) and 55% one and two year old French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of underbrush, dark red cherries and berries and dark red rose petals. Think wild cherries sprinkled with herbs and flowers. Discreetly concentrated core of dark cherry and cranberry flavors strike an impression on the mid palate and linger with a pleasing citrus-flavored berry finish. Great cut and vibrancy. Not as luscious as the Russian River Selection, but more nuanced, offering a different experience with each sip.*

**2009 Alysian Rochioli Vineyard Edgewater Russian River Valley**

**Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.71, 240 cases, \$65. Only Williams Selyem and Alysian receive allocations from this vineyard. Clones 115, 777 and Pommard. 100% de-stemmed. Wild and cultured fermentation lasting 11 days with manual punch downs daily. Aged 13 months in 45% new (Francois Frères and Rousseau) and 55% one and two year old French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Riper, darker fruited aromatic profile consisting of a complex melange of deep red and purple stone fruits with a hint of potpourri. Mouth filling presence with well-proportioned tannins and acidity keep the wine in line. Reasonably assertive but light on its feet. Impressive persistence on the finish highlighted by citrus-flavored cranberries. Unlimited long-term potential.*



## Anaba Wines

Proprietor John Sweazey developed a passion for wine as a Stanford University undergraduate, pursued a successful career in real estate finance, and sold his business in 2003 to found Anaba, a winery in western Carneros. The name, Anaba, refers to the anabatic wind that blows in Sonoma. The Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines are sourced from cool vineyards in Carneros and other properties in Sonoma County (a Soberanes Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir is new for the 2010 vintage).

The winemaker is University of California at Davis graduate Jennifer Marion. All fruit is de-stemmed, fermented in one ton open top vessels and aged 11 months. The Pinot Noirs are all very similar in aroma and taste. They are solid and well-crafted fruit-driven examples of Pinot Noir. If you like Kosta Browne Pinot Noir, you will probably enjoy Anaba Pinot Noir which are similar stylistically.

A tasting room is located at 60 Bonneau Road at the intersection of Highways 121 and 116 (photo below). Visit [www.anabawines.com](http://www.anabawines.com). Anaba Chardonnays are reviewed later in this issue.

**2009 Anaba Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.61, 929 cases, \$32. From Gap's Crown and Sun Chase vineyards located on the western facing slope of Sonoma Mountain. Aged 11 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of blackberries, black plums, baking spice and oak, tending to fade over time in the glass. Moderately endowed with rich flavors of sweet plums and berries veering to a very ripe profile. Silky on the palate with restrained tannins and an underlying earthiness. Less interesting over time in the glass. The wine had a mild cooked fruit flavor the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Decent.*

**2010 Anaba Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc.. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. Subdued fruity aromas of darker cherries and berries with hints of spice, vanilla and oak. Moderately rich core of dark berries and black plums accented by spice and oak notes. Brighter and more seductive than the 2009 vintage bottling with more body and structure. Also veers to the ripe side. Good.*

**2009 Anaba Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.57, 294 cases, \$45. Clone 667. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Brightly fruited on the nose with very ripe dark cherries and berries with a hint of Moroccan spice. Middleweight flavors of dark berries with a citrus-imbued berry tang on the finish. More intensity and finishing strength than the Sonoma Coast bottling. The fruit cloaks the tannic structure giving the wine a very soft and sleek texture. The wine grows on you over time. Very good.*

**2010 Anaba Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc.. *Deep, dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Similar to the 2009 vintage but more reluctant and showing more oak at this early stage. Luscious dark cherry and berry flavor with hints of herbs and anise, leaving a lasting impression on the lengthy finish. Better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Good (+).*

**2010 Anaba Sun Chase Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc.. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. The nose is very subdued at this early stage, offering peeks of dark berry jam, spice and oak. Full-bodied, fat and silken on the mid palate, with assertive flavors of dark stone fruits, blackberries and poached plums. The most striking fruit in the Anaba lineup. Much better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with better integration of oak and more expressive fruit. Great upside potential. Very good.*



## Frank Family Vineyards

This Napa Valley winery is located at the historic Larkmead Winery site in Calistoga, and is well known for its Cabernets, Chardonnays and sparkling wines. A Pinot Noir program was launched with the 2007 vintage, using grapes from the 138-acre Lewis Vineyard in Napa Carneros, and other vineyards in the Carneros region. The winemaker is Todd Graff. The tasting room, housed in a 1930s Craftsman home in Calistoga, is very popular, having won the *San Francisco Chronicle* reader's choice for Best Tasting Room in Napa in 2010 and 2011. The 2009 vintage Pinot Noir was previously reviewed favorably and these two 2010 releases are commendable followup releases. Visit [www.frankfamilyvineyards.com](http://www.frankfamilyvineyards.com).

**2010 Frank Family Vineyards Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.75, TA 0.64, \$35. Aged 12 months in 35% new and 65% once and twice filled oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of plum, black currant and rose petal. Plentiful flavors of plum and black raspberry with herbs in the background. Relatively light in weight with soft tannins, leaving a little heat in its wake on the finish. Good.*

**2010 Frank Family Vineyards Napa Valley Reserve Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.87, TA 0.59, \$57.50. Aged 9 months in 35% new and 65% once and twice filled French oak barrels. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Richly perfumed with aromas of darker red and black Pinot fruits and spice cabinet. Delicious core of ripe black plum, black cherry and black raspberry flavors offering impressive mid palate intensity and finishing strength. Soft and velvety in the mouth with supple tannins. Well-integrated oak. Only nit would be the lack of uplifting acidity but this wine aims to seduce with its luscious fruit core. Very good.*



## Graton Ridge Cellars

The Paul Family were originally Russian River Valley apple growers, but like many Gravenstein apple operations in this region, the apple bins gave way to grape bins and the rustic farm stand that offered apples and apple juice was transformed into a modern tasting room facility open daily at 3561 Gravenstein Hwy (118) N, in Sebastopol. The Paul Family Vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The winemaker is Nick Legg. Both a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and a Russian River Valley Estate Pinot Noir are offered. Visit [www.gratonridge.com](http://www.gratonridge.com) for wines and check out the great collections of recipes.



**2009 Graton Ridge Cellars Estate Paul Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$50. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Appealing aromas of fresh dark berries and cherries with hints of oak, coffee and peppercorn. Flavored with oak-kissed dark Bing cherries and dark red berries with a moderately fat, silken richness that only Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs can offer. Smooth and seamless on the palate with supple tannins and impressive cherry-driven finish. Very good.*



## george wine company

George Levkoff has a thing about lower case but his Pinot Noirs are nothing but upper class. Trained and inspired by Burt Williams of Williams Selyem, he launched his eponymous label in 2003 with 150 cases of Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir. His Pinot Noirs quickly caught the attention of top sommeliers at restaurants in Las Vegas and New York, and his wines have quickly achieved cult status. I have been a fan from the beginning, entranced by the elegance and sensuality that his wines deliver. George is a one-man operation, performing every step of wine production from sorting grapes to hand bottling and numbering each bottle, personally marketing the wines, and even delivering. The wines are highly allocated to a mailing list with very limited fine restaurant distribution (a number of the restaurants are noted on the website). The 2010 wines are sold out. Visit [www.georgewine.com](http://www.georgewine.com) and get on the mailing list.



**2010 george Sonoma Coma Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., 195 cases, \$50. The name refers to the lack of nightlife in Healdsburg when the sun goes down and George's gift for humor. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Slightly confected aromas of cherries, red raspberries, fruit punch and spice. Light in weight and easy to drink, offering the essence of fresh cherries with a subtle earth and herbal accent. Very soft tannins and bright acidity. Good (+).*



**2010 george Vintage VIII Ceremonial Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., 195 cases, \$60. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Beguiling dark, deep cherry perfume. A clear standout that seduces from the get go, offering moderately rich flavors of black cherries, red plums, and cola wrapped in fur coat tannins. Softly textured with bright acidity and admirable length on the refreshing finish that draws you back for another sip. A ripper.*



**2010 george Vintage VIII Leras Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., 195 cases, \$60. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of fresh cherry pie, baking spice and dried rose petals rise out of the glass. A charming wine that is light in weight but full-flavored with notes of redder cherries and berries, Chinese 5-spice and herbs, finishing with a spark of citrus driven acidity. A gentle, graceful wine. Very good (+).*

**2010 george Vintage III Hansen Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., 195 cases, \$60. I have never been fond of george's bottling from this vineyard which sits next to a dairy farm and smells and tastes a little bit like poop. A wine critic once said, "Good Burgundy smells like shit," so this must be good and many sommeliers relish the Pinot Noir from Hansen Vineyard. The 2010 vintage is the best I have sampled from this vineyard going back several years. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black cherries, barnyard and old shoe. Middleweight flavors of dark cherries and black raspberries with a subtle note of fecal matter in the background. Well-proportioned tannins and good acidity make for a balanced wine. A distinctly different wine that is the ultimate reflection of terroir, smelling and tasting like the cow waste adjacent the vineyard. A very unique wine for the adventuresome Very good.*



## Loring Wine Company

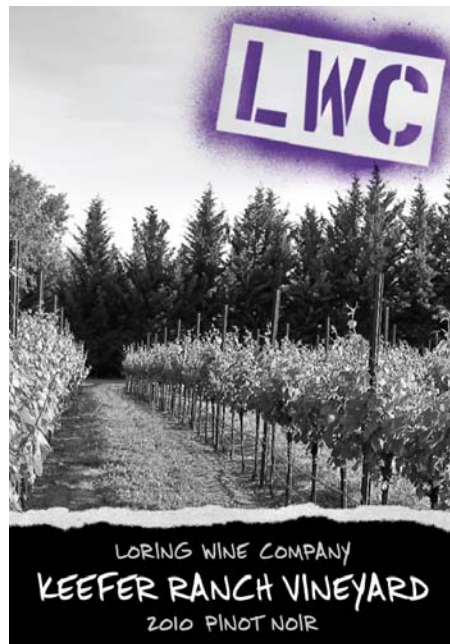
Proprietor and winemaker Brian Loring has come a long way. Inspired by the Pinot Noirs of Calera Wine Company, he developed his winemaking skills working under winemaker Norm Beko of Cottonwood Canyon Winery in Santa Maria Valley in the late 1990s. A software engineer by trade, Brian was one of the first boutique Pinot Noir producers to enter the wine production game cold, a path that many have subsequently followed in California. Unimpressed by his good fortune and success, he has shared his enthusiasm and knowledge freely, and inspired a number of others to venture into the Pinot race including Jamie Kutch of Kutch Wines, Andrew Vingiello of A.P. Vin, and the partnership group at Pali Wine Company.

Loring's success has been predicated in part on his ability to acquire first-rate Pinot Noir grapes from prestigious vineyards. His philosophy is, "The fruit is EVERYTHING." His wines have caught the attention of the consumer and wine press with their hard-to-ignore deep colors, ripe, showy, sappy fruit, and generous oak character. Over the years, Loring has moderated his style, choosing to pick at somewhat lower sugar levels to reduce the alcohol levels, and although the wines remain intensely fruit-driven, they have better acidity, less oak notes, are less boozy and better balanced. My reviews of the 2010 vintage wines below reflect this. He continues to have a solid following and sparkling press reviews and remains firmly committed to his vision for Pinot Noir. He has gradually increased production, pursuing an ultimate goal of 3,000 cases annually. He crafts his wines in a leased facility in the Lompoc "Wine Ghetto," while still employed in a day job as an independent software contractor. Chardonnay (see review later in this issue) is also offered and occasionally other varietals appear.

The 2010 Pinot Noirs reviewed here are all full-bodied, fruit-driven and very similar in flavor profile. The wines exhibit noticeable but not intrusive oak support, moderately high alcohols, relatively mild tannins, soft textures, and reasonable finishing lengths. It is a style of wine that has been criticized by some winemakers in California who profess that balance can only come through lowered extraction, ripeness and alcohol levels, yet the Loring Pinot Noirs are nicely balanced and in the case of the Durell bottling, impeccably balanced.

Additional 2010 Loring Wine Company Pinot Noirs not reviewed here include: Russell Family Vineyard Paso Robles, Aubaine Vineyard (San Luis Obispo County), Cargasacchi Vineyard (Sta. Rita Hills), Rancho La Vina Vineyard (Sta. Rita Hills), Clos Pepe Vineyard (Sta. Rita Hills), and three appellation blends from the Central Coast, Russian River Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands.

The winery's tasting room is open Friday through Sunday from 12:00 to 5:00 and Monday through Thursday by appointment (805-742-0478). Brian's sister, Kimberly, is involved in the winery as well. Visit the website at [www.loringwinecompany.com](http://www.loringwinecompany.com). The wines are sold through a mailing list with limited retail distribution. Prices include shipping.



**2010 Loring Wine Company Keefer Ranch Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., \$48, screw cap. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely perfume of hi-tone black cherries with pie spice. Lush black cherry fruit with hints of herbal oak and cola. Seductively soft in the mouth with reasonable length on the finish. Lacks the usual tension of wines from this cool vineyard and overplays the fruit angle, but is still a very alluring drink. This vineyard consistently outperforms many others from this region. Very good.*

**2010 Loring Wine Company Graham Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., \$48, screw cap. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherry, cola, cigar box, and a touch of oak. Fully ripe flavors of dark red cherries and black raspberries on a middleweight frame with a subtle oak char underpinning, offering impressive mid palate richness and some length on the finish. Still young and linear at this stage. Tasted twice. Good.*

**2010 Loring Wine Company Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., \$48, screw cap. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruit profile displaying aromas and flavors of blackberries, black currants, black plum, raisin and saffras. Moderately dense with a long fruit-laden finish. Silky soft in the mouth. The fruit really sings in this wine. Good (+).*

**2010 Loring Wine Company Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., \$48, screw cap. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Dark red fruits including ripe strawberries fill the glass with perfume. Soft and elegant, offering the tasty essence of red cherries and plums framed by complimentary oak and finishing with some persistence. This wine reflects the femininity that I find in many wines from this vineyard. Very good.*

**2010 Loring Wine Company Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., \$48, screw cap. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh cherries and ripe strawberries. Round and polished in the mouth with a refined core of ripe, dark red cherries and berries, finishing long with a cherry-fueled intensity. This wine displays the most juiciness and tension of the Loring wines tasted this day and exhibits impeccable balance.*



## Olivia Brion

This is a very interesting wine project headed by David Mahaffey who planted Heron Lake Vineyard in 1980 in the Wild Horse Valley east of Napa Valley. A boutique grower and producer of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Olivia Brion is a partnership between Mahaffey, vineyardist John Newmeyer who lives on the isolated property, and physician and epidemiologist Mark Oberle, M.D.. The Wild Horse Valley appellation (approved in 1988) is the coolest region in the Napa area and the Heron Lake Winery is the only winery in the appellation. The vineyard is planted to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir on very rocky soils rich in minerals. The vines struggle to survive and yields are low which translates to intensity of flavor. The vineyard will be fully organic in the spring of 2013.

Mahaffey has been making wines in the Napa Valley for 30 years and has been the winemaker for Heron Lake Vineyard since its first vintage in 1985. Olivia Brion is the epitome of an estate winery where the vineyard and winery are located on the same site, and the wine is produced exclusively from estate fruit and bottled on site. Until recently, nearly all the Chardonnay was sold to Newton for their premium bottlings, but the fruit is now all retained for the Olivia Brion Chardonnay.

Both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are held for 17-18 months before release as Mahaffey believes the wines need the extra time for full development.

The story of Olivia Brion, the inspiration for the winery's label, is well detailed on the website at [www.heronlakewinery.com](http://www.heronlakewinery.com). The wines are sold primarily direct to consumers through an order form on the website. Current production is 800-900 cases of estate Pinot Noir and 1,000 cases of estate Chardonnay. The Chardonnay is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

I visited Heron Lake Vineyard & Winery recently and the photos of Heron Lake and the Heron Lake Vineyard follow. Only a thirty minute drive from Napa, but a whole different world redolent of beauty and serenity.







**2009 Olivia Brion Heron Lake Vineyard Wild Horse Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., 400 cases, \$40. Released April, 2012. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red berries, seasoned oak and floral bouquet. More savory than fruity, with a core of dark red cherries and berries, offering interesting riffs of red bell pepper, herbs and spice. A unique wine that unfolds slowly in the glass, offering well-honed ripe, fine-grain tannins and an uplifting cut of acidity on the finish. This wine will appeal to those who do not relish overtly fruity wines. Very good.*



## Olson Ogden

John Ogden and winemaker Tim Olson started this boutique winery in Sonoma County in 2002, offering about 1,000 cases a year of Pinot Noir and Rhone varietals. Tim Olson began crafting wine in his home garage well over 20 years ago. Influenced by Charlie Wagner (Caymus) for whom he worked, and Burt Williams (Williams Selyem) whom he admired, he crafted some excellent wines at Tarius Wines in Santa Rosa before launching the Olson Ogden label. Olson Ogden wines have garnered numerous awards in wine competitions and received considerable raves from the wine press. Olson Ogden wines are sold through a mailing list with limited retail distribution ([www.olsonogdenwines.com](http://www.olsonogdenwines.com)). Tasting is available at the co-op tasting room, Vinteca, in Santa Rosa. Manchester Ridge Vineyard is pictured below.

**2009 Olson Ogden Alder Springs Vineyard Mendocino Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.53, 143 cases, \$65. This vineyard, farmed by Stu Bewley, is located an hour north of Ukiah, sitting on a mountain slope between 1700 and 2700 feet elevation. It is sustainably farmed with low yields ranging from 1.5 to 2 tons per acre. Clones are Wädenswil, 115, 459 and 777. Aged 17 months in 65% new French oak barrels. *Aromas of ripe, herb-dusted berries with particular notes of bay leaf. Discreetly concentrated core of perfectly ripened black cherries and dark red berries with an earthbound tone. A hint of wood spice adds interest. Firm, very slightly astringent tannic backbone. Memorable finish that you hate to end. Very good (+).*



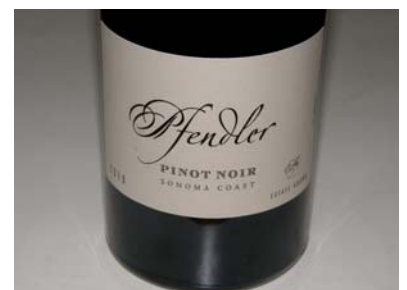
**2009 Olson Ogden Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.57, 148 cases, \$55. This vineyard is located in the Mendocino Ridge AVA 2000 feet above the Anderson Valley. Clones 114, 115 and 777. Aged 17 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy aromas of red cherries and berries with a hint of balsam and herb garden. Flavors of luscious pie cherries accented by notes of exotic tea, cola, cassis sandalwood and spice. Layers of interest with seductively soft tannins and incredible length on the exit. An interesting contrast to the Alder Springs bottling with this wine being less structured, but more fruity and flirty. Take your pick.*



## Pfendler Vineyards

Kimberly Pfendler keeps her deceased spouse's memory alive through this label that offers Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from four estate vineyards in the Petaluma Gap region of the Sonoma Coast. Noted winemaker and viticulturist, Greg Bjornstad, was the initial winemaker and vineyard manager, replaced for by John Raytek in 2010, with Greg returning in late 2011. The 2010 Pinot Noir reviewed here was finished by Greg. Visit the website at [www.pfendlervineyards](http://www.pfendlervineyards) to purchase the wine.

**2010 Pfendler Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., \$42. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with an array of spiced, dark red fruits. Opens nicely over time in the glass, revealing a medium weight core of red and dark red Pinot fruits with a notable hint of pomegranate, spice and oak char. Mild tannins, bright acidity and some length on the finish. A charming wine that aims to please. Very good.*



## Talisman

I have written extensively about winemaker Scott Rich and his consistently stellar Pinot Noir lineup. He started his label in 1993, sourcing fruit from unique terroirs that are challenging and expressive. I caught up with him at the recent World of Pinot Noir to talk about his latest releases. He has been crafting Pinot Noir from Red Dog Vineyard on Sonoma Mountain and Adastra Vineyard in Carneros for several vintages now and he has a good handle on the fruit from these two sources. Both wines are very good, but the Adastra Vineyard Pinot Noir is the best he has made from this vineyard. All Talisman wines are held for at least a year in bottle before release. Talisman wines are available through a mailing list and the website store at [www.talismanwine.com](http://www.talismanwine.com). The winery is not open to the public and does not have a tasting room but four times a year the doors are open for open houses. Occasionally a private tour and tasting is possible (707-996-9050). The wines are made in a warehouse complex known as Eighth Street Wineries in Sonoma (visit [www.eighthstreetwineries.com](http://www.eighthstreetwineries.com)).

**2008 Talisman Red Dog Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 335 cases, \$48. This vineyard is located high above Bennett Valley at 1200 feet elevation on the northwestern side of Sonoma Mountain. 100% Pommard 4 clone. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. An array of perfectly ripe purple and black fruits rise from the glass. Savory and earthy, edgy and raunchy, with a subtle tarry note in the background. Moderately dense with ripe, well-proportioned tannins and a dreamy finish. A wine of character that shows its individuality in each vintage. Very good (+).*



**2008 Talisman Adastra Vineyard Los Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 266 cases, \$50. This vineyard is organically farmed by Chris Thorpe and his son-in-law Edwin Richards. Clones are Wädenswil, Dijon 113 and Pommard. *Moderately dark in color. Appealing aromas of blackberries, boysenberries and exotic woods. Delicious core of black plum and blackberry fruit that cloaks the firm structure producing a sleek mouth feel and impressive finishing strength. A man's wine that is yet condescending and soft on the palate. Still alluring the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. I wanted to hug this wine.*



## Tessier

Owner and winemaker Kristie Tacey specializes in Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Her initial career path was biotechnology and in 2000 worked on the Human Genome Project. While living in the San Francisco Bay area, she became intrigued by wine and winemaking. After working as an assistant winemaker at the former East Bay winery, Lost Canyon, and later as part of the winemaking team at JC Cellars, she launched her own label in 2009. She now has a Certificate in Winemaking from University of California at Davis. Her husband, Jason Wilinski, is her Brand Manager, support and mind behind. The Tessier wines are available by e-mailing Kristie at [kristie@tessierwinery.com](mailto:kristie@tessierwinery.com) and can be found at several San Francisco Bay retailers and restaurants. Tasting is by appointment. Visit [www.tessierwinery.com](http://www.tessierwinery.com). I was particularly impressed by the appealing textures of all three of the 2010 Pinot Noirs.

I have no clue as to the origin of the name except to say that Peter M. Tessier is a well-known researcher in the field of biotechnology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The Tessier label depicts a photograph through a microscope of some lesser life form. The winery's tag line is catchy: "Science as Art."



**2010 Tessier Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.58, 122 cases, \$28. Aged in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherries, cherry syrup and sandalwood. Middleweight flavors of fresh cherries caressed by soft tannins complimented by subtle oak. A solid wine that is very open and approachable with an appealing Elvis on velvet mouth feel. Good (+).*

**2010 Tessier Saralee's Vineyard Clone 115 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.57, 21 cases, \$40, sold out. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy but pleasing aromas of darker red cherries and raspberries with a subtle hint of rose petal. Appealing array of flavorful cherry, red currant, marionberry and strawberry fruit with a sidecar of herbal oak. Firmly structured with a pillowy soft texture, finishing with a tangy red berry flourish. A step up from the Russian River Valley bottling and very approachable at this early stage. Very good.*



**2010 Tessier Las Brisas Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.67, 51 cases, \$35. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Light reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose offers bright aromas of red plum and red berries with notes of pine needle and grass. Light on its feet and soft in the mouth, this wine has some character with primarily cherry flavor underpinned with a resin-pine riff which I assume is oak in origin. Firm, ripe tannins and bright acidity. Much better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with more expressive fruit and resolution of the oak intrusion. Good (+).*

## Three Sticks Wines

Founded by Bill Price in 2002, offering Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon from the 130 acres of Durell Vineyard that he owns (his former spouse, Ellie Phipps Price, owns 60 acres of Durell Vineyard and makes wine under the Dunstan label). Three Sticks is a teenage nickname given to him by surfing friends who teased him about being named William S. Price III. The winemaker is Don Van Staaveren assisted by Tracey Bledsoe. Three Sticks Wines is one of the few California wineries to succeed with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Due to the limited production, the wines are sold through an allocation list at [www.threestickswines.com](http://www.threestickswines.com). Most of the fruit from Durell Vineyard is sold to numerous prestigious wineries.



**2009 Three Sticks Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., 253 cases, pH 3.70, TA 0.63, \$60. Released March 20, 2012. A selection from the finest blocks in the vineyard and the best barrels in the cellar. Clones 667, 115 and 777. 10% whole cluster. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Ripe dark berry and plum aromas explode from the glass accented by the slightest note of herbs and spice. An "Oh my God!" nose. Delicious essence of fresh black raspberries, black currants and dark plums, accented with Middle Eastern spices and cola. Amazing mid palate presence, soft tannins, and a finish that would make Hollywood proud. Crafted for early accessibility and not a long term ager. You will need a cold shower after drinking this one.*



## Toretti's Family Vineyard

Robert Torres, a restaurateur and rancher, planted 5 acres of Pinot Noir in 2000 on his family's 10-acre estate in the Santa Maria Valley and began producing wine under the Casa Torres Vineyard label in 2006. He subsequently changed the label to Toretti's Family Vineyard. The name is a combination of Robert's spouse Marlene's maiden name, Maretti, with the surname Torres. The Maretti family is one of many Swiss families that left Europe to settle on the Central Coast in the early 1900s. The initial winemaker was Lane Tanner, later replaced by Paul Wilkins (Alta Maria, Native9), who has worked magic with the fruit from this vineyard. The wines are available by mail, fax or phone through the website at [www.toretti.com](http://www.toretti.com). I first encountered the wines at the recent Pasadena PinotFest and came away very impressed. Total production is 950 cases annually of Pinot Noir, Syrah and Chardonnay. A tasting room is planned. 805-714-0622.

**2009 Toretti Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., \$44. *Light reddish-purple color in the glass. Attractive aromas of ripe cherries, strawberries, sandalwood and balsam. Delicious core of exotically flavored red cherries and berries with a slight confected tone. Light in weight and exuding plenty of finesse and charm, this wine is drinking beautifully now. Very good.*



**2009 Toretti's Family Vineyard Inocencio Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$44. *Light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherry compote, freshly macerated strawberries and sandalwood rise up from the glass. A strawberry and cherry wonderland on the palate with a sidecar of spice and malt. A little more body and structure than the Santa Maria Valley bottling, this wine is an immensely satisfying one that caresses the taste buds with generous flavor without being overstuffed. Dude, this wine is great.*



## Williams Selyem

This winery needs no introduction. Director of Winemaking, Bob Cabral, and his winemaking staff have Williams Selyem headed up and up fifteen years after the winery's acquisition from Burt Williams and Ed Selyem. The wines continue to pile up the awards and scores and Cabral received a "Winemaker of the Year" award from *Wine Enthusiast* magazine recently. The estate vineyard wines are superb and the non-estate vineyard sources such as Rochioli, Hirsch, Peay, and Ferrington would be the envy of any winery. This is a large operation, with multiple individual bottlings of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Zinfandel each vintage. A new winery is a testament to the label's success, seemingly way too modern and "Napaesque" along side this venerable strip of legendary Westside Road wineries, but visual exciting nevertheless. The winery is not open to the public, but tasting is available for mailing list members. Visit the website at [www.williamsselyem.com](http://www.williamsselyem.com). A mobile app has been launched that features a cellaring guide with Drink or Hold recommendations, aging windows, original winery tasting notes, and a community notes section to add your own comments. Point your smart phone to [www.williamsselyem.mobi](http://www.williamsselyem.mobi).



**2010 Williams Selyem Westside Road Neighbors** Reviewed and highly recommended in the last issue.

**2010 Williams Selyem Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$49. Over 95% estate fruit. *Medium garnet color in the glass. A typical Middle Reach Russian River Valley offering with aromas and flavors of Bing cherries, dark red raspberries, and baking spice. Nicely crafted with moderate tannins, pleasing tension, and admirable balance. Good.*

**2010 Williams Selyem Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$49. Mostly Dijon clones (a rarity for Williams Selyem). *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Exotic aroma of wild berries, spice and woodshed. Moderately rich and impressively vivid black raspberry and plum core with an undertone of earth and minerals. Juicy and silky on the palate, with a well-honed backbone of acidity and tannins, finishing with generous persistence. Very good.*



# Four Winery Encounters Leave Prince Relishing His Good Fortune

I have to admit. Drinking great Pinot Noir is one of life's most endearing pleasures and I am unapologetic that I get to do it practically every day. Even more special, I get to meet extraordinary people who are involved in the production and sale of Pinot Noir and whose unwavering passion never bores me. I recently traveled to three wineries in the Russian River Valley, two of which I had never visited, and one in Carneros, and came away reveling in my good fortune. Each winery offered a lineup of incredible wines, the quality of which is so high, it is practically impossible to make critical distinctions as to desirability (scores in some critics' parlance). So, I won't bother, other to give you a feel for the wines and encourage you to explore them on your own. There is always the danger of "cellar palate" when visiting a winery where you can easily be seduced by the romance of winemaking and the charm of the people presenting the wines. After many years of visiting wineries, I believe I can distance myself from extraneous attractions and concentrate on the wines. I have absolutely no hesitancy in recommending the wines from these three producers.

Since the wines reviewed below were tasted rather briefly, I have chosen to give my general impressions and rate them on a scale of good to very good. Many of the wines would undoubtedly be worthy of my highest Pinot Geek award if tasted and evaluated over time in my usual fashion at home.

## Halleck Vineyard



Ross Halleck invited me to visit his home and adjacent vineyard located at 900 feet elevation in the eastern Sebastopol hills, part of the Sonoma Coast region of Sonoma County. I was received and treated to the same tour and tasting that he offers to those who chose to visit and sample his wines. Appropriate food was matched with the wines as the midday affair progressed from a picturesque setting next to the vineyard to a deck in the back of the house overlooking the Russian River Valley. It was a very gentele way of familiarizing myself with Halleck Vineyard's latest releases. I had reviewed several vintages of Halleck Vineyard Pinot Noirs beginning in 2003, but had not tried the current 2008 vintage releases.



Ross founded a very successful marketing agency based in Palo Alto, but bitten by the wine bug, he acquired a relatively isolated property in Sebastopol, and by 1991 had moved his former spouse, Jennifer, and their three sons to the home on the site. Buoyed by Jennifer's experience working in the wine industry and their shared passion for wine, they planted a 1-acre vineyard surrounding their home. Ross admits that he was very fortunate, dumb luck if you will, that the site turned out to be so perfect for growing Pinot Noir.



Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777 were planted in 1992 and 1993 by the Dutton family and first harvested in 1999. The aim was to set aside profits from sale of the wine from this estate vineyard to pay for their three sons' college educations. This has proven unrealistic as the small vineyard has not always offered a significant commercial crop because of the challenges of growing Pinot Noir there. The Hallecks expanded their Pinot Noir offerings by sourcing fruit from other nearby premium growers. They now produce a Pinot Noir blend from two vineyards called the Three Sons Cuvée, an Estate Pinot Noir, a Hillside Cuvée Pinot Noir from neighboring vineyards, and two vineyard designated Pinot Noirs, Hallberg and the Farm. A dry Russian River Valley Gewürztraminer from Saralee's Vineyard is also offered.

The winemaker is Rick Davis who currently crafts wines for several other labels including Londer Vineyards, La Czar Vineyards and Calstar. Ross and Rick's aim is to produce Pinot Noirs that are earthy and savory rather than simply fruity. The winemaking regimen is as follows. Grapes are 100% de-stemmed, whole berry fermented, cold soaked for 5 days, fermented in open top bins, and aged 9-10 months in about 30% new French oak barrels.

Production is about 1,500 cases annually and the wines are sold primarily through a mailing list (visit [www.halleckvineyard.com](http://www.halleckvineyard.com)). A list of retailers and restaurant placements is included on the website. Inquire by e-mail for an appointment to visit and taste.

**2008 Halleck Vineyard Three Sons Cuvée Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., pH 3.47, TA 0.614, 800 cases, \$40. Sixth vintage. Sourced from the Farm and Hallberg vineyards. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Relatively modest in intensity but flavorful featuring a core of well-spiced, dark red cherries and complimentary oak. An easy drinking and versatile wine. Good.*

**2008 Halleck Vineyard Hallberg Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.9% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.589, 282 cases, \$60. A vineyard off Highway 116 near downtown Sebastopol owned by Brice Jones at the site of the former Hallberg Apple Orchard. Dijon clones 777 and 115. *Alluring aromatic profile featuring scents of fresh berries, cherries, forest floor and spice. Flavors of dark cherries, ripe strawberries, peppery spice and sandalwood. Seamless and long on the finish. Very good.*

**2008 Halleck Vineyard Hillside Cuvée Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.607, 247 cases, \$45. *Aromas of savory dark fruits and forest floor. Bright and crisp flavors of deep red cherries and berries with hints of spice, cranberry and acid-driven minerality. Good.*



**2008 Halleck Vineyard The Farm Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.26, TA 0.626, 231 cases, \$60. Vineyard planted in 1999. Dijon clone 777. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Fresh, ripe wild berries are featured on the nose and palate. The most intense, dense and earthy of the Halleck offerings, yet balanced beautifully by vibrant acidity. Well-managed oak and nicely proportioned tannic bones. Very good.*

**2008 Halleck Vineyard Estate Halleck Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.595, 36 cases, \$75. Yields of 1 to 1.5 tons per acre. Vineyard is picked by family and friends. *This is a virtuoso wine that offers a complex array of aromas and flavors that defy adequate description. A chameleon in the glass that changes constantly over time. The middleweight core of dark red and black berries is quite exotic, seemingly coating every nook and cranny in the mouth, and finishing with an intense and lasting flourish. Ross says this wine makes him “tear up,” and I can understand why. Very good ++.*

## Hartford Family Winery

Jackson Family Farms bought the former Laurier Winery out of bankruptcy in 1992 and the first commercial crush was in 1994, consisting of two Pinot Noirs and one old vine Zinfandel. Don and spouse Jenny, Jess Jackson's daughter, are now the sole owners of Hartford Family Winery.

The most recent winemaker was Jeff Mangahas who left in 2011 for a position at Williams Selyem and was replaced by veteran winemaker Jeff Stewart, formerly of Buena Vista Carneros. Jeff was a young assistant to Merry Edwards in 1989 when the winery was known as Laurier Winery, so his winemaking career has come full circle. I tasted through many of the 2010 Hartford Court Chardonnays and 2009 Hartford Court Pinot Noirs with Jeff recently. Although I have been a fan of Hartford Family Winery wines for a number of years, I had never visited the winery and saw my chance when Jeff came on board. The 2011 wines will be Jeff's first full vintage. I tasted a few from barrel and they appear to be very promising.

Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are bottled under the Hartford Court label and Zinfandel carries the Hartford label designation. Pinot Noir is sourced from vineyards in the Russian River Valley, Green Valley of Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, Carneros and Anderson Valley. A Russian River Valley Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are offered as excellent entry-level wines, with the remainder of the lineup being vineyard designated or special block bottlings from single vineyards.

Hartford Family Winery wines are sold through the winery's online store at [www.harfordwines.com](http://www.harfordwines.com), the winery's Wine Club and through limited retail distribution. Various tasting options are offered in the tasting room that is open daily. A seated private library food and wine pairing experience is coming soon.



**2010 Hartford Court Russian River Valley Chardonnay** \$28. An entry level wine sourced from several estate and non-estate vineyards. Many of vineyards are 15 to 20 years old. Inaugural vintage for this bottling. *Very light straw color in the glass. Fresh aromas of green apples and spice. Light on the palate with appealing flavors of baked apple and roasted nuts. An easy drinker and great value. Good.*

**2009 Hartford Court Fog Dance Vineyards Green Valley of Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.6% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.55, \$60. Named for the dance performed by the Pacific fog that drifts through the vineyards and back again to sea each day. Planted in 1998 to Dijon Chardonnay clones 95, 96 and 809. Aged 15 months in 20% new French oak barrels. Inaugural vintage of this bottling. *Light straw color in the glass. Aromas of green apple, pear, lemon curd and petrichor. Flavors of baked pear, lemon, apple and brown butter. Rich, yet refined and crisp. Very good (+).*

**2008 Hartford Court Seascape Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc. pH 3.59, TA 0.60, 450 cases, \$65. A 6-acre site west of the town of Occidental planted in the late 1980s. The vineyard borders the well-known Coastlands Vineyard. Extremely cold site that is often harvested in November. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Unfined, unfiltered. *Medium straw color in the glass. Striking minerality, even salinity on the nose. Citrus-driven flavor, crisp and clean with a slightly viscous mouth feel. Very good (+).*

**2010 Hartford Court Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 3,000 cases. An entry level wine. *Very aromatic, displaying scents of fresh berries and sappy cherries. Soft and gentle on the palate with lighter weight flavors of red cherries and berries with a good cut of citrus-driven acidity on the finish. Good (+).*

**2009 Hartford Court Seascape Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.74, TA 0.56, 250 cases, \$60. The vineyard is located south of Fort Ross adjacent the well-known Coastlands Vineyard. Dijon clones 777, 114 and 115 with some 2A. Yields are only about 1 ton per acre. Native yeast fermentations. Aged 15 months in 45% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Well-spiced black raspberry and black cherry fruit with hints of spice, vanilla and peat. A very soft and elegant wine with gossamer tannins that is irresistible. Very good.*

**2009 Hartford Court Sevens Bench Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.75, TA 0.53, 300 cases, \$60. From an estate vineyard near Saintsbury's Brown Ranch and Shafer's Red Shoulder Ranch. Primarily Dijon clones 667 and 777. Native and cultured yeast fermentations. Aged 15 months in 60% new French oak barrels. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Deep, darkly fruited nose with complimentary notes of spice and oak. Earthy and tannic, reflecting the heavy clay soils of this vineyard. Rich black cherry and dark red berry flavors with a velvety mouth feel. Good.*

**2009 Hartford Court Velvet Sisters Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** \$60. The vineyard is located in the deep end of the Anderson Valley and one of the last vineyards to be harvested. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely spiced dark red fruits on the nose. Impressive mid palate intensity and staying power on the finish. Delicious red and blue fruits wrapped in ripe, firm tannins. Laser-like in its focus and purpose. Very good (+).*

**2009 Hartford Court Hailey's Block Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** \$60. Named after Don and Jennifer Hartford's daughter Hailey. From a block of Arrendell Vineyard planted to Dijon 114 and 777 clones. *Aromas of red cherries and raspberries, baking spice including allspice and floral garden. Moderately intense dark red fruit flavor accented by spice. Soft tannins and reasonably good length on a finish that has a very soft landing. Good (+).*

**2009 Hartford Court Land's Edge Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 15.4% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.55, 1,637 cases, \$45. Unreleased. Primarily from the estate Far Coast Vineyard. Native yeast fermentations. Aged 15 months in 45% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Array of dark stone and berry fruits on the nose with nuances of petrichor and forest floor. Full-bodied and rugged with a core of purple fruit compressed by firm tannins which linger on the dry finish. Young and tight. Good.*

**2009 Hartford Court Arrendell Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.61, 300 cases, \$85. Planted by Dutton in 1975 with Martini heirloom selections. More recently, Dijon clones have been added. Struggles to ripen less than 1 ton per acre by Halloween. The winery's flagship wine. *Layers of aromatic interest offering scents of black cherries, kirsch, spice and oak. Soft and luscious on the palate with mouth coating flavors of black raspberries lingering on a well-endowed, memorable Grand Cru finish.*

*Relatively soft tannins create a sleekness but keep the fruit in line, while a bright cut of acidity adds vibrancy. A very special wine of character. Very good (++)*.

**2009 Hartford Court Fog Dance Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5 alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.56, 350 cases, \$60. From an organically farmed estate vineyard planted in Goldridge fine sandy loam with primarily Dijon clones 667 and 777. Aged 15 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Complex aromatic profile with scents of exotic berries, citrus peel and forest floor. Very different tasting from other wines in the lineup. Dark red and purple fruits are vivid and brightened by perceived heightened acidity (minerality) and caressed by soft tannins. Impressive aromatic intensity and length on the finish. Very good (+)*.



## **Dutton-Goldfield**

Founded in 1998 by talented winemaker Dan Goldfield and noted Sonoma County viticulturist Steve Dutton, this partnership has thrived because of Dan's exceptional Pinot Noirs, Chardonnays, Syrahs and Zinfandels (and a few other small production varietals including a Riesling for 2011) and Steve's superb vineyards and viticulture expertise in the Russian River Valley, Green Valley and Sonoma Coast. Dutton-Goldfield owns 80 acres. Of the annual production of 7,000 cases, 95% comes from Steve's vineyards, primarily those in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley appellation. Steve is the son of famed Russian River Valley winegrower, Warren Dutton, and heads up the Dutton Ranch with his brother Joe. It was Warren that initially suggested Steve and Dan form a partnership.

Dan is an energetic, high-spirited and talkative winemaker who as a young man intended to enter medical school. A wine epiphany at a tasting with winemaker Larry Brooks (Acacia, Champion) led him to pursue a master's degree in enology from University of California at Davis. He still retained a medical connection, his surgeon spouse. Dan is an avid cyclist and some of his vineyard sources have been discovered on his frequent bike rides in the region. Most of the Pinot Noir vineyards are in very cool sites located in the Green Valley with a special bottling from Mark Pasternak's Devil Gulch Vineyard in Marin County.

Dutton-Goldfield opened a tasting room and storage facility at the western corner of Gravenstein Highway and Occidental Road in Sebastopol which is open daily. Dutton-Goldfield wines are sold primarily through the tasting room, a mailing list, a Wine Club, and website online store ([www.duttongoldfield.com](http://www.duttongoldfield.com)). The tasting room staff is particularly warm and well-informed and I would encourage you to visit. A very informative e-newsletter is published frequently.

Winemaking is straightforward using de-stemmed grapes, 5-day cold soaks, open top bin fermentations, and aging in 45% to 60% new French oak barrels. Different clones are vinified separately. Dan's wines are always beautifully balanced with modest alcohols (often less than 14%), hi-tone acidity and juiciness, and perfectly integrated oak.

I recently tasted through a number of new and recent releases at Dutton-Goldfield with Valerie Wathen, a spokesperson and long time member of the Dutton-Goldfield sales and marketing staff. A few of the wines

have not been released and since they are in limited production, are offered first to mailing list and Wine Club members. However, she agreed to provide a link to an order form for these and other wines for *PinotFile* readers: <http://www.duttongoldfield.com/acrobat/pforderform.pdf>. You can also phone her personally at 707-823-3887. Wine Club members enjoy significant discounts and access to all limited production releases and magnums.

**2010 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.66, 2,336 cases, \$35. Released March 2012. Sourced from five Dutton Ranch vineyards with 40% from Mill Station Vineyard. 100% barrel fermented. Aged 10 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *Attractive aromas of fresh pears, lemon and roasted nuts. Flavors of baked pears, green apple, and citrus in a crisp, bright style with some length on the refreshing lemon-driven finish. A terrific food wine. Very good.*

**2010 Dutton-Goldfield Fox Den Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.47, TA 0.58, 356 cases, \$58. Released November 2011 but still available. From a new vineyard source previously used for Orogeny wines, planted by Dan and Steve in 2002 and located near Occidental. Clones 667, 777 and 115. Highest natural acidity of all the Pinot Noirs. Aged 17 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Very aromatic with hi-spirited scents of fresh berry mash, blueberry pie and spice. Moderately intense on the mid palate with flavors of raspberries, cherries and a hint of oak, all wrapped in dusty tannins. Notable for a lively cut of acid on the juicy finish. Very good.*

**2010 Dutton-Goldfield Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.58, 2,598 cases, \$38. Released February 2012. The winery's flagship bottling composed of five vineyard sources including Emerald Ridge and Freestone Hill. Aged 10 months in 40% new French oak barrels. *Fresh and aromatic featuring black cherry, blackberry and boysenberry fruit making an impression on the mid palate and finishing softly with mild fine-grain tannins. Spice and complimentary oak add interest. A solid everyday table wine. Good (+).*

**2010 Dutton-Goldfield Emerald Ridge Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.62, 251 cases, \$58. Planted by Steve Dutton in 1991 to an array of clones. Pommard, 2A, and Dijon 667 are included in this wine. Aged 12 months in 55% new French oak barrels. *Relatively closed, needing time and swirling to reveal the aromas of blackberry jam, black cherries and cardamom spice. Forceful and assertive in the mouth (the most full-bodied of the wines tasted), yet without weight, offering delicious flavors of fresh blackberries, black cherries and baking spices. Round and polished with a Grand Cru finish. Still showing some oak which will integrate with maturation in the bottle. An outstanding wine that is liquid nobility. Very good (++)*.

**2010 Dutton-Goldfield Angel Camp Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 83 cases, \$58. Limited release to Wine Club. First Anderson Valley Pinot Noir for Dutton-Goldfield. *Perfume and flavors of dark red and black stone fruits with a complimentary note of savory herbs and oak. Discreetly concentrated with fine-grain tannins, zippy acidity and good finishing length. Very good.*

**2010 Dutton-Goldfield Azaya Ranch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir** 30-40 cases, \$58. From a vineyard farmed by Mark Pasternak on Hicks Valley Road near Corda Family and Stubbs vineyards. Mark planted this 18-acre vineyard in 2006 with Dijon 115, 667, 777, 828, Swan and 2A clones. Fruit from this vineyard also goes to DeLoach whose 2009 bottling won the recent Pigs & Pinot competition in Healdsburg. Hartford Court and Woodenhead are also in line for fruit in the future. Inaugural bottling from this very cool site. *Open and generous nose with aromas of fresh pie berries, spice and loamy earth. Delicate, yet flavorful core of dark red stone fruits and berries caressed by well-ripened, mildly firm tannins, and infused by bright acidity. A winegasm. Very good (++)*.

Sonoma County vintners are bringing "Sonoma in the City" to Los Angeles with the "Taste of Sonoma: On Tour" grand tasting will be held April 24, 2012, at The London West Hollywood and will feature over 100 wines from 15 distinctive regions. Dan Goldfield will be participating, offering a unique tasting of the past, present and future of one of his wines (a past vintage, current vintage, and barrel sample). Trade tasting in the afternoon followed by consumer tasting in the evening. Special advance tickets are \$40. For information visit [www.sonomawine.com](http://www.sonomawine.com).



## Scribe Winery

This is a unique, relatively new project launched in 2007 by proprietors Andrew Mariani, Andrew Avellar and Kristof Anderson, who acquired 256 acres three miles east of the Sonoma Town Square in Carneros. The property dates to 1858 when Emil Dresel and his brother Julius planted vineyards here, possibly the first Riesling and Sylvaner vines in the United States. Most recently, the property was a run-down turkey farm.

The trio is revitalizing the property and planted 35 acres of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay Riesling and Sylvaner beginning in 2008. Considerable work was expended to clear the property of debris, derelict sheds, invasive plants and acres of poison oak. An on site winery is planned that will be built to preserve the turkey shed and honor the history of the property.



A historic Mission Revival style Hacienda, once home to the Dresel family, will possibly be restored as well, currently the site of impromptu events hosted by the owners and featuring Bay Area chefs (visit the website for upcoming dinners). The restoration will prove challenging as there is no electricity and plumbing so the interior will need a complete update. The trick is doing this while preserving the aged exterior of this majestic home.



Currently the winery's wines are produced from sourced grapes and include a Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sylvaner, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. The wines have already found a following and the 2010 Pinot Noir is already sold out. Join the mailing list to obtain future offerings. Visit the stylish and informative website at [www.scribewinery.com](http://www.scribewinery.com).



Tasting is offered in an underground bunker-like room below the winery's offices that is quaint and charming, yet very cold on the day I visited. The staff are young and enthusiastic, still new to the game, and enjoyably unpretentious. The 2009 Scribe Carneros Pinot Noir was previously reviewed favorably in *The PinotFile* ([www.princeofpinot.com/winery/1220/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/winery/1220/)). The 2010 vintage was sampled and although similar in flavor profile to the 2009 vintage, it was from a cooler vintage and is lighter in weight with more acidity and brightness.

**2010 Scribe Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 350 cases, \$42. Martini and Pommard clones. 17-year-old vineyard. Harvested at 22° Brix, native yeast fermentation, aged 5 months in neutral French oak barrels, and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Bright, unadorned and pleasing cherry aromas and flavors picking up liveliness and interest over time in the glass as the wine warmed. This style of Pinot Noir has become popular for its easy upfront drink ability and refreshing fruity qualities. Very good.*



# Mining for Good Pinot Noir in the Value-Priced Bin

**2010 Balletto Estate Bottled Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$17 (retail \$28). Double Gold Medal 2011 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of black cherries, black plums and blackberries, veering to the ripe side. Wood-kissed darker fruits on the palate with a citrus peel note in the background that lingers on the finish. Lacks conviction and a little too oaky, but pleasant. Decent.*

**2010 Balletto Burnside Road Vineyard Estate Bottled Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 350 cases, \$35 (retail \$40). Gold Medal 2011 Sonoma County Harvest Fair. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of very ripe dark berries and plums with hints of prune and oak. Middleweight very ripe fruit flavors with notes of Hoison sauce and rhubarb. A bit linear and bogged down with oak. Soft tannins make for easy drinking. Disappoints for a medal winner, but may find fans among those who prefer very ripe flavored Pinot Noir. Good.*



**NV Barefoot California Pinot Noir** 12.3% alc., \$6.99 (but often discounted). The most awarded California wine brand under \$15 in United States wine competitions. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red berries, cherry snow cone and sweet pipe smoke. Mid-weight flavors of cherry cola and sassafras with a slight confected quality. Most certainly includes other red varieties besides Pinot Noir. Reasonable good structure, but a bit shallow fruited. Soft, easy drink ability. Throw in a few ice cubes in the summer, and this will make for a refreshing drink. All things said, a great value. Widely distributed. Decent (+).*



**2009 Fort Ross Fort Ross Vineyard Sea Slopes Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$26.99. *Darkly colored in the glass. A varied array of aromas including very ripe, roasted dark berries, black currants, oak and bell pepper. Very ripe fruited with flavors of black raspberries, boysenberries and plums with a vegetal undertone. Rich, sultry and earthy with some length on the finish. Considerable better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Good.*



**2010 Jack Hammer Central Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$12.99, screw cap. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of red berry pie, black cherries and complimentary oak. Medium weight flavors of dark cherries and a hint of oak spice, finishing with a cherry and raspberry laden hi note. A silky textured wine that goes down easy. Good (+).*



**2010 La Crema Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.82, TA 0.53, \$25. *From very cool vineyard sites in a cool vintage with delayed harvest. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, open top tank fermentation, gentle punch downs three times a day, aged 6.5 months in 23% new French oak. Lots kept separate throughout the winemaking process and blended at the end. A broad pallet of clones including 115, 667, 777, 828, Pommard, Martini, Calera, Mt. Eden, Swan, 2A and 23. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh strawberries, cherries and oak spice, fading some over time in the glass. Crisp and juicy in the mouth with a lighter weight array of dark red cherry and allaliberry flavors with complimentary oak-driven notes of spice and chocolate. Lacks a bit of finishing length, but overall a fine, reliable daily drinker. Easy to find as it is ubiquitous on grocery store top shelves. Good (+).*



**2010 Picket Fence Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., pH 3.77, TA 0.54, \$17.99. *From Bronco Wine Company in Hopland. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Some reduction upon opening, eventually revealing aromas of red cherries and smoke. A lighter, nimble style with a cherry core back by a smoky oak flavor that diminishes over time. Decent.*

**2010 Redtree California Pinot Noir** 12.5% alc., \$6, screw cap. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Marked reduction upon opening with aromas and flavors of burnt matchstick. Left in a glass all day, the reduction resolved, revealing aromas and flavors of black cherries with spice and oak char in the background. Light in weight with silky tannins and easy approachability. A quaffable wine that is not up to the quality of previous vintages. Decent.*



**2010 Sean Minor Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$14. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Shy aromas of dark fruits, forest floor and oak. Lighter weight flavors of dark raspberries and blackberries with a subtle smoky, oak char undertone that dissipates over time in the glass. Velvety soft in the mouth. This wine could use more time in bottle. Decant if you pop a cork now. Good (+).*



**2011 The Pinot Project California Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$9.99. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Slightly confected aromas of strawberries and red cherries with hints of spice and pine forest. Soft in the mouth with a moderately intense core of dark red cherry and raspberry fruit with a floral and pine needle sidecar. Soft in the mouth with a short finish. A pretty good Pinot for the money, but the pine forest adjunct (still present the following day from a previously opened bottle) was not pleasing to me. Decent.*





**2009 Tondré Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**

14.8% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.68, 650 cases, \$22.50. Winemaker Anthony Craig. Aged 20 months in 37% new Hungarian oak barrels.

*Vibrant aromas of dark cherries and berries with notes of oak and hickory. Delicious essence of black raspberries with striking mid palate presence and some persistence on the finish. Notes of plum reduction sauce, spice and saffras add interest. Still fine two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. The best value priced wine reviewed in this issue. Hard to find (not sold on the website: try Bottle Barn in Santa Rosa, CA.) Very good.*



# Recommended Chardonnays

**2009 Anaba Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.3% alc., \$28. *Pale golden straw color and clear in the glass. Green apple and pharmaceutical aromas. An austere wine with very little flavor offering demure notes of apple, lemon water and subtle oak. Crisp and easy drinking but lacks interest. Decent.*

**2010 Anaba Denmark Vineyard Wente Clone Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.3% alc., \$37. *Pale golden straw color and clear in the glass. Interesting aromatic profile offering scents of dried mango, lemon curd, ocean air, lees and seasoned oak. Nicely flavored, featuring lemon zest, pastry cream and butter. On the austere side but more interesting than the Sonoma Coast bottling with lively acidity and some length on the finish. Good (+).*



**2009 Domaine Serene Clos du Soleil Dundee Hills Willamette Valley Oregon Chardonnay** 14.6% alc., \$45. *Dijon clone 76 from a 4-acre vineyard at 650-700 feet elevation. Barrel fermented and aged on the lees. Light straw yellow color in the glass. Shy but pleasing aromas of apple, lemon zest, and tropical fruit assortment. Crisp and juicy baked apple, citrus and caramel flavors in a delicate style. The oak is complimentary without being indulgent. Very good.*

**2009 Dunstan Durell Vineyard Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., \$39.95. *Golden yellow color and clear in the glass. Oak-driven aromas of toffee, butterscotch, allspice and mocha java with baked pear in the background. Tasty middleweight flavors of baked pear, baked apple, honey, oak toast and minerals with good fullness and roundness. The heavy oak influence is not for me personally, but the wine is well crafted in its style. Good (+).*



**2010 Envolve Carneros Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., \$24.99. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Appealing scents of baked apple pie, toffee and caramel. Flavors of honeycomb, green apple, pineapple, toffee and oak. A wine of considerable nuance, leaning a little heavy on oak, with reasonably good length on the refreshing finish. Good (+).*



**2010 Epilogue North Coast Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., \$13.99. *Very light straw color and clear in the glass. Aromas of pear, lemon curd and vanilla, fading over time in the glass. A light, crisp style with pear, apple, honey and subtle oak flavors, accented by a flinty, mineral note. Decent.*



**2010 Fogdog Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.75, 1,470 cases, \$35. *Sourced from independent growers (67%) and Freestone estate vineyards (33%). Aged 8 months in 20% new and 7% two to three-year old French oak barrels. Light yellow in color and slightly cloudy. Uplifting aromas of lemon curd, pomelo and baked apple. Delicious flavors of*

*lemon tart, white pear and subtle oak with bright acidity driving the wine. Finishes soft and creamy. A very classy wine at this price point.*



**2009 Fort Ross Fort Ross Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 800 cases, \$26.99. *From a 50-acre vineyard at 1200 to 1700 feet elevation, one mile from the coast above the coastal fog. Winemaker is Jeff Pisoni. Light golden straw color and slightly cloudy in the glass. Aromas of golden apple, lemon curd and seasoned oak. Tasty core of baked apple, oak spice, and nutty flavors. Polished and well-crafted. Very good.*

**2010 High Flyer Sierra Madre Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay** 14.7% alc., 550 cases, \$?. One of three wine brands from Somerston Wine Co., made under the direction of General Manager and Winemaker Craig Becker. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Peach, honey, butter, roasted nuts, and yeast aromas are featured. Tasty core of baked apple, citrus and vanilla wafer flavors in a restrained, demure style, finishing with a good cut of citrus that makes an enjoyable impression. Very good.*



**2009 Lioco Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay** 12.6% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.66, \$35. Whole cluster pressed, cold fermentation in stainless steel tanks, no oak, wild yeast, natural MLF, 6-month fine lees contact without fining or filtration. Wenté clone on original rootstock planted in 1982 at 1600 feet above the Anderson Valley. Shallow clay over fractured rock leads to low yields. *Light yellow color and very slightly cloudy in the glass. Aromas of spiced pear, honey, gardenia and ocean air. Very light and transcendent in the mouth with flavors of Meyer lemon, green apple, and nori, finishing tart and lemony. Picked at low Brix to produce a lean, acidic style. Very good (-).*

**2010 Loring Wine Company Durrell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.9%, \$48. *A big, full-on style of Chardonnay in the Kistler tradition with plenty of attractive buttery white stone fruit and citrus aromas and flavors. Oak is involved but not intrusive, while the alcohol lends body and creaminess. Very good.*

**2010 Lucia Soberanes Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., \$45. Inaugural bottling from this vineyard. *Light straw color in the glass. Aromas of apple, roasted nuts, fresh brioche and lemon curd. Mid weight flavors of baked apple with a hint of citrus. Slightly creamy and smooth on the palate with juicy finishing acidity. Very good*

### Soberanes Vineyard

This is the newest vineyard from the Gary Pisoni and Gary Francioni families, consisting of 40 acres of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah on the Santa Lucia Highlands bench about 9 miles north of Pisoni Vineyards.

The vineyard is named after José Maria Soberanes, who pitched a tent on this site when trekking from Mexico with the Portola expedition of 1769. His son, Feliciano, acquired the rancho as repayment for forty horses, fifty head of cattle, four oxen, and some sheep. The area was then called *El Camp Real del Chocolate* or Chocolate Camp.

The vineyard is blanketed by fog every morning at about 450 feet elevation, conditions that allow low temperatures for slow ripening of grapes. The rocky soils are ideal for wine grapes.

Row direction runs from north to south to have more uniform sun exposure with tight spacing of vines. Multiple clonal material was used for the Chardonnay block.

Wineries sourcing Chardonnay from Soberanes Vineyard include Bernardus, Black Kite, Brack Mountain, Lucia (Pisoni Family), ROAR (Francioni family) and Testarossa.



**2009 Olivia Brion Heron Lake Vineyard Wild Horse Valley Chardonnay** 14.3% alc., 300 cases, \$40. Native yeast ferments. Aged 16 months in Latour and Francois Frères oak barrels. *Light straw color and very slight haze in the glass. Demure aromas of lemon, green apple, petrichor and ocean spray. Delicious core of baked Bosq pear, caramel, honey and very subtle oak. Reserved but seductive with a creamy, spirited finish. A very classy, black tie wine that keeps everything in perspective.*



# Pinot Briefs

**Lane Tanner New Winemaker for Sierra Madre Vineyard** Sierra Madre Vineyard owner Doug Circle announced recently that Santa Maria Valley wine industry veteran Lane Tanner has been appointed winemaker for the vineyard's eponymous brand. Tanner dissolved her own Lane Tanner brand after the 2009 vintage, but couldn't resist taking this "dream job." She inherits the winemaking duties from Steve Rasmussen who will work on other projects including his mobile bottling line business. The Sierra Madre Vineyard brand produces estate grown Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc exclusively from the Sierra Madre Vineyard that was originally planted in 1971. Visit [www.sierramadrevineyard.com](http://www.sierramadrevineyard.com).

**Peter Michael Winery Institutes QR Code Authentication** Peter Michael wines, starting with the 2010 vintage of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, and 2011 vintage of Sauvignon Blanc, will have a QR code on the back label which is unique to the individual bottle, providing an easy means of authenticating the wine. Scanning with any smartphone equipped with a suitable code reading application brings the curious to a micro-website that provides authentication information on the wine. To download a QR scanning application for an iPhone, download QRdeCoder, SCAN or i-Nigma from the Apple app store. For all other smartphones, open the phone's internet browser, go to <http://i-nigma.mobi>, and follow the instructions.

**Physicians Drinking Habits Reported** The recently announced 2012 Medscape Lifestyle Report offered the results of a questionnaire given to 292,251 United States physicians with 29,025 United States physicians responding in twenty-five specialties. 72% of all physicians drink alcohol which is greater than the United States national population figure of 67%. 60% have less than 1 drink a day, 12% have 1-2 drinks per day and 2.65% have more than 2 drinks per day. Among cardiologists, 70.9% drink with 56.9% drinking less than 1 drink per day, 15% drinking 1-2 drinks per day, and 3.3% drinking more than 2 drinks per day. 25.1% abstain. For male internists, 52.2% drink less than 1 drink per day, 12.2% drink 1-2 drinks per day, 2.6% drink 2 or more drinks per day, and 33.1% abstain. For female internists, 47.4% drink less than 1 drink per day, 8.2% drink 1-2 drinks per day, 0.9% drink 2 or more drinks per day, and 43.5% abstain. No breakout was given for type of alcoholic drink imbibed regularly.

**Fulcrum Opens New Tasting Room in Napa** Fulcrum has partnered with four other wineries to launch District 4 Tasting Lounge in downtown Napa in the shopping and restaurant district. District 4 offers daily tastings and will hold a variety of wine events throughout the year. Contact David and Christinna Rossi at [info@fulcrumwines.com](mailto:info@fulcrumwines.com) or 707-610-9602 to set up a VIP tasting. The District 4 tasting lounge website is [www.district4wine.com](http://www.district4wine.com). Grand opening is April 22, 2012.

**"Dueling Vintners" Croquet Tournament** The Dueling Vintners Croquet Tournament is one of the highlights of this year's 9th Annual Croquet Invitational and Charity Auction hosted by Make-A-Wish Greater Bay Area. Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards is the home of this event. Guests enjoy an elegant lunch paired with wine under courtside tents, Kosta Browne's Dan Kosta, aka the "Premier Pinot Pusher of West Egg," won three battles in a row but lost out last year to Schrader Cellars' Fred Schrader, "The Kahuma of Cabernet." Ticket prices are \$200 per person for this year's event on Saturday, May 19. For information and tickets, visit [www.sf.wish.org](http://www.sf.wish.org).

**French Wine Society Bourgogne Master-Level Webinar Program** This program launches May 3, 2012, for a 3 month in-depth online study with optional classroom component on the legendary wines of Burgundy. The lead instructor is Don Kinnan, CWE, and guest instructors include Allen Meadows, Becky Wasserman, Jay Youmans, MW, Eric Hemer, MS, Karen McNeil, and Charles Curtis, MW. Mastery is conferred to candidates who successfully finish the curriculum and pass the final exam. Tuition is \$495. Register at [www.frenchwinesociety.org](http://www.frenchwinesociety.org).

**International Pinot Noir Celebration** When you think summer, you think IPNC. On Thursday, July 26, 2012, there will be an incredible pre-IPNC ¡Salud! Benefit Dinner at Linfield College. The chef will be four time James Beard Award for Best Chef, Cathy Whims, of Portland's famed Nostrana restaurant. A variety of guest winemakers (TBA) will participate. More information on tickets will be available soon. For tickets to IPNC, visit [www.ipnc.org](http://www.ipnc.org).

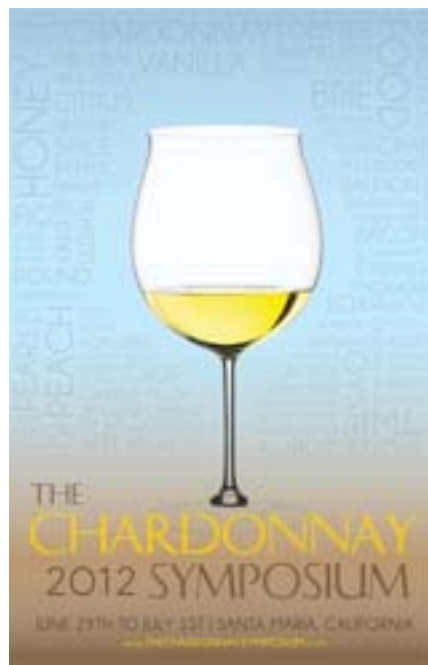
**Mountains to Metro** Governor Hotel's Heritage Ballroom in Portland will be the site of this year's Mountains to Metro tasting presented by the Chehalem Mountains Winegrowers on April 19, 2012. 35+ winegrowers will be pouring with the opportunity to buy wines from these producers. Visit [www.mountaintometro.com](http://www.mountaintometro.com) to purchase tickets.



**Rotary Club of Newberg Red Carpet Charity Auction & Wine Event** This 35th annual event will be held Saturday, April 14, 2012, at the Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg, Oregon. The proceeds support a range of activities for Chehalem Valley youth. World class cuisine, Oregon's finest wines and a silent and live auction. Event tickets are \$100 per person. For further information and tickets, visit [www.newbergrotary.org](http://www.newbergrotary.org).

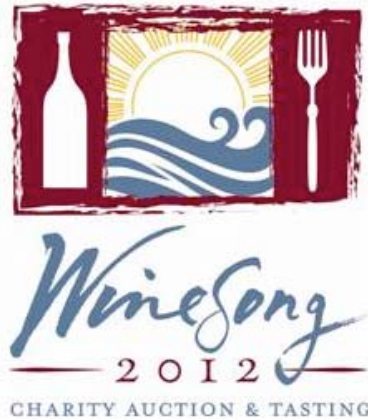
### **Chardonnay Symposium Celebrates 100th Birthday of America's Favorite Wine**

The Chardonnay Symposium in the Santa Maria Valley will gather internationally recognized producers and pioneering growers to analyze, discuss and celebrate Chardonnay. The Chardonnay Symposium is the only event of its kind devoted solely to Chardonnay. A BYOC Santa Maria style BBQ at the Sierra Madre Vineyard on Friday will kick off the event. The educational panel session on Saturday will be moderated by *Wine Enthusiast's* Senior West Coast Editor and popular blogger, Steve Heimoff. Satellite winemaker dinners, a Grand Tasting featuring 50 producers, and a "Pops in the Vineyard" concert by the Santa Maria Philharmonic Society on Sunday will round out the program. The dates are June 29-July 1, 2012. For information and tickets, visit [www.thechardonnaysymposium.com](http://www.thechardonnaysymposium.com).



**Russian River Valley Winegrowers Passport to Pinot Barrel Tasting Weekend** The First Annual Passport to Pinot Barrel Tasting Weekend will feature over 50 Russian River Valley wineries the weekend of June 9-10, 2012. Ticket holders will enjoy barrel tastings, library tastings, food pairings, entertainment and futures purchasing. Weekend tickets are \$65 per person which includes both days and a signature RRVW wineglass as a souvenir. Visit [www.rrvw.org](http://www.rrvw.org).

**Winesong 2012** Celebrity chef Bradley Ogden will be featured at the 2012 Winesong Charity Auction & Tasting held on the Mendocino Coast September 7-8, 2012. The event benefits the Mendocino Coast Hospital. On Friday, September 7, the Anderson Valley Winegrowers will offer an insider's view of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir. On Saturday, September 8, guests stroll the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens enjoying wine and food from 100 wineries and 50 Northern California restaurants. The celebration continues into the auction tents for the Live and Silent Charity Auctions. Chef Bradley Ogden will prepare this year's Live Auction Lunch paired with Mendocino County wines. Visit [www.winesong.org](http://www.winesong.org).



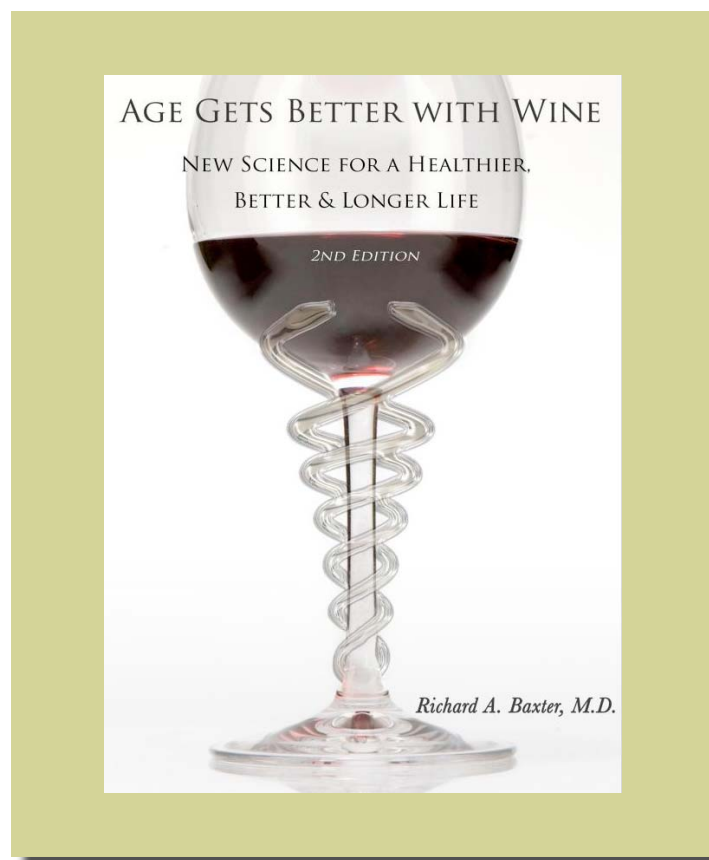
**Buzz About Low Alcohol Wines: Good or Bad?** An excellent article appeared in *BK Wine Magazine* on March 19, 2012, titled, "Low Alcohol Wines are Good or Bad?" ([www.bkwine.com](http://www.bkwine.com)). Another article appeared in *Wine Business Monthly* (Cyril Penn, April 2012) titled, "Priming the Pump for an Entirely New Wine Category." Low alcohol wines are quite popular in the U.K wine market and these wines will be appearing in the U.S. market soon. Data from The Nielsen Company showed that sales grew nearly 50 percent last year to more than a million cases. TFC Wines, headed by Tony Dann, the founder of Cone Tech, plans to introduce low alcohol wines stateside through other producers and distributors, as well as through labels of their own. The trick with low alcohol wines is making them taste good and taste like the wine consumers have been used to drinking.

**Slow Wine 2012 Drops Scores** The guide to Italian wines, *Slow Wine 2012: A Year in the Life of Italy's Vineyards and Wines*, is being published in English for the first time. The book reviews 3,000 wines and includes extensive information on each producer. The guide has abandoned any ratings or scores, putting the emphasis instead on the story of each wine.

**Men Who Drink in Moderation Less Likely to Die After Heart Attack** Harvard researchers reported in the *European Heart Journal* (March 28, 2012) that men who drank two alcoholic drinks each day over a long period were 42 percent less likely to die from heart disease, and 14 percent less likely to die from any cause. Also, among men who consumed moderate amounts of alcohol before a heart attack, those who continued to consume alcohol in moderation after a heart attack had a better long term survival rate. This is the first study to measure alcohol drinking before and after a heart attack.

**2012 Oregon Wine Symposium Report** Christian Miller of Full Glass Research reported that on a volume basis, Oregon accounts for only 0.4 percent of California, Oregon and Washington wine sales but Oregon demonstrates the strongest growth rate of the three states and has the highest average price point.

**Breathalyzers in France** Beginning in the spring of 2012, every car in France will have to be equipped with a breathalyzer. The announcement, made by French President Nicolas Sarkozy who is on a personal crusade to reduce the number of road deaths in France, will require every driver to have a breathalyzer kit in their cars so they can check their alcohol level before driving. Anyone caught without a breathalyzer kit will be fined. In France, alcohol is the biggest cause of deaths on the road with 28.5 percent involving a car driven by someone with an elevated blood alcohol level.



## *Age Gets Better With Wine*

The second edition of *Age Gets Better With Wine* by Richard A. Baxter, M.D., published in 2009, is the most comprehensive volume available on the potential health benefits of alcohol, wine and wine compounds. Confronted by a complex subject with an ever increasing number of peer-reviewed publications appearing each year, the author adroitly assembles the science in an orderly and well-referenced time line to allow the inquisitive reader a perspective on the issue and a realization of how we have arrived at our current level of understanding.

Baxter accurately and clearly deciphers the scientific jargon, explaining terminology like methylation, free radicals, antioxidants, COX inhibition, cohorts and so forth, in such a fashion that the reader without a medical or scientific background can read along comfortably. An extensive glossary of terms is also included. Baxter is also particularly adept at explaining wine polyphenols and their range of potential physiologic actions including anti-aging, antibacterial, antiviral, antioxidant, anti-cancer, and anticoagulation capabilities. He devotes an entire chapter to the most studied polyphenol, resveratrol. For those opposed to drinking alcoholic beverages or unable to drink alcohol due to health issues, alternative dietary sources of polyphenols are also discussed such as cocoa, tea, and coffee.

Historical quotes regarding wine and health precede and end each chapter, and appropriate graphs, summary tables, and illustrations reinforce the discussion. I love the quote from Abraham Lincoln: "It has long been recognized that the problems with alcohol relate not to the use of a bad thing, but to the abuse of a very good thing."

Because of the rapidly evolving knowledge about health benefits of alcohol, wine and wine compounds, this book is understandably a few years behind in relating the newest research. Nevertheless, the landmark scientific studies published over the last 40 years that are referenced in this book are still relevant to our widely held belief today that wine in moderation is good for our health. Baxter advises readers to consult the latest developments in wine and health related matters at his blog: [www.healthandwine.blogspot.com](http://www.healthandwine.blogspot.com). His latest post is on wine and breast cancer, emphasizing to women "The smart choice favors having a glass of wine with dinner and not stressing over it."