



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink
no Noir, you
Pinot Noir*

Anderson Noir Valley: The Festival

The 15th Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival was held on June 18-20, 2012. Sponsored by the Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association, this event originated 20 years ago with winery open houses, but was formalized into a festival in 1997. The popularity of the festival has paralleled the rise in quality and notoriety of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir, and offers a casual, country fair atmosphere accompanied by a cadre of enthusiastic Pinot Noir winegrowers and winemakers. All Pinot Noir is from grapes grown exclusively in the Anderson Valley.

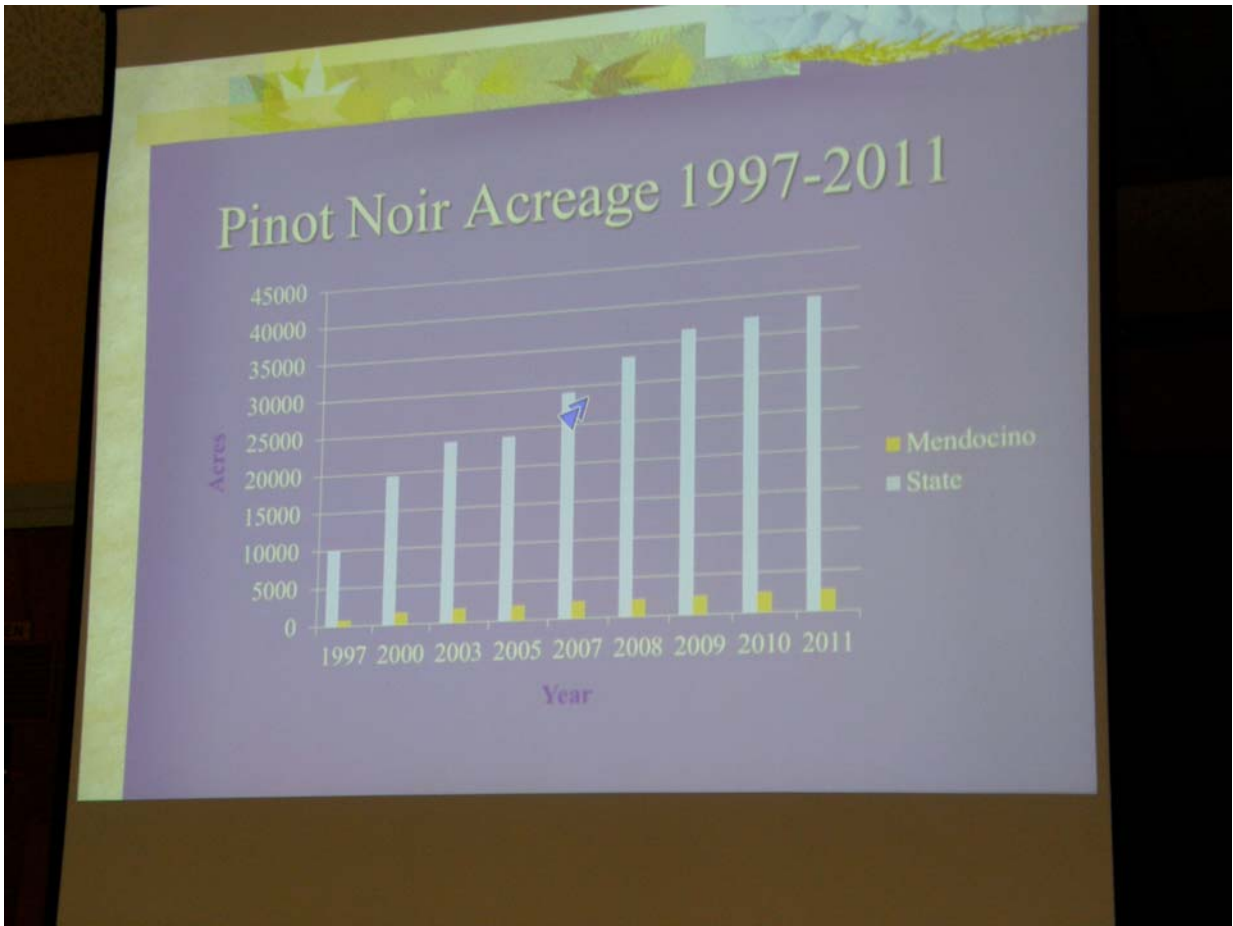


Excerpts from Technical Conference

State of the Pinot Noir Union

Glenn McGourty, Winegrowing & Plant Science Advisor, University of California Cooperative Extension

The first table shows total Pinot Noir acreage, 1997-2011, for Mendocino and California:



The second table shows total Pinot Noir Acreage for Mendocino County Subregions (3-year-old data):

Pinot Noir Acreage in Mendocino County Subregions

Area	Acres
Anderson Valley	1128
Potter Valley	383
Redwood Valley	154
Ukiah Valley	69
Hopland	17
Elk, Gualala	9
Willits	8
All other areas	16

The third table shows the top Pinot Noir Producing Counties in California in 2011:

County	Acreage	Tons Produced	Average Price / Ton
Sonoma	11,929	18,473	\$2,902
Monterey	8,721	18,035	\$1,597
Santa Barbara	4,417	6,698	\$2,654
San Luis Obispo	1,740	Included above	As above
Napa	2,998	3,814	\$2,528
Mendocino	2,470	2,827	\$2,476
Total/Av.	32,269	49,847	\$2,431

The fourth table shows other Pinot Noir Producing Counties 2011:

County	Acreage	Tons Produced	Average Price / Ton
Sacramento	1,427	1,245	\$673
San Joaquin	1,705	18,057	\$601
Merced	922	17,506	\$494
Yolo	772	12,103	\$699
Solano	566	3,276	\$838
Total/ Average	5,392	52,187	\$661

The fifth table shows that currently there is more tons of Pinot Noir produced in the Interior regions of California than in the Coastal region of California, although the Coastal region has over six times as much acreage. The difference is attributable to yields: <2 tons per acre for Coastal region compared to 10 tons per acre for the Interior region due to heavy watering and fertilizing leading to increased bud development. These startling figures show the rise of inexpensive Pinot Noir in California.

Regions	Acreage	Tons Produced	Average Price / Ton
Coastal	32,269	49,847	\$2,431
Interior	5,392	52,187	\$661

Summary of Pinot Noir Wine Sales

Jim Gordon, Editor, *Wines & Vines*

Table one shows there are 21 wineries in Anderson Valley as of April 2012.

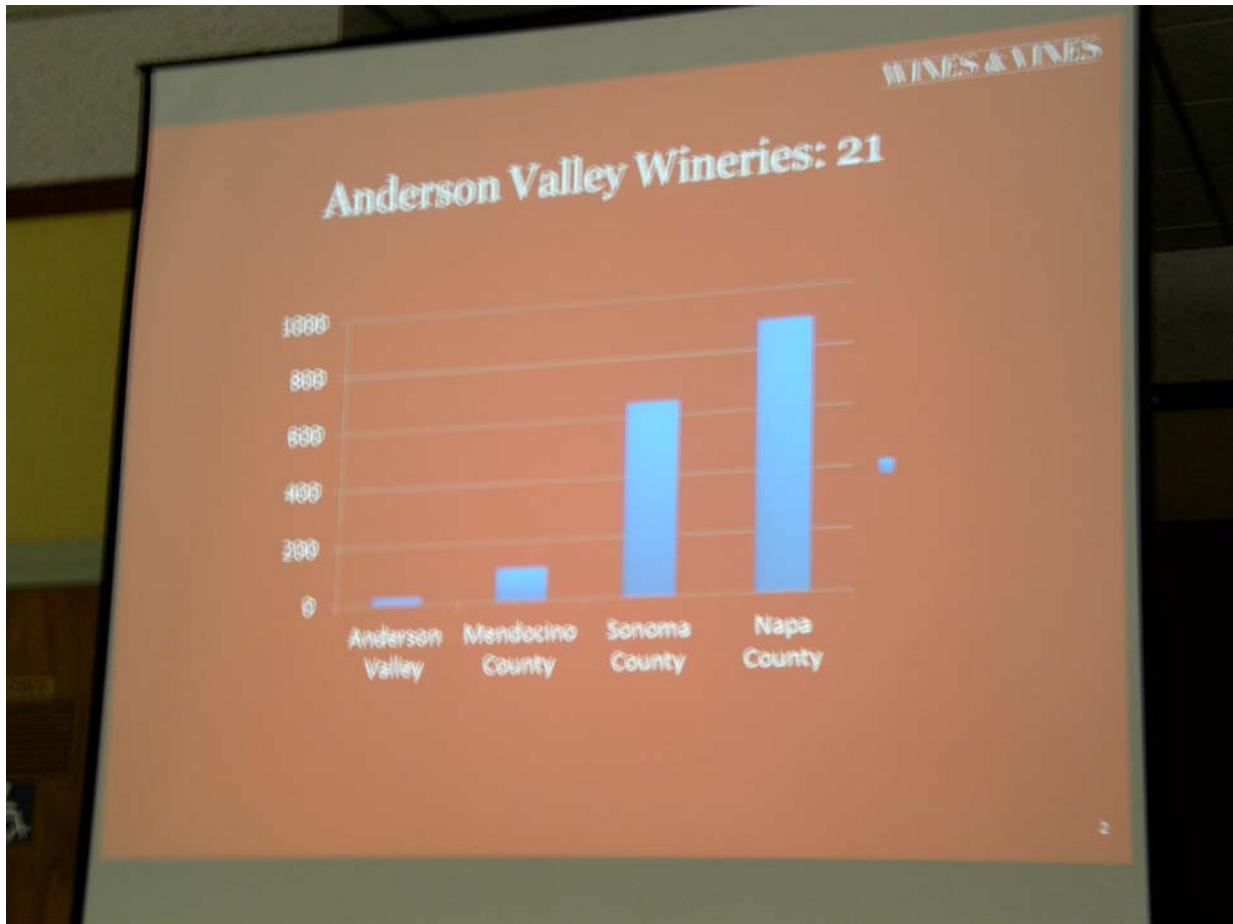


Table two shows winery average bottle price for Anderson Valley and other regions:



Table three displays the average winery size by case production for Anderson Valley and other regions:

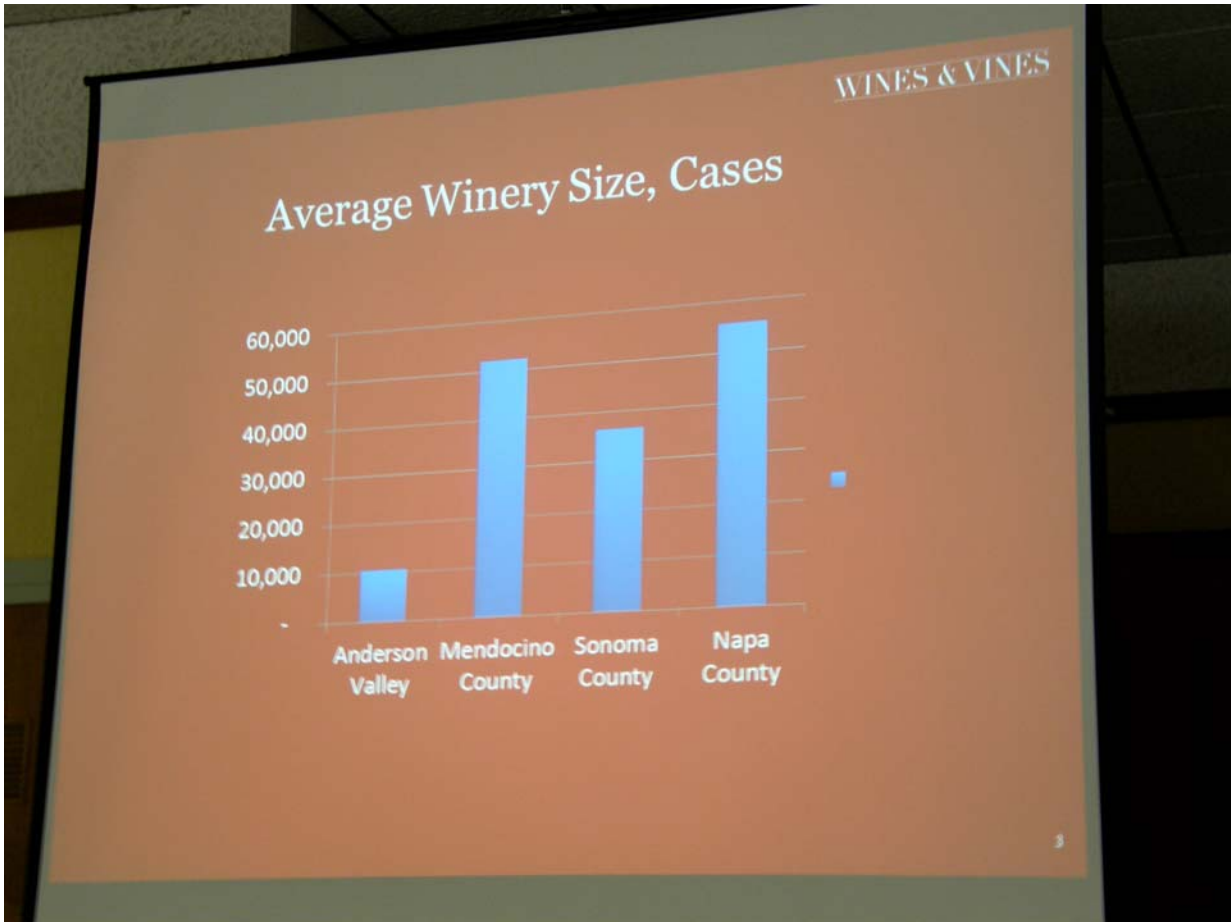


Table four shows Pinot Noir Sales for large retailers and supermarkets, and includes imports:

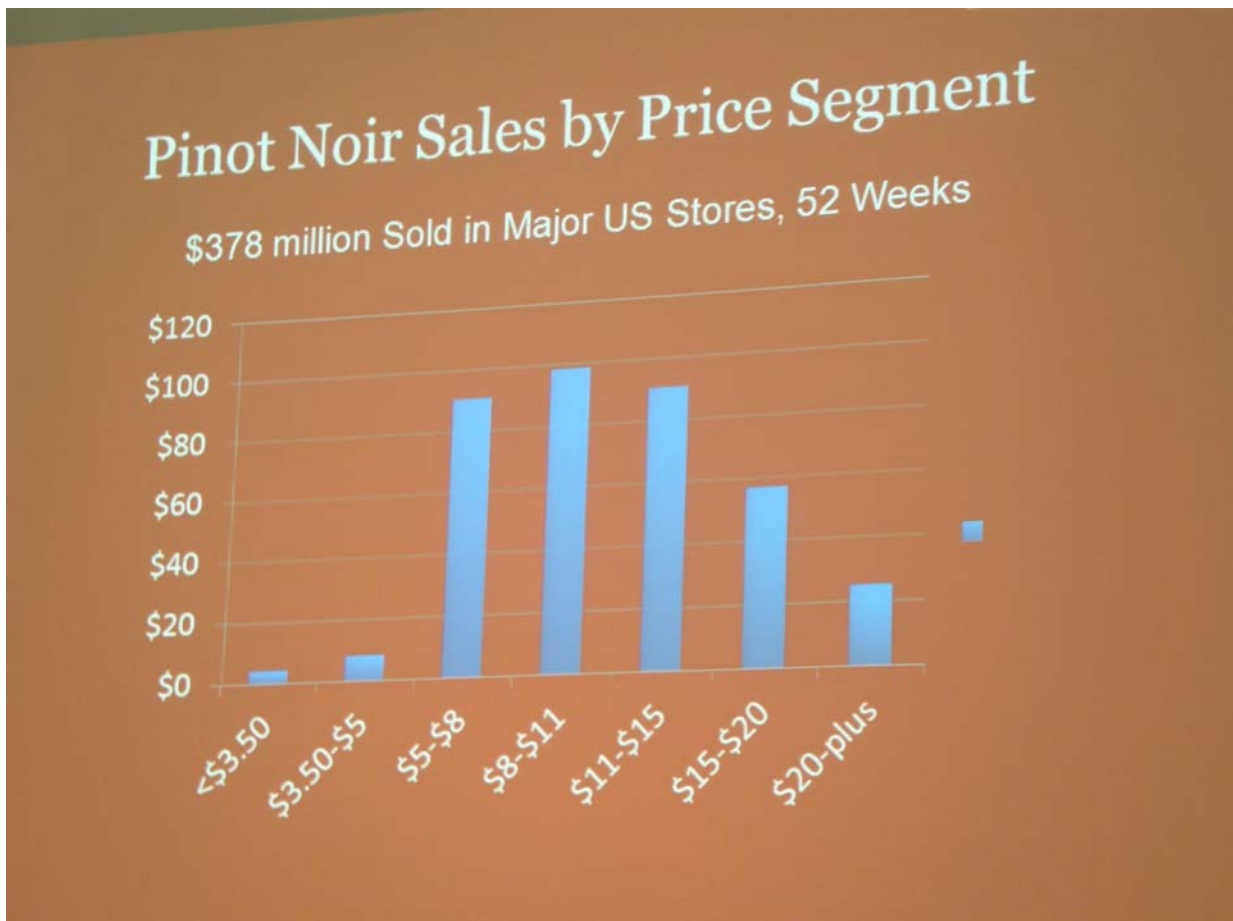


Table five reveals that Pinot Noir sales are still hot!

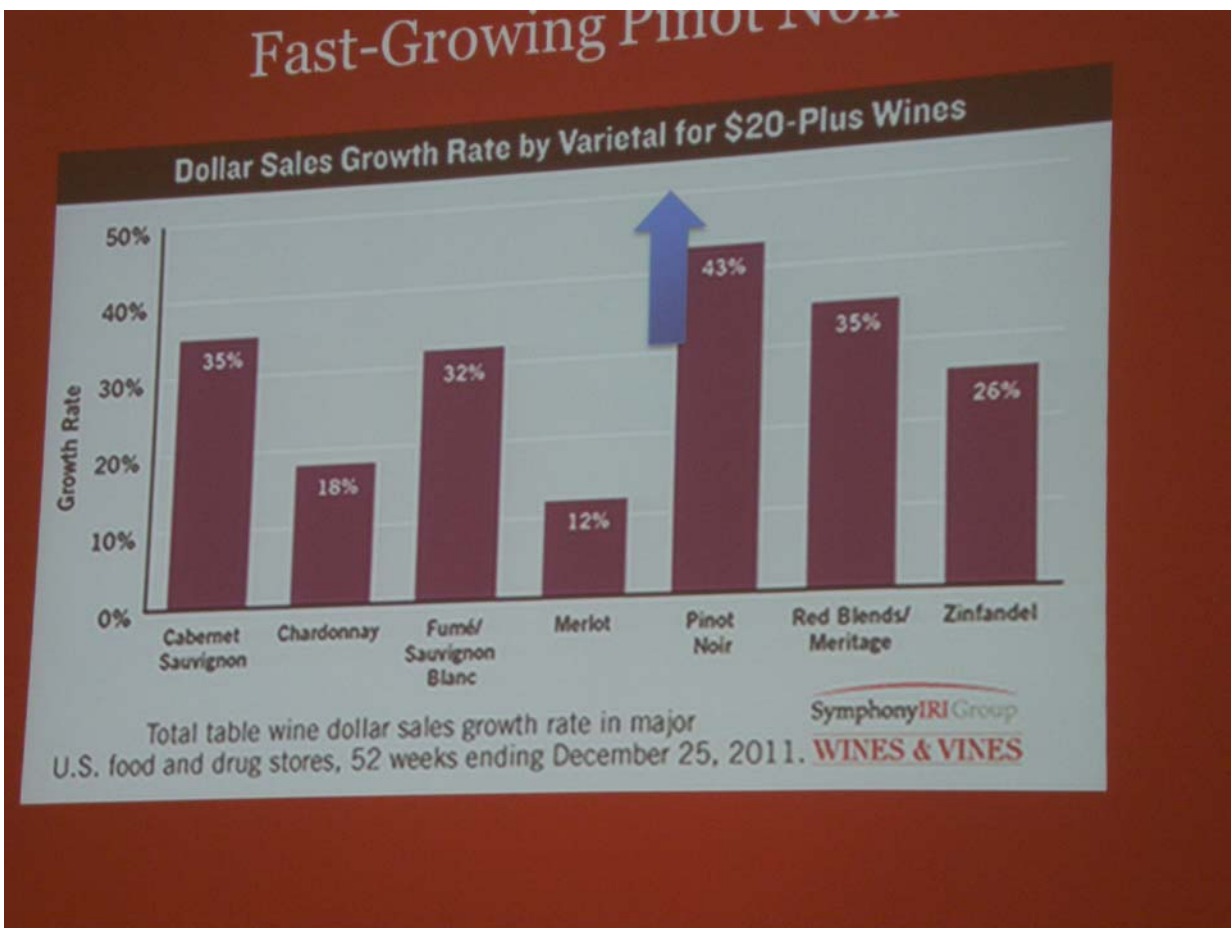
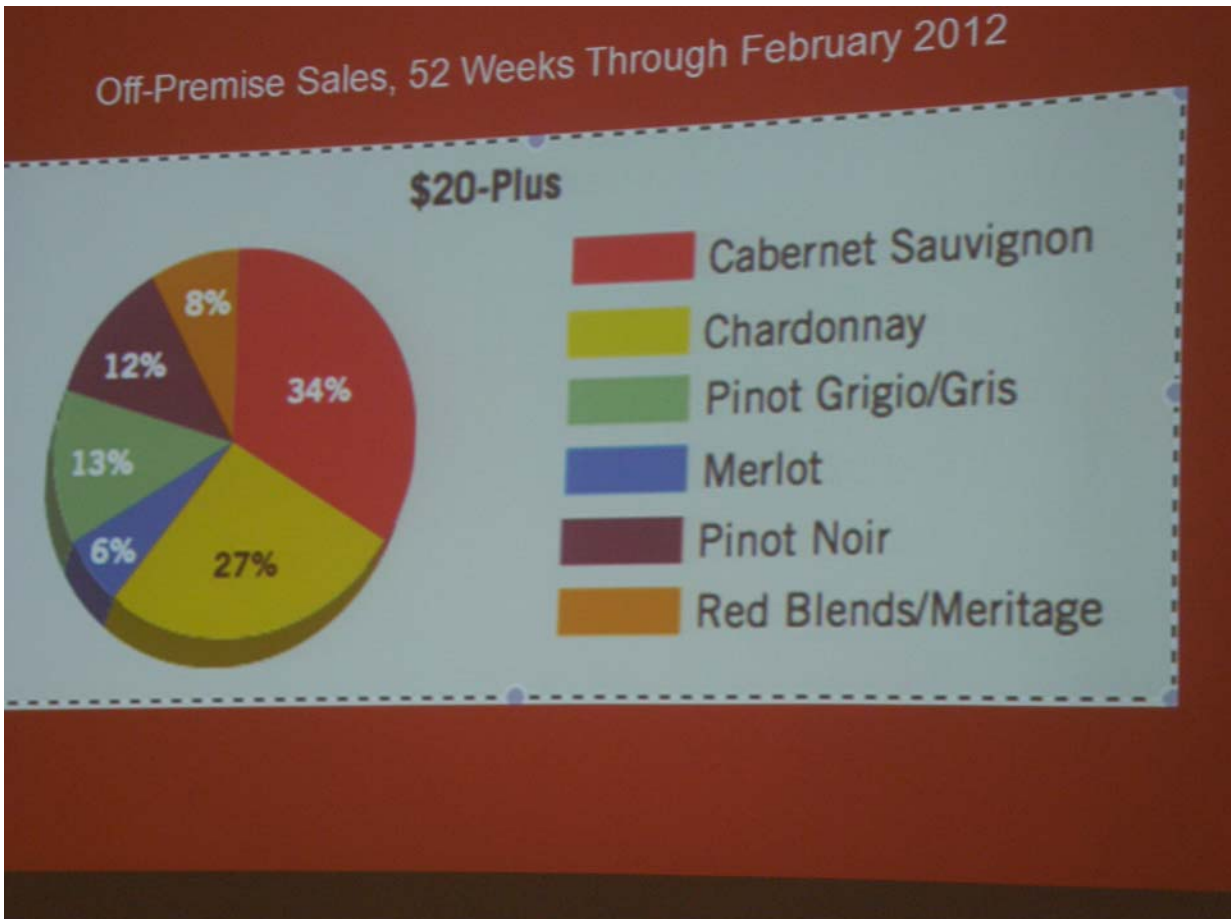


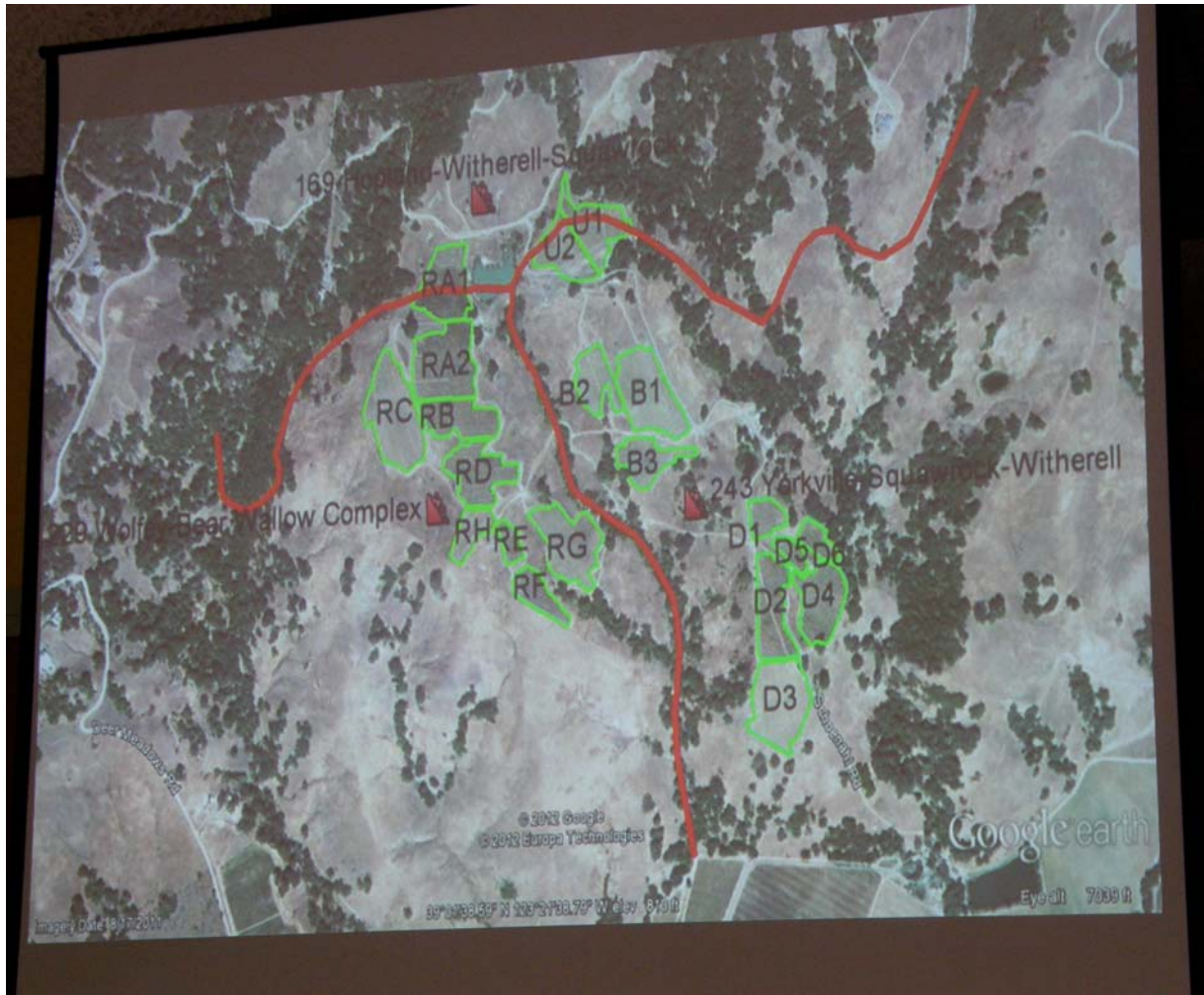
Table six shows Off-Premise Sales of major varieties:



Cerise Vineyard Focus and Panel Discussion

Ryan McAllister (Vineyard Manager) and Anthony Filiberti (Winemaker) of Knez (“Kay-nez”) Winery, and Jerome Chery of Saintsbury Winery; Moderated by Greg Walter, *The Pinot Report*

The 40-acre Cerise Vineyard is located between 550 and 1180 feet above the floor of the Anderson Valley, looking down on the town of Boonville. The vineyard is like a “puzzle,” with disparate terrain, different aspects, and three different soil profiles. Each small, clonal block is no larger than a few acres (see Google vineyard map below). The vines, planted between 1996 and 1999, are located on steep slopes facing south and southwest. Farming has been organic for two years and the use of biodynamic preps has been instituted.



There are ten clones of Pinot Noir planted on seven rootstocks: Dijon 114, 115 (two types), 667, 777 and 828, Pommard 5, Martini, David Bruce, Wädenswil, and a La Tache selection. Yields are low (1.1 tons per acre in 2011) as the soils are thin, hard and marginal. A concentrated effort is underway to revitalize the soils with composting and other measures.

David Bruce “Clone”

When I heard mention of the David Bruce Clone at the Cerise Vineyard Seminar, I realized that I knew little about this Pinot Noir selection. I did a bit of research, but found the only reliable and informed source of information to be John Haeger, author of *North American Pinot Noir*. Beside the information I gained from this thoroughly researched book, John passed along the following information to me.

There is no such thing as a David Bruce Clone per se, as it represents any number of Pinot Noir selections of undetermined clonal origins. There is no FPMS certified David Bruce Clone. The term, “David Bruce Clone,” has become common parlance among winegrowers for selections taken from David Bruce’s plantings in the Santa Cruz Mountains, or cuttings from other vineyards planted with David Bruce’s estate vineyard budwood.

David Bruce was determined to produce Pinot Noir when he acquired 40 acres of vineyard land in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 1961. Only Martin Ray was making Pinot Noir in that region. Bruce obtained the cuttings used to plant his vineyard on Bear Creek Road in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 1962 from two sources: (1) The increase block at Wente’s Arroyo Seco vineyard which only contained certified clonal stock including Pommard, Martini and Wädenswil, and (2) Martin Ray’s vineyard at what is now known as Mount Eden (the exact origin of these vines is unclear except that apparently they were a field selection from Burgundy brought into the United States in the 1890s by Paul Masson). At the time, winegrowers were not clone conscious, so Bruce would not have chosen a particular clonal type, but rather some “Pinot Noir vines.”

The vines Bruce obtained from Martin Ray are probably different from the vines selected in the early 1970s by Merry Edwards, sent to Davis for clean up and FPMS certification, and eventually became the Mount Eden clone. At least one of the so-called Swan clones also came from Mount Eden.

Pierce’s Disease destroyed Bruce’s vineyard in the early 1990s, and the last Estate Pinot Noir produced from the original vines was 1992. The Estate Pinot Noir program was resumed in 1996 after the new plantings matured. The newer plantings came from Noble Hill Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which had originally been planted with cuttings from Bruce’s original vines. So, in essence, Bruce got his own vine selection back (albeit some of it could have mutated) when he replanted.

Vines in California planted with cuttings taken from Bruce’s estate vineyard therefore represent a field selection and the vines should properly be referred to as David Bruce selections.

In 2008, Knez Winery owner Peter Knez bought Cerise Vineyard (and Demuth Vineyard) and hired Anthony Filiberti (Anthill Farms) as winemaker.

Four Cerise Vineyard designated Pinot Noirs were tasted at the seminar: Saintsbury, Littorai, Knez and Gros Ventre Cellars. My brief tasting notes and comments from the panel are included. Other producers sourcing fruit from Cerise Vineyard include Chronicle Wines, Drew, Phillips Hill, Anthill Farms (included in their Anderson Valley blend) and Onward Wines.

2009 Saintsbury Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc, \$45. Saintsbury has produced a Pinot Noir from this vineyard since 2005. Dijon and Pommard clones. 100% de-stemmed, 10 day skin contact, gentle press, aging in 20% new French oak barrels. *Dark berries, black cherries and spice are featured. Soft and elegant in the mouth with well-honed tannins and impressive length. Very good.*

2009 Littorai Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$60. David Bruce, La Tache selection and Dijon 828. *Floral and savory aromas with flavors of dark red and black berries. Mid-weight but powerful with bright acidity and a lingering finish. More subdued and earthy than the other wines in the lineup. More intense than Littorai’s Sonoma County wines. Needs time. Very good.*

2009 Knez Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$36. Sourced from several different blocks that are fermented separately. Primarily older clones with a lesser amount of Dijon clones. Significant whole cluster. Native fermentations. Aged 12 months in 30-40% new French oak barrels. *Herb-kissed*

cherries on the nose. *Delicious array of dark red fruits, nicely spiced, with fine-grain, well-tamed tannins, and a very long and fruit-filled finish. Appealing animale character. Very good (+).*

2009 Gros Ventre Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 151 cases, \$44. Pommard 5 and Wädenswil. 100% de-stemmed, native fermentations. Aged 10 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Well oaked with noticeable spice and savory accents. Generous purple fruit flavors with bright acidity on the elegant finish. Needs more time to integrate the oak. Very good (-).*

There was an interesting discussion of whole cluster inclusion at the end of this seminar. Several comments by the panel are of note:

- * Can override fruit purity
- * Can be more challenging to control aromatics
- * Can overwhelm flavor and produce a green note
- * Can influence acidity; may have to add acid since stem brings potassium to the wine decreasing natural acidity
- * Can offer bright, pretty, and spicy aromatics
- * Can add flavors of chai tea, tobacco

The Grand Tasting

Under the big tent at Goldeneye Winery, Anderson Valley Pinot Noir was poured by 40 producers including wineries located in the Anderson Valley and outside wineries sourcing grapes from Anderson Valley growers. This is one of my favorite walk-around tastings, because the venue is not too crowded, there is an upbeat casual vibe, plenty of great food, and live music. Many of the producers provided current releases for review by the trade in the morning preceding The Grand Tasting (my results follow).

A few impressions at The Grand Tasting:

** The 2009 vintage of **Maggy Hawk** Pinot Noir (unreleased) was being poured. The promotional literature was right on: "There are those who exclaim that adversity is tantamount to greatness in Pinot Noir. This is certainly true of the Maggy Hawk site in Anderson Valley, a steeply sloped vineyard situated adjacent the dark, cool underbelly of the coastal Redwoods." The name, Maggy Hawk, is a tribute to proprietor Barbara Banke's favorite thoroughbred horse Maggy Hawk and her offspring. Four wines, all single clone, were produced in 2009: "Jolie," 14.6% alc., 237 cases; clone 115 - flat-out spectacular and the wine of the event for me; "Afleet," 14.6% alc., 234 cases, Pommard clone; "Hawkster," 15.4% alc., 240 cases, clone 2A - the ripest and my least favorite; and "Unforgettable," 14.5% alc., 235 cases, clone 667. The wines are scheduled for release in June 2012. A website is forthcoming. The wines will be sold primarily through a mailing list and are expensive (about \$70). I previously reviewed the three spectacular 2007 Maggy Hawk wines. Serious pinotphiles should saddle up.

2009

MAGGY HAWK

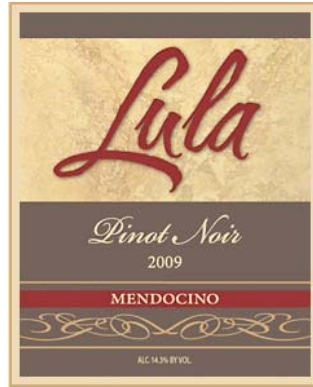
Jolie

*Anderson Valley
Pinot Noir*

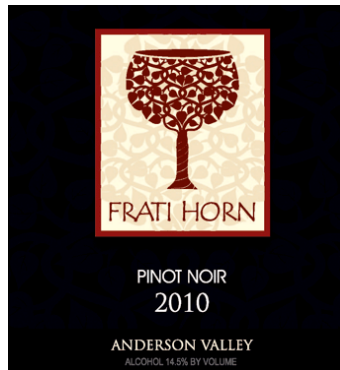


237 cases produced

** I continue to enjoy the wines crafted by Jeff Hansen at **Lula Cellars** based in Mendocino. The 2010 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir displayed copious, luscious dark raspberry, boysenberry, and blueberry fruit. Still young, with healthy tannins, this is a wine to covet. 200 cases, about \$39. A tasting room is located at 9000 Highway 128 in Philo. Visit www.lulacellars.com.



** A new discovery was the second release from **Frati Horn Wines**. This new project was launched by proprietors George and Anne Coughlin in close partnership with Jon Phillips at Inspiration Vineyards and Winery. The 2010 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$29) is sourced from three vineyards (Ridley, Balo and Londer). Clones 777, 115 and Pommard. Aged 12 months in 25% new French oak. Light, but flavorful, with alluring strawberry and blueberry fruit and a refreshing cut of acidity, this wine is very food friendly. Frati Horn is boontling for “glass of wine.” Visit www.fratihorn.com.



** David Rossi continues to offer well-crafted Pinot Noir from multiple vineyard sources under the **Fulcrum** label. His 2009 Londer Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$52) was previously reviewed in the *PinotFile* in July 2011. 14.1% alc., clones 115 and Swan, aged 15 months in 30% new French oak barrels. I tasted the wine again at the Grand Tasting, and found it had benefitted significantly from additional time in the bottle. Bright and crisp, with delicious dark red fruits and mellow fine-grain tannins. This wine is drinking beautifully now and is still available. Visit www.fulcrumwines.com.



** I visited Tim Mullins who was proudly pouring at the grand opening of his new winery and tasting room in Philo, across the street from Goldeneye Winery. This beautiful facility on 14 acres is a fitting venue for offering the outstanding 2010 **Balo Vineyards** Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$39.95). The wine is crafted by talented winemaker Jason Drew (Drew Cellars in Elk) and was one of the top Pinot Noirs I tasted at the Trade Tasting. A complete review of this wine can be found later in this issue. Phone 707-895-3655 for tasting room hours. Stop by for great Pinot and bocce. Tim is relocating from North Carolina and hopefully you will run into him in the tasting room. He also loves to talk cars.





** **Champ de Rêves** had its Grand Opening on Sunday May 20. Anderson Valley's newest Pinot Noir-centric winery held an open house at the historic winery and tasting room at Edmeades. The winery, owned by Barbara Banke, produces Pinot Noir exclusively from the Boon Ridge Vineyard situated 1,300-2,000 feet above Boonville. The Boon Ridge Vineyard was formerly part of the now shuttered Edmeades Winery and had not been developed for years. It was planted to clones 667, 777 and Pommard 5 in 2006. The winemaker, Eric Johannsen, has over a decade of experience in Pinot Noir winemaking in California. The wine is sold through a mailing list at www.champderevesvineyards.com.



** **Navarro Vineyards** has been developing its Pennyroyal Farm in Boonville on Highway 128. The owner's daughter, Sarah, is opening a goat cheese creamery, and a winery is planned for the future at the site. Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, and a few other varieties in small amounts have been planted there.

** The Madrones, adjacent Goldeneye tasting room on Highway 128 in Philo has recently been featured in *Food & Wine*, *Sunset*, and *Departures* magazines. The Madrones hosts four tasting rooms: Lula Cellars, Drew Family Cellars, Bink Wines and Berridge Wines, and has two stylishly appointed guest quarters for rent. An eatery is planned for later in 2012. Visit www.themadrones.com.

** Steve Ledson, proprietor of **Ledson Winery** in Sonoma Valley and **Zina Hyde Cunningham Winery** in Anderson Valley, both of which produce Pinot Noir in addition to many other varietals, invited me to tour his 6,000-acre Bald Hills Ranch high above Boonville. He originally acquired the property as a getaway, but soil and climate studies over a two year period indicated the property had significant potential for growing first-rate

Pinot Noir. He has planted a total of 15 acres of Pinot Noir divided among two vineyards perched at 1,500 and 2,300 feet above the Anderson Valley floor. He has the potential to plant 100 acres of vineyards on the property without removing timber. Fans of Zina Hyde Cunningham can purchase individual rows in the Bald Hills vineyards and receive four cases of Pinot Noir each year. The rows carry nameplates identifying the owner. The highest vineyard is pictured below. Visit www.zinawinery.com.



Anderson Noir Valley: Trade Tasting



2010 Balo Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.63, 248 cases, \$39.95, released May 1, 2012. 46% 777, 22% Pommard, 16% 828, 11% 115, 5% Martini. 30% whole cluster. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of cherries and rose petals. Bright, brisk and juicy, with delicious flavors of fresh cherries elevated with vivid acidity. An exceptional wine. Very good (+).*



2009 Baxter Langley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.64, 150 cases, \$45, released November 1, 2011. Planted exclusively to Martini clone in 1982. Native yeast fermentation. Aged 18 months in neutral French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of forest, moss, cranberry and red cherry. Soft and crisp in the mouth with spiced red cherry and raspberry flavors backed by supple tannins, finishing with some length. Very good.*

2009 Black Kite Cellars Angel Hawk Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.58, 109 cases, \$75, released winter 2012. A reserve bottling from Kite's Rest Vineyard produced only in select vintages. "Angel Hawk" is the colloquial name of the Black Shouldered Kite, for which the winery is named. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of Angel Hawk are donated to the Golden Gate Raptor Conservancy. Aged 20 months in 100% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Enticing aromas of black cherries, plum, exotic spices, oak and rose petals. An attention grabbing core of delicious black cherry fruit with subtle notes of spice and oak. Creamy on the palate with extraordinary length. A hedonist's Pinot that will attract many fans. My only nit is the high alcohol which peaks out when the wine warms in the glass. Very good.*



2010 Breggo Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.59, 2,021 cases, \$38, released April 1, 2012. A blend of numerous clones from Donnelly Creek, Savoy and Wiley vineyards. Aged 13 months in 48% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass.*

Aromas of black cherry, cranberry, brier and oak. Light and gentle on the palate, with flavors of black cherries encased in supple tannins with complimentary oak in the background. An easy drinker. Good.

2009 Claudia Springs Klindt Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.59, 245 cases, \$32, released May 1, 2011. Pommard and Dijon clones. 10% whole cluster. Native fermentations. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Very floral nose with hints of graham and baking spices. Medium weight flavors of red cherries with savory herbs and oak in the background. Good.

2010 Drew Morning Dew Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.66, 165 cases, \$48, released May 15, 2012. From Burt Williams' vineyard in the deep end of the Anderson Valley. Rochioli selection, a DRC field selection and Dijon clone 828. Jason Drew now draws from Burt's own choice block since Burt no longer produces Pinot Noir. 50% whole cluster, 50% native fermentation, aged 11 months in 30% new and 70% seasoned French oak. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Amazingly fragrant with the scent of fresh pie cherries, strawberries and spice. Fresh and vibrant on the palate with good tension, featuring an array of red fruits, edible flowers and spice, offering a lively cut on the highly aromatic finish that lingers forever. In a word, stunning. Very good (+).

2009 Elke Vineyards Donnelly Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.90, TA 0.65, 840 cases, \$34, released May 1, 2011. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated primary and native secondary fermentations. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Cherry and herbal oak aromas with a little horse saddle funk (? Brett). Flavors of plum, black cherry and herbs with mild, firm tannins and a soft mouth feel. Good.

2009 Expression Annahala Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 224 cases, \$48, released May 1, 2012. This vineyard is located between Philo and Boonville on Highway 128. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Very appealing aromas of cherries, plum cake and spice. Soft in the mouth with a moderately rich core of tasty dark cherries and plums accented by spice and savory herbs. Very approachable with mild, relaxed tannins, offering interesting nuances with each sip. Very good (+).



2009 Foursight Charles Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.63, 405 cases, \$46, released fall 2011. Clones 777, 114, 115 and Pommard 5. 70% de-stemmed and fermented with 30% whole clusters and wild yeast. Aged in 15% new, 57% 2nd year, 14% 3rd year and 14% neutral French oak barrels. Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Aromas of dark cherries and exotic woods. Pleasing generosity of Pinot fruit flavor, backed by well-proportioned tannins and acidity. Very good.

2010 Fulcrum Londer Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 149 cases, \$56, released June 16, 2011. Clones 115 and Swan. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Effusive and spell binding aromas of fresh black cherries and baking spices. Very tasty core of darker red cherries and berries wrapped in fine-grain, firm tannins. A beguiling wine of great interest. Very good (+).

2009 Goldeneye Gowan Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.73, TA 0.52, 1,000 cases, \$80, released March 1, 2012. Gowan Creek is the home of Goldeneye winery. Aged 16 months in 70% new and 30% second vintage French oak. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Rich, dense and heady, featuring intense, dark berry and black currant flavors, a muscular backbone of tannin, and oak-driven accents of toast and caramel. Not particularly to my taste, but well made in its style. Very good.

2010 Greenwood Ridge Vineyards Hundred Point Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.63, 50 cases, \$50, released January 1, 2012. Inaugural release of this bottling. The name comes from a rocky promontory on the nearby Mendocino coast where, legend has it, one hundred ships have been wrecked. Aged 8 months in 100% new French oak barrels. Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Slightly confected aromas of fresh raspberries with hints of baking spice, brioche and vanilla. Elegant and soft on the palate, offering a discreetly concentrated core of well-ripened red cherry and raspberry fruit caressed by supple tannins, and finishing with a cherry calling card. Very good.

2009 Handley Cellars RSM Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.53, 266 cases, \$52, released May 1, 2011. 100% de-stemmed, retention of about 40% whole berries during the process to encourage the fruitier flavors that occur with carbonic maceration. Rockpile yeast isolate used for fermentation to enhance the mineral flavors typical of this vineyard. Aged on the lees 10 months in 37% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherries, black raspberries, brioche and spice. Impressively rich mid palate attack of darker cherries and berries with complimentary notes of mocha and coffee from oak. Should age nicely. Very good.*

2006 Harmonique Elegancé Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.65, 675 cases, \$36.50, released spring 2011. Winemaker Robert Klindt. Aged 19 months in 70% new French oak barrels, and aged in bottle until release. Four vineyard sources (Conzelman Vineyard Old Block, 21% Cerise Vineyard, 16.5% Wiley Vineyard and 12.5% Klindt Vineyard). 7 Pinot Noir clones. *Very light in weight, featuring red cherry and berry flavors with underpinnings of oak and savory herbs. Fruit has faded and is swallowed up by tannin. I have had this wine before and do not believe this was a representative bottle. Withhold judgment.*

2009 Husch Knoll Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., TA 0.56, 410 cases, \$40, release July 1, 2012. Old vines originally planted in 1971, the first Pinot Noir vines in Anderson Valley. The vines thrive in an outcropping of sandstone with shale lenses, possessing excellent drainage. 75% de-stemmed, 25% whole cluster. Aged 17 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately deep reddish-purple robe. Heady aromas of dark red cherries and berries with hints of spice and an earthy bent. Discreetly concentrated core of spiced black cherries, wrapped in big-boned, ripe tannins typical of this site, finishing with crispness and very impressive length. Considerable nuance lies within this special wine. A connoisseur's wine. Very good (+).*



2009 Knez Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 400 cases, \$39, released September 1, 2011. 30-year-old dry-farmed vines. 30-50% whole cluster native fermentations, aged 16 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Medium reddish-purple color and slightly cloudy in the glass. Appealing aromas of cut flowers, cherry and spice. Lean and tight on the palate with flavors of dark red cherries and savory herbs. May come out of its shell with further cellaring. Good.*

2009 Lazy Creek Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.62, 809 cases, \$38, released May 14, 2012. Heritage and Dijon clones in one of the oldest vineyards in Anderson Valley. Partially whole cluster fermented. Aged 16 months in 28% new and 72% older French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very ripe fruit profile on the nose and palate. Black cherries and black raspberries are featured with well-proportioned tannins. A bit tart on the finish which shows some length. Good.*

2009 Londer Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.59, 286 cases, \$48, released spring 2012. From a 16-acre vineyard planted in 2001. Pommard, 115, 777 and Swan clones. Aged in 30% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Alluring aromas of freshly ripened black cherries and compost. Soft and silky on the palate with a profusion of red and black fruits backed by ripe, firm tannins and bright acidity. Nicely balanced. Tremendous potential but needs a few more years in the cellar. Very good.*

2009 MacPhail Fratney Shams Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.58, 181 cases, \$49, released fall 2011. 100% de-stemmed, 14 days total cuvaion, both indigenous and inoculated primary ferments and native malolactic fermentation in barrel. Batonnage in barrel once every week for 3 months. Aged 11 months in 60% new and 40% 1 and 2-year-old French oak barrels. Unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Extremely oak driven with aromas and flavors of mocha and coffee obscuring a luscious core of black cherry fruit. Modest in weight with bright acidity. Decent.*

2010 Navarro Vineyards Methode à l'Ancienne Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.74, 2,463 cases, \$29, release November 1, 2012. 100% de-stemmed, aged in 39% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of hibiscus, deep red cherries and spice. Mid weight flavors of darker red stone fruits with a complimentary hint of oak. Very drinkable now with a highly aromatic, fruit-filled finish. Very good.*

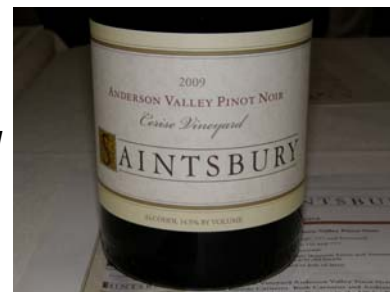
2009 Phillips Hill Estates Wiley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.55, 380 cases, \$38, released December 1, 2011. This vineyard is located in the cool deep end of the Anderson Valley and is often the last Pinot Noir vineyard harvest in this AVA. Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777. Yields 2 tons per acre. Aged 11 months in 35% new, 30% 1 year and 35% seasoned French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Smoky, toasty nose with a hint of cherry. A lighter, elegant style with pleasing flavors of red cherries, vanilla, cinnamon and oak. Solid but not remarkable, leaning a little too heavily on oak for me. Good.*

2009 Philo Ridge Vineyards Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.69, 455 cases, \$32, release June 1, 2012. Sourced from Philo Ridge Vineyards and Ferrington Vineyards. Clones 115, 777, 667, Pommard and 2A. 100% de-stemmed, long cool fermentation, basket pressed, aged 24 months in 35% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Fragrant with aromas of darker cherries and strawberries with a hint of mocha. Tasty core of mid weight fruit complimented by savory herbs and oak-driven accents, finishing with refreshing acidity. Good (+).*

2009 Richard Berridge Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.62, 247 cases, \$45, released October 1, 2010. 94% Londer Vineyard. Aged in 41% new, 35% twice used and 18% once used French oak barrels. *Well oaked with fruit aromas and flavors of dark red cherries, plums and ripe strawberries. Soft on the palate with supple tannins. Nicely crafted in its style, but I prefer less oak. Good (+).*

2007 Roederer Estate Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.57, 685 cases, \$23, released May 1, 2010. More than seven clones make up this wine. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 15% new French oak barrels and bottled with light filtration. *Medium reddish-purple color with slight haze in the glass. The nose is herbal and green. Light and easy to drink, with demure flavors of red cherries and cranberries, finishing with an herbal riff. Very austere. Decent.* Note: Roederer has purchased the Jim Ball property across from Goldeneye and is planting vineyards on the site. This winery will be exclusively devoted to still wines. The name of the winery has not been announced.

2009 Saintsbury Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 704 cases, \$45, released January 1, 2012. Pommard, Dijon 115 and 777 clones. Aged 10 months in 24% new, 27% once used and twice used French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Effusive aromas of fresh, spiced berry compote. Medium weight core of perfectly ripe and vibrant dark red berry fruits wrapped in tame tannins. Impeccable balance. Very good (+).*



2006 Schraffenberger Cellars Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.59, 295 cases, \$20, released May 1, 2010. Pommard, 667, 114, 115 and 777 clones. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 20% new French oak barrels. Lightly filtered to bottle. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Scent of herb-flecked dark cherries. The flavor echoes the nose. Fresh and easy to drink with gossamer tannins. Good (+).*

2008 Toulouse Vineyards Estate Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.89, TA 0.56, 550 cases, \$50, released November 1, 2010. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass with early rim bricking. Aromas of cherries and ashtray. Smoke tainted. Unsatisfactory.*

2009 Twomey Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.61, 1,853 cases, \$46, released April 28, 2012. Sourced from Ferrington Vineyard, Savoy Vineyard and Monument Tree Vineyard (estate owned). Aged 15 months sur lies in 45% new and 55% once used French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with an array of red berries, hibiscus and rose petals. Crisp and bright, with vivid flavors of dark red raspberries, cranberries and pomegranates. The fruit really sings on the long finish. Very good (+).*

2009 Waits Mast Deer Meadows Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 49 cases, \$47, released September 1, 2011. Vineyard farmed by Rich Savoy off Deer Meadows Road above Boonville. Clones 115 and 2A. 100% whole berry, aged 17 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. A savory wine with herb-scented and herb-flavored deep red cherry and berry fruits backed by dusty tannins, finishing with reasonable length. Very good.*

2010 Walt Hein Family Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 250 cases, \$52, release June 29, 2012. From a vineyard owned by Richard Roessler which is farmed organically. Clones 777, 115 and Pommard. 30% whole clusters. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Inviting aromas of boysenberries and plum. Pleasing array of dark berry flavors in a mid weight style with a very polished, satiny mouth feel. Very good.*

Mendocino Ridge: California's Best Kept Secret Source of Spectacular Wines

I recently have had some spectacular Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Mendocino Ridge. While in Anderson Valley for the recent Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival, I spent an afternoon with winemaker Jason Drew of Drew Family Cellars whose vineyard and winery are located in Elk in the Mendocino Ridge appellation. We toured two of the region's vineyards, Valenti and Signal Ridge, and this took a few hours as many of the vineyards in this appellation are spread out and difficult to reach. As we drove around, Jason filled me in on the geography, the vineyards and the potential of this emerging region for fine wine.

Mendocino Ridge was approved as an American Viticultural Area in 1997, yet it has some of the oldest producing vineyards in Mendocino County. The first modern plantings were established by Italian immigrants and date to the late 1800s. Field blends of red varieties, primarily Zinfandel, were planted, and Zinfandels produced from old vines in this region have been legendary. In 1988, Kendall-Jackson proclaimed that the Mendocino Ridge was one of the world's greatest regions for Zinfandel. Today, Zinfandel is still prized from this AVA, but the region now holds considerable promise as California's newest frontier for premium Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

The Mendocino Ridge AVA is a non contiguous trio of ridges that is defined by vineyards at least 1,200 feet or more in elevation, and within 10 miles of the Pacific Ocean. It is California's first and only non contiguous AVA. Because of the hilly terrain of the AVA, lower elevations are not included. The ridges are above and surrounded by coastal fog, fostering the name "Islands in the Sky." This catchy name is trademarked by Dan Dooling, owner of Mariah Vineyards, a producer of Mendocino Ridge Zinfandel and Syrah, and one of the winegrowers along with Steve Alden of Perli Vineyard to successfully achieve appellation status for the region.

The first map below is from the website, www.everyvine.com, where an extensive map of the Manchester Ridge is under construction. When completed, the map will be a 24" x 36" map poster similar to other regional maps available for Sonoma, Napa, Idaho and Oregon.



The second map below shows the wineries and vineyards of Anderson Valley relative to Manchester Ridge which is noted to the west of Anderson Valley by the patchy, pale, designated ridge top areas extending to Highway 1.



There are 262,400 acres (410 square miles, 36 miles in length from north to south) within the outer boundaries of the Mendocino Ridge AVA, but the actual viticultural area encompasses only 87,466 acres, all lying above 1,200 feet elevation. Of these 87,466 acres, approximately 2,000 acres (2% of the total acreage) of ridge tops are suitable for vineyards. The side slopes are very steep, with grades approaching 70%, and are covered with timber, making them unfit for planting. The Mendocino Ridge is a twisting 12-mile uphill westward drive from the Anderson Valley floor along Greenwood Road from Highway 128. The Mendocino Ridge AVA is essentially a northern extension of the true Sonoma Coast AVA.

The following photographs give a feeling for the ridge top location of the vineyards and the surrounding timberland. The first aerial photo shows Mariah Vineyard and the coastal fog bank. The second aerial photo shows Manchester Ridge Vineyard and its proximity to the Pacific Ocean shoreline. The third photo is of Valenti Vineyard and the fourth photo is of Signal Ridge Vineyard, both of which I visited.





The climate of the Mendocino Ridge AVA is different from the Anderson Valley below. Perched above the fog and frost threat, the vineyards bask in the early morning sun, and early afternoon maritime breezes cool down the fruit, never allowing temperatures to rise as high as the Anderson Valley floor. The winds have an added plus of drying out the soils after rains. The diurnal variation during the growing season is significantly less than the Anderson Valley (20 degrees versus 40-50 degrees for Anderson Valley), and daytime high temperatures are often 10 degrees cooler than in the Anderson Valley. There is enough rainfall (40" or more annually) and ground water to dry farm vineyards. Like the true Sonoma Coast, yields are small in large part due to the extremes of spring weather. Bud break tends to be early, but the shoots grow very slowly due to the consistent coolness, and harvest arrives at the end of September or later.

The soils of the Mendocino Ridge are unique "timber" type, and since the vineyards are located at the top of ridges, they are well drained. In contrast, the soils of the Anderson Valley are deep alluvial in type and in the nearby Yorkville AVA, upland range type. Because of the high elevations of Mendocino Ridge vineyards, soils are of meager depth leading to smaller berries, thicker skins, and lower yields compared to Anderson Valley. In general, the tannins are more prominent in wines from the higher elevations in the Mendocino Ridge. Jason Drew told me that the wines from Mendocino Ridge typically have a noticeable minerality which he referred to as a character analogous to "chewing on granite." I have found an exotic flower component among the aromatic profiles in the Pinot Noirs from this AVA. Bright acidity is a common feature.

The first winery in the Mendocino Ridge AVA was Greenwood Ridge Vineyards, founded in 1980. The original Greenwood Ridge Vineyard was planted by Tony Husch in 1972, and was acquired in 1973 by Greenwood Ridge owner Allen Green. There is a small amount of Pinot Noir now planted there. There are 15 vineyards in the Mendocino Ridge AVA, the majority of which are planted to Pinot Noir (a little over 100 acres), all located on four large ridges: Fish Rock Ridge, Greenwood Ridge, Signal Ridge, and Manchester Ridge.

Noteworthy Pinot Noir plantings in the Mendocino Ridge AVA include the following: (1) Jason Drew's 7 acres on his estate in Elk, planted in 2011. The vineyard is still unnamed. Multiple clones including Dijon 115, 667, and 828, Pommard, Swan, Calera and Mount Eden. The vineyard is extremely close to the Pacific Ocean (a little over 3 miles as the crow flies) so it will be interesting to see how it progresses; (2) DuPratt Vineyard includes 1 acre of head-trained Pinot Noir; (3) Manchester Ridge Vineyard has 161 plantable mountaintop acres at 2,000 feet with currently 19 acres of Pinot Noir and 11 acres of Chardonnay in production under the direction of vineyard manager Martin Mochizuki. Grapes are sold to Auteur, Berridge Wines, B. Kosuge, La Follette, B. Kosuge, J. Jacomon, Lattanzio Wines, Marguerite Ryan Cellars, Olson Ogden, Russian River Vineyards, Taft Street and Tom Eddy; (4) Mariah Vineyard has some vines grafted over to Pinot Noir and farmed by owner Dan Dooling; (5) Perli Vineyard located at 2,200 feet has 6.5 acres of Pinot Noir. Grapes are sold to Drew and Arista; (6) Signal Ridge Vineyard is located at 2,300 feet. Originally planted to Zinfandel in 1998, it now has 15 acres of Pinot Noir planted in 2005 in production, with additional plantings of Pinot Noir in 2011. All grapes are under contract to Failla; (7) Valenti Vineyard is located at 1,400 feet and currently has 12 acres of Pinot Noir, Syrah, Zinfandel, and Viognier under production. 6 acres of Pinot Noir, clone 667, were planted in 1999, and 3 acres of Zinfandel were budded over to clone 115 and Rochioli selection in 2007. Grapes are sold to Baxter, Drew and Phillips Hill; and (8) Sky High Ranch owned by Ferrari-Carano, located at 1,600 feet, planted in 2003 to clones 667, 777, 828 and Pommard. The name "Sky High" is ironic as the vineyard site was previously occupied by hippies who farmed another crop of some repute.

There are 4 wineries in the Mendocino Ridge AVA, all located on Greenwood Ridge: Baxter Winery, Drew Family Cellars, Greenwood Ridge, and Phillips Hill. The Manchester Ridge AVA Winegrowers Association consists of 17 members (Baxter and Phillips Hill have no vineyards).

A number of current releases from the Mendocino Ridge AVA follow. Several Mendocino Ridge wines have been reviewed previously in the *PinotFile* (<http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/835/>).

2009 Arista Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$38. *Deep, dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Complex aroma profile including notes of blueberries, wooded forest, smoke stack, and oak. Lightly styled with delicate flavors of red fruits back by savory herbs. Lifted by bright acidity, the fruit shows some persistence on the finish. Mild tannins make for easy drink ability. Good (+).*



2009 Arista Perli Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.3% alc, \$52. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely arrayed aromas of black cherries, shaved oak and vanillin. Moderately intense and flavorful dark red and purple fruits supported by mild tannins, layered with spice and soil-driven notes, finishing with unbelievable length and intensity. A seamless wine in perfect balance that has eye-opening mid palate pop, extraordinary mouth coating staying power, and memorable finishing strength.*



2010 Arista Perli Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir \$52. *Tasted at the winery. A stunning wine that really made me sit up in my chair. Demure aromas of oak-kissed cherries with discreetly concentrated flavors of dark cherries, dark berries, spice, and subtle oak, wrapped in soft, silky tannins. Elegant, polished, and highly approachable now, the impeccable balance will lead to further rewards in the future. Like the 2009 vintage of Perli Vineyard, a wine to treasure.*

2009 Auteur Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$40. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. Gorgeous aromas that make you just want to chew on the juice. Deep perfume of perfectly ripened pie cherries and vanillin oak. A stunningly flavorful wine that is quite flamboyant and showy, offering an array of darker berry and cherry flavors backed by complimentary oak. The finish is extraordinarily long, lasting more than 30 seconds. As good as this wine is upon opening, it did not show as well the next day from a previously opened bottle and probably is not a long term ager. Drink up for smiles now. Very good.*



2007 B. Kosuge Wines Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 240 cases, \$40. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. A bit funky on the nose with aromas of pine forest, mushroom and spice. Soft and smooth on the palate with a moderately rich core of dark red cherry and berry fruits that veer to an ultra ripe, and slightly oxidized character. Well-honed acidity with supple tannins. The next day the wine was disappointing with over ripe flavors and a vegetal note. This may not be a representative bottle of this wine as I have sampled it in the past and reviewed it very favorably (January 2010).*



2009 B. Kosuge Wines Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino (Mendocino Ridge) Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 165 cases. \$40. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh berries sprinkled with herbs, spice and flowers. Delicious core of darker red cherries, berries and plums with an attractive savory, wildly exotic tone. Very soft in the mouth with firm, but complimentary tannins, and a long dry finish. This is a wine that aims to please.*



2009 Drew The Gatekeepers Blend Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.67450 cases, \$28. *Released February 2011. Sourced from Manchester Ridge and Perli vineyards. Clones 777, 667, 114 and 115. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in 100% neutral French oak. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. A nose you could chew on, with luscious aromas of dark red cherries and berries and spice, underlain with a floral and sandalwood note. Equally satisfying in the mouth, with a flavorful array of perfectly ripe cherry and dark raspberry flavors complimented by the finest dusting of flowers and oak. Can't say enough good things about this well-crafted, seamless wine. I could easily drink it all night long.*





2009 Drew Perli Vineyard Murder Ridge Block Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.67, 99 cases, \$40. Released November 2011. 50% 777 and 50% 667. Aged 11 months in 100% seasoned oak. 100% de-stemmed. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Beguiling aromas of cherries, raspberry coulis, and chocolate malt. Delicious core of moderately rich cherry, berry and plum flavors with a forest bent. I swear I can taste the nearby redwoods in this wine. Very smoothly textured like the most perfect thighs, with supple tannins and a gentle, sexy finish. A languorous and slinky wine that is a clear standout in this lineup of Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noirs.*



2009 Drew Valenti Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.61, 72 cases, \$40. Released February 2011. Clone 667. 30% whole cluster. Aged 11 months in 25% new French oak and 75% seasoned French oak. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Very slow to open on the nose with aromas of cherries, spice, forest floor and oak. Moderately dense, luscious flavors of savory dark plums, black raspberries and black grapes with a long and intensely fruit-filled finish. A slight vegetal note is evident either from slightly under ripe fruit or whole cluster. Very good.*

2009 Ferrari-Carano Sky High Ranch Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$42. Grown, produced and bottled by Sky High Ranch, Philo, CA. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 18 months in 24% new French oak, 66% older French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Reserved aromatics, offering subtle scents of dark red stone fruits, brier and oak. Flavorful array of dark red cherry and raspberry flavors with hints of chicory and earth. The fruit really makes an impression. Some dry tannins provide support and the wine finishes with reasonably strong fruit high notes. Lacks a little aromatic interest, but really delivers on the flavor. Very good (+).*



2009 Greenwood Ridge Vineyards Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.62, 300 cases, \$30, screw cap. Released June 2011. Aged 8 months in French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of fresh strawberries, cherries, spice and oak cask. Respectable flavors of red berries which persist on the intensely fruity finish. The fruit is mildly compressed by firm and slightly astringent tannins. Over delivers for the price. Good (+).*



2009 La Follette Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$40. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Oak-kissed deep red and well-spiced cherry aromas. Crisp and elegant with an appealing dark cherry core, lashed with plenty of oak-driven notes of toast and coffee. A little too much oak for me personally, but crafted well in its style. A bit hot on the finish as it warms in the glass. More oak integration was evident the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating more cellaring will be beneficial. Very good.*



2008 La Follette Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Chardonnay 14.5% alc., \$40. *Golden straw color in the glass. Very restrained nose with demure aromas of white peaches, straw and smoke. Light in weight (seems filtered), bright in acidity, with shallow fruit flavors and notes of vanilla cream and burnt toast. Sadly impugned by smoke taint. Decent at best.*



2009 La Follette Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Chardonnay 14.2% alc., pH 3.73, TA 0.60, 499 cases, \$48. Three clones: Dijon 76, Old Wente, and the newer Dijon 809. Clones vinified separately. De-stemmed, crushed and skins held in contact with the juice for a number of hours to increase aromatics. Native fermentation for Old Wente and 76 clones. Inoculated with a yeast that heightens the perfume of the 809 clone. Aged sur lies with early battonage. Bottled unfiltered. *Light*

straw color in the glass. Aromas of damp forest floor, baked pear, papaya and light caramel. Intense flavors of white peach, pear, and lemon drop with an underlying earthiness and minerality. Slightly creamy with bright acidity, barely perceptible tannins, and a bold, long finish. The richness, complexity and length really challenge the senses.



2009 Lattanzio Wines Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$35. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Subdued aromas of pleasing dark cherries, dry leaf and oak. Creamy and full-flavored on the palate with a delicious core of perfectly ripened black cherries framed by the slightest hint of oak. Nicely balanced with lively acidity and ripe tannins, finishing with aromatic persistence. Still great the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.



2009 Olson Ogden Manchester Ridge Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.57, 148 cases, \$55. Aged 17 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of red cherries and berries with a touch of savory herbs. Full-flavored essence of fresh red cherries with notes of tea leaf, cola, sandalwood and spice. Very soft tannins and generous persistence of cherry fruit flavors on the long finish. Very fruity and flirty.



More Anderson Noir Valley Pinot

2009: A year of redemption after the disastrous fires in 2008 which cast a pall over the vineyards, 2009 was a more typical growing season in the Anderson Valley. Winter rains were lighter than usual, and a mid-May heat wave brought high temperatures. Bud break was late and spring was generally cool but not accompanied by frost. The summer was moderate and relatively cool allowing slow ripening and a prolonged harvest that began in mid-September and finished the last week of October. A later September heat wave brought grapes quickly to optimum ripeness and a large October storm provided a challenge that most vintners avoided. In summary, the quality of the vintage parallels the 2007 vintage, and probably surpasses it.

2010: Fruit set was good. Mild and cool growing season with heavy cloud cover and fog during most of the summer. Unseasonably cool in late summer, delaying grape maturation by a few weeks. A moderate heat wave in August pushed ripeness. Another moderate heat wave the last week of September was followed by mild weather the first weeks of October. The long, cool growing season produced wines of good fruit intensity and excellent acid balance.



2010 Balo Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.90, TA 0.63, 248 cases, \$39.95. Released May 1, 2012. 1.5 tons/acre. 46% 777, 22% Pommard, lesser amounts of 828, 115 and Martini clones. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. Crafted by Jason Drew. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of deep red raspberries black cherries and rose bouquet. Moderately rich, earth-kissed flavors of black cherries with a hint of spice and cherry cola. Bright acidity, supple tannins and generous length. Very polished and sophisticated.*



2011 Balo Anderson Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 62 cases, pH 3.40, TA 0.66, \$20.95 (sold out). 100% 777 clone. Saignée, aged in stainless steel barrels for 6 months, unfined. *Pretty red rose color with slight haze in the glass. Initially, very nice aromas of strawberries and red raspberries, changing in the glass to slight aromas of fresh cut apples and white raisins (acetaldehyde). Refreshing and crisp featuring red berry flavors with hi-tone citrusy acidity on the herb-toned finish. Decent.*

2009 Black Kite Angel Hawk Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.58, 100 cases, \$75. A reserve wine from Kite's Rest Vineyard aged 20 months in 100% new French oak and 7 months in bottle. *Deep, dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Very fragrant, offering a perfume of ripe plums, blueberries, Moroccan spices, oak and sweet pipe smoke. Big-shouldered and richly endowed with spiced dark stone fruits backed by well-proportioned firm tannins and toasty oak, offering a creamy texture, and finishing with impressive length. Tasted the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine was still burly and flashy with plenty of oak and tannin. Very California at heart and seductive for those who relish this style. Very good.*



2010 Bruliam Deer Meadows Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., \$46. Released December 11, 2011. From a vineyard that sits 1,600 feet above the valley floor, farmed by Rich Savoy. Calera (20%), 777 (50%) and 115 (30%) clones are co-fermented. Aged 10 months in 50% new Francois Frères French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. I love the heady aromas of raspberries, strawberries, sandalwood and spice. Wood-kissed dark raspberry flavor on a lighter, elegant frame with mild, fine-grain tannins and adequate acidity. Reserved mid-palate impression and finish, but has charm. Tasted twice. Good (+).*



2010 Champ de Rêves Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$35. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very seductive aromas of fully ripened cherries with hints of spice, leather and dark chocolate. Delicious core of black raspberry and black cherry fruit framed by toasty oak and a bright cut of acidity. The finish is crazy long: my notes say amazing!*

Beautifully composed and balanced. Reminds me of a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir in character but with better acidity typical of Anderson Valley. Impressive debut.



2009 Copain Kiser Vineyard “En Bas” Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., \$65. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose offers appealing aromas of black fruits and Chinese 5-spice. Juicy, with a fresh cut of acidity, offering earth-kissed flavors of black raspberries and black plums, ending with a floral and citrus-imbued cranberry note on the finish. Opens slowly in the glass. Unchanged the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A bit too acidic for me, but this style will find fans. Good.*

2009 Copain Kiser Vineyard “En Haut” Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$70. *Subdued aromas of black cherry tart, blackberry jam and oak. Darker berry and cherry flavors are featured, mildly compressed by muscular tannins. Similar to “En Bas,” but more black raspberry fruit intensity, more expressive, more length and more appealing. A good, but not disproportionate cut of acidity on the finish. Very good (+).*



2010 Couloir Roma’s Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., pH 3.75, TA 0.67, 142 cases, \$38. This vineyard is located on a mountaintop ridge at 1,850 feet elevation. Originally planted for sparkling wine production, it was retrained to bilateral cordons for fine still wine production. Pommard clone planted in Goldridge loamy soils, now approaching 20 years old. Sustainably and organically farmed, managed by Couloir Wines in conjunction with Ardzrooni Vineyard Management. 60% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation. Aged 10 months in 20% new French oak. *Light garnet color in the glass. Demure but pleasant aromas of cherry drops, strawberries, and straw. Middleweight flavors of dark red cherries and raspberries with hints of sandalwood. Smoothly textured with reserved tannins. Very elegant with high-spirited acidity. Good (+).*

2010 Couloir Monument Tree Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., pH 3.74, TA 0.62, 141 cases, \$38. This vineyard was planted to Dijon clones in 1999 by Duckhorn Vineyards and is now owned by Twomey Cellars. Organically farmed, this vineyard is situated in the “deep end” (cooler end) of the Anderson Valley. Clones 777, 667 and 115. 1/3 fermented whole cluster. 7-day cold soak, native yeast fermentation, aged 10 months in 30% new French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Uplifting perfume of red cherries and tea leaf. Moderately intense flavors of dark red cherries and raspberries with a complimentary hint of spice and oak, robed in ripe, firm tannins. Impressive mid palate impression, welcoming crispness, and admirable finishing length. A serious wine of pedigree that needs more time in bottle for full expression. Very good.*

2010 Couloir Londer Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.62, 141 cases, \$38. This 15-acre vineyard is located in a warm pocket in the “deep end” of the Anderson Valley. Five clones of Pinot Noir. Farmed by Ardzrooni Vineyard Management. 80% Pommard and 20% Dijon clone 115. 40% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Intense aromas of dark raspberries and blueberries with a hint of pine. Delicious core of mixed dark red berries with hints of dark chocolate and spice. Well-structured and integrated tannins with a welcoming cut of acidity on the finish. This wine really attracts your attention and holds on. A consistently top-performing vineyard. Very good (+).*



2010 Drew Fog-Eater Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.63, 210 cases, \$42. Fifth vintage of this wine. A blend of 50% Balo Vineyard and 50% Morning Dew Vineyard, both of which are heavily influenced by coastal fog and cool ocean breezes. Fog-eater is the Boontling term used to describe a coastal dweller, someone living out on the margin. Rochioli, Pommard, 777, 828 and Martini clones. 30% whole cluster. Native fermentation. Aged 11 months in 12.5% new French and 77.5% season French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Aromas of forest floor, dark red berries and cherries, savory herbs and floral elements. Juicy and crisp with modest intensity, featuring flavors of wood-kissed raspberry and black cherry fruit and a hint of citrus in the background. Very smooth and elegant with supple tannins. An easy drinking, solid food wine. Good (+).*

2008 Esterlina Cole Ranch Reserva Mendocino Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$65. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Pungent, green, vegetal aromas. The fruit is very dull and stripped on the palate and clearly smoke tainted. The balance is heavily weighted toward tannin. Unsatisfactory.*

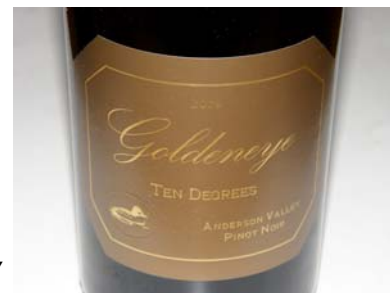
2009 Esterlina Cole Ranch Reserva Mendocino Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$65. At 189 acres, Cole Ranch is the nation's smallest AVA. Located between Anderson Valley and Ukiah off Highway 253. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Slightly confected aromas of black raspberries and pie cherries. Waves of mid weight dark stone fruits and berries unfold on the palate with accents of oak, cola and brown spice. Balanced fine-grain tannins, bright acidity and some length on the fruit-driven finish. A very ripe fruited style. Very good.*

2009 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 9,385 cases, \$55. Sourced from four estate vineyards (19 clones of Pinot Noir), combined with 5% of grapes from independent growers. Aged 18 months in 70% new French oak. *Medium reddish-purple robe. Brooding aromas of blackberry jam and dark chocolate. Medium weight flavors of blackberries and black plums with toasty oak in the background. Plentiful tannins both from the fruit and oak. Lavishly fruited, yet linear in character and seems to want for some zip. Good.*

2009 Goldeneye Gowan Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 1,090 cases, \$80. This vineyard is 10 miles north of Goldeneye's Confluence Vineyard where there is more fog. 8 clones of Pinot Noir. More than 100 barrel lots are evaluated three different times in blind tastings over the course of a year to discover lots that are unmistakably Gowan. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Intensely fragrant with aromas of black cherries, black currants and blackberries with oak-driven accents. Oak-kissed array of dark fruit flavors, moderately rich and dense, wrapped in firm, mildly astringent tannins, finishing long and lush. A little withdrawn and needs more time to integrate the oak. Still solid the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*



2009 Goldeneye Ten Degrees Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 365 cases, \$110. A special bottling from 200 acres of estate vineyards which offer 49 combinations of clone and rootstock. The best 14 barrels in the cellar out of 1,500. Less than 1% of estate fruit makes it into this bottling. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Subdued nose, opening slowly to reveal lovely aromas of fresh, ripe dark berries and oak. Very pretty fruit core, offering delicious layers of red and black berry fruit accented by complimentary oak. Smoothly textured with well-proportioned tannins and acidity and offering seemingly endless pleasure on the extraordinary finish. Still highly aromatic and flavorful the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating age ability. A thoroughbred in the Goldeneye stable.*

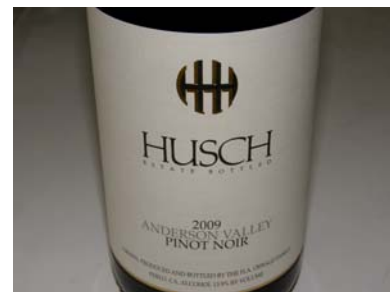


2010 Greenwood Ridge Vineyards Hundred Point Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 50 cases, \$50, screw cap. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh black cherries, dark red berry jam, caramel and spice. Medium weight, luscious dark red fruits wrapped in svelte tannins, elegant in composition, finishing long and aromatic. I like this wine for its delicacy, purity of fruit and transparency.*





2009 Husch Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$18. 25% whole cluster. *Moderately light reddish color in the glass. Aromas of confected black cherries, raspberries, forest floor, potpourri, and vanilla. Mid weight flavors of black raspberries, black cherries, currants and sandalwood with a hint of citrus on the finish. Smooth and easy to drink with pleasing acidity and fine grain tannins. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. This is always a dependable wine that is easy on the wallet. You won't find a better under \$20 Pinot Noir anywhere in California. Very good.*



2009 Knez Winery Cerise Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$36. Some whole cluster. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. A stunning wine with enticing aromas of fresh cherry pie, nutmeg spice, herbs and petrichor. The juicy palate sings the same tune with interesting herbal, spice, mineral and earth nuances, persisting on the generous finish. Underlain with fine, fuzzy tannins and well-honed acidity. A complete wine.*



2009 Knez Winery Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$36. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Demure but pleasing aromas of dark red cherries and brambly berries, brioche and old book. Tasty middle weight flavors of raspberries and cranberries with a savory herb undertone, picking up flavor intensity and interest over time in the glass. Well-proportioned tannins and acidity. This wine grows on you and is easy to drink. Very good.*

2010 Kutch Savoy Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.45% alc., 240 cases, \$48. 100% de-stemmed. Native yeasts. Aged on lees 16 months in neutral oak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Slowly emerging aromas of dark berries, violets, cedar and eucalyptus. Lighter weight flavors of raspberries, cranberries and red plums with a mild oaky, earthy bent. Elegant with a soft tannic backbone, finishing shallow and citrusy. Re-tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine was still lightly flavored and tart with a little alcohol peeking out. The fruit seems under ripe in this wine. Good.*



2009 Londer Vineyards Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$45. *Medium dark red color in the glass. Very vibrant nose, offering hi-tone aromas of earth-kissed, fresh dark red berries with hints of oak and spice. A stellar wine that satisfies with plentiful dark red cherry, raspberry and strawberry flavors accented by savory herbs, and framed by firm, but well-proportioned tannins. Soft in the mouth with impressive length on the red-fruited finish. Everything comes together in this wine: pedigreed fruit, impeccable winemaking, and easy approachability.*



2009 MacPhail Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 275 cases, \$49. Clones 2A, 115 and 777. Aged 11 months sur lies in 40% new French oak. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Oak-driven aromas initially give way over time in the glass to lovely, crushed black cherry fruit scent. Vibrant fruitiness, offering mouthwatering flavors of fresh black cherries and black raspberries lingering on a very long and generous finish. Balanced tannins, a bright cut of acidity, a soft mouth feel, and the slightest dusting of oak in the background. The pedigree of the fruit from this iconic vineyard shows through. Very enjoyable now but has the goods to age well into ten years.*



2009 MacPhail Fratney Shams Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 200 cases, \$49. Clone 115. Aged 11 months sur lies in 40% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. This wine is lashed with oak, offering aromas of black coffee, timber and sweet smoke, and flavors of dark red*

cherries and berries buried in oak. Plentiful astringent oak tannins dominate the pretty core of fruit. Tasted twice. Decent at best.

2009 POE Angel Camp Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 300 cases, \$48. Vineyard farmed by noted viticulturist, Paul Ardzrooni. Clones 115, Swan, 2A, Pommard and 667. Aged in 40% new Francois Freres and Remond French oak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Deep, dark and mysterious with flamboyant aromas of black berries, brewed tea, and oak notes of mocha and vanilla, becoming more vibrant over time in the glass. Full-bodied and very tasty with a luscious and slightly sweet core of black plum and black grape flavors accented by hints of oak and dark chocolate. The impressive depth of fruit is well balanced by acidity and tannins, so it should drink well for several years. Very good.*



2010 Sheldon Roma's Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., 125 cases, \$35. No new oak. Unfined and unfiltered. My second tasting of this wine (the first tasting was disappointing so I wanted to give the wine another shot). *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Some nice red cherry and raspberry fruits shows up on the nose initially, but give way over time in the glass to aromas of straw bale and apple core (acetaldehyde - oxidation). Elegant and light in flavor featuring red cherries and berries and spice with a faint underlying herbal, green and citrus note. The fruit seems under ripe. Bright acidity with soft tannins. Becomes less and less attractive over time in the glass. Unsatisfactory.*



2010 Twomey Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.61, 1,853 cases, \$46. Sourced from Ferrington, Savoy and Monument Tree vineyards. Aged 15 months sur lies in 45% new and 55% once-used French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish color in the glass. Muted, but pleasing aromas of fresh strawberries, raspberries, dried rose petals and sandalwood. Delicious core of raspberry flavor elevated by brisk acidity, draped in well-proportioned tannins, underlain with a complimentary note of oak and savory herbs, and finishing with a vivid riff of cherry fruit which lingers for a remarkably long time. A seamless wine that is uncommonly refreshing. Tasted against several very good Anderson Valley Pinot Noirs, this was the clear standout. Re-tasted the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine had become more aromatic and generous in flavor. Irresistable.*



2009 Waits-Mast Deer Meadow Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 49 cases, \$47. Released September 2011. This vineyard is located at 1,600 feet elevation above the town of Boonville and is farmed by Rich Savoy. Clones are 115 and 2A. 100% whole berry, inoculated yeast, aged 17 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Pleasant aromas of dark cherries and berries, bark, forest floor, and fennel, becoming more giving over time in the glass. Tasty core of fruit featuring black raspberries, purple grapes and black cherries veering to the ripe side, underlain with a complimentary hint of savory herbs, green pepper and toasty oak. Moderately rich with mild tannins and some length on the finish. Tasted twice with consistent results. Very good.*



2009 Waits-Mast Hayley Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., 24 cases, \$36. Released September 2011. From a 34-acre valley floor site planted to Dijon clones 114, 115, 667 and 777 with small amounts of Pommard and Martini. This wine is all clone 114. 100% whole berry. Inoculated yeast. Aged 17 months in 25% new Francois Frères French oak. *Aromas and flavors of black cap raspberries and black cherries with a subtle underlying earthy, herbal bent. Full-flavored and plush on the palate, with a juicy finish. A savory wine that aims to please. Still solid the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*

2009 Zina Hyde Cunningham Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$48. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of nicely spiced cherries, raisins and cardamom spice. Moderately rich flavors of black cherries and raspberries with a hint of herbal oak. Soft and silky in the mouth, leaving a hint of warmth on the finish. Veers to a ripe, cooked fruit profile but not markedly so. Good.*



2009 Zina Hyde Cunningham Reserve Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 100 cases, \$60. Aged in 75% new and 25% used French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Reserved aromas of dark cherries and plums with a hint of spice. The ripeness of fruit is right on in this offering, revealing flavors of dark stone fruits and dark red berries, rhubarb, clove, cola, spice and graham. More bones than the regular bottling with considerably more length on the finish, and displaying a very inviting, soft, velvety mouth feel. Beautifully balanced.*



2010 Zina Hyde Cunningham Anderson Valley Pinot Noir - Barrel Sample (from bottle). A note to be on the lookout for this beauty when it is released. *Terrific in every way at this early stage. Bright cherry, raspberry and red plum fruits with a hint of oak and sandalwood on a moderately light, elegant frame. My notes say great!*



Yorkville Highlands is a small appellation located just south and inland of the Anderson Valley in Mendocino County. It stretches along Highway 128, flanked by Alexander Valley to the southeast and the Anderson Valley to the northwest. Most of the vineyards are planted to warm weather varieties such as Zinfandel, Syrah and Petite Sirah. There are small plantings of Pinot Noir in strategically placed areas (Vidmar Vineyards, Walsh Ranch Vineyards, and Weir Vineyard) with Weir Vineyard clearly the most noteworthy. For more information, visit www.yorkvillehighlands.org.



2010 Drew Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.67, TA 0.62, 98 cases, \$42. First planted in 1992 under the guidance of Burt Williams (Williams Selyem). 15 acres planted to Wädenswil 2A, a DRC selection and a Rochoili field selection (1/3 each in this wine). Owner Bill Weir strives to achieve old world character from his vineyard. 30% whole cluster. Native fermentation. Aged 11 months in 25% new and 75% seasoned French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of berry jam on toast, forest floor and floral notes. A wine with character, featuring flavors of dark berries, plums, and subtle oak, clothed in balanced, ripe, dry tannins, finishing crisp with a good cut of acidity. Silky in the mouth with a long, dramatic finish Hollywood would envy. Not as tannic as some previous vintages. I love wines from this vineyard!*



2009 SPELL Weir Vineyard Yorkville Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 175 cases, \$39. Crafted by Shane Finley. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Intensely aromatic featuring a perfume of dark raspberries and blackberries with a lovely accent of spice. Infused with vivid flavors of black raspberry jam and tea leaf, currently dominated by firm, dry tannins. Impressive length on the well-endowed finish. This is a remarkable vineyard. Very good.*

Along the Pinot Trail in California: Part I - Central Coast

For those score obsessed, number-centric wine enthusiasts, the conversion for my ratings to numerical scores is begrudgingly provided as follows: Pinot Geek (94-98), Very good (90-93), Good (86-89), and Decent (82-85). Unsatisfactory signifies a wine that is flawed or that I would not recommend. The same ratings apply to Chardonnay, except a Golden Geek icon is used to signify exceptional wines. A (+) would indicate the upper number of the range and a (-) the lower number of the range.

2009 and 2010 vintage comments by Ben Cain, winemaker at Twomey Cellars. “2010 was a long, cool year, 2 to 3 weeks later than 2009, and more akin to a European vintage whereas 2009 was definitely California. This translated into physiological ripeness at lower sugar levels, but greater time to develop more complexity and nuances. Thus the wines are more elegant, but have higher density with great tannin structure, balanced natural acid spines, and very clear terroir-driven expressions of place of origin. I found the 2009 wines were more reflective of their vintage than their sites, but were definitely expressions of place. The 2010 wines show clearer differences and more precise snapshots of place.”

2009 vintage comments by Gary Farrell, winemaker at Alysian Wines. “2009 is a standout vintage among critics and consumers alike, as the wines show tremendous generosity and structural integrity without excessive extract or alcohol. In 2009, cool and steady temperatures slowed the ripening process, and delivered fruit with elevated levels of flavor and acidity at lower sugar levels; an ideal scenario for crafting fully flavored wines with enhanced freshness, impeccable balance and (importantly) lower alcohol levels.”

Take special note of the following producers in Part I and Part 2: Clos Pepe Estate, Dragonette Cellars, McIntyre Vineyards, Big Basin Vineyards, The Donum Estate, Stemmler, Alysian, Scherrer, Twomey, La Rochelle, Waits-Mast, J Vineyards, Canihan and MacPhail. All these wineries have more than one highly rated wine.

Sta. Rita Hills

2010 Clos Pepe Estate Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.71, 915 cases, \$54. The Clos Pepe Pinot Noirs in 2010 are bigger and riper than the traditional Clos Pepe restrained style. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Evocative aromas of black cherries, ripe berry jam, spice and subtle oak. Mouth full of generous strawberry, raspberry and red licorice flavors with a satiny smooth mouth feel, and a very long finish displaying a good spark of acidity that keeps the fruit in check and leaves a refreshing memory. This wine is built for enjoyment with food. Very good.*

2010 Clos Pepe Estate Vigneron Select Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.68, 72 cases, \$59 *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. More subdued on the nose and offering a riper fruit profile. Darker fruits are featured with compliments of savory herbs, leaf and earth. Compared to the Estate bottling, more intensity of dark berry flavor, more fruit presence on the finish, more ripeness, and a hint of alcohol in the background. Very silky with modest tannins, and acidity that is well integrated. A true select bottling but not one defined by more oak as with many reserve wines. Definitely needs more time, say 2 to 3 years for optimum enjoyment. That said, it is hard to keep your hands off it now. Very good (+).*



2010 Dragonette Cellars Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 300 cases, \$42. Sourced from vineyards on the western edge of the Sta. Rita Hills including Sebastiano, Cargasacchi-Jalama, Cargasacchi, Fiddlestix, La Encantada, and Zotovich. clones Pommard, 113, 114, 115, 667 and 828. Native and commercial yeasts. Aged 16 months in 25% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. A little spicy, a little savory, and plenty of dark red cherry and berry fruit aromas. Discreetly concentrated flavors of red and black raspberries and cherries and red plum cake, with modest tannins and a generous cut on the finish. This is perfect for drinking now. Very good.*

2010 Dragonette Cellars Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir ("Black Label") 14.4% alc., 100 cases, \$75. Favorite barrels (50% Cargasacchi, 25% Fiddlestix, and 25% La Encantada vineyards). Clones 115 and 667. Native and commercial yeasts. Aged 16 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Deep, dark plum color in the glass. Very reserved, even locked down, barely offering scents of black cherries and vanillin oak. Striking mid palate attack of ripe dark berry and satsuma plum flavors, underlain with notes of oak, chicory and tar. Very soft in the mouth, with modest tannins, finishing with remarkable fruit intensity. Hard to evaluate at this early stage, but the potential is obvious. Very good (+).*



2010 Dragonette Cellars Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 150 cases, \$54. 17% whole clusters. Native and commercial yeasts. Aged 16 months in 35% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Reserved, but pleasant aromas of dark red cherries and berries, with a hint of herbs. Delicious core of black cherry fruit with accents of spice and oak. Modestly rich and plush. Soft in the mouth with very well managed tannins (this vineyard can produce very tannic wines). Impeccable balance. Very approachable now, but will benefit from a few more years in the cellar. A complete wine and one of many I have had the pleasure of drinking from this venerable vineyard.*

2009 Furthermore La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.61, 51 cases, \$40. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 12 months in 33% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Hi-spirited aromas of fresh darker berries, raisin and spice. Mid weight flavors of moderately dark cherries and raspberries draped in muscular, dry tannins. The most striking fruit, albeit super ripe, of all the 2009 Furthermore wines. This wine displays complimentary acidity so typical of Sta. Rita Hills wines. Still solid the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Quite enjoyable. Very good.*

2010 Longoria Rancho Santa Rosa Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 15.6% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.56, 97 cases, \$45. Pommard clone. A heat spell in September caused sugar content of grapes to shoot up quickly and the grapes were harvested at a riper level of sugar than usual. 100% de-stemmed. Aged in 35% new French oak barrels. Fined and filtered. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Reserved aromas of dark cherries, very ripe berries, currants and bark. Fruit-driven on the palate, with plenty of wood-toned dark cherry flavor back by pliant tannins and finishing a little boozy (hot). A little more expressive the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Good.*

2009 Waits-Mast La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 23 cases, \$47. Released September 2011. Clones 115 and 777. 100% whole berry, aged 17 months in 20% new French oak barrel. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of black grapes, fruit leather, herbs and tar. Rich, plush and soft on the palate, featuring flavors of earth bound black cherries and plum. A bit ponderous and lacks a spark. Tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine showed a riper profile including raisin. Good (+).*

Santa Maria Valley & Arroyo Grande

2009 Bien Nacido Vineyards Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$N/A. The Miller Family's own approach to a Bien Nacido wine. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Lovely array of dark fruit aromas with a subtle green vegetal note. Discreetly concentrated flavors of dark red plums, black raspberries and currants with a hint of spice, green bell pepper and mushroom in the background. Medium weighted with balanced tannins, and light on its feet. A nicely balanced and savory wine. Very good.*



2009 BIGVINE Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 2,300 cases, \$14. 85% Arroyo Grande, 15% Sta. Rita Hills. Aged 12 months in 25% new French oak barrels with regular lees stirring. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. The interesting and complex nose really draws you in. Aromas of strawberries, cherries, sandalwood, sawdust and Indian spice.*

Delicious middleweight core of fresh dark cherries and red raspberries, caressed by supple tannins, offering good acidity, and finishing with memorable aromatic persistence. A beautifully balanced wine that is very easy to cozy up to, and



quite impressive for a first release. Unbelievable value.

2010 Longoria Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.57, 160 cases, \$45. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 16 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. A savory wine featuring aromas of cherries, red raspberries, bell pepper and stem. Light and soft in the mouth with delicate tannins, featuring flavors of red fruits, green bell pepper, and green tea leaf. An elegant wine with bright underlain acidity. Harvested at lower Brix and shows it. Good.*

Santa Lucia Highlands & Arroyo Seco


2010 Bruliam Soberanes Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$46. Released December 11, 2011. Inaugural bottling. Pisoni clone. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 10 months in 50% new French oak (Remond), and another 3 months in bottle before release. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Takes some work to bring the nose out, but it grudgingly offers pleasing aromas of dark berries and exotic spices. Lip-smacking, middleweight core of perfectly ripe dark red and black berry and plum fruit. Very good supporting acidity and oak, lacking slightly in finishing length and intensity. Quintessential Santa Lucia Highlands fruit profile. Good (+).*

2009 Furthermore Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.67, 70 cases, \$50. Clones 828 and Pisoni. Aged 12 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Very savory in style. Aromas of dark red cherries, sage and other herbs. Herb-toned red fruit with notes of green and black olives. Modest tannins. About the same the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A bit atypical for Rosella's in my experience. Good.*





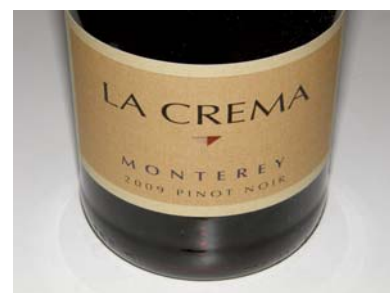
2010 J. Lohr Fog's Reach Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., pH 3.78, TA 0.55, 2,427 cases, \$35. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Pommard 4. Fruit was 100% de-stemmed. Aged 8 months in new and second fill French oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. Evocative perfume of raspberry jam on toast. Richly endowed with flavors of black cap raspberries, dark strawberries, sassafras, herbs and complimentary toasty oak. An embracing wine with fruit that really draws your attention. Could use a little more acid zip. The finish goes on and on. Very good.*



 **2010 Kori KW Ranch Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 200 cases, \$38. From the 14-acre terraced KW Ranch Vineyard. The vineyard has previously supplied fruit to several famous vintners. Clones are 667 and Pommard 4. Grower is Kirk Williams and winemakers are Kori Violini and Sabine Rodems. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Impressively aromatic with bright, intense aromas of black raspberries, kirsch and dark plum sauce. Medium weight flavors echo the nose with added accents of toasty oak and floral notes, finishing with a flourish of black raspberry fruit. Soft and velvety on the palate, and very comforting to drink. Admirable balance with silky tannins and well-honed acidity. A complete wine that brings out the best in Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir. A big, but pleasant surprise to me, as I had never previously met with this label.*



  **2010 La Crema Monterey Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$20. *Moderately dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. Very fragrant aromas of perfectly ripe berries include strawberries with hints of spice and vanilla. A charming wine that aims to please with a medium weighted core of luscious dark raspberries, strawberries and boysenberries accented with cola, cassis and oak. Nicely buttressed with soft tannins and offering good length on the finish. Great balance. All you can ask for in California Pinot Noir for the price of a Jackson.*



2011 La Rochelle Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Rosé 12.5% alc., 119 cases, \$24. Pommard and Swan clones. *Light pinkish-orange color in the glass. Aromas of strawberries, cherries and orange peel. Light and refreshing, featuring flavors of rose water, red berries, and blood oranges. A perfect summer wine. Good (+)*

2010 Loring Wine Company Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$40. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Enticing aromatics, featuring bright scents of cherries, dark red raspberries and spice. Crisp and hi-spirited, composed of middleweight red fruits that are pure and vibrant, supple tannins, complimentary oak treatment, and a finish of excellent length. Definitely ripe in character, but hard to ignore. The name "Garys' Vineyard" on a bottle is a reliable guarantee of quality. Very good.*



2010 McIntyre Vineyards Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 2.62, TA 0.63, 240 cases, \$38. Predominantly Dijon clone 777. Indigenous yeast fermentations. Crafted by Byron Kosuge. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Opulent aromas of black cherries, black raspberries, cardamom spice and toasty oak. Pumps out the fragrance consistently over time in the glass. Very tasty core of dark cherry and dark berry fruits with a subtle hint of oak toast and vanillin in the background. Smooth and luxurious on the palate with soft, restrained tannins and some persistence on the finish. Very drinkable now, but the balance predicts a long life ahead.*



2008 McIntyre Vineyards Mission Ranch Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$36. Released spring 2011. From Mission Ranch Vineyard. Vinified by Byron Kosuge. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Perfume of dark red cherries, berry glaze, leaf and oak. This wine offers only a glimpse of its future potential. A little rustic and closed down now, but showing sparks of flavorful purple and black fruits caressed by supple tannins. Better and better over time in the glass. The velvety texture is very pinotesque. Cellar or decant if you must open now. Very good.*



2010 McIntyre Vineyards East Block 3 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 90 cases, \$46. Released spring 2011. Sourced from select lots of the 60-acre estate sustainably farmed home estate vineyard. Native yeast fermentation. Owner and grower Steve McIntyre. Winemaker Byron Kosuge. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Alluring aromas of dark berries, plum pudding and subtle oak. Delicious middleweight flavors of black raspberry, blackberry and black plum wrapped in soft tannins, finishing with remarkable fruit presence on the lengthy finish. Impeccable balance. Can age but drinkable now.*

2008 Talbott Cuvée RFT Diamond T Vineyard Monterey County Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$75 (sold out). Named in honor of Robert Talbott's father, Robert Flook Talbott Sr. (RFT). Sourced from the 14-acre Diamond T Vineyard planted to Pommard and Dijon clones. The finest 10 barrels, aged 12 months in 100% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of deep, dark plums, blueberries, roasted nuts and grilled beef. Ripely flavored and full-bodied, featuring tastes of dark berries, black currants and plum sauce with a hints of dark chocolate, chicory, and molasses. Soft in the mouth with firm, slightly rugged tannins. Unusual and distinctive. Very good.*

Santa Cruz Mountains



2008 Big Basin Vineyards Alfaro Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 105 cases, \$48. Dijon clones. 20% whole cluster, indigenous yeast fermentation. Aged 14 months in 60% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Effusive aromas of strawberries, raspberries, spice and cut flowers. Well-endowed with flavors of dark red Pinot fruits fanning out on the palate in waves, finishing with a raspberry kiss. Savory herb flavors add interest. All you could want in a Pinot with supple, dreamy tannins, bright acidity and purity of fruit. With added bottle age, this wine is showing more transparency than the 2009 vintage bottling. Big Basin Vineyards has emerged as one of the top Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir producers along with Windy Oaks, Mount Eden, Rhys Vineyards and Thomas Fogarty Winery.*




2009 Big Basin Vineyards Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 193 cases, \$44. From a cool vineyard near Corralitos in the southern Santa Cruz Mountains. Very low yields. Fermented with 15% whole clusters using indigenous yeasts. Aged 16 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Evocative aromas of blackberries and blueberries, plum cake and smoky oak. Rich, plush, and full-flavored with a core of black plum fruit wrapped in ripe, firm, proportionate tannins, complimentary oak, and finishing strong and long. Smoothly textured making for good drinking now, but the wine was better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle indicating it will improve with further cellaring. Very good (+).*

2009 Big Basin Vineyards Alfaro Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 144 cases, \$44. From a vineyard in Corralitos. Yields of 1 ton per acre with small clusters and berries. One lot fermented with 15% whole cluster and one lot 100% de-stemmed. Indigenous yeast fermentation. Aged 16 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromatically attractive, featuring scents of sweet black raspberries, black plum and savory herbs. Moderately rich flavors that echo the nose, picking up intensity over time in the glass. Hints of oak vanillin and herbs add interest. Nicely composed, offering pliant tannins, good acidity and some length on the finish. Needs more time in the cellar and could easily end up like the excellent 2008 vintage bottling. Good (+).*

2009 Big Basin Woodruff Family Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 97 cases, \$48. From a 30-year-old vineyard in Corralitos. Fermented whole berry with 25% whole cluster, native yeasts, unfined and unfiltered. Aged 16 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Demure aromas of strawberries, raspberries and red currants with a subtle touch of smoky oak. Middleweight flavors of ripe dark red berries, subtle oak highlights, and whole cluster spice. Nicely composed with supple tannins, satiny mouth feel, and admirable length on the fruit-driven finish. Opens up over time in the glass. Very good.*

2008 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 985 cases, \$46. Estate grown and bottled. Previously reviewed November 24, 2010 and very impressed with the wine. This bottle did not live up to expectations for whatever reason. *Aromas of red cherries with a strong herbal and green component. Brisk and light on the palate, featuring flavors of red cherries and berries, savory herbs, and citrus peel acidity on the tight finish. Rather austere and mineral-driven. Better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with more fruit intensity but still not up to par. Good.*

 **2009 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 780 cases, \$45. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very nice array of aromas including dark grapes, black cherries and cardamom spice. Absolutely delicious, mid weight flavors of dark red cherries and berries with a long, long, long finish. Wow! Beautifully balanced with fine-grain tannins, moderate extraction and bright, juicy acidity on the finish. This is a wine you can bank every vintage. Known to be very age worthy.*



2010 Santé Split Rail Vineyard Corralitos Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.65, 100 cases, \$35. From Sante Arcangeli Family Wines. Vineyard is at 1700 feet above Monterey Bay, planted to David Bruce clone, UCD 32 (a Champagne clone) and Dijon 115. Aged 10 months sur lies in 70% new American, Hungarian and French oak barrels. *Light reddish-purple color in the glass. Oak-kissed red fruit aromas with notes of rose petals, baking spice and sandalwood. Spicy, red fruited core including prominent strawberry flavor, underlain with cinnamon, oak vanillin and a hint of citrus. Different types of oak give the wine a spiced flavor profile that veers from the expected norm for California Pinot Noir. Elegant with a very bright cut of acidity on the finish. Good (+).*

2009 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$60. Wine club or tasting room only. 15-acre vineyard 900 feet above Monterey Bay at the southern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA. Estate grown, produced and bottled. Windy Oaks' signature wine, primarily from the 1.5-acre Bay Block of the original 3-acre vineyard. Unfined and unfiltered. *Demure but pleasant perfume of dark red fruits, rosewood, rose petals and spice. The core of dark cherries and raspberries is fresh and alive, accented with notes of oak-driven herb, mocha and caramel. Juicy, with bright acidity, ripe tannins, and some length on the finish. Very good.*

2009 Windy Oaks Estate Henry's Block Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$49. Wine club or tasting room only. From a 1-acre block in the oldest part of the original 3-acre estate vineyard featuring Wädenswil clone. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Fragrant with very ripe black cherry and currant fruit aromas associated with hints of spice, floral notes, and toffee. Very ripe, dark fruited featuring black cherries, black plums, sassafras, and slight prune. Silky with well-proportioned tannins, finishing with impressive length. I am not usually a big fan of Wädenswil as a stand-alone clone Pinot Noir, but in the right site as demonstrated here, can make a different, interesting wine. Very good.*

2008 Windy Oaks Limited Release Wild Yeast Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$55. Wine club or tasting room only. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Slightly funky, yeasty nose with bright black cherry fruit aromas. Mid weight core of darker red cherries and berries with a crisp, red berry driven finish. Moderately firm grip of tannin with plenty of oak flourish. I have mixed feelings about this one and this may not be a representative bottle. Good.*

Along the Pinot Trail in California: Part 2 - North Coast & Other


Marin County

2010 Couloir Chileno Valley Marin County Pinot Noir 12.8% alc., TA 0.56, 93 cases, \$38. The vineyard is situated on the southern border of the Petaluma Gap and is influenced by the Pacific Ocean to the west and San Pablo Bay to the south. Very long growing season. 50% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation. Aged 10 months in 25% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Shy fruit aromas with a prominent floral perfume including jasmine. An austere wine that is light on the palate, offering demure flavors of red cherries and berries with a mineral and vegetal note in the background. The acidity really dominates the finish. Just not enough flavor here to please the California palate and the whole cluster has dealt an unappealing vegetal note to the wine. Decent.*


2009 De Loach Vineyards Marin County Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 614 cases, \$30. Winemaker Dan Goldfield. Grower Mark Pasternak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose opens slowly, reaching a peak over 45 minutes in the glass, offering scents of dark red cherries and berries and subtle green herbs. Dark raspberry flavor with an earthy bent on a medium frame with balanced fine-grain tannin and good acidity. Nicely composed with some finishing length, but lacks a statement. A "pretty" wine. Very good.*

Carneros

2009 Donum Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.61. TA 0.65, 400 cases, \$65. Soon to be released. A blend of Calera, old Martini and Donum Roederer selections from several blocks on the Donum Ranch. Aged 16 months in 65% new French oak barrels. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherries, dark rose petals, exotic woods and stem. Delicious core of black cherry, black raspberry and raisin flavors with an appealing earthy, soil-driven character. Veers to the ripe fruit side. Moderately rich, with well-balanced firm tannins. Plush on the palate and welcoming now. Very good.*

 **2009 Donum Estate Grown West Slope Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.64, 250 cases, \$85. From a west-sloping block in the 5.5-acre site at Donum Ranch. Roederer selection. A barrel selection from this single block as a stand-alone wine. 100% de-stemmed, 6-day cold soak, inoculated with RC212, four punch downs per day, extended maceration (total maceration time was three weeks. Aged 16 months in 70% new French oak barrels. Best barrels selected and blended in the summer of 2009. Aged in 70% new French oak (Francois Frères, Billon and Ermitage). *Dark reddish-purple robe. Intriguing aromas of dark cherries and berries, compost, soil, hops and rose petals. Wow! Hits the mid palate with strikingly plush, spicy dark red and black fruits buffered with ideal oak integration and perfectly balanced tannins and acidity. Ridiculously long and memorable finish. Offers something different with each sip. Like Drew Barrymore - very successful at a young age (much more approachable than previous vintage). Even better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. An amazing wine that is California Pinot at its best and flat out one of the finest Pinots (along with the Donum Thomas) I have reviewed so far this year. Wine Spectator trumpets "94," I say, "98." Did I say long finish?*



 **2009 Donum Estate Grown Thomas Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.34, TA 0.75, 101 cases, \$100. Named for Thomas Ferguson, the owner of Ferguson Block, a 1974 planting of Martini selection Pinot Noir. Honors Thomas Ferguson's 100th birthday. Winegrower Anne Moller-Racke has worked with this vineyard for 28 years, and the Thomas block has always stood out. Every year in blind tastings, it is seen as been the best from this vineyard, a true evidence of terroir. 100% de-stemmed, native primary fermentation. Aged 16 months in 1-year-old French Billon oak barrels. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding aromas of black cherries ripe strawberries, berry reduction sauce and spice. Soft, plush and supple in the mouth, with flavors of perfectly ripe black raspberries, black cherries and black tea that*

really wake up the mouth. The wine offers pliant tannins and a good cut of acidity on a finish that is eye-opening. The silky texture is outrageous. More approachable than previous vintages. Impeccable balance. Even better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Hard to choose between this wine and the West Slope. You will need a cold shower after drinking this one.

Note: In 2001, the Racke family acquired the former Tula Vista Ranch, now Donum Ranch, the home of The Donum Estate. The name "Donum" means "donation" in Latin and is a reference to grapes as a gift of the land. The Donum Ranch consists of 70 acres of vines (multiple clones including Roederer, Swan, Chalone, and Dijon 115, 667 and 777), 20 acres of the nearby Ferguson Block (primarily old Martini), and the 11-acre Nugent Vineyard planted to Dijon clones 115 and 667. Kenneth Juhasz (Auteur) has been the winemaker at The Donum Estate since 2002. Anne Moller-Racke oversees the farming of all the estate vineyards. In December, 2011, Racke sold The Donum Estate and Stemmler brand to Winside, Inc, a partnership of Danish investors for an undisclosed amount. The team including Anne Moller-Racke and consulting winemaker Kenneth Juhasz remain in place. Donum's potential for more estate plantings and bottlings was a consideration in the investment. The winery is not open to the public, but tasting is available by appointment (contact Brooke Gadke, Director of Hospitality, at 707-939-2290).

2009 Garnet Carneros Pinot Noir 13.77% alc., pH 3.67, \$20, screw cap. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Fruity aromas of strawberries, red currants and balsam. Has a cooked fruit and porto overtone. Oak-dominated dark plum and black raspberry fruit flavors with hints of dark chocolate and coffee, mild tannins and reasonable acidity. Decent.*



2009 Stemmler Estate Grown Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.62, 784 cases, \$42. A limited release from fruit grown on The Donum Estate. A blend of six blocks planted to predominantly heritage selections and comprises Dijon, Martini, Roederer, Calera, Hanzell and Swan. 100% de-stemmed, hot fermentations lasting 5 to 9 days for maximum extraction. Extended maceration for 2 to 6 days. Each block made and aged separately until the final blend is assembled in the spring and then returned to barrel for 10 months. The blend represents every part of The Donum Estate. Total aging 18 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Fragrant with purple stone fruits, black grapes, tea leaves, spice and vanilla. Silky and beautifully balanced, with appealing flavors of blackberries, Hoison, and black currants with oak, tea and mushroom notes in the background. Moderately rich and earthy with well-proportioned tannins. Quintessential Carneros.*



2009 Stemmler Ferguson Block Carneros Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.63, 67 cases, \$44. To be released soon. Ferguson Block sits less than a mile east of The Donum Estate. It is the oldest vineyard in The Donum Estate, planted in 1974 with an old Martini selection of Pinot Noir on St. George rootstock in gravelly, loamy clay soils. Aged 18 months in once-used French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Evocative nose offering savory and fruity aromas including black cherries, baking spice and herbs. Really wows in the mouth with flat-out delicious core of earthy black cherries accented with complimentary vanillin oak. Satiny in texture with a generous finish that makes you want to take another sip. Nothing like old vine sophistication.*



Russian River Valley

2009 Alysian Russian River Valley Selection 13.8% alc., pJ 3.41, TA 0.73, 2,231 cases, \$40. Multiple vineyard sources (Rochioli, Allen, Floodgate, Starr Ridge and Hallberg). Clones Pommard, 777, Martini, 115, Cruz and 828. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 40% new French oak barrels. Gary points out, "While we love the vineyard-specific wines for their purity and focused expression of each individual property, the Russian River Selection often displays greater complexity and (to some) is a more complete and satisfying offering." *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of Bing cherries and strawberries with good volume. Exuberant flavors of black cherries, dark red berries, tea leaf, cola and clove with a slight herbal note contributed by sweet oak. Full-bodied yet not overbearing, with reserved tannins, and admirable length. I agree with Gary that this is his finest Alysian Russian River Valley Selection to date. Exceptional flavor and intensity at a modest alcohol level: the holy grail of Pinot Noir. Very good (+).*



2009 Alysian Floodgate Vineyard Origins Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.73, 240 cases, \$55. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Dreamy aromatics with intense and vivid aromas of fresh Bing cherries, raspberries, spice and vanilla. Flavorful, but juicy and easy to drink, offering tastes of red cherries, herbs, sandalwood and graham, picking up intensity over time in the glass. Very elegantly crafted with soft, dry tannins, lively acidity and generous length.*



2009 Alysian Floodgate Vineyard Rock Hill Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.71, 159 cases, \$55. From an estate property in a sub appellation of the Russian River Valley known as the Middle Reach. Rock Hill is a tiny block planted on one of the rockiest knolls on the property. Dijon clone 777. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is a fruit wonderland. Intense fragrance of spiced Bing cherries, raspberries and plums. Richly flavored but light on its feet, with alluring flavors of black cherries, black raspberries, herbs and spice. So good you want to bite into it. Refreshing acid spine, gossamer tannins and a memorable finish of uncommon length. Crazy good.*



2009 Alysian Hallberg Vineyard Crossroads Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.72, 196 cases, \$55. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Inviting array of aromas including dark cherries, dark red berries, pepper and baking spice. Mid weight flavors of dark red cherries and berries with a citrus-imbued cherry finish of noticeable length. More body and structure than the Floodgate bottlings. Perfectly composed with well-proportioned tannins. Again, showing the elegance that is always evident in a Gary Farrell Pinot.*



2009 Alysian Rochioli Vineyard Edgewater Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.71, 240 cases, \$65. Clones 115, 777 and Pommard. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of dark red pie berries and spice. Delicious Pinot extract, featuring perfectly ripe flavors of dark cherries, raspberries and strawberries accented with spice cake. Intense mid palate presence and amazing finishing length and intensity. Gorgeous without being overwrought. Perfect balance with supple tannins and juicy acidity. You want to chew on this one.*



2009 Alysian Rochioli Vineyard Allen-Rochioli Blocks Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.68, 122 cases, \$65. *Brooding aromas of black cherries and black raspberries with a hint of spice. Intense mid palate attack of delicious black cherry and black plum fruit accented with cola and spice. The most linear and undeveloped of the 2009 Alysian wines, but clearly the one with the most long term potential for greatness. Develops more intensity and interest over time in the glass and was much better two days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A pretense to seduction.*



Note: If you aren't familiar with Alysian wines, its time to listen up. Veteran Russian River Valley winemaker Gary Farrell crafts superb Pinot Noir (and Chardonnay) from top notch vineyard sources. His wines show hi-tone aromatics, soft tannins, juicy acidity and impeccable balance predicting age ability. Oak is never obtrusive. These are among the finest Pinot Noirs currently being produced in the Russian River Valley, if not all of California. Visit www.alsianwines.com.

2010 Anthill Farms Tina Marie Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 12.6% alc., \$44. This vineyard is located in the Green Valley and is farmed by owners Ron Black and Stephen Bessone. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose unfolds slowly in the glass, revealing aromas of dark red cherries and raspberries with hints of clove and other spices. Relatively light in weight and somewhat lean in style, with flavorful black cherry fruit caressed by supple tannins, and underlain with tight acidity. Admirable length with welcome freshness and accessibility. Good (+).*



2010 Castalia Rochioli Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.5% alc., \$55. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass.*

Deep, dark aromas of boysenberry jam, plum reduction sauce, spice, oak and tobacco. Enticing middleweight flavors of black cherries and dark berries, displaying the plush, vivid fruit that the Russian River Valley is famous for. Impeccable balance with well use of oak accents, offering restrained tannins, good length, and easy drink ability. Continues in the tradition of consistently excellent wines crafted by Rochioli cellar master, Terry Bering. California through and through.



2010 Darms Lane Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 250 cases, \$39. Darms Lane Vineyard is located in the southwestern bench lands of the Napa Valley. The 14-acre vineyard was established 26 years ago as a Chardonnay estate, and the name changed from Crichton Estate Vineyard to Darms Lane Vineyard and replanted in 2002 and 2003 to warm weather varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon. The winery is family owned and located in the Oak Knoll District of the Napa Valley. This is the inaugural release of a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir sourced from the Dutton Ranch Barron Vineyard in Green Valley. De-stemmed fruit, lees stirring during the first 3 months of barrel aging. Total élevage 10 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Winemaker is Brian Mox. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherries, oak and mocha java. Oak-kissed, full-on flavors of dark cherries, black plums, dark chocolate and cola. Soft and seamless on the palate. Less oak evident the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Give this wine more time in the bottle so it achieves better oak integration. For now, it is Good.*



2010 De Loach Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$18.50. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherries and forest floor. Soft in the mouth, with appealing dark red cherry flavor, displaying good balance and some length on the finish. Good.*

2009 De Loach Vineyards OFS Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 15.0% alc., \$30. *Dark reddish-purple hue in the glass. This wine has a cooked fruit character. Aromas of dark berries, root beer and grilled fruit. Flavors of currants, raisins, and cassis with notes of tea, tar and oak clothed in balanced dry tannins. Soft in the mouth with a hot finish. Decent.*

2009 Donum Estate Grown Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.65, 400 cases, \$65. Blend of Dijon clones 115 and 667. 100% de-stemmed, total maceration 3 weeks. Aged 16 months in 60% new Remond oak barrels. Best bottles selected from each lot and blended in the summer of 2009. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is rather mesmerizing, offering aromas of very ripe Bing cherries, brandy, brown sugar and spice. Luscious, but light on its feet, with a dense core of black cherry and raspberry fruit, filling the mouth and exploding on the finish. Very smoothly textured with pliant tannins and a refreshing cut of lively acidity on the finish. Very well crafted. Very good (+).*



2009 Donum Estate Grown Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.4% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.67, 80 cases, \$85. An inaugural release from an

11-acre vineyard that was planned and planted by Anne Moeller-Racke in the mid 1990s. 100% Dijon clone 667. 100% de-stemmed, total maceration time 3 weeks. Aged 16 months in 67% new French oak barrels. Best barrels selected and blended in the summer of 2009. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. My God! An unbelievably spirited nose of vibrant black cherries. Moderately rich in weight but deeply packed with deep, dark cherry flavor. The fruit is perfectly ripe and accented with the Russian River trademarks of spice and cola. Seamless with tannins that match up to the opulent fruit. This wine has it all and the wine to show someone when searching for an example of a great Russian River Valley Pinot Noir*



2009 Emeritus Vineyards Hallberg Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$47. Hallberg Ranch is the home ranch of Emeritus Vineyards lying along the 10-mile Gold Ridge running from Sebastopol to Forestville in the Russian River Valley. Nicolas Cantazcuzene is the winemaker. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Very muted nose initially, opening slowly to reveal delicate aromas of dark berries and plum with oak cask and stem in the background. Soft and smooth on entry, with moderately full-bodied*

flavors of cassis and black plums underlain with firm, mature tannins. Rather linear now, but enough pleasing fruit to suggest future potential. Good (+) now, but may warrant a higher recommendation in a few years. Very popular in the restaurant marketplace.

2009 Eric Kent Wine Cellars Stiling Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.6% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.63, 183 cases, \$45 (sold out). Proprietor and winemaker Kent Humphrey was married in 2002 in a wine country ceremony at Stiling Vineyard. The following year, Stiling Vineyard supplied Kent with his first Chardonnay and Pinot Noir fruit and he has been working with them ever since. Grapes are pulled primarily from Hillside Block planted to Swan clone in 1989. 50% new French oak at slightly high toast levels. Grapes are also sourced from Bunkhouse Block, also planted to Swan clone. This block is often fermented with 1/3 whole cluster and produces an earthier, more herbal. It does better with less oak. Label artist is Eliza Frye. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherries, plum sauce and spice. Tasty core of spiced cherries veering to the ripe side. Rich and flavorful, with supple tannins and a seductively soft mouth feel. A fruit-driven wine offering exuberant pleasure. Very good.*



Note: Donald Edward Stiling was a well-known winegrower in the Russian River Valley who passed away in March 2012 from complications of Parkinson's Disease at the age of 83. His early career was with Proctor & Gamble, where he rose through the management ranks. He transformed an old 50-acre apple ranch in Sebastopol off Vine Hill Road in the 1980s into a vineyard and was active on the board of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission. One of his famous clients was Gary Farrell.



2010 Fulcrum Floodgate Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

14.3% alc., 190 cases, \$N/A. Clone 667. Barrel aged 16 months in 30% new French (Remond) oak barrels. *Demure aromas of black cherries, black raspberries and baking spice. Lovely fruit core with luscious flavors of black cherries, cola and spice, robed in dry, fine-grain tannins and underlain with modest acidity. Very pleasing finesse with staying power on the lengthy finish. A very distinguished vineyard source that really delivers. One of the most outstanding wines I have had from winemaker David Rossi. Very good (+).*



2009 Furthermore Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.50, TA 0.57, 99 cases, \$40. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 12 months in 33% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark*

reddish-purple color in the glass. Ripe black cherry aromas and flavors in a discreetly rich style, underlain with oak and herbs. Veers to the very ripe fruit side. Firm, ripe tannins with a satiny mouth feel. Still solid the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Good.

2009 Gary Farrell Russian River Selection Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.69, \$35. Released May 1, 2011. Sourced from multiple vineyards including Rochioli, Allen and Hallberg. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Muted aromas of well-oaked dark cherry and berry fruit. Savory and slight tart, with flavors of red cherries and cranberries, with riffs of herbs and oak. Mild tannins and very brisk acidity. Lacks the lush fruit character that is usually the high point for Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Decent.

2010 Hartford Court Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., \$30. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherry tart, spice and fennel with some pungency showing up. Moderately rich and deep cherry flavor with hints of cola and spice, wrapped in gentle tannins. An easy user-friendly drinker. Decent (+).

2008 Holdredge Old School Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., \$38 Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Slight reduction, but displaying bright aromas of Bing cherries and spice. Shrill and austere with piercing acidity, offering flavors of tart cherries and moderate oak character. Decent.

2009 Honest Weight Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 100 cases, \$29.99. Produced by McNeil & Sons, Cloverdale. Secret vineyard source. Wente, Swan clones. Aged in 255 new and 75% once-used French oak barrels. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Reserved aromas of brandied cherries, black currants, and baking spice. Tasty core of very ripe cherry and berry fruits with complimentary toasty oak in the background, finishing with a grilled fruit and hickory character. Elegantly styled. Much better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle showing less oak, more vibrant fruit and more attractive spice notes. Good (+).




2010 Hook & Ladder Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.67, 2,923 cases, \$25. Released spring 2012. From vineyards farmed by Cecil De Loach since 1973 located on the plains off Olivet Road in western Santa Rosa. Native yeast fermentation, aged up to 11 months in 20% new French oak barrels. Winemaker Jason De Loach. Light reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of Bing cherries and oak spice. Flavors of cherries, sandalwood and clove. Very smooth on the palate and easy to drink. A lighter, straight forward, solid Pinot, that is lighter, redder fruited and juicier than the Reserve bottling. Good (+).



2010 Hook & Ladder Third Alarm Reserve Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$35. Native yeast fermentation. Aged 11 months in 30% new French oak barrels. Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very expressive nose of ripe dark cherries, cola and spice. Quintessential Russian River Valley Pinot Noir with signature flavors of black cherries, cola and brown spice with a hint of mocha. Fully ripe in fruit character, very smooth on the palate, displaying impeccable balance. Highly approachable now and well worth the tab. Very good (+).



 **2009 J Vineyards & Winery Barrel 16 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.59, 535 cases, \$75. Released January 2012. A selection of 16 barrels from diverse Russian River Valley vineyards. 100% de-stemmed, open-top fermenters, aged 14 months in 35% new French oak barrels, blended, and returned to barrel for 3 months. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of Bing cherries, sandalwood and oak spice. An hi-collared wine with generous flavors of black cherries, dark red strawberries, cola, graham and clove spice. Aims to please with welcoming elegance, reserved tannins and an aromatic finish steeped in spiced cherry compote. J's top Pinot delivers.



2009 Jigar Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 465 cases, \$32. Name ("jigg-er") is Urdu/Hindi for symbol of love and affection, courage, heart and one who lives life to the fullest. Proprietor is Jigar and Stephanie Patel. Winemaker is Erik Miller of Kokomo Wines. Inaugural release. Clones 667, 777 and 114.

Aged in 25% new French oak barrels. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose is closed for business and no fruit ever emerges. Flavors of brandied cherries, herbs and cola finishing with a cherry riff, bright acidity and a bit of heat. The medium weighted fruit carries a roasted, confected quality. The wine seems a little disjointed. Decent. (Note: this wine won a Gold at the 2011 San Francisco Chronicle Tasting so may not be a representative bottle)



2009 La Rochelle Dutton Ranch Campbell Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 142 cases, \$48. Pommard clone.

Moderately deep reddish-purple color in the glass. Bright aromas of dark cherries, sage, spice and potpourri really draw you into the glass. Delicious (written twice in my notes) cherry bombast with subtle accents of edible roses, spice and mocha. Discreetly concentrated mouthful of Pinot with supple tannins and an incredible finish featuring extravagant ripe cherry fruit. In three words, flat out great.



2008 Marimar Estate Don Miguel Vineyard La Masia Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$30.

Estate grown and bottled. From organic grapes grown in western Sonoma County in the Green Valley appellation. Unfiltered. Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Revealing aromas of cherries, raspberries and delicate oak. Flavors of very ripe berries and raisin, accentuated with an herbal bent, displaying flamboyant tannins and some heat on the reasonably long finish. Good.



2011 Origine Russian River Valley Rosé of Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$12, screw cap. Sourced from 3 vineyards. Slow, cold fermentation. Aged on the lees for 2 months and bottled young. Moderate pink-orange color in the glass. Aromas of fresh strawberries, red raspberries and watermelon leap out of the glass upon opening. Discreet richness with flavors of strawberry, raspberry and red grapefruit with a hint of cherry vanilla. Fresh and spirited. Good (+).

2009 Papapietro Perry Leras Family Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.78, TA 0.569, 1000 cases, \$54. Vineyard is planted to Pommard clone that is 13 years old as well as newer clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 11 months in 50% new and 50% 1 and 2-year-old Francois Frères oak barrels. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of darker red cherries and berries and damp forest floor. Delicious core of deeply flavored red and black cherries accented by subtle notes of earth, minerals, herbs and oak. Mid weight in style with a very sexy, satiny texture and supple tannins. Ready to drink now. Very good (+).



2009 Porter Creek Fiona Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$36. Vineyard established in 1982 by the George Davis family on a steep hillside along Westside Road at the entrance to Porter Creek. Made with biodynamic grapes. Moderate reddish-purple hue in the glass. An interesting wine made in the French style and quite distinct from many Pinot Noirs currently produced from the

Russian River Valley. Aromas of cherries, summer herbs, grass and verbena. Elegant and light in weight, yet offering pleasing cherry flavor with considerable length and intensity on the cherry-driven finish. Unusual spice accents add interest. The wine possesses plenty of svelte tannins for the long haul. A distinctive and interesting wine with a true expression of terroir. Very good (+).



2007 Scherrer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$36. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Dark cherries are the featured fruit on the nose with hints of balsam, spice and smoky oak. Moderately intense array of black cherry, and black raspberry flavors with supple tannins and some length on the finish which leaves a trace of heat in its wake. This bottle seems a bit tired at this stage. Good.

2008 Scherrer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 620 cases, \$40. Essentially from the Green Valley appellation. Unfined and unfiltered. Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. The nose unfolds slowly in the glass, reaching a crescendo in about 45 minutes, featuring fresh Bing cherries and red berries with a hint of spice. Light on first taste, picking up intensity over time in the glass. Brighter and fresher

than the 2007 vintage with more red fruits featured. The tannins are supple making for easy drinking. The wine finishes with a bit of spice and orange peel, and refreshing acidity. Very good.

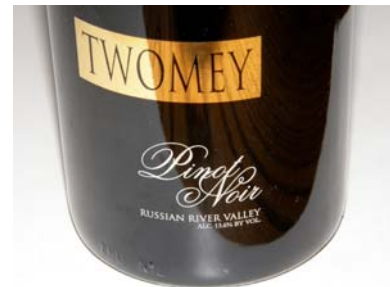
2010 Sonoma-Loeb Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., pH 3.83, TA 0.50, \$45. Clones 667 and 777 from one of the Dutton family's most prized blocks. Long cold soak, indigenous yeasts, unfiltered and unfiltered. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Richly perfumed with brandied black cherries, spice, and oak-driven aromas of herbs and vanilla. Full-bodied, husky style, with a big heart of black cherry and blackberry fruit and a staccato of cola, and chocolate. Well oaked, with nicely managed tannins. This wine makes a statement. A little too close to Syrah for my comfort, but very well made in its style. Very good.*

2009 Stemmler Nugent Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.63, 606 cases, \$42. An 11-acre site in the heart of the Russian River Valley planted with tight spacing in 1997 to Dijon 115 and 667 clones. 100% de-stemmed, hot fermentations, extended maceration and aged 18 months in 20% new French oak barrels. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Very fruity nose of mixed berry jam aromas with a slight funky note. Soft and velvety on the palate with bright black cherry cola flavor offering some fruit-driven aromatic persistence on the finish. Great balance. I like this wine for its seductive mouthfeel. Very good.*

2008 Taft Street Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.60, 1,074 cases, \$16. Sourced primarily from Jim Moore Vineyard east of the winery on Occidental Road and Russian River Farms along Eastside Road. Aged 14 months in barrel. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of Bing cherries, sage and pepper. Middleweight flavors of red cherries, raspberries and cranberries wrapped in muscular rainy tannins with a good snap of acidity on the very dry finish. The tannin/fruit balance is tipped toward tannins. Good.*



2010 Twomey Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.65, 2,600 cases, \$50. Released April 28, 2012. Sourced from the sustainably farmed, estate West Pin Vineyard and sustainably farmed Crinella Vineyard. Aged 15 months sur lie in 50% new and 50% once used French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of fresh Bing cherries, blueberries, spice and floral notes. Delicious core of mouthwatering dark cherry and strawberry flavors with cinnamon and other baking spices, and supportive oak in the background. Very silky in the mouth. Vibrant in character due to uplifting acidity, producing a refreshingly bright finish that lasts and lasts. A beautiful, elegant wine of distinct character that is very food-friendly. Still needs time to reach its apogee and will benefit from decanting if you drink now. This wine will convert you to Pinotholicism.*



2009 Waits-Mast Amber Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 47 cases, \$42. Released September 2011. The vineyard was planted in 2000 with Dijon clones 115, 667, and 777. This wine is predominantly clone 115 (50%). 100% whole berry, inoculated with RC212 yeast, aged 17 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very reserve nose initially, opening slowly over time in the glass to reveal delicate aromas of dark cherries, Asian 5-spice and hibiscus. Delicious core of spiced black cherry and cola flavor with an underpinning of savory herbs. Soft and plush on the palate with modest tannins. A little warmth in the background. A very bold tasting, California style Pinot which will find fans. Very good.*

Sonoma Coast

2010 Anthill Farms Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$34 First release of this bottling. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of red plums, crushed red grapes, rose petals, soy and spice with a hint of volatile acidity. The flavors follow in step with an added floral riff, backed by a mouth-puckering, tight, citrusy acidity. The acidity is disarming and the wine is out of balance. Decent (-).*

2010 Anthill Farms Campbell Ranch Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., \$44 From a vineyard near Annapolis in the fog line at 750 feet. 12 year-old vines. Planted in 2002 and farmed by owner Steve Campbell. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very muted nose initially, slowly opening over time in the glass to reveal aromas of darker berries and cherries, tea leaf, graham and spice. An elegant, bright and*

slightly lean wine, with flavors of dark red cherries and berries including cranberries, finishing with citrus-driven acidity adding a lift to the sweet fruit. Good (+).

2010 Anthill Farms Peters Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.2% alc., \$44 This vineyard is located in the hills west of Sebastopol. Farmed by Randy Peters for over 20 years. Pommard and 777. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromatically pleasing with a perfume of dark cherries, savory herbs and seasoned oak. Middleweight flavors of cherries, herbs, grilled mushrooms and vanilla creme with well balanced tannins and acidity. Soft in the mouth with enticing drink ability. Very good.*

2010 Bruliam Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$46. 100% de-stemmed, minor acid and water additions to counteract high sugar. Inoculated fermentations. Aged 10 months in 50% new French oak (Remond). Clone 828. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with vivid aromas of dark cherries, plum sauce, grilled beef, wildflower and seasoned oak. Darker cherries and berries are featured on a middleweight frame, with hints of herbs, straw and tobacco, becoming more expressive over time in the glass. Soft, well-tamed mountain tannins, finishing with a flourish of dark berry fruit. Will benefit from more bottle aging. This vineyard produces wines of interest year in and year out. Very good (-).*



2009 Canihan Exuberance Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.70, 500 cases, \$50. From a dry-farmed, organic. 3.75-acre estate vineyard bordering Los Carneros, planted to Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777 in 1998. Certified organic by CCOF. Yields are less than 2 tons per acre. Aged 22 months in 100% French oak barrels. Gold Medal San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition and Pinot Noir Shootout. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Very spicy nose offering enticing aromas of black raspberries, strawberries, deep red rose petals and sweet pipe smoke. I can't take my nose out of the glass. An aristocratic wine with mouthwatering flavors of dark berries, exotic spice, earthy notes of mushroom and flavor-enhancing savory herbs in the background. Soft in the mouth, with well proportioned ripe, firm tannins. Has a typical Carneros Pinot Noir personality.*

2008 Canihan Exuberance Sonoma County Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.60, 180 cases, \$50. A reserve from a dry-farmed, certified organic estate vineyard. Yields 1 ton per acre. Very similar to the 2009 vintage of this wine, except the fruit is riper in 2008. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of cherries, strawberries, violets, seasoned oak and spice. Broad in the mouth with moderately intense black cherry, blueberry, and strawberry flavors with Asian 5-spice in the background. Mild fine-grain tannins, smoothly textured, with generous length on the bombastic finish. This wine has benefited from further time in the bottle and is better than I recall in past tastings. Very good (+).*

2008 Clary Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$40. From an estate vineyard located in the western reaches of the Petaluma Gap. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red fruits, wine cellar and oak. Flavors of earth-kissed black cherries and berries, tar and oak, with a hint of citrus on the crisp finish. A little less ripe and extracted than previous vintages I remember, but more transparent. Good.*



2009 Dunstan Durrell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.63, 231 cases, \$50. Aged 16 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Placed second out of 460 Pinot Noirs tasted at the 10th Annual Pinot Noir Summit in 2012. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Evocative nose offering aromas of spiced black cherries, black cap raspberries, sassafras and oak, picking up interest and intensity over time in the glass. Offers moderately dense and very ripe flavors of dark cherries and berries with notes of tea and vanilla. Soft in the mouth, almost creamy, with silky tannins and amazing length on the generous finish. Simply delicious. Top notch.*



2010 Flowers Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$45. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of boysenberries, fruit punch, spice and violets. Darker berry flavors are featured on a middleweight frame, with accents of Asian 5-spice and cola. Juicy and crisp, with impressive fruit purity. Highly approachable with supple tannins. Even better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, with more striking cherry character. Very good.*

**2010 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**

14.2% alc., 189 cases, \$56. Clones 667 and 777. Aged 15 months in 33% new Remond French oak. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Brightly perfumed with aromas of black plums, blackberry jam and Chinese Five Spice. Deliciously rich core of blackberry and plum reduction sauce flavors with a very appealing accent of spice. The wines fills the mouth with fruit, grabbing your attention, but is light on its feet due to supple tannins and impeccable balance. A big boy Pinot with black tie class and flat-out terrific.*



2009 Furthermore Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.63, 47 cases, \$50. Clones 115, 667 and 777. Aged 10 months in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderate ruby color in the glass. Fragrant array of dark red fruits with a hint of saffras. Modest richness with pleasing flavors of dark cherries and berries with savory herbs and brown spice in the background. Very smoothly textured and easy to drink. Much better the next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, displaying richer fruit flavor. Very good.*

2009 J Vineyards & Winery Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$50. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels and lightly fined before bottling. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Brooding aromas of black fruit leather, black raspberries, violets, oak and spice. Tasty core of moderately rich black raspberry and blackberry fruit with hints of black tea and cola. Soft in the mouth, with firm, dry tannins. Drinking perfectly now. Very good.*

2010 Littorai Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$40. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red fruits, damp earth, and wooded forest. Soft and smooth on the palate, with good richness and intensity, offering flavors of dark red cherries and raspberries that have a woody, earthy tone. Better the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Littorai wines perform better with a few years of cellaring. Good.*

2009 MacPhail Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 325 cases. \$49. Clones 115 and Pommard. Aged 11 months sur lies in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderate ruby color in the glass. The nose is closed for business, reluctantly giving up demure aromas of dark stone fruits and toasty oak. Middleweight flavors of plums and black raspberries wrapped in fine-grain tannin, lingering with some appeal. Not particularly broad or giving and may not be a representative bottle. Reserve judgement.*

**2009 MacPhail Wildcat Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**

14.3% alc., 325 cases, \$49. Clones are Pommard, 115, 667 and 777. Aged 11 months sur lies in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color and slightly hazy in the glass. The nose offers plenty of interest, with deep aromas of wild blackberries, rose petals, mocha java and Asian 5-spice. Black cherry and dark berry core well robed in oak with an underpinning of earth, herbs and dark chocolate. Appealingly wild and feral with substantial length on the finish. Could use more time in bottle to fully integrate the oak, but damn good right now.*

**2008 Paradise View Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**

14.7% alc., 581 cases, \$26. From a vineyard at the intersection of Highways 37 and 121 in the Sonoma Coast appellation owned by winery proprietor Al Brayton. The winemaker is Denis Malbec, who was born at Chateau Latour and learned viticulture and winemaking as at early age as the third generation of his family to work at Latour. He was Cellar Master from 1994 to 2000. Denis joins sommelier May-Britt Malbec as winemaking consultants on this project, joining Paradise View in 2002. 100% de-stemmed, intensive sorting, aged 20 months in 30% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Enjoyable aromas of black cherries and black raspberries with a hint of spice and sweet smoke. Medium weight, bright flavors that echo the nose with complimentary smoky oak support. Silky tannins, finishing juicy with some length. Good (+).*



2010 Roadhouse Winery Black Label Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$55. Sourced from the Petaluma Wind Gap. *Expressive nose offering scents of ripe Bing cherries and cola. Rich and flamboyant,*

with luscious flavors of black cherry pie filling, cherry cola, and sassafras, complimented by toasty oak in the background. Striking flavor expression that will find many fans. Smooth in the mouth with supple tannins and ready drink ability. Very good (+).



2007 Scherrer "Big Brother" Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 160 cases, \$50. A blend from a vineyard in Annapolis and another in Bodega, the name comes from the generosity of the wine, yet retains a delicacy typical of Pinot Noir. *Medium reddish-purple hue in the glass. Multiple aromas pop up over time including black cherry, spiced plum, sassafras, wine cellar and new oak. Packed with fruit but sleek and easy to cozy up to. Flavors of black cherries, boysenberries, sassafras and smoky oak, supported by silky tannins, finishing smooth and clean. Impeccable balance.*



2008 Scherrer Platt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 185 cases, \$75. Released November 2011. Joan and Lew Platt planted this vineyard overlooking the town of Bodega. A very cool site that escaped the summer wildfire issues. *Medium reddish-purple color in the glass. Subdued aromas of dark red cherries with a hint of tea leaf and oak. The fruit really pops on the palate with vibrant exuberance. Flavors of black cherries, blueberries and black raspberries elevated by a lively cut of acidity. Moderately rich and beautifully balanced. Needs time to open in the glass. Built for the long haul (available in magnums which should easily last 15 years).*



2009 Senders Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$35. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of super ripe fruit, dominated by prune, raisin, notes. A well-crafted wine with modest concentration, supple tannins, and a very silky mouthfeel, but regrettably, the black cherry and dark berry fruit is simply too ripe for my taste. Good.*

2010 SPELL Nicole's Blend Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 252 cases, \$37. Winemaker Andrew Berge. Sourced from Terra de Promissio Vineyard east of the town of Petaluma and Miron Vineyard in the Sebastopol Hills. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of red pie cherries, baking spices and sandalwood. Middleweight flavors of cherries with a hint of tobacco and herbs, displaying admirable finesse and some finishing strength. Russian River Valley in character. Very good.*

2010 SPELL Guidici Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 150 cases, \$39. Winemaker Shane Finley. The vineyard is located just outside the small town of Occidental amidst towering redwoods. *Dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Enticing aromas of fresh deep red cherries and strawberries with a hint of spice. Rich and bold in character, with plentiful and attention-grabbing deep red and black fruits backed by muscular tannins and bright acidity. Addictive flavor in this wine. Very good.*

2008 Thirty-Seven Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 150 cases, \$40. 100% de-stemmed, intensively sorted, extended maceration, aged 11 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Crafted by Denis and May-Britt Malbec. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Strong elements of smoke and ash on the nose and in the mouth with fruit flavors of black cherry and blackberries, wrapped in soft, supple tannins. Seems smoke-tainted, but may sport strong oak-driven, heavy toast characters. Either way, I find the wine rather unpleasant to drink. That said, my experience has been that there are a number of wine drinkers who welcome smoky Pinots that I find disagreeable. To each his own. Decent.*

2010 Trombetta Family Wines Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 600 cases, \$58. Petaluma Gap vineyard location. Clones 777, Swan and 828. Native yeast fermentations, extended maceration, aged 9 months in 50% new and 50% 1-year-old French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *Dark plum color in the glass. Super ripe fruit profile. Aromas of crushed black grapes, cassis, blackberries, tea leaf and soy sauce. Full-bodied flavors of sweet black raspberry and black currant fruit, assuming a dried-out character over time in the glass with notes of raisin, hay, grass and tea leaf showing up. Stops just short of syrupy. Some fine-grain tannins and a lingering fruit-driven finish. Pushes the ripeness envelope too far for my taste, but well-made in its style. Decent.*

2009 Twomey Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., \$50. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas jump out including black cherries, potpourri, spice and charred oak. Medium weight core of fresh dark red and black berries and cherries with well-integrated fine-grain, tawny tannins, and supported by a bright acid spine, finishing with a slightly citrusy, uplifting finish. Very good*

Mendocino County



2010 Straight Line Wine Mendocino County Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., TA 0.61, 550 cases, \$28. A blend from vineyards that go into Couloir Wines single-vineyard designated Pinot Noirs. Fruit from Anderson Valley vineyards make up the majority of the final wine. 40% whole cluster, native fermentation. Aged 11 months in 40% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherries, spiced plums, and cut flowers. Discreetly concentrated flavors of dark red berries, black plums and spice with a hint of citrus peel on the refreshing finish. Easy to like, with supple tannins, and reasonably good length on the finish. Very good (-).*

2010 Couloir Oppenlander Vineyard Mendocino County Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.61, 116 cases, \$38. 80% Pommard and 20% Dijon 115 clones. 50% whole cluster. Native yeast fermentation. Aged 10 months in 40% new French oak. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Brooding aromas of earth-kissed dark grapes and berries. Well composed array of middleweight dark red and black fruits with a savory mushroom and earthy bent typical of this vineyard. Perfectly ripened fruit, smoothly textured in the mouth, finishing with admirable length and crispness. Very good.*



2009 Waits-Mast Oppenlander Vineyard Mendocino County Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 48 cases, \$44. Released September 2011. A vineyard that consistently produces distinctive and stunning wines. Located just outside the town of Comptche, about 8.5 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. The vineyard is owned by the Shandel family, 5th generation owners of the property. The site is very cool and harvest is typically later than in other regions. 100% whole berry, native yeast, aged 17 months in 25% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Lovely aromas of wooded forest, wild berries and fresh cherries. Delicious essence of red Pinot fruits with a savory, spicy, herbal edge. Amazing fruit intensity on a rather delicate frame. Very soft in the mouth. A lighter, redder interpretation of Pinot from this vineyard in this vintage. Hint: If you see "Oppenlander Vineyard" on a Pinot wine label, buy it.*



Other

2009 De Loach Vineyards California Heritage Reserve Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$10. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Slightly confected, with aromas of strawberries, cherries, and spice. Riper fruit evident on the palate with notes of stewed plum and raisin. Moderately rich with noticeable oak backing, offering some grainy tannins and bright acidity. Becomes less interesting over time in the glass. A suitable daily drinker at the right price. Decent.*

NV Deux Terres Red Wine 13.7% alc., \$45. 50% French and 50% American grapes. Two French winemakers (Roger and daughter Julie Belland of Domaine Roger Belland) and 1 American winemaker (Jennifer Tensley of Lea Wines) collaboration. Two different terroirs (2009 Lea Turner Vineyard Pinot Noir and 2009 Domaine Roger Belland Santenay-Commes Premier Cru), but two similar winemaking philosophies. *Moderately light reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of dark red berries, dried rose petals and balsam with a hint of pungency from volatile acidity. Tasty core of dark red berry and cherry fruit. Earthy and mineral, with complimentary oak, ripe, firm tannins, and a crisp finish tasting of cherries. A unique wine, speaking more of Burgundy than California. Good.*

2010 Grey Stack Bennett Valley Cuvée Sonoma County Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 150 cases, \$35. Second vintage. Proprietor is Peter Young, winemaker is Pat Sullivan, and vineyard manager is Chris Bowland. From an emerging appellation. *Moderately dark reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of spiced black cherries, herbs and green garden. Medium weight flavors of dark red cherries and berries with spice and herbal oak in the background. More savory than fruity (not for fruit hedonists). Good.*



2010 Kendall-Jackson Vintner's Reserve California Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.53, 50,000 cases, \$19. Sourced from cool California coastal Jackson Estates Grown vineyards including Santa Barbara County (54%), Monterey County (41%) and Mendocino County (5%). Aged 8 months in 96% French (19% new) oak barrels. This is always a remarkable wine for me considering the huge production. *Moderate reddish-purple color in the glass. Aromas of darker cherries and berries with hints of oak and spice and even peppered beef. Wood-kissed black cherry and black raspberry fruit on a light, elegant frame with mild, sandy tannins. Pair with Asian "shakin' beef." Consistently one of California's best value Pinot Noirs, widely available, and often discounted. Good (+).*

2011 Montpelier California Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.55, \$6. From Bronco Wine Company. 76% Pinot Noir, 17% Syrah, 4% Petite Sirah, 3% Dry red. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Aromas of confected cherries (Maraschino) with notes of forest floor and oak. Light, fruity, and simple, featuring flavors of cherries, raspberries and cranberries in an easy to drink style with some fine-grain tannins and a backing herbal oak sheen. Won't light your fire, but low in alcohol and user friendly. Decent.*



2010 On Point Christinna's Cuvée North Coast Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 242 cases, \$34. From Fulcrum Wines. A blend of Londer, Gap's Crown and Floodgate vineyards, honoring the winemaker's wife. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Swan. Barrel aged 15 months in 24% new French (Remond) oak barrels. *Moderately light reddish-purple hue in the glass. Pleasant aromas of dark red cherries, red currants and berries with notes of briar, Dr. Pepper and oak spice. Light, but big on flavor with an array of bright fruits including raspberry, cherry and blueberry. Mild tannins and great uplifting natural acidity. A solid, well-crafted wine and a good value to boot. Very good.*



2010 Pink Truck California Red Wine 10.5% alc., \$8.99. Artwork by Sonoma artist Dennis Zieminski. From Red Truck Winery in Sonoma. *Light pinkish-red in color in the glass. Aromas of strawberries, red raspberries and blood oranges. Intensely fruity, with the flavor of strawberry soda and tutti-fruitti. Simple, refreshing without tannin. A medium-bodied rosé style wine which will work with summer grilled dishes, especially over ice. Decent.*

California Chardonnay

An excellent article appeared in *Wine Business Monthly* (January 2012) written by Lance Cutler, one of a number of varietal reviews that focus on a single grape variety through interviews with distinguished winemakers. He notes in the article that Chardonnay is a cross of Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc grape varieties. There are 34 different clonal varieties of Chardonnay identified in France and these Dijon clones have been exported around the world. In California, Karl Wentz developed a clone of Chardonnay that is revered and widely planted.

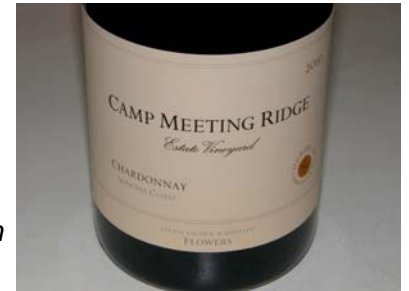
Cutler, who has been a winemaker for over 30 years, points out the following. "Chardonnay has a wide range of styles and while it is definitely influenced by terroir, winemaking decisions seem to play an equal part stylistically in the finished product. Winemakers make the call on whether to put the wine through malolactic fermentation and whether to use oak in the aging process. Malolactic fermentation, especially in conjunction with newer oak barrels, tends to create richer, bigger wines with a definite creamy character." As you read the reviews below, it is clear the use of malolactic fermentation in at least a portion of the wine is extremely popular in California.

Cutler also notes, "Winemakers are also split on whether to follow oxidative or reductive regimens in their production cycles, which affect whether they leave the wines on lees and how often they might stir the lees." The vast majority of California Chardonnay is left on the lees with some lees stirring.

2010 Flowers Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 13.7% alc., \$40. *Light straw color in the glass. Very nice aromatic expression showing scents of white peach, lemon curd, and bear claw pastry. Fresh tasting flavors of green apple and brioche with a lemon peel driven and lively finish. Seamless and solid. Good (+).*



2010 Flowers Camp Meeting Ridge Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 13.5% alc., \$70. An estate vineyard situated at 1200 to 1400 feet elevation, planted to Hyde, Old Wentz and Dijon 95 clones. Yields of 1.25 tons per acre. Barrel fermented in 64% new French oak barrels for 14 months. *Moderate straw color in the glass. Alluring aromas of baked pear, roasted nuts, crème brûlée and milk chocolate. Plenty of flavor intensity including juicy lemon and apple with hints of buttered brioche and sweet oak. An exceptional wine with very slight dry tannins, lively acidity, and an appealing lemon drop finish.*



2010 Gary Farrell Russian River Valley Selection Chardonnay 14.2% alc., pH 3.32, TA 0.66. \$32. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, crème brûlée, and toasted oak. Lean flavors of honeyed pear, vanilla wafer and lemon. High acidity, lagging a bit in flavor interest and nuance. Good (-).*

2010 Hook & Ladder Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.34, TA 0.69, 5,800 cases, \$19. Released winter 2011. Fruit crushed, de-stemmed and immediately sent to press, aged in French oak barrels. 75% malolactic fermentation. Lees stirring in barrel once a month. Aged 9 months on the lees. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Aromas of fresh pear, honeycrisp apple, and apple sauce. Light and crisp, with flavors of baked pear, apple and citrus with the slightest hint of oak. A basic, back porch Chardonnay. Decent.*



2010 J. Lohr Arroyo Vista Vineyard Series Arroyo Seco Chardonnay 14.9% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.67, 5,426 cases, \$25. Sourced from prime Monterey vineyard acreage. Native fermentation, weekly stirring of each barrel from November 2010 to March 2011 (during MLF and five months after). Barrel-aged sur lie for 18 months in 42% new French oak barrels (mostly Francois Frères). *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of caramel apple, citrus, mossy rock, brioche and redwood. Delicious and classy, with flavors of white nectarine, lemony brioche, and pastry cream, accented with minerality. Soft in the mouth without evident tannins. A quality drink. Very good.*

2009 Knez Winery Demuth Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay 14.0% alc., \$30. *Light straw in color. Aromas of buttered toast and toasted oak overshadow aromas of pear, apple and petrichor. Flavorful, featuring baked apples, pear, toffee, and an appealing mineral character. Slightly creamy with a steely finish. A restrained and delicate, acid-driven style. Very good.*

2010 La Crema Monterey Chardonnay 13.9% alc., \$18. A variety of clones including 4, Dijon and Rued. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Aromas of baked pear, butter, toast and hazelnuts. Light and simple, with noticeable oak, citrus and mineral flavors. Goes down easy, but not distinguished. Decent.*

2010 La Follette Lorenzo Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.3% alc., pH 3.33, TA 0.584, 100 cases, \$38. Crafted in a classic California style from old Russian River Valley vines. The vineyard was planted in 1974 by John Bazzano who named it after his Italian grandfather. The 10-acre site enjoys cooling fog in the mornings and evenings during the growing season. Fruit pressed whole cluster with juice sent directly to barrel. Stirred bi-weekly through January and then monthly until July. Composed of a heritage Chardonnay clone. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Reserved scent of golden apple, pear, lemon, chalk dust and oak. Flavorful core of citrus, baked pear, and spiced apple, with complimentary oak notes of brioche and toast. Somewhat rich, slightly creamy in texture, finishing with a bright cut of lemony flavor on the finish. Very good.*



2010 La Follette Sangiacomo Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.2% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.63, 560 cases, \$38. From the cold climate Petaluma Gap. Planted in 1998, the Roberts Road block is rooted in the alluvial soils of Copeland Creek with tracks of gravel. Predominantly Old Wente selection. Made in a Burgundian reductive style with native yeasts. Aged 10 months sur lie with gentle stirring of the barrels. *Light straw color in the glass. Complex perfume of lemon curd, petrichor, Asian pear, ripe pineapple, roasted hazelnuts, and subtle oak. Delicious flavors of baked pear, citrus, and green apple, with perfectly integrated and supportive oak. Juicy and spirited, making you reach for another sip. La Follette is a master of Chardonnay.*



2010 La Rochelle Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay 14.9% alc., 90 cases, \$65. Released April 21, 2012. *Light straw color in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, golden apple, pastry cream and roasted nuts. Delicious array of flavors including baked pears, roasted hazelnuts, buttered brioche, baked apples and grilled peaches with a slight petrol note. Slight creamy in texture, with a citrus-driven acidity in the background, and a hint of heat on the finish. Definite oak influence but it is complimentary. A buttery style of Chardonnay made popular in California by Kistler and Aubert and others that will appeal to those who welcome this genre. Very good (+).*

2010 La Rochelle Ferrington Vineyard Anderson Valley Chardonnay 14.6% alc., 120 cases, \$65. Released April 21, 2012. *Pale straw color with slight haze in the glass (unfiltered). Aromas of golden apples, pastry cream, butter brickle and roasted nuts. Tasty array of white fruit flavors including apple, pear and citrus with a subtle underpinning of toffee and toast from oak, finishing with an hi-strung lemony zing. Very good.*

2010 McIntyre Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay 14.3% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.69, 290 cases, \$28. Released winter 2010. Winemakers Steve McIntyre and Byron Kosuge. From the Home Estate, the oldest Chardonnay plantings in the Santa Lucia Highlands. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Very muted nose, offering demure aromas of baked apple, citrus peel, peach and fresh brioche. More expressive on the palate, with flavors of baked pears, honey, lemon and toffee. Light and reserved in style with zippy acidity. Decent.*

2010 McIntyre Vineyards Estate Block K-1 Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay 14.4% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.169, 100 cases, \$38. Released winter 2010. From the oldest Chardonnay plantings in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Native yeast fermentation. Winemaker is Byron Kosuge. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Reserved aromas of lemon curd, white peach and marzipan. Tasty, with modest flavors of lemon, toast and roasted nuts, finishing with reasonable intensity and offering refreshing acidity. A little more body and interest than the Estate bottling. Good (+).*

2009 Paradise View Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.1% alc., 350 cases, \$24. *Light straw color in the glass. Subdued, but pleasing aromas of lemon, golden apple and chestnut, with a slight cheesy note (diacetyl). Flavors of lemon pudding, golden apples and spice with a brisk acid backbone. Decent.*

2010 Sonoma-Loeb Carneros Private Reserve Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.62, \$23. Sourced from one small block of Sangiacomo's famed "Home" Ranch. Fermented in French oak barrels, aged on the lees for 8 months, and underwent full malolactic fermentation during the aging process. 75% new French oak barrels. *Light straw color and clear in the glass. Fresh fruity aromas of pears and peach cobbler along with scents of pastry cream and buttered brioche. Creamy and soft on the palate without perceptible tannin, featuring flavors of crème brûlée, honeyed pear, and gentle toasty oak. Discreet richness with well-integrated acidity, finishing with some persistence. Very good.*



2010 Sonoma-Loeb Envoy Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.56, \$N/A. Sourced from plantings of Rued clone and Robert Young clone at Dutton Ranch. 80% malolactic fermentation, aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Light straw color and clear. Demure but very pleasant aromas of lemon curd, Asian pear, and citrus peel leading to flavors of baked pear, pineapple, brioche, toast and baking spice.*

Slightly creamy on the palate and impeccably balanced. A little richer than the Carneros bottling with slightly more length on the finish. Like this wine for its polish and exuberance.



Note: Sonoma-Loeb was acquired by Chappellet Vineyard & Winery in 2011. Phillip Corallo-Titus has been the winemaker for both Sonoma-Loeb and Chappellet since 1990. Sonoma-Loeb has always been a small winery dedicated to producing Sonoma County and Carneros Chardonnays, and more recently, Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. The two wineries have shared the same winemaking facility on Pritchard Hill for over 20 years. In 1990, Phillip crafted Sonoma-Loeb's debut Private Reserve Chardonnay and in 1999 introduced Envoy Chardonnay. The Private Reserve is a Carneros wine, featuring three clones of mature vine Chardonnay grown at Sangiacomo Vineyard. The clones are Wente, Robert young and Catarina. The Envoy Chardonnay is the "pinnacle" of the Sonoma-Loeb portfolio. All the grapes are sourced from the Dutton Ranch in the Russian River Valley. 80% is from the vineyard's original Rued clone block planted in 1968. The very low yielding old vines produce a special wine as evidenced by my notes above.

2009 Thirty-Seven Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 14.0% alc., 150 cases, \$36. Label logo shows 37 interlocking circles that create the Flower of Life. *Very light straw color in the glass. Slight reduction upon opening, improving over time in the glass to reveal aromas of pear, citrus peel, and petrichor. A light, reserved style (no butter or oak here), with green apple and pear flavors, lively acidity and a steely finish. Good.*

Pinot Briefs

Theresa Heredia New Winemaker at Gary Farrell Winery After a 10-year successful stint as winemaker at Freestone Vineyards, Theresa has been appointed winemaker at Gary Farrell Winery. Theresa has a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and three years of study in the chemistry and viticulture and enology program at University of California at Davis. Her winemaking experience includes Burgundy (Domaine de Montille and Domaine Comte Armand) and Saintsbury in Carneros. Upon leaving Saintsbury, she trained with winemaker Cdraig Williams at Joseph Phelps Vineyards in the Napa Valley. She replaces Susan Reed as winemaker. She told me recently she is excited to work with the vineyard sources at Gary Farrell Winery such as the famed Rochioli Vineyard.

Oregon Pursues the UK Wine Market Harpers Wine & Spirits Trade Review recently (May 24, 2012) reported that the executive director of the Oregon Wine Board, Tom Danowski, is trying to double sales of Oregon premium wines in the UK over the next three years. The key, he said, is getting the export market to realize the high quality of premium Oregon wines that justifies the added expense. The challenge for Oregon is that there is considerable climatic variation in vintages, vineyard yields can be quite low, grape prices are high to support farming costs and this in turn forces bottle prices to be high. Currently the UK is the number two export market for Oregon wines behind Canada. Oregon now has 450 wineries, each typically producing less than 5,000 cases a year, with 12,560 planted acres of Pinot Noir. Pinot Gris (2,590 acres), Chardonnay, Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon follow in much smaller acreage. According to *Wine Business Monthly* (April 2012), on a volume basis, Oregon accounts for 0.4% of California-Washington-Oregon wine sales, but shows the strongest rate of growth of the three states and has the highest average wine price-point.

Chilled Pinot Noir Campaign Cono Sur Winery in Chile is launching a summer campaign to encourage consumers to drink chilled Pinot Noir. As reported in Harpers Wine & Spirits Trade Review (May 15, 2012), Cono Sur has developed promotional posters, wine cooler bags and tee shirts featuring the slogans, "Lighter, fresher, cooler," and "Keep cool and drink chilled Pinot Noir." Cono Sur is one of Chile's top Pinot Noir producers.

Baccarat Launches New Wine Glass The Chateau Baccarat line of professional wine glasses, which began sales in France this year, has developed a wine glass shaped like a closed tulip blossom. The company says that the narrow lip at the end of the vertical "chimney" prevents alcohol in the wine from overpowering other delicate aromas since it collects down in the glass after swirling and the aromas are trapped at the top. The design is very similar to Riedel's Oregon Pinot Noir glass which I have used for several years in my tastings. US cost is about \$80 per stem.

Screw-capped Champagne next? Wine writer Tyson Stelzer has claimed that about 5 to 6 percent of the Champagne he tastes is corked, equating to 18 million bottles of flawed wine. Australia's DeBortoli is the first to introduce the Viiva closure, a screw cap for use in their sparkling wines. The problem with this alternative closure is it removes the dramatic pomp and circumstance of the "pop" when a sparkling wine bottle is opened. Diam Bouchage, based in the town of Ceret in Roussillon, offers another closure option for sparkling wines. Diam is made with natural cork but it undergoes a patented process called the Diamond process, which effectively kills TCA.

Oregon Wine Country License Plates Available Oregon drivers can now obtain a wine country license plate. Oregon is the first in the nation to offer a license plate promoting the state's wine industry. The new license plate will cost \$30 more than a standard one with the additional cost benefit tourism marketing. The Oregon wine industry contributes more than \$2.7 billion dollars a year to the state's economy.

Dick Erath Funds Training of Oregon Taste Testers The Erath Family Foundation has underwritten a program at Oregon State University that will train Oregon winemakers to taste using a sensory method called free-choice profiling that will allow them to use consistent vocabulary to describe color, aroma, taste and mouth feel of wines. The 60 winemakers will then meet periodically to evaluate experimental wines made by Oregon State University and Oregon's commercial wine industry. The process will allow a reliable evaluation of whether certain winemaking and viticulture practices are truly beneficial to the consumer's wine drinking experience. This summer, the tasters are evaluating Pinot Noir made from grapes harvested at Stoller Vineyards in Dayton and Maple Ranch Vineyard in Cave Junction. The grapes used are part of a study to determine how much fruit should be left on a vine and when it should be thinned to produce the highest quality wine.

Winemaker Kathleen Inman a Rising Star Kathleen Inman, the founder and winemaker of Inman Family Wines in Santa Rosa, California, received the Rising Star Award at The Women for WineSense Grand Event held May 6, 2012, at the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena. The Rising Star Award is given annually to women with 12 or fewer years in the wine industry. Inman had a summer job at Napa Creek Winery where she met her future husband, Simon, and moved to his native England to work in finance. She and her husband explored France's wines and wine country while in England and decided to return to the United States and launch their own winery. She acquired a 10.45-acre property on Olivet Road in the heart of the Russian River Valley and began planting and farming organically in 2000. Inman currently offers an excellent lineup of wines including estate Olivet Grange Pinot Noir, estate Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Rosé ("Endless Crush") and a brut rosé sparkling wine.



U.S. Post Office to Ship Wine and Beer Senate Bill 1789 was passed in April 2012 that allows the U.S. Postal Service to compete with Fed Ex and UPS in the shipping of wine to consumers. The bill must still be passed by the House of Representatives to become law. The bill allows the U.S. Postal Service to ship wine from wineries and wine retailers to consumers.

John Falcone New Winemaker at Gainey Gainey Vineyard, located in the Santa Ynez Valley appellation, is a long time producer of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Sta. Rita Hills (including estate vineyards) as well as Bordeaux-driven varietals from estate vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley. Falcone began his winemaking career in Napa Valley, arriving in Santa Barbara County nearly ten years ago. He has been the winemaker, along with his spouse Helen, at Rusack Vineyards located in the hills above Solvang.

OPB’s “Grapes of Place”

Place” which aired on television M the words of those who lived it. Ex to incorporate rare film footage and



video, “Oregon Wine: Grapes of the Oregon wine industry through with the Oregon Historical Society www.shoppbs.org.

Westside Road Wineries

in the Russian River Valley has for the distinctive wineries of the 12-mile drive known as the “Rodeo Drive” of Pinot Noir. Founding members include; Alderbrook Winery, Armida Winery, Gary Farrell Winery, HGK Estate Wines at Hop Kiln Winery, Mill Creek Vineyards & Winery, Thomas George Estates and VML Winery.



wineries on famed Westside Road (WRWA) to publicize the

8th Annual Pinot Family Reunion

This year’s event will be held at John Ash & Co and the Vintners Inn Event Center on Sunday, July 22, 2012, with wine and food tasting from 1-5pm, and a family style dinner at John Ash & Co at 5pm. Over 40 all-star Pinot Noir producers are featured including Benovia, Dutton-Goldfield, Hartford Court, Kosta-Browne, Littorai, MacPhail, Merry Edwards, Siduri, Small Vines, Thomas George Estates, and Twomey. A silent and live auction will include large format wines, verticals, overnight stays, and more. The event benefits the Sutter North Bay Women’s Breast Care Center. Tickets are available at www.brownpapertickets.com or call 707-527-7687.

Judgment of Princeton

At the Annual Conference in Princeton, New Jersey, the American Association of Wine Economists AAWE organized a wine tasting called “The Judgment of Princeton.” It was modeled after the 1976 “Judgment of Paris.” The Princeton tasting was led by George Taber and included 9 wine judges from France, Belgium and the United States who tasted French against New Jersey wines. The French wines selected were from the same producers as in 1976 including Chateau Mouton-Rothschild and Haut Brion, priced up to \$650 a bottle. The results were surprising. Although the winner in each category was a French wine (Beaune Clos des Mouches for the whites and Chateau Mouton-Rothschild for the reds), New Jersey wines barely differed in their average rank from those of France. Three of the top four white wines were from New Jersey. The best New Jersey red wine was ranked in third place. Prices for the New Jersey wines are typically one-third to one-twentieth of their French competitors. A statistical evaluation of the tasting showed that the rank order of the wines was most likely be different. From a statistical Princeton blind tasting, both French judge Bordeaux. After disclosing the wines’ ide contrast, several tasters from the United economics.org for the full results.



tasting were repeated, the results would therefore undistinguishable. At the wines over their counterparts from surprised but did not complain. In ratings to be published. Visit www.wine-

Bill Price and Winemaker Gavin

Classic Wines, LLC, has formed a partner Price Chanin Vineyards. Gavin was prev The new, yet-to-be-named wine brand, w at their new winery located at Bien Nacid Gavin’s touch and lower alcohol approach released early next year featuring a small Rinconada Vineyard in the Sta. Rita Hills vintage. Chanin was named one of *Forbes* *San Francisco Chronicle*. he will continue to produce wines under the Chanin Wine Co. label at the new winery.

Partnership

Bill Price, owner of aker Gavin Chanin with the creation of r at Au Bon Climat and Qupé wineries. single-vineyard wines and will be crafted alifornia. Price has been impressed with rieties. The 2011 vintage will be inot Noir and a Pinot Noir from La o the lineup beginning with the 2012 wine and a “winemaker to watch” by the Chanin Wine Co. label at the new

Russian River Valley Single Vineyard Night

The Russian River Valley Winegrowers Association and Uncorked Events are sponsoring the Russian River Valley Single Vineyard Night in San Francisco, Thursday, July 19. More than 25 winemakers and winegrowers will be pouring small-lot, single vineyard wines

at San Francisco's Sloane Square. Unique silent auction items will also be on display to benefit the Russian River Valley Winegrowers. For tickets, visit www.singlevineyard.eventbrite.com.

Alysian Wine Tastings in Southern California Alysian Wines by winemaker Gary Farrell will be the featured winery at 'Sideways The Play' in Santa Monica. The 2009 Russian River Valley Selection Pinot Noir will be poured before curtain call and during intermission. For tickets, call 310-397-3244. A winemaker dinner with vintner Debbie Farrell will be held at the Montage Resort Beverly Hills on Saturday, July 14 and at the Montage Resort Laguna Beach on Sunday, July 15. Contact the hotels' websites for more information.

New Name for AOC Bourgogne Grand Ordinaire (BGO) The new name of the appellation is Coteaux Bourguignons and the first bottles so labeled will appear this spring with vintage 2011. The appellation extends from Beaujolais in the South to Auxerre in the North. Red (Pinot Noir, Gamay and César), white and rosé wines are included. The appellation serves as a source of introductory wines to Burgundy.

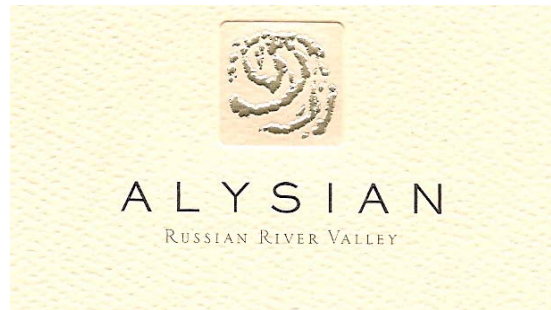
Willamette Valley Vineyards 2008 Clonal Blending Kit A 4-Pack 2008 Clonal Blending kit is available that includes one bottle each of 667 clone, 777 clone, Pommard clone and Wädenswil clone. A great way to liven up a gathering or dinner party. Visit www.willamettevalleyvineyards.com. 25% off until June 30.

Wine Tourism versus Farmland Preservation in Oregon There is concern in Oregon that wineries are becoming tourist traps. Oregon lawmakers recently passed H.B. 3280 that states that vineyards may not make more than 25% of their income from incidentals like food and gift shop merchandise. Existing vineyards making more than 25% of their income from incidentals were given a grandfather clause, allowing them to continue to attract tourists for events. It is a delicate issue, as many wineries believe that the focus of farmland should be to sell farm products and not run event centers or restaurants. On the other hand, consumers like to sample food with wine to receive the full wine experience. In California, there has been an increasing number of wineries hiring full-time chefs to offer visitors wine-food matching experiences.

Coastlands Vineyard For Sale The Coastlands Occidental Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir estate at 18100 Fitzpatrick Lane is for sale. 2 parcels totaling 38 acres are being sold together including 14+ acres of old Pinot Noir plantings. \$4,250,000. The vineyard was a source for Pinot Noir under the Williams Selyem and Cobb labels. Visit www.18100FitzpatrickLane.com.

Tickets Still Available for 2012 IPNC

There will be approximately 700 attendees for the 2012 IPNC weekend, including 140 representatives from the 70 featured wineries. In addition, a new audience of 550 guests will attend the IPNC's Sunday Walkabout at the end of the weekend. Approximately 70 Pinot Noir producers will be featured this year, from California, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, Oregon and Washington. More than 250 wines at IPNC! Approximately 50 guest chefs will celebrate. Chefs will travel from all parts of the United States, France and other countries to look for IPNC participants. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.citywinery.org.



New Champagne Dispenser



Bottle Variation: Fly in the Soup

Wine critics base their evaluation and scoring of wines usually on the sampling of a single bottle. Occasionally a flawed or “off” bottle is met with, and a second bottle is opened, but the majority of wines are judged on one bottle. I believe bottle variation can affect the judging of wines creating a “fly in the soup.”

A major study funded by wine closure manufacturer, DIAM Bouchage, the producers of the DIAM technical cork, focused entirely on bottle variation that consumers in the United States might meet with when buying leading brands of wines. John Gabbani of CUBE Communications helped organize the study. He said, “Bottle variation is the wine industry’s elephant in the room.”

The study was reported in the latest June 2012 issue of *Wines & Vines* (but unpublished elsewhere) and included thirty of the best-selling wines in the United States (the top ten sellers by volume in each of three price categories). Eighteen bottles of each wine were bought at retail stores in the San Francisco area, critically examined by technical and sensory analysis, with the results tabulated by a professional statistician. The technical testing screened for TCA and levels of total and free sulfur dioxide (sulfur dioxide is a good indicator of bottle variation since the levels of sulfur dioxide will reflect variations in bottling, closure inconsistencies, and exposure to heat). Sensory testing was performed by judges who rate the quality of the wines based on fruit, floral, earth, oxidation and TCA criteria.

The study revealed that only 23% of the sampled wines met the stringent technical quality standard meaning 77% of the wines failed. Most of the wines passed the total sulfur dioxide consistency test, but only 60% passed the test for free sulfur dioxide. The TCA defect rate was high, with only 43% of the wines passing the test. The sensory testing indicated that bottle variation was picked up less often by the judging panel, and only occurred in 12% of the wines using all measured criteria.

Using the most consistent wines as benchmarks, the study concluded that over 70% of the bottles exceeded tolerance levels. The wines bottled with technical corks and screw caps were more consistent than natural cork and synthetic closures.

The London Wine Fair: 02inWines (May 29, 2011) featured a bottle-to-bottle variation panel discussion led by noted wine writer, Jamie Goode. The panelists emphasized the importance of oxygen management in insuring consistency of bottles. Glass quality, choice of closure and application of closure all influence bottled wine consistency. Wine transportation and storage are factors as well, the panel said, with excess cold or heat having a significant detrimental effect on wine quality.

The challenge of bottle variation is compounded with Pinot Noir, since it tends to come and go like a chameleon in the bottle, particularly with aromatics. I often receive two bottles of the same wine for review. Over the past few months, I have opened two bottles of the same wine on occasion and compared them. Surprisingly, I noticed enough bottle variation in some wines to significantly impact my quality judgment. In some cases, the bottle variation is vary subtle, but enough to influence the final rating. For this reason, and from this point forward, if I have the slightest suspicion that a wine is not pristine or does not represent a proper example, I will open the second bottle for comparison. If I only receive one bottle, I must base my review on that single bottle, or attempt to obtain a second bottle. This can be quite a nuisance, much like a fly in the soup, but absolutely necessary for fair wine evaluations.